

# Return Unto Thy Rest O My Soul

by Carter Conlon

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*The sermon highlights the desire to live for God and the reality of human weakness and failure, but assures us that God's plan is perfect and good.*

**Duration:** 50:42

**Scripture:** Psalm 18:16-17, Psalm 18:19-20, Psalm 116:7, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 5:21

**Topics:** "Rest"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God waits for the cry of His people, when they come to the realization that they cannot fulfill their own promises to Him. The speaker explains that Jesus came to make a way for believers to have a relationship with God and become partakers of His divine nature. The speaker shares their personal experience of crying out to God for deliverance and the transformation that occurred when they surrendered their own efforts. The sermon also references Psalm 18, describing the dramatic imagery of God's power and deliverance.

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## Transcript

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Psalm 116, return unto thy rest, O my soul. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

God Almighty, I thank you that you will never gather your people and leave them unfed. I thank you, God, that you will touch whatever vessel you put in this pulpit because you love your church. I'm asking you for a special touch from heaven today to quicken my body and quicken my mind, enlarge my heart.

Lord, let me hear from you that I may clearly convey the thoughts of your heart to your church today. I pray, God, you remove every hindrance, spiritual, physical, whatever stands in the way, that you simply

remove it. We declare it removed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, Father God, I thank you that your word cannot be bound, that your life and plan has free course and access into every heart. There's no weapon formed that the devil can ever prosper against it. I thank you, God, that your kingdom will advance and you will break the bonds.

You will break, O God, every lie of the devil that he's trying to form against every honest, God-seeking heart that is in this house. You will set free from the oppression of the enemy. God, I believe it with all my heart.

I stand and, Lord, I trust in you. I thank you, mighty God, that you're going to do a mortal blow into the camp of the enemy today. Father, I thank you for it in Jesus' mighty name.

Psalms 116, the psalmist, I'm just going to read the first two verses. The psalmist says, I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

Now, Psalm 116, the first two verses I just read are obviously verses written after the fact. It's like you and I getting to the end of our life story and deciding to write a song about it. And God has been faithful.

And when we get to the end of this journey, we begin our song, as it is, by saying, I've decided to love God. I'm going to love him. And I'm loving him because he's heard me.

Every time I cried out to him, he heard me. He answered me. He moved heaven and earth to answer my prayers.

I have found out that his ear is open to me. And as long as I live, I'm going to continue to call out to him. How would you like that to be your testimony this afternoon? Now, there are many, many views on Psalm 116.

As numerous as you have commentators and commentaries, you have views. Some believe that this is attributed to Hezekiah. Some others say that this is obviously King David.

One or two claim that this is a psalm written about the sufferings of Christ. In reality, nobody knows for sure who wrote it. But there are some elements in it that I want to touch on today that have an application to my life and a direct application to your life.

I want to share with you some of the things that I feel the Holy Spirit has opened to me in this particular psalm. I started out by saying that this particular psalmist is writing an after-the-fact expression of praise. He or she has had an answer to prayer that's so dynamic, so impacted his life, that he says, I will call upon him as long as I live, I will call upon God.

And I do believe that that should be the desire of every Christian person today, that you should have such a trust in God that no matter what comes your way, that you would look away from circumstances, situations, frailties, weaknesses, oppositions of darkness, whatever it might be that comes against you. You say, I'm not looking to these things, these are not going to chart my course. My course is charted by Almighty God.

He prescribed or determined a plan for my life even before I was formed in my mother's womb. God knew my name. He had a plan and a pathway for my life and that through this plan, his name would be

glorified.

And so he holds the keys not only to death and hell and eternity, but he holds the keys to my life. He has the blueprints to my life. So I'm not going to call out to my friends and neighbors in times of distress.

I'm going to call out to him as long as I live because his ear is open to me and his power is mine for the asking. I see in this particular psalm, I shared this earlier this week at Mount Zion School of Ministry, and I see perhaps a new Christian, a young person. I'm not sure exactly who it might be, but I want you to come with me on a bit of a journey today.

