

Returning to Divine Purpose

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the need for a return to divine purpose through understanding God's mercy and true worship.

Duration: 55:00

Scripture: Psalm 133:1

Topics: "True Worship", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon from 1 Kings chapter 18 focuses on the theme of returning to divine purpose. The speaker emphasizes the need for surrendering to God, seeking His mercy, and empowering through the Holy Spirit. The story of Elijah challenging the prophets of Baal highlights the importance of true worship and unity in the body of Christ. The call is to come close to God, allow Him to consume our weaknesses, and be filled with His Spirit to impact our generation for His glory.

Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning about returning to divine purpose from the book of 1 Kings chapter 18, if you'll turn there please in your Bibles, returning to divine purpose. Now Father, I thank you God with all of my heart, I praise you for your strength and your power, for it's in your victory that we stand, it's in your strength that we speak, that we sing. God, all we can bring to you is a heart that believes that you want us to draw close, that you want to sanctify us and cover us and empower us and give us the ability to be the testimony that you have already determined we should be in the earth.

And so Lord, we just simply yield our bodies to you, to be able to speak this in my part this morning and to be able to hear it on all of our part, we need the same anointing. God, we can't hear it without you. Our natural bodies will reject your word unless, oh God, you give us the ability to embrace it.

And so Lord, we don't come to you with arrogance, we don't come to you with natural strength this morning, we come to you humbly. We come to you knowing that we need a savior, that we need a covering, that we need an empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We come to you, God, knowing that if you marked iniquity, none of us could stand.

We come to you because you're a God of mercy. And even you responded when your people sang that song in Solomon's temple, God is good and his mercy endures forever. And so Lord, we thank you for mercy this morning.

No matter what we have done or where we have strayed, or God, even if you've been merciful enough to show us our own hearts, we thank you, Lord, for the knowledge that we stand justified and righteous, not because of what we have done, but because of what you did for us through Jesus Christ, your son. We bless you, God, for this day. We appeal to you, Lord, this morning for a nation that has turned away from you.

We appeal to you, Lord, for a city, New York City, very much like Nineveh. There are so many people now in this city who don't know spiritually their left hand from the right anymore. They don't know what is right and they don't know what is wrong.

We stand this morning and we appeal to your mercy and the goodness of your character to breathe on this city one last time, perhaps before you come. God, almighty, we ask you that every man, every woman, every child would have an opportunity to hear about the cross of Jesus Christ and this amazing love of God. You are able, God, to override all the defenses that evil has built up against this truth.

You can push it over in simply a moment of time. And so, Father, we thank you, God. Speak to our hearts.

Show us our place in this last hour in which we live. We thank you for it. In Jesus' name, amen.

First Kings chapter 18, I want to talk to you about returning to divine purpose, beginning at verse 23. Therefore, let them give us two bowls and let them choose one bowl for themselves, cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. And I will prepare the other bowl and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it.

Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord. And the God who answers by fire, he is God. So all the people answered and said, it is well spoken.

Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, choose one bowl for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many. And call on the name of your God, but put no fire under it. So they took the bowl which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, oh, Baal, hear us.

But there was no voice, no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. And so it was at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, cry aloud, for he is a god.

Either he's meditating or he's busy or he's on a journey, or maybe he's sleeping and must be awakened. So they cried aloud and cut themselves as was their custom with knives and lances until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was passed, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice.

But there was no voice, no one answered, no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, come near to me. So all the people came near to him.

And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name. Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord.

And he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two sails of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood and said, fill four water pots with water and pour it on

the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. Then he said, do it a second time.

And they did it a second time. And he said, do it a third time. And they did it a third time.

So the water ran all around the altar. And he also filled the trench with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel.

And I am your servant. And I've done all these things at your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that you are the Lord God and that you have turned their hearts back to you again.

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces. And they said, the Lord, he is God.

The Lord, he is God. Now this is a true historical story. It happened exactly as the word of God says it happened.

