

# Remember The Prisoners

by Carter Conlon

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*This sermon challenges believers to love their enemies, bless those who curse them, do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who persecute them, reflecting the love and mercy of God. The message emphasizes the need for supernatural strength to obey God's command to love unconditionally, even in the face of opposition and hatred. It calls for a surrender to God's power and grace to show kindness and compassion to those who mistreat us, remembering that God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 41:50

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:43, Deuteronomy 23:3, Hebrews 12:25, Romans 5:5

**Topics:** "Unconditional Love", "Divine Strength in Adversity"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning, a message called Remember the Prisoners. And I've subtitled it, loving your enemies is such a wonderful idea, that is, until you have enemies. It's a wonderful concept, isn't it? We love to read it, about how we're to love our enemies.

And we can preach it eloquently, we can quote it. But when our enemies arise and stand before us, it requires something deeper than what you and I naturally have, to be able to actually obey the word of God. Matthew chapter five, if you'll go there, please.

And we'll start there. So Father, I thank you with all of my heart, God, for those that you have gathered in your house today. Thank you, my God, that your word indeed is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

The entrance of your word gives life, light, strength. God gives us hope, gives us a reason to live, gives us joy, gives us purpose for the future. I'm asking your Holy Spirit to flow through me today.

I offer my life as a vessel in your hands through whom and through which you can speak. Help me, Lord, to get rid of my own thoughts. Help me, Lord, to stand behind the cross.

Help me, God, to speak only for you. For my words are worthless, but yours can create a universe. So I pray, God, that you speak today to every heart.

I ask you, Lord, to go over every barrier, go around every obstacle, reach every heart in every place, no matter where we are. Give us the grace to learn, to grow, to prepare, to be ready for the day in which we live. And Father, I thank you for this with all my heart in Jesus' name.

Matthew chapter 5, beginning at verse 43. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies.

Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. And pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

Incredible commandment of God, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Now, Jesus starts off this discourse by reminding his own disciples of something they had heard, and it actually was in the word of God.

It's amazing. Now, God doesn't contradict himself, but there are certain instructions that he will only give to us at a season in our lives where we are actually able to fulfill. Thank you so much.

What God is asking us to do. Now, in the Old Testament, in the book of Deuteronomy, this is most likely what Jesus was referring to. I'll read it to you.

Chapter 23, beginning at verse three. Now, an Ammonite or a Moabite. Now, these were the children of the descendants of Lot through his incestuous relationship with his two daughters.

And these two tribes of people became actually avowed enemies of the people of God at that time. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the 10th generation, none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever.

In other words, there was a certain people group that God says, in spite of the fact that they may even claim some lineage to the place of blessing, they are barred from the assembly. They are not going to be allowed to enter because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt. In other words, you're not going to be kind to them because they weren't kind to you.

And because they hired against you, Balaam, the son of Baal from Pether of Mesopotamia to curse you. So you're not going to be kind to them because they've not been kind to you. And you're not going to bless them with your mouths because they have cursed you.

Nevertheless, the Lord, your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord, your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord, your God loves you. Verse six says, you shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. So God says, these are your enemies.

You're not to bless them. You're to curse them. You're not to be kind to them.

You're to reciprocate to them exactly in the way that they've treated you. You're to treat them and you're not to seek their peace, as he says, or their prosperity all of your days forever. So this is the word that the

disciples sitting there have heard.

They've all studied this. They've known it. Now they're sitting in a place where the son of God himself, God in the flesh is standing before them or sitting as the case may be.

And he's giving them an instruction that is foreign to what they had heard. Just like you and I, when we come into the body of Christ, a lot of us, even before we were saved, we knew. I don't know how we knew it, but instinctively we knew it's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

You remember that? And it sounded so good, didn't it? And somebody hits you, you hit him back. Somebody does something to you, you do it back. And if you can, you do a double.

And it just seemed right. That was kind of like the common thought of the time. And it is the common thought for a people that don't have the strength to do otherwise.

This is exactly what God was saying. You heard this in a time when you were incapable of responding above the abilities that you have in yourself. They were not capable at this time of responding another way.

Humankind can't love like this. Humankind doesn't have the power in it to bless when people curse or to love when they're hated or to do good when good is not done or to pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. Oh, we'll pray all right, but our prayers are not necessarily for blessing.

You know exactly what I'm talking about. You remember the time when you were a young Christian, you read the Bible and David the king said, Oh God, break their teeth. You remember that? Remember when you read it, somebody's face came right into your mind at that time.