I want you to go back in time with me into the Old Testament temple. And you see this person coming in, perhaps newly, a new understanding of who God is or perhaps just a brand new Christian, maybe a young person coming into the temple. And evidently, according to this psalm, when you look at it, verse 14 and 18, where he says, I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

He says the same thing, verse 18, I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. The implication here is there was a season where these vows were made, where perhaps he was unable to fulfill them. I see a young person coming into the temple of God, just like I see many young Christians coming into the house of the Lord.

I see a lot of young people in this choir today, very, very zealous for the things of God. Others your age are out there and they are pursuing relationships. They are pursuing careers and money.

They're doing all kinds of different things where they think they're going to find fulfillment and happiness. But in every generation, there are some who say, no, that's not what my life is going to be. I'm bringing my life and giftings.

I'm bringing this life that God gave me back into the temple and I'm going to live for God. And I see this young person coming into the temple and all this religious activity is going on around them. And there are lambs being slaughtered and all kinds of sacrifices being made past and present.

There's a history, of course, in this place. And I see a young person coming in like I see many coming into the house of the Lord, making as it is vows to God and saying, Lord, I'm going to yield my life to you. Many of you have said that in this house, haven't you? God, my life is yours.

You've heard a message somewhere and you've gotten out of your seat. You've come to an altar and you said, Lord, everything I am is yours. A lot easier said than done.

Others I see coming to the altar, this young person saying, I will be a seeker of God all the days of my life. I will not go halfway in my service to him. Others may.

I will not. I'm going to go all the way with God. And even if I'm called to Africa, that's where I'm going to go.

There's nowhere I won't go. There's nothing I won't do. I've heard some of the preaching.

I agree with it in my heart. So I'm coming and I'm giving myself. I'm making this vow as it is to God.

I will love him. That is God. And I will think of Christ above all others.

I will not be selfish or self-serving or lustful or envious of the gifts and talents of others. I will always obey God when he speaks to me. And I believe that's in the heart of many, especially in our youth.

When we come in, I've made vows like this. If you want to call them such when I had no power to perform them whatsoever. But I came into the house of the Lord and it's a good thing this is in your heart.

But we can wind up like the apostle Paul, where Paul says, I know what to do, but how to perform it. I find not. I know in my mind what I should be doing, but I find a law that is at work within me.

And this law that is at work, this law of sin and death in me seems to drive me in the opposite direction to what my mind says that I should be doing. What my heart really longs to do. I find this law of sin and death that is at work in my inner man, driving me constantly to do other things.

And that's exactly what happened. I see a young person in this psalm coming in, making all these vows before God. And then in verse three, he says, the sorrows of death compassed me and the pains of hell got hold upon me.

I found trouble and sorrow. And in verse six, he says, I was brought low. I like what the New Living Testament says about verse three.

Death had its hands around my throat and the terrors of the grave overtook me. I see this psalmist saying no longer, no sooner had I made these promises that I found the hands of death around my throat, choking the very life out of me. Wondering, God, why did I even make these promises in the first place? And in verse eight, I see a young person has lost almost all hope.

He says, thou has delivered my soul from death. That's my life breath within me, the very essence of my life. God, you delivered it from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling.

Here's somebody that's very zealous for the Lord, says, God, I'm going to live with you for you with all my heart. But the next thing that seems to be happening is the very life seems to be getting squeezed. Some of you might understand what I'm talking about right now, right out of them.

Eyes, instead of looking to God and full of this aspiration to honor him by living a life that is pleasing to him, now full of tears and failure, this inability to perform these promises that we have made to God himself and feet that are falling. And it's interesting because in the Hebrew, the word for falling means a fall that comes as a result of pushing. That's interesting.

It's not just a fall. It's not a trip. It's a fall that comes from a pushing, a moving towards something perhaps that that person doesn't have the ability to fulfill.

And in verse 10, he says, I believed and the context really is I believed I could. And therefore, I have spoken. I was greatly afflicted.