When people read this story, many people see it in different ways. But when I read it, I see the mercy of God. For I know in my heart that God is good and his mercy endures forever.

The heart of the law, even, is mercy in the Old Testament. Everything was leading to the mercy of God. And if you don't know that by now, then you have never fully understood God.

God is a God of mercy. He doesn't call us to come to the throne of his and pray when we're strong. He calls us, actually, in our weakness.

He calls us when we know that there's nothing of our own strength that could ever bring about a victory, whether it's a personal victory, a corporate victory, a victory that you need in your neighborhood, your town, your city, whatever it is. God knows that he calls to his throne those of us who know that there is no plan of man that can ever win this victory. This is a spiritual victory, and only he can win it.

The people at this time through whom God had chosen to testify of himself and the earth, Israel, his people, this nation that he gathered by his mercy. And he brought them from a distant place, and he brought them together into a place of promise. And he said, this is going to be a place where my glory is going to be so exhibited through a people called by my name that strangers will come from foreign nations, which they did in the early days of Solomon.

And they will come into the place where you worship, and they will have hard questions. But when they call out to me, those questions will be answered. But they will come because they see in you the glory of God.

They see something in you and around you. They see an order. They see a sense of divine purpose that can only come from God himself.

It can't be procured by any amount of human effort. For if it could be, then every other kingdom who put the effort into it would have it. But they became divided.

I personally believe that Solomon became bored with the things of God. I believe in my heart as I read and study his life that after 20 plus years of faithfully attending the temple, faithfully seeing God do what God

said he would do, and being a man with a creative mind that was given him by God, he simply got bored with the things of God and began to leave early, as it is, and do other things. His boredom with the things of God caused him to begin to do things that he regretted, caused him to establish systems and places of worship that were never prescribed by God.

It brought a weakness into the nation and a weakness into his own house. He fathered a son, Rehoboam, who was an arrogant young man, not given to godly counsel, given to impulsive moving in this wonderful nation that God had established and subsequently divided the nation between north and south. The larger portion was known as Israel.

The smaller portion was known as Judah. The larger portion was the north. The smaller was the south.

This division opened the floodgate in Israel, the larger part with ten tribes in it, to a suggestion of godless, or succession, rather, of godless leaders under whose guidance false worship began to prosper. You remember Jeroboam, the first leader in this northern kingdom, feared that the people would return to the temple and to that place where God said worship was supposed to be. So to stop the people from doing that at both ends of the northern kingdom, he established places of worship which really mirrored the gods of the societies around them.

And the societies around them were completely different and focused than the people of God were supposed to be. And he told the people, this is as far as you have to go. You don't have to go all the way to Jerusalem.

You can stop here in Bethel and in Dan, and you can worship at the altars that I have made for you. Now remember that the purpose of worship and service to the true God was spoken to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and verse 3. And he said to Abraham, now, Abraham being the father of faith, the man through whose lineage God chose, that the Savior, Christ, was eventually going to be born. And out of Christ, of course, the church was going to be left in the earth as a testimony of who God is, just as Israel was left in the earth in that day as a testimony of who God is or was to that generation.

And in Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, God said to Abraham, in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed. I'm going to multiply you. I'm going to do it sovereignly.

It's going to be done by the Spirit of God. It can't be done any other way. And I'm going to do something in you.

And what I'm going to do in you is going to cause you to be a blessing to many, many others all throughout the world. Now, in the northern part of Israel, Baalism became the predominant form of religion. And Baalism was an inversion of this blessing.

In other words, it turned it around. The blessing was to be for others. Baalism turned it inward.

And the theological focus became, bless me. The blessing is for me. It's for my purpose.

It's for my agenda. And it was a self-focus worship that had to be maintained at all costs, even the cost of sacrificing their infant children. What a tragedy when you think that God's people could descend so low that they could end up sacrificing their own sons and daughters, their own babies, as it was, somehow thinking this is pleasing to God.