And you found yourself saying, yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. God almighty.

You see that mouth in the workplace. You know, they ever notice that people who curse you, their mouth forms like a weasel's mouth and their two big teeth come out in the front and they have that look about them. And you, all you can do is see their teeth and you're just saying, God, yes, God, yes, God, yes.

Break their teeth in their mouth. And so they have heard this. He said, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

In other words, love those who love you, love those who are kind to you, love those who shake your hand in church, love those who have never said anything evil about you, love those who, uh, their words are, are uplifting and building and all this stuff. And so everybody understood that you've heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. And at this particular point in the disciples minds, this was reasonable.

And they actually had their scriptures to back them up on this particular thought. But I say to you, this is the son of God. Now love your enemies, bless those who curse you do good to those who hate you pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

You're to love, to bless, to do good and to pray for people that wish you harm. He says, now I'm sending you to live among those who oppose you in such a way that only a super natural heart beating within your own can give you the strength to be what I am calling you to be. In other words, you can't do this, but I can, I'm going to show you the way.

And I'm going to come and live inside of your physical body. And if you will yield to me and let me be your strength, I will give you the power to do what you can't do. You see the disciples, the old Testament disciples didn't have the power.

The spirit of God, the anointing of the spirit was only for a select few. It was for the King David's. It was for the Elijah's, the Elisha's.

Everyone else kind of just stood back and watched people operating in supernatural power. And so realistically, it wasn't possible. They could do these things, but he's saying to them now, I am going to show you the way I'm going to be everything before you that I'm asking you to be.

And you becoming one in heart with me and allowing my Holy spirit to not only dwell, but to become the life source of your human body. You now will have the ability because of my presence in your life to do what you couldn't formerly do. Does it make sense to you? You and I were warned in the gospel of Matthew chapter 24, verse 12, that lawlessness is going to so abound in the last days that the love of many will grow cold.

It's going to be easy to hate. And hate seems to be the purveying characteristic of our day, isn't it? In the news and the media and speech everywhere, in the entertainment industry, everybody is spewing hatred. Have noticed that lately? You notice how easy it is to make a list of grievances and how people are wishing for harm to other people.

People are wanting others to suffer. They're wanting them to be marginalized. They're wanting others to be vilified there.

And when one speaks evil, the other one tries to be more evil. And then they try to be more evil and they try to be more evil. And there's an increase in lawlessness to the point where love will be almost non-existent.

The love in unregenerate society will be virtually gone. There'll be a loss of even natural affection, the Bible says. And we're seeing that now with even the discussion, the discussion of murdering children outside the womb now.

We're seeing that loss of natural affection, the loss of any kind of love the way it's supposed to be. And we've been warned that the love of many will grow cold. And even in the body of Christ, as society gets more violent and vile, it's almost like Esther at a certain point in her life says, I know that this is a violent time.

I'm just going to hide in the palace. And you know, you and I can make that choice and we can hide in the palace. We can hide in the church.

We can tuck ourselves away in our own little world and we can just listen to what we want to listen to. And we can go to church and pretend that we really fully love everybody, but we can actually be hiding the whole time. Because the love in our hearts has growing cold.

We look at people and we actually want them to be judged. We actually want them to be cursed. We're so sick of the violence and the vileness that we say, God, thank you, there's a hell.

And we forget there's a cross. We forget there's a savior who so loved the world that God gave his only begotten son. Jesus himself said the son of God didn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

In the book of Hebrews chapter 12, the scripture tells us these words, beginning at verse 25, see that you do not refuse him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused him, who spoke on earth, how much more shall we not escape if we turn away from him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth. But now he is promising yet once more, I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.

Now this yet once more indicating the removal of those things that are being shaken as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear for our God is a consuming fire. Let brotherly love continue.

Do not forget to entertain strangers for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them. In this passage of scripture, the writer is talking about a last day moment in this world when everything that can be shaken is going to be shaken.

I think we're starting to see a bit of that now. Everything that we thought we were, everything that we held to, every self-viewpoint, the shaking that's beginning, even if it's a social one at the moment, it's going to increase of course in the days ahead, will shake out of us everything that has been made that's not of God. Everything, every image we've formed, everything we've convinced ourselves that we are or are capable of doing, the shaking that is coming just simply shakes it out and it's proven that it's not been born in God.