I believed I could do these things. I believe that I could be sincerely set apart for God. I believe that as a Christian, I could walk through this life and not envy the ministry gifts on another person.

I believed I could forgive all of my enemies and love those that have even spitefully used me. It was a moment of zeal. It was a moment where I came in and I heard a word and I said, God, in my heart, I want to obey it.

And I believe that I could do it. And I headed out as it is to fulfill it. I spoke it.

But all I found was great affliction in my zeal. It led me to a crying out and a groaning and a sighing. And folks, do I ever know what this is about personally? Do I ever know what it is to want to live for God with all of your heart? I know what it's like to go to churches and altars as a young Christian and say, Lord, others may may not want to go with you.

But I want to go with you all the way. I want to live for you. I want to be an honest man in everything I say.

I want to have a clear and clean mind. I want to be the husband that you called me to be and the father that you want me to be. I want, oh God, and I would just have this list of things and say, Lord, I'm going to do it and set out to do it and honestly will to do it and honestly promise God that I'm going to live a life that is pleasing to him.

I have to find myself 17 years after making some of these vows out on a country road, crying out and groaning and sighing and accusing God himself of not being faithful to me, of crying out to God and saying, Lord, is this the way you treat your servants? Is this what you do to those who are set apart for you? I have this in my heart to live for you and to obey you. And I've set out to do it. And God, now all you've done for me is taken away my strength and I stand here now unable to go forward, unable to preach other than once a week and even then very, very minimally because of the depth of the headaches that would come on me and say, God, is this my reward for all that I have determined in my heart? I know exactly what this psalmist was going through, afflicted, losing hope, crying out, groaning and sighing, having made these great promises to God of the life that I'm going to live.

And I know that some of you, even in this Young People's Choir, you're understanding this now. You're beginning to understand that we have no resource to fulfill our promises to God. We can come into the house of the Lord and we can promise God anything we want.

But we are inside utterly bankrupt to fulfill our promises. I can't even keep my promises to you, let alone God. I can tell you one thing and have the inability to perform it the next hour.

It's only in Christ that anything I've ever promised or ever desired is ever going to come to fruition. Verse 11, he said, I said in my haste, all men are liars. The word liars is *kazav* and it means empty speakers of falsehood.

I had as much zeal or strength as anybody who's ever come into the kingdom of God, who's a naturally strong man or woman or strong person. And I made these vows to God, but I had an inability to perform them. I was left empty, afflicted, crying out, sighing, groaning.

And I said, everyone is a liar. There's nobody who has the power to fulfill these things. For I have had as much measure of strength as any other man ever had and I cannot fulfill it.

I cannot do it. And the psalmist says, I said in my haste, all men are liars. All that was left is what we find in verse 4. He said, then I called out to the name of the Lord and I said, O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.

Oh, folks, that's a wonderful place to get to. When we finally exhausted all of our efforts to please God, all of our efforts to walk with God, all of our promises to God, we've exhausted it all. It's like we've gone to the bank and we've made this incredible promise to build this incredible kingdom.

We've withdrawn all of our resources and we haven't even laid the foundation. And it's very obvious that we don't have the resources to finish this building. We are disillusioned and disappointed.

We can be left where people look at our lives because we made great boasts about what we're going to do. And some of you know what this is all about. Only to have your family point the finger and said, you began to build it.

We're not able to finish. Were you? You're not able to do all the things that you said you were going to do or be all of those things that you have boasted that you were going to be able to be. Then all that's left.

All that was left to me after 17 years of traveling the country and preaching and pushing is a cry. Oh, God, deliver my soul. I remember the day I cried in that country road and I said, Lord, if you don't touch me, I'm finished.

If you don't deliver me. I can't preach another day. I can't build any more of your kingdom.

I can't travel anymore. There's nothing more I can do unless you touch me. I've been over almost six months in that condition of an unable to preach the gospel, except for once and very softly on Sunday morning.

Oh, Lord, deliver my soul. And I know that in this house and annex, there are some of you here today that that's your cry. You come into this house and you've exhausted all of your resources.