But when our focus of worship as a people, as a nation, turns to self, every form of self, there's no limit to where we will go to maintain that sense of self-worth, even the sacrificing of our children. Haley's Bible dictionary says the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth, who was his fictitious goddess wife, were the official murderers of little children. Hard to imagine that this could happen to a nation, isn't it? That it could have a succession of leaders who took the nation into deeper forms of godlessness.

That the house of God, that what was supposed to be the house of God, would turn to self. Baal was the sun god. He was the lord of the elements, the forces of nature, the god of basket and store.

In other words, the god of provision and prosperity. And the people began to worship prosperity. They began to worship everything that could be given to them.

They forgot Jehovah God. And they began to almost unthinkable this could happen. And that they started bringing their children in for human sacrifice, thinking this is somehow part of legitimate worship.

No history repeats itself, folks. We have sacrificed 50 million children in this nation on the altar of self and convenience. Oh, history does repeat itself.

We're now dysfunctional as a society. We're dysfunctional as a government. We're dysfunction is on every level.

But this is a moment of mercy. And the mercy of God for this particular tragic situation begins with a famine. God takes away the basket and the store.

He takes away that which has captivated his own people. Don't forget that in every generation, it's all about his people. Always has been, always will be.

And he takes away whatever captivates the hearts of his people. And I want you to remember, it's mercy that does this. Mercy, judgment would be letting the people just go on in this delusion and end up in hell.

That's judgment. Thinking they're happy, thinking they're prosperous, thinking everything is fine, thinking their worship is accepted, only to find out they've been outside the kingdom of God the whole time. No, mercy, mercy takes away the sense of well-being when it's not, doesn't have its origin in God.

And God sends a famine. And you'll see that throughout scriptural history. Famine, or may I call it the cutting off of the fuel source of error, has often been God's method of bringing his people back to true spiritual worship and practice.

In the gospel of Luke chapter 15, Jesus himself told the story of a young man who took the inheritance of his father. Maybe he found his father's house too restrictive. I really don't know why.

But he asked for his inheritance. The scripture says Jesus said he took a journey far away from the heart of his father into a land where he began to spend that which his father had given him on self-consumption and on riotous living. Now, how do you think the father would get that son to come home? The scripture says, but when he had spent all, there arose a famine, a severe famine, actually, in that land, and he began to be in want.

A severe famine. God will do what he has to do to get us back to divine purpose again. God will do it in his mercy.

So I don't want you to be afraid if you have to go through flood and fire and trial. I don't want you to be afraid if the stock market suddenly one day collapses. I don't want you to be afraid.

I don't know how God is going to get our attention, but I can tell you God is going to get our attention. And I can tell you scripturally, he will literally shut the rain as he did in Elijah's day. He could have rightly just judged that northern kingdom for what they were doing.

They had really forsaken him. But in his mercy, he stops the rain for three and a half years. Don't forget, Baal was the sun God.

Baal was the Lord of the forces of nature and of the elements. He was the one who provided basket and store. So if God wants to get his people away from a worship that is not true, how does he do it? He simply proves this God to be false, proves this God to be powerless, proves that this God does not satisfy, does not have the provision that the people need, is not the source of happiness.

There is no joy and everlasting peace to be found there. He simply turns off the rain. And I want to remind you it's an act of mercy.

Judgment would have been to let it keep raining. That would have been judgment. This was mercy.

And you and I have to understand this because if we don't understand it, we're not going to fully comprehend the season that we're going to have to walk through. As a matter of fact, this whole world may have to go through it together. I really don't know the scope of it, but I do know what God's speaking to my heart.

And throughout scriptural history, you'll see this famine over and over again. And it's the famine that caused this prodigal son to consider his ways, caused him to come to himself and head home and come back to his father. And so too it caused the people in Elijah's day to think about whether or not that what they were worshiping was real.

Was it really reflective of God's purpose for them? Or was there power in that purpose, in that worship, to achieve the purpose of God for them in the earth? It caused them to think, otherwise they never would have come to the top of Mount Carmel. There would have been no contest. Elijah, at least to his understanding, was the only public voice left.