It's not been birthed in God. It's not being sustained by God, that only that which is of God cannot be shaken. The love of God, people have claimed to love others, people claim to be people of love, but that will be shaken out of the hearts of humanity.

It's only the love of God that cannot be shaken. It's God's love. It's not ours.

It's God's. It's a love that he's willing to impart to us. It's a heart that he's willing to give us if we're to receive it.

It's a set of eyes that see something other than what we see with our natural eye and ears that hear something other than what we hear with our natural ear. We start walking in the realm of God. We start seeing people the way God sees them.

There's a love that God's willing to put in your heart and in mind that scripture bears witness. It cannot and will not be shaken out of our lives. After declaring all of these things, the writer says, remember the prisoners as if chained with them.

Remember those. Remember, no matter how they fight against you, no matter how vile they might be in the workplace, no matter how they behave on the streets, no matter how their conversation or behavior may irk you, remember that they are chained to darkness forever. Remember that it's only the love of God through the cross of Jesus Christ that can set them free.

Remember that Christ died for you and for me when we were still sinners. Remember that he came for us when we weren't looking for him. He planted thoughts in our hearts when we didn't want him.

Somebody came close to us and shared his love with us when we didn't even care and many of us rejected it in the beginning. But the love of God is persistent and most of us today would not be here apart from the fact that God was able to love you through somebody that came close to you. When you walk down Broadway and you see the way people are behaving today, remember the prisoners.

Don't forget them. Don't hide in the palace. Don't distance yourself from people that oppose you and curse you and slander you and speak against you.

Remember that Christ loves them. Remember the spirit of God is inside you as his church, as his body. Remember that we are left on the earth to represent the one who went to a cross and suffered an unthinkable beating so that we could be here today.

He could have quit at any time. He could have walked away and said, three years I've been with you guys and you're all frauds. Your love and loyalty is faulty.

Your declarations of bravado are worth nothing. When I need you, you're not going to be there. He could have easily walked away and condemned the whole works of us to hell and we would have no hope today.

But God so loved you. God so loved me. God so loved us before we were formed in our mother's womb that he went to that cross and he endured the beating and the whipping and the spitting and the shame and the mockery so that we could be here today.

He remembered us because we were prisoners of sin. We were prisoners of darkness. We were doomed to an eternity without God.

That's why Hebrews chapter 12, the writer says, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Consider him.

Consider the fact that by the spirit of God within him, given of his father, that he was able to go the full distance to that cross. He was able to die. He was able to stay on that cross because of love, because he saw you.

He saw me. He saw us here today. He saw the day you would open your heart and receive him as savior.

Consider him because if you don't, you'll become weary and faint in your minds. And Jesus said in Matthew chapter five, again, where we began, he says, that you may be the sons of your father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. In other words, I'm not asking you to be what you can't be.

I'm now asking you to let me be through you who I am. It's not about you and I loving everybody because we can't. It's about Christ in us.

As Paul says, who is the hope of our glory? Christ in us. In him, we live, we move, we have our being. Christ in us.

The acknowledgement, in all your ways, acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. It's that acknowledgement, God, I can't love in this situation, but you can. So Holy Spirit, would you just take over? Would you take the levers of this human body? Would you take the reins of my mind? Would you take

over my heart? Would you, Lord, begin to love through me? Because God, you've asked me to do something I can't do.

You've asked me to do something, if given the choice, I won't do. But Lord, I'm willing to be made willing. I'm willing to let you get a hold of my heart.

I'm willing to let you speak through me. I'm willing to let you love my enemies through me because I can't. I don't know about you, but I've been there before.

It's a fanciful thought until you have an enemy. Love your enemies. It's wonderful.

I've even preached on it till one day and another day and another day. And the longer you live, the more enemies you're going to get. They're suddenly standing and something rises in you that's Old Testament, for real.

And then the word of God comes in the back of your mind. You're trying to push it away. Get away.

Just not right now. Not right now. Maybe a little later.

Right now, I want vengeance. Right now, I've got a vision in my mind of a bus running over this brother. You've heard it was said, love your enemy, love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Bless them.

In the workplace, can I get you a coffee? I'm going out to get lunch. Would you like something? I'll buy it for you. Bless those who curse you.

Do good to those who hate you. I hear you're a little short of groceries for your children. I thought maybe I could give this to you.

Do good. You seem to be upset. Would you like my seat? And pray for those who spitefully use you.

I can hear everybody go, ooh. And persecute you. Talk about, sometimes there's people in your own family mock you, mock your faith in God every time your family gets together.