All of your best intentions are in the dust. All of your attempts to live for God have failed. And there's nothing left but a cry.

There's nothing left but this, oh, Lord, deliver my soul. You're going to find in the scriptures. When you go back with me to Psalm 18, you're going to find that you're in very, very good company.

The devil would like you to believe that you have failed. But in reality, if you've not failed, you're on the perfect plan of God. You are following a path that God has prescribed for your life.

And whether you know it or not, the path that God prescribed for you has brought you to this place. Now, in Psalm 18 is a psalm written by David. David is anointed to be king, just like you and I are anointed by God.

And the scripture says we are going to rule and reign with Jesus Christ. Samuel walks in and anoints him in the midst of his brethren, pours oil on top of his head and tells him he's going to be the next king of Israel. Incredible.

And some of us are like that, singled out as it is. I remember I used to be a young Christian. I remember at least two or three times when I'd be just sitting in a meeting and the preacher stopped preaching one time and pointed me out and said, hey, you, you right over there in the crowd.

God has a great plan for your life. Stay close to him. And I felt like Samuel or like David, rather.

Samuel just poured oil on my head. I have no idea where this is going to. We think the anointing is we get the oil on our head and then bingo, we're on the throne, scepter in hand, ruling the kingdom.

Well, yes, there's an anointing and then there's a kingdom. But there's a lot that happens in between that prepares those who are called, in a sense, in the end to rule and reign with Jesus Christ. And we experience, of course, a measure of that by allowing Christ to live his life in us on this side of eternity.

Now, you have to picture David is anointed to be king. And what's his testimony? You know, we think the psalm should read and the enemy would love us to think this way in our own Christian life. I was single.

I was among the sheep and I was pulled out. I was anointed by God through a prophet. And I went the next day.

I was outfitted for my new king's robes and I was put on the throne. And you and I know it doesn't happen that way. These are the words of a man anointed to be king.

Psalms 18, verse 5. What does he say? The sorrows of hell compassed me about. The snares of death prevented me. In my distress, I called upon the Lord and I cried unto my God.

And he heard my voice out of his temple and my cry came before him even into his ears. You see, we're in good company. David says, I was anointed to be king, but there was so much of hell and death around me.

And even the frailty, if you look at David's psalms, he talks frequently about the frailty of his own heart. Gathering up and standing against him and making this calling on his life an impossibility to fulfill apart from the grace and mercy of God. And so before he could reign, before he could know what it is to walk in that anointing that God had placed on his life, first the sorrows of hell had to come around about him and the snares of death had to stop him as it is from going forward.

There was no measure, in other words, of human strength that could make this happen. And you see it all through the scriptures for men and women who are used of God. There is no measure of human strength that can take them to the place that God has destined them to be.

In my distress, I called out upon the Lord and cried to my God. And you see, that's exactly what God waits for. He's anointed to reign, but the pathway to this life runs not only to a cross, but through a tomb.

And many people don't realize this. Yes, we say, well, I've been to the cross in a sense because I've said, Jesus, I want to follow you. And I've read the scripture that says, I'm to deny myself and take up my cross.

And that means the yielding of my life. So, Lord, in a sense, I feel like I've been there. I've gone to the cross, and I'm willing to carry it as it is, wherever you ask me to take it, or how you ask me to live as a Christian.

And a lot of people think that the pathway that we are invited to in Christ ends at the cross. But I want to remind you there's a tomb on the other side of the cross. There's a place of death.

There's a place of burial. There's a place where literally every man or woman of God who is ever going to amount to anything, in God's kingdom, comes where we say, God, if there's any hope of ever getting out of this place of death, it's going to be you that brings me out. That cry that comes into the heart of the believer where Jesus said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

In other words, Father, I'm about to die. And if I'm going to live, I'm going to live by your promises to me. There's no power that's going to bring me out of the grave but your promise to me.

And so I'm committing my life now, my spirit, into your hands. I'm giving my future into your hands. Jesus himself said, unless a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone.