We know there were others who had not bent their knee to this God of prosperity. There were 7,000 others according to the word of God. But Elijah was not aware of another public voice at this time in his life and ministry.

And yet there were 450 false prophets willing to lead the people into this false worship, willing to literally buddy up to this false political system that was promoting deeper and darker godlessness in the nation constantly. There were no voices left, hardly that are willing to stand up against it and say, this is wrong. What you're doing is wrong.

Where you're going is wrong. You may think it's going to prosper you, but it's going to end in disaster. It always has and it always will end in disaster.

You cannot take evil and make it good. You cannot take good and say it's evil. You can't transgress the law of God without consequence, folks.

You can't. It's not possible to do it. God will not be mocked.

Whatever a nation sows, that nation will reap. God will not be mocked. There's no way we can transgress the boundaries that God has set in proper order for this world to exist without paying a terrible price.

For God himself said, don't you enter into the fields of the fatherless. Don't you remove their right. Don't take away their boundaries.

For if you do, I will arise and defend them. And in this nation, we have entered into the fields of the fatherless. Every child that we've not killed in the womb, we're telling now in our schools that there is no God.

Try to tell me we haven't entered into the fields of the fatherless in this society. And folks, I know I do say this a lot. And sometimes, sometimes I wish I could have another message, but I can't apologize for what God's called me to do and sent me to do.

I don't know any other way. But I want you to see the mercy in this. So I let this, God lets this religion run its course with its sincerity.

It was sincere. Sincerity doesn't mean it's true. It was active.

They danced and ran around and the King James says even leapt on their altars. And when that didn't do it, they started cutting themselves to prove how sincere they were before God, that they were willing to die for what they believed in. And when that didn't work, then they began prophesying as if they, as if they're prophesying somehow is gonna force God to move his hand and do what they say.

Yet no one heard, no one regarded, no one was answered. And then I see something in the scriptures that has caused me to see this passage like I've never seen it before. It's now the time of the evening.

They've had their goal for the whole of the morning the whole of the heat of the day. They've had their time. It's now coming to the evening sacrifice.

It's getting close to the end of the day. It's gonna be dark soon. And Elijah said to all the people, come near to me.

I don't know how you feel about those four words, but he's standing there on behalf of God. And you and I knowing the circumstances, people have been sacrificing their children. They have been worshiping calves.

They've been listening to evil and somehow thinking it was good. They've strayed so far from God that it's tragic even looking at it from only a historical perspective. But yet God through that man that he had at that time says, come close to me, come close to me.

In other words, I'm not gonna reject you. Oh Jerusalem, oh Jerusalem, how many times I've longed to gather you. I've longed to draw you close to my heart.

I've longed to show you who I really am. I've longed to make you partakers of the victory that could be yours. Come near to me.

And all the people came near to him. And so he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And he took 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the Lord had come saying, Israel shall be your name.

He took 12 stones and he started to show them your weakness came when you allowed yourself to become divided. Firstly separated from a true fervency for the things of God you were divided from the heart of God and what your purpose really was in the earth. And then you became divided from each other on top of that.

And so this was a broken down altar, no matter how fancy it was or how much gold that they were putting on it or how intricate the design might have been. The Bible declares it to be an altar that was broken down because there was no unity. I've always believed that unity is the folly of peacetime.

And we have allowed ourselves, hear me on this. We've allowed ourselves in this nation to become disunified. And we become obsessed with being right.

Everybody wants to be right. They all wanna have the right theology. And in our obsession with being right, we're not aware of how wrong we have become because we have allowed ourselves to be weakened.

We are more and mightier than all the forces of hell that are trying to destroy this nation at this hour in history. But we don't know it because we are divided. Now I'm talking about the bloodline fellowship of Jesus Christ.

I'm not talking about random religion. I'm talking about people. There are different names on the door.