They write letters about you. They create rumors about you. Their acid drips from their fingers on the internet.

Every time you post something on Facebook, they come back and they just trash you and they persecute you. And Jesus said, pray for them because they're prisoners. They're prisoners.

Do you know these folks are going to an eternal hell? Do you know there is a place called hell and there is fire there and there is darkness there and there's torment and there's death? And there's an absence of all hope. There's an absence of all comfort. There's an absence of the presence of God.

There's a torment there that is deeper than you and I could ever understand on this side of eternity. Do you know they're prisoners and they're chained to it and they're going there? That's why God says, I've left you here to show them my mercy. I've left you here to show them that I love them.

I've left you here to bless them as I do when they curse my name. I've shared with you before from this pulpit, I used to have a habit of cursing the name of Christ. When I played cards in the lunchroom as a

police officer, thought nothing of it.

There was a Christian there who used to be such a blessing to me, even though I cursed the name of his Christ. Do good to those who hate you, to pray for those who spitefully use you, to pray God. They have no idea.

Remember Jesus said, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. They have no idea where they're heading.

They have no knowledge that this is forever. This is eternal. Trust me, when we get to heaven, there'll be no satisfaction in your heart that somebody that persecuted you is now in hell, because then you will understand the greatness of the love of God.

You and I will understand the great gulf that he bridged when he came to a cross and died. There will be that sharing in a sense, because the Bible says there's no joy in the heart of God when he has to judge. And there'll be that sharing in a sense of the sorrow that's in the Savior's heart.

And you'll be thinking about, maybe I could have done just a little bit more. Maybe I could have been a little kinder. Maybe I could have reached out God in a way.

Maybe I could have written that note or made that call or made that gesture or prayed that prayer. Maybe I could have come out Tuesday night and just say, God, have mercy on these people. God, I plead with you to have mercy on them as you had on me, because they are prisoners, Lord, of their own sin.

They're chained to the devil and they have no idea what awaits them in eternity. So God, you've left me on the earth in this darkened moment in history to be a testimony of you who endured such opposition of sinners and still went to the cross that I might be saved. Only God can go there.

He says that you may be the sons of your father in heaven. He makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. In other words, we just treat all people equally as much as God enables us.

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even tax collectors do the same? I think it's appropriate to be preaching this at tax season. Your tax collectors are used by him as the greedy, the self-focused, you know? And if you greet your brethren only, you're not doing any more than tax collectors do. In other words, the unregenerate, people who just live in this world and they're kind of grabbing for everything they can get from everybody, you're not doing any more than them.

We're a people who are called to give when these people are just taking and taking and taking and taking. Therefore, you shall be perfect just as your father in heaven is perfect. Now, that is impossible.

Just the thought, how can I be perfect? How can I be perfect as God is? But Jesus said it. So there has to be some truth in that applies to my life. And the only way I can understand it is that I will let the perfect one be himself through me.

That's it. That's it. I mean, Carter Conlon is hugely deficient in all of these areas, but the Christ in me is not.

So I simply yield to him. I acknowledge his presence in my life and say, God, you went to the cross. I didn't.

You love them with an everlasting love. I really don't in myself, but you live inside of me. So I yield my body to you as a living sacrifice.

I yield my reputation. I yield my desire for vengeance. I yield the list of offenses that I want to write against these people or this person, whatever it is.

I yield my self-righteous right to get even when somebody is wrong being. I ask you to be who you are through me. And you know, when God gives you the ability, then it's amazing because I've had to live through this a few times and you begin to realize, wow, this is all you got.

You create the opportunity to be kind. You make the pathway to do this. You give the ability.

You even give me the words. I've been in places where words are coming out of my mouth that I don't really want to say. I'm talking about nice words, kind words.

And it's like, who's saying this through me? Let me finish with book of Romans, chapter five, verses five to eight, where Paul says, now hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Our hope today that we will be able to fulfill this calling of God in this generation is not disappointed by the very virtue of the fact that as believers in Christ, we not only have truth in our minds, but the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to make this truth a reality through us. For when we were still without strength, verse six of Romans five, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die. Yet perhaps for a good man, someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love towards us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is the demonstration of the love of God that he came to us before we even knew or cared that he existed. When we were cursing his name, he was whispering his redemption into our hearts. When we were unkind, he was still sending rain upon us, even though we were unjust.

He still let the sun come up upon us every morning, still allowed us to experience some forms of joy, even though the joy was without him. He was kind to us and his kindness, the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, his goodness leads us to repentance. And he's calling us as his people.