But if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit. If I live again, it will be not by my promises to you, but by your promises to me. You see, there has to be a transition in the Christian life.

And when we are young and when we start out full of natural strength and zeal, we do all have a tendency to make promises to God. God, I will seek you. God, I will love you.

God, I will walk honestly. God, I will do this. God, I will do that.

You all know what that's all about. But you see, when maturity begins to approach, God will take you at your word and he will lead you to a tomb. And he will lead you to a place where you are going to die.

You have no power to fulfill these promises. You have no resources to make it happen. You think as bad as Lazarus.

And you know it in this area of your life. You are dead. And not only have you written yourself off, but everybody else has written you off too as well.

They've rolled a stone in some cases over this part of your life. And even many Christians here today, you've done the same thing. You've rolled a stone over this area of your life.

And you say, there's no hope for me ever to live or to get out of this place, this diseased condition as it is of my soul. But Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 4, whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And that word lust means the diseased condition of the soul.

David knew this. David knew that he was so encompassed from without and from within by this corruption that is in the world and is in every man who does not have the life of Christ reigning inside of him. He called out to God.

And David's testimony began to change. The moment he called out to God, the Scripture begins to describe something from verses 7 to 16 in Psalm 18, which would seem incredibly graphic. It talks about the earth shaking.

The foundations of the hills moving. Smoke coming out of the nostrils of God. Fire coming out of His mouth.

So hot that coals like wood was turned instantly to coals by it. Bowing to heavens, coming down, darkness under His feet, riding upon a cherub, flying on the wings of the wind, making darkness His secret place. Verse 12, thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire, the Lord thundering in the heavens, the highest giving His voice.

Yea, verse 14, sending out arrows and scattering them, shooting out lightnings and discomfiting them. The channels of the waters were seen, the foundations of the world were discovered at Thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils. All this is very dramatic, but it's trying to convey a point that God Almighty waits for that cry.

And He says, when I hear that cry, when you finally come to the place where you know you can't do it, where you know your own promises to Me are worthless, because I didn't come and die on a cross so that you can make promises to Me. I came and died on a cross so that I can make a way for you, that I might come and live within you and make promises to you, and by these promises you become partakers of the divine nature of God through Jesus Christ. I came, not so that you could promise to Me, but your heart could open to Me in faith, and I could start to make you into that which I've destined you to be from before the time you were even conceived in your mother's womb.

I had a plan and a purpose for you, but it's not fulfilled by that which is in you, because you have no resource to fulfill it. It's only by My promises to you that it will ever happen. David's testimony changed now to verse 16.

He says, He sent from above. He took Me, drew Me out of many waters. Verse 17, He delivered Me from My strong enemy, and from them which hated Me, for they were too strong for Me.

Verse 19, He brought Me forth into a large place. He delivered Me because He delighted in Me. Verse 20, The Lord rewarded Me according to My righteousness.

Now, this is interesting, because in the Old Testament, of course, your righteousness was determined in great measure by your obedience. But in the New Testament, it's not so. Jesus Christ paid the price for our failure, and through Him, the Bible says, we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

You might be the most struggling Christian in this place today, but let me tell you something. If you have trusted in Christ, if you have an honest heart, if your salvation is genuine, and you know that it's genuine, you have the Spirit of God upon you, you are the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. The devil cannot condemn you.

He cannot stop the plan of God because of your failing. He cannot tell you you're not going to make it. He's a liar and the father of all lies.

He cannot stop the plan of God from advancing in your life, because the righteousness we have is not our own. It is the righteousness of Christ that has been given to us freely by Almighty God. If the enemy wants to get to you, he's got to go through Christ.

But he cannot get through Him, because he was triumphed over on Calvary. Verse 22, verse 29, For by these, as I have run through a troop, and by my God I have leaped over a wall. David says, Yes, I was compassed with the sorrows of hell, and there was infirmity all around me.

But I cried out to my God, and He was waiting for this cry. And when He heard it, He came and empowered me. And I have been able to run through even a host of the enemy that has been pitted against me in the testimony of Christ in my life.