There's Methodist and Lutheran and Baptist and Pentecostal and charismatic. Those names are on the door. But inside those doors are people like you and I who have come to the cross of Jesus Christ, acknowledging that his sacrifice was the only way to eternal life.

And faith in that sacrifice has made me born again by the spirit of God. I can't afford to be divided from my brothers and sisters in Christ any longer. If we're gonna know victory in this generation, we have to come back together again as the body of Jesus Christ and as the family of God.

If you can live with my distinctives, I can live with yours. By distinctives, I mean there are practices that are peculiar to different denominations. They are not things that are essential to salvation, even though we'd like to think they are, they aren't.

The cross is essential to salvation. Faith in Christ is essential to salvation. But we've allowed all of these other side issues to divide us and we've become proud.

And in that pride, God has actually had to resist us because he resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Listen to me, those that are listening online, those that will hear this in the future, we don't have the luxury of being divided any longer. If we are going to win this day in which we are living, we must come together again as the body of Jesus Christ.

We must drop all of the tags and become one in Christ. Now, I don't care what contrary opinions say about that. You choose to be divided, then you've chosen to stay weak.

Stay inside your own little box and sing your little songs while your whole society heads to hell. But I tell you, if we will come together, and God is the only one that can really do this, it's a spiritual work, but if we will allow God to bring us back together again, we will be a force to be reckoned with in this generation. Thank you, Pastor.

Listen to what David says in Psalm 133. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down to the edge of his garments.

It's like the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, life, evermore. It's there God commends the blessing.

When brethren dwell together in unity, David knew that. David knew it from a cave. David understood this, that when men and women come together, they are gathered together in one accord and for one purpose.

That they want to be used of God. They want the power of God to carry them to a place where he is again glorified in the earth. Then it might be disaffected, distressed, and in debt people that went into that cave.

But I tell you mighty, warriors of God came out of that cave. There is a blessing that God commands in unity. There is a blessing.

Oh God, help us to understand this hour in which we're living in. Help us to know Lord Jesus Christ, that we don't have the option of considering this much longer. And then with the stones in verse 32, 1 Kings chapter 18, he built an altar in the name of the Lord.

And he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two sails of seed. And he put the wood in order. And cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood.

And said, fill four water pots with water and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. And then he said, do it a second time. And then he said, do it a third time.

Our unity is going to be built around the cross of Jesus Christ. The victory of that cross, the mercy of the cross, the power of the cross. Everything that happened, he set the wood in order.

We've had a lot of theology. A lot of things that have been purporting themselves as new and abundant revelation. But I tell you, there is a revelation that never, that is new every morning.

It's new every day, it's new every hour. The power of God in the cross of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice that he made on that cross. Where the power, where the penalty, and where the blindness of sin was broken.

And we were brought into the power of a resurrected life. Lay it on the wood, he said. Put the sacrifice on the wood.

Get back to preaching the cross of Jesus Christ. Get back to understanding what that victory is all about. Live in that victory, cherish that victory.

Then he said, fill the water pots with water and pour it on the sacrifice and do it a second time and do it a third time. And to me, it represents the fact that Christ was going to die. He was going to go into the grave for three days until there was no chance of false fire.

There was no chance of life unless God brought the life. And this is all, when you understand, everything points to Jesus Christ, the cross, the victory, the church. He said, pour the water on it, pour it again and pour it again until there's no chance of life.

And I thank God, I thank God with all my heart that Jesus has to raise us from the dead. Jesus has to give us power, he has to give us life. And when he does, you know it.

You know it, my brother, you know it, my sister. You know that what you're becoming is not humanly possible. You know that God is doing this in your life.

You know it's only the resurrection life of God that has come into you through that cross of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice of the son of God that is making you who you are. It's putting into your heart what was never there. It's taking you where you could never go.

It's giving you true and abundant treasure of God's life within that you could never possess in any amount of human strength. God is giving this to you. And by the grace of God, you've been delivered from death.