Now this is a high calling, and this is not just an ordinary message. This is something God has put very deeply on my heart because the Holy Spirit is now preparing us for the moment that we are coming into. And some of you are already there.

He's preparing us to say, here's how you get through. Here's how you become a witness of me. Here's how you win the victory.

Here's how you bear fruit. Even in a place that looks rocky and barren, it looks like there's no chance. Here's how you begin to bear fruit.

You let me love the people through you. And I would encourage you to start praying for those that you don't naturally love. Start praying for God to put that love in your heart.

I took a journey just recently down Broadway and the behaviors there after a certain time, I can't even talk about it from the pulpit. And so I just began to pray out loud, God have mercy. God have mercy on these people that are behaving in a way that I personally find abhorrent, but God, you don't, you died for them.

So have mercy. Have mercy on these people that are drunk over here. Have mercy on the drug seller on the corner.

Have mercy, Lord, on those who think that they've got it all together, but they don't. God have mercy. And I started praying out loud for people.

Have mercy, Lord. Have mercy, God. Have mercy.

Have mercy. No matter what they speak of us, no matter what they think of us, God have mercy. God have mercy.

Though they call us haters, though they call us bigots and dividers, and though more and more and more we're going to be marginalized by a society that's going deeper and deeper into darkness, God, have mercy on them through us. The love of God has been poured into our hearts, the scripture says. And so where do we start? We start with the people that we're thinking of right now.

That person you just can't get out of your mind as I'm speaking. That person, when I started speaking, you thought, God, he can't be asking me to love this person, to do good, to pray, to bless. It's not possible.

This person that trash talks me every chance they get, person that backstabs me in the workplace, this family member that curses my name every time it comes up. God, you can't be asking me to do that. And the Lord says, no, I'm asking you to let me do that because you can't.

But I can. I have. I made a way, won the victory.

Now I want you to just share in it. I'm going to invite you into the victory. I'm inviting you into the end zone.

I've already scored. I've already won. I'm already there.

So I'm inviting you to join me right now, and I will be your strength and I will give you the power. So you start where you need to start. You start at the beginning.

You start with that person. You start with those people. You start with that situation, that neighbor.

You start by knocking on that door, getting that person a sandwich or a cup of coffee. You start by doing what you know to do in the power of the spirit right where you are. And it will prepare you for tomorrow when perhaps a society in much larger measure will begin to rise up against the people of God and the testimony of God.

Jesus himself said, you will be hated of all nations for my namesake. We're probably not far from that day now. So you have to get ready.

You have to start exercising your spiritual muscles now. As we said earlier, you got to start running the race now. You got to get up and put on your uniform and say, I'm going to be a Christian.

I'm going to do right. I'm going to do it God's way. I don't necessarily want to do this, but God, you're going to give me the strength to do it.

I'm going to do right. I'm going to walk in truth. I'm going to trust you, Lord.

And I'm not going to be results oriented. If they get saved, thank God. If they don't, at least I tried.

At least I was good. At least I prayed. At least I blessed.

At least I spoke well of people. At least I learned to get out of that gossiping group in the lunchroom. I got away from that stuff.

And I started to do what was right. And I just said, God, make my life a fragrance of who you are everywhere I go. And help me, Lord.

Help me, God. Help me when those enemies rise up. Help me, Lord, when people do and say things that they shouldn't and seem to take delight in persecuting the righteous.

Help me. And that's my altar call today. It's for that person, that family, those people, right where you are now.

And it will require that you go back and read that verse and memorize it, that you do good, you bless, you pray, you act in kindness and say, Lord, I'm going to trust you for this one victory. I can't fight Goliath until I fight the bear or the lion. God, these are secret.

These are small things. And maybe you're going to take me in a larger public way, but I can't go there until I win this one. You've got to win those personal battles first.

So Father, I thank you, God, that you are preparing us as your people for this day. You are preparing us to survive and thrive both. Lord, thank you.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for not letting us go into the future unprepared, unready, taken by surprise. When everything starts to shake, my God, thank you that you're planting something in us now that will not be shaken.

It cannot be shaken. The love of God cannot be taken by any shaking of this world. Thank you, Lord, for what you're about to do, God.

I praise you with all my heart in Jesus' name. We're going to stand in just a moment. And if you just want the strength of God for that person, those persons, that situation, I'm going to ask you to come.