There's nothing can stop you if the power of God is in you. If the plan of Christ is moving forward by the grace of Almighty God, there's no weapon of hell formed against you that can prosper against you. By my God, he said, I've leaped over every wall.

The enemy has tried to erect around me. Everything he's tried to build to try to say to me, you'll go this far and no farther. By God within me, there's not a wall that the enemy could build that I could not go over.

As for God, he says in verse 30, His way is perfect. The Word of the Lord is tried. He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.

Verse 32, he says, It is God that girdeth me with strength and makes my way perfect. Verse 33, He makes my feet like hinds feet. That means like a mountain goat.

And sets me upon my high places. In other words, it is God inside of me who gives me the power to climb impossible places. Gives me the power to go where my natural flesh could not go.

And to become what I could never be through any amount of human effort. It is God that girds me with strength. Verse 34, He teaches my hands to war so that a ball of steel is broken by mine arms.

This is not an exaggeration on David's part. He said, There is no end to the strength of God within me. As strong as God is, I can be.

Even a bow that is made of steel, God will increase my strength so that it can be. I can draw that arrow back so far that a bow of steel is broken by my hands. Thou, verse 35, He says, Has also given me the shield of Thy salvation.

Thy right hand is holding me up and Thy gentleness hath made me great. Oh God, You have sheltered me in from the weaponry of my enemy. You have holden me up in Your right hand and You are so gentle, oh God.

You are so gentle. There is nothing You would do to ever harm me. Every thought You have towards me is for good.

You have enlarged, verse 36, my steps under me that my feet did not slip. Verse 39, Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle. Verse 40, Thou hast given me the necks of mine enemies that I might destroy them that hate me.

They cried, but there was none to save them, even unto the Lord. But He answered them, not. Psalm 116 again, and verse 15, the psalmist says, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

Now what's he talking about? Now I know there's a physical death, and we can't give that application, but I don't see God, personally today, let's say you sir were to die at this moment and fall in the aisle, I don't see God looking down and say that's really precious. No, there's another death that's very precious to God. It's when we finally get to the place where we say, God, I can't.

There is no hope apart from You. I have exhausted all of my resources. I have tried so hard to get the victory.

I have put every ounce of everything I've got into this. And now, I'm like Lazarus, I'm in a tomb. And I've died.

There's no hope that I can love this person again. There's no hope I could ever forgive. There's no hope I could ever be an honest, truly honest seeker of God without You, coming and raising me from the dead.

Oh, that kind of a death is precious, beloved. Verse 12. He says, What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits towards me? Knowing what it is that God has done for me.

Knowing what it is that God wants to do for my life. What can I give back to God? If I can't make promises and fulfill them, if I can't make vows and do them, if I don't have the resource to fulfill them, then what is it that I can give back to God? What can I render to Him? When I consider all that He's willing to do for me or has done for me. Then He answers His own question in verse 13.

I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. This is what I will render to God. I will take the salvation He's given me.

I will take the cleanness that He's imputed to me through Jesus Christ. I will take the full gift of His life. All the promises He's ever made to me.

I will take this cup of salvation and I will call on His name. And I will say, Oh God, come and do what only You can do. Come and make me into the man or person it is that only You can make me.

Come and take me where only You can cause me to go. Come and give me what only You can cause me to have. Come and move in me.

Live and move in me and cause me to have my being in You. Oh God, raise me from the dead and let my life be a testimony everywhere I go. Let it be Your name, Jesus, that's on my lips.

Not methodology, not how to, or how did I do this? But it's Christ that raised me from the dead. Let my testimony be of the goodness of God. The incredible grace of Almighty God.

Let me be reckoned among the dead that I may live with Christ. That Christ may be my life. That the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead may raise me also out of the diseased condition of my soul.

And give me power so that I know it's God. And touch my mind and touch my body and touch my heart. God, You said You'd give me a new mind.

Give it to me, oh God. I take the cup of my salvation. I'm tired of these thoughts.

I'm tired of these vengeful thoughts. I'm tired of this desire for revenge or vengeance, whatever it is. I'm asking You, Lord, to come and raise me from the dead and give me a new mind.

And give me a new heart. And give me a new spirit. That all this generation may know that You are God.

That I may have a testimony and a song. That I may stand at the end of my days and say, I love God. Because He heard me.

I cried and He heard me. And He listened when I cried to Him. And He raised me out of weakness into His glorious liberty and life and strength.

Therefore, I will call upon Him as long as I live. Oh, God. He says, I am Your servant.

Verse 16. And the son of Your handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds.

You cut the cords that were holding me down. You gave me life. You took away from me, by grace, all this sense of my own self-image.

I tried to cram into Your kingdom. But You can't accept it because it's corrupt. It has to die that You may live within me.

And He says, Oh, God. You loosed my bonds. You loosed my bonds.

That can be Your story. That can be Your story if You just finally come to the end of all the efforts to be holy. You can't be holy in Your own strength.

It's not possible. All the efforts to please God through all the religious activities that You're involved in. You cannot please God through these things.

We please God when we believe Him. We please God when we acknowledge that the source of our life and strength is Christ. We please God when we lose confidence in ourselves and we begin to look up.

Like God called Abraham. Said, don't look this way. Look this way.

I'm your exceeding great reward. Look away from yourself. Look away from your own efforts.

Look away from your own abilities or lack thereof. And look to me. Oh, God.

You've loosed my bonds. Do I ever know this? Do I understand this? Loosed my bonds. Oh, the cords we wrap ourselves in when we try to do something for God.

Or be something that only God can make us into. We wrap ourselves in grave clothes just like Lazarus. And we end up dead.

Unable to fulfill it. I will offer to Thee, verse 17, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. And I will call on the name of the Lord.

He said, this is what I will render back to You, oh God. I will thank You before the nations. I will declare Your name to all who can hear.

I'll shout it from the mountaintops. There's none other but Christ. There's no other life but Christ.

There's no other strength but Christ. There's no other righteousness but Christ. There's no other hope but Christ.

I'll offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. I will thank You before the nations for what You've done for me. And I'll call upon Your name.

I'll just keep calling on Your name. I'll never let the devil shut my voice. When I'm on my deathbed, I'll call on Your name.

Like the psalmist says, oh God, one more time. Show Your power. Show Your glory.

Even in the room of my death, show Your glory. I'll call out to Your name. And I'll pay my vows now, He says, in the presence of all His people.

I couldn't do it then, but I will do it now. I tried to do it in my own strength, and all I got was the hands of death around my throat. I couldn't do it then, but I will do it now.

I will pay my vows, but it's not me doing it. It's You doing it, oh God. I didn't have the resources.

It's You in me. It's Christ in me, the hope of glory. It's God who created the universe, who chooses to come and live in this temple, this human body.

If you could lay hold of that truth alone, it can revolutionize your life. The God who said, let there be light, lives in you. Amazing.

And every promise He's ever made has as much power and authority as when He said, let there be light. And light was. Oh, how foolish we are.

How foolish we are to try to be what only God can make us. And so we stumble, we fall, we fail. We stumble, fall, fail.

Stumble, fall, fail. Get up, stumble, fall, fail. Go into some place that says, well, here's a new way.

Try this. Here's five steps. Try that.

Here's three steps. Do this. Stumble, fall, fail.

Stumble, fall, fail. Sin, confess. Sin, confess.

And finally, by God's grace, we die. We come to the place where we say, I give up. God says, precious.

That is precious to me. I've been waiting to hear that. That is precious to me.

Now we're going to live. Now I'm going to raise you from the dead. And you're going to be quickened in that area of your life.

And I'm going to give you what it is that you tried to achieve in your own strength. But you couldn't do it. Now I'm going to give it to you.

And you're going to know that it's me. And I will be the testimony of your lips for the rest of your life. I'll be the testimony of your lips all the days of your life.