We're going to pray together because we're all in this boat together, folks. We're going to pray together in the annex you can come to as well. We'll wait.

And we're simply going to pray. Say, God, give us the strength now. Give us your Holy Spirit.

Help us to be kind in Jesus' name. Praise God. Praise God.

You know, you're not in a weak position because you let people get away with this stuff, you know. You're actually in the stronger position. You're in the eternal position.

You're in the position of God's strength. And for their sakes, for their soul's sake, you are willing to be a representative of the one who went to a cross. And so don't forget that.

It keeps everything in perspective. Because they get away with slandering you in the workplace does not mean they're on the winning side. You are on the winning side.

And by God's grace, he'll show something through you. You see, I know people are at this altar this morning. A lot of you are in your own Gethsemane right now.

You're right there with Jesus where he said, if it's possible, I don't want to do this. Three times he went back to the Father and said, hey, if there's any other way, I just don't want to do this. I just don't want to be beaten and whipped and mocked and persecuted and laughed at and reviled.

And I just don't want to do this if there's any other way. But nevertheless, God, not my will, but yours be done. And the Lord strengthened him at that point.

And that's where we are right now at a point where God will. We're just being honest, right? With God. I don't want it.

Nothing in me wants to do this. But if this is your will, Lord, and then immediately the scriptures, angels came down and strengthened him. I mean, immediately God sent strength and says, this is the right way.

This is the way I've called you. This is what taking up your cross looks like beyond just the theology of it. This is the practical side of taking up your cross and following Christ.

And so you'll find yourself strengthened to do what God's asking you to do. And trust me, when you walk away, you've dropped off that coffee, that note that you've made that call. You will know that what you're doing is right.

You will know it. There'll be a witness of God. There'll be.

And not only that, you're putting a stamp of God in the conscience of the person because people look and say, how is it possible that he or she speaks back that way to me when I speak this way of them? And there's something of a stamp of God comes into the conscience and they start to think about spiritual things when they haven't been thinking before. Remember the prisoners as if you are chained with them. Don't forget the people that are being left behind.

You're going to heaven. We got that settled. Your name's in the book of life.

You're going, but don't forget those that aren't just, just don't, don't forget those that aren't going. Remember the prisoners. The writer says, as if you are chained with them, don't forget them.

Don't leave them behind. So father, we're just, thank you, Lord, for God, for just giving the strength to all of us, Lord, that only you can God, it's so against our, our nature to do these things, but it's not against yours. So we have to yield our nature to you, Lord, our body to you and say, Lord, you've got to come and you've got to be our strength.

Now you've got to give us the power to do what is right. As much father, as you gave it to your own son in the garden of Gethsemane to do what was right and what would bring about life, it would look like weakness, but it was the strength of heaven on display. And so God give us the grace Lord to, to go the distance Lord in this race that you've set before us Lord, help us not to draw back or, or hide or take a shortcut.

God, just help us to do it your way, by your spirit, by your power, with your grace. Let it begin with our prayers, Lord, for those who spitefully use us, those who slander us, those who don't know what they are and they have no idea where they're going. God almighty, give us the grace to be your people.

May we finish Lord in our generation, the way the church began. God almighty, give us this grace Lord to be empowered and led, sustained and governed by the spirit of God. Father, we thank you for the victory.

Thank you Lord. I want you to start thanking God right now for that person. No, right now, lift your voice.

Just take a moment, take a moment and thank God for those people and name them. Those people in your office, your apartment building, those that are causing you pain, those that are slandering you, start thanking God that God's going to use you to make a difference in their lives. That you're not going to leave them behind.

Something of your, of Christ in you is going to touch their hearts and their lives. Just lift your voice everywhere, everywhere in the sanctuary. Just start thanking God for the people that God's going to reach through you, through a surrendered vessels.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. Praise be to God.

Thank you Lord. Thank you God with all of our heart today, Lord, that you're going to give us the grace Lord to reach out. You're going to give us the grace to be kind.

You're going to give us the grace to do good. The grace to be silent Lord, when we need to be silent. The grace to walk away when everything inside of us wants to fight back.

The grace of God to represent you. You did not hide your face from shame. You did not turn your back from the whipping Lord.

God almighty, God almighty, give us the grace Lord that you have already won for us on the cross. And father, we thank you that you will help us as your people to be everything we should be and ought to be in our time. God put a love in our hearts that cannot be shaken out of us by any circumstance around us.

And father, we thank you for it. We thank you for it. God, we thank you in Jesus mighty name.

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