And my song will be, I love the Lord because he heard me. I love him because he inclined his ear to me. And therefore, I will call upon him as long as I live.

As long as I live, I will call out upon the name of my God. Hallelujah. I want to give a very simple altar call today.

Here in the Education Annex, those who are in the Annexes, there's not that many people. You can feel free to join us at this altar today. And this is how simple it's going to be.

I am dead in this area of my life. I am making no more promises to God. I'm going to live only by his promises to me.

I'm tired. I'm finished. I've had it.

I cannot change. I've given it my best effort. I've made all the promises I can make.

I've gotten to the point where I said all men are liars. I didn't feel anybody could try any harder than I've tried. And I couldn't do it.

And I don't think they can do it either. I'm done now making promises to God. There's going to be a change.

I'm not going to live by his promises to me. And Lord, I'm bringing you this area of my life. If it's an unforgiveness, if it's a lying tongue, if it's a lustful heart, don't know what it is.

But I know the Holy Spirit's been speaking to many. And if you can acknowledge that you have no strength in this area anymore, if you can acknowledge before God, God, I'm a dead man. I'm a dead woman.

You think, in the natural, you think that God is going to condemn you. But he doesn't. He said this is precious.

This is precious to me because now I can show you who I am. Now you can trust me and I can infuse you with my life. And I will give you the victory.

And you will know that I am God. And your heart will become enlarged. And you will start calling out to me more than you ever have before.

And I will change not just this area but other areas in your life. And I will enlarge the borders of your life. I will give you more than you could ever naturally possess.

And I will teach you how to have confidence in me. I will guide you and lead you all the days of your life. And you will have a song that people want to hear.

There will be something in your voice that causes many to want to listen, even in your own family. If you will have the courage to say, God, I need you to raise me from the dead. Now in some cases you are just so engrossed in sin that it's your whole life that has to be raised from the dead.

Thank God he provided for that at Calvary when he shed his blood and paid the price for your sin, that you might be forgiven and make an entrance into your life for the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ, who will raise you from living among the dead and give you new life. Now as we stand, if the Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart, would you come? I'm just giving an altar call for the dead. Would you just come and join me at this altar? And we're going to pray together for life and believe God.

Would you slip out the balcony, go to either exit, main sanctuary, just slip out of your seat. Please just make your way down. We're going to pray together.

And we're going to believe God for life. Hallelujah. Pray with me now.

Lord Jesus, I reckon myself to be dead in this area of my life. I have no power to change by any effort of my own. But I see today that your word tells me that when I know this, when I understand that I am powerless, this is precious in your sight.

I cry out to you now as the psalmist did, as David did. And I say, oh God, deliver my soul. Lift me out of the power of death and create in me a clean heart, a new mind, and a new spirit.

Jesus, I believe that I will live in this area of my life by the power of your life, through your promises being lived out inside of me. And so I yield it. I give it to you, Lord, as Christ gave his spirit to the Father.

I give this to you, Jesus. And it's by the power of your life and your promises to me that I will live in this area of my life. God, forgive me for not trusting you sooner.

God, forgive me for trying to work it out in my own strength. Oh God, I rejoice this day for the knowledge in my heart that in the name of Jesus Christ, the same spirit that raised him from the dead will lift me out of this death and give me the victory that Christ won for me. Two thousand years ago, I claim today in the name of Jesus that I am in this area of my life, alive from the dead, no longer under the power of sin or the dominion of the flesh.

I'm under the grace of God. So I lift my voice. I clap my hands.

I say, Jesus, I praise you. I thank you. I thank you for the victory.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Hallelujah. I'm alive from the dead by the grace of God.

I live. Hallelujah. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

I live by the grace of God. Hallelujah. Do you believe it? Do you believe it? We live by the grace of God.

We stand by the grace of God. We sing by the grace of God. We go from glory to glory by the grace of God.

We testify by the grace of God. We praise by the grace of God. We pray by the grace of God.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Thank you, Jesus. Give Him thanks.

Give Him praise. This is the conclusion of the message.

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