And the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead has now quickened your mortal body. And you stand in the power of God. You stand as a living testimony of who God is in your generation.

The only way, the only worship that God receives is that has returned to the cross. Worship that understands the completeness and the purpose of the sacrifice of Christ. Worship that understands it's only through the resurrection of Christ's life within me that I can escape the powerless self-focus of my own heart and become one of those through whom all the families in the earth will be blessed.

I can't escape my own selfishness and neither can you. I can't. I don't have the power.

It's not in me. I'm selfish to the core and so are you. It's all about me.

It was the sin that was sown in Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It's all about you, the devil said. It's all about you.

It's all about you. It's not about God. It's all about you.

And that was sown deep in all of humanity. And I can't escape it unless the power of God enables me to be a person that is willing to be given for the benefit of others. For that is the call of the Christian life.

That is the reason why God lets his supernatural power be shown in us, that others may come to this temple as they were supposed to in the day of Solomon and inquire. That's what Peter said, always be ready to give an answer to those who ask you for a reason for the hope that is in you, for the stranger that comes to the temple and says, there's light in your eye. There's life in your voice.

There's bounce in your step. Don't you read the news? Don't you see what's happening? Don't you know what's going on around us? Aren't you aware that the rain has stopped? And they come and they begin to ask. But you and I have been given by the spirit of God the power to live not for ourselves, but for them.

We're not running confused in the streets. We're not clamoring and wringing our hands, looking at our retirement plan on the internet. When everything starts going down, you begin to realize, oh God, they're coming to the temple soon.

The prodigals are coming home. Those that have been distanced from you, you're speaking to them. And let that be the cry of our heart, come close to me.

Come close to me. Come close to me and I'll show you where the power of God is. Come close to me and I'll show you what you've been longing to find, but you've stopped short of where it really is.

Come close to me. At the evening sacrifice, it came to pass in verse 36 at the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and I'm your servant. And I've done all these things at your word.

Hear me, oh Lord, hear me. That this people may know that you are the Lord God and that you've turned their hearts back to you again. This is the prayer that will make a difference in this hour that we're living in now.

It's prayer that's not self-focused. It's prayer that says, oh God, hear me. Oh God, hear me.

And turn the hearts of the people back to you again. It's not about me, it's about them. Turn their hearts back, oh God, for they are your people.

And you are still inviting them close to you. And then the fire of the Lord fell. When the people went into the upper room after the resurrection of Jesus Christ and they went in in their weakness, I know this is what they prayed.

Oh God, turn the hearts of the people back to you again and let them know that you are the Lord God. They've chosen a system of worship that is deficient. They've chosen to stay at a place that has no power.

They've chosen because they want the robes and they want the titles and they want all of these things and they don't want any of the persecution that the cross will bring them to. But oh God, have mercy, have mercy on them. And I could hear them in that upper room saying, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to you.

And we ask you, oh God, that if we are founded upon that altar, that foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone, oh God, would you accept the sacrifice of our lives? And would you give us the power to make a difference? Would you do what only you can do? And verse 38 says, then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood and the stones and the dust and it licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, the Lord is God, the Lord is God. And when all the people saw 120 believers in the beginning of what we now know to be the church of Jesus Christ, standing in the marketplace, focused with the right focus, they were giving themselves for the benefit of others.

They were not living for self-focus. They were willing to follow their master. The glory of the Lord was on them.

Their prophesying was not in vain as it was with these who were worshiping short of where true worship takes place in the day of Elijah. But their prophesying had power. It was laced with truth.

It had the mark of the divine on it. And when they began to speak, suddenly garments didn't mean so much anymore. Suddenly reputation, suddenly self-focus began to lose its focus.

And people looked at 120 people completely gripped by the spirit of God, willing to be given for the society all around them, willing to confront the power of even Rome that in its arrogance marginalized and mocked everything unlike itself. But when they stood there in that power of God, two things happened. Number one, I'm absolutely sure all of hell was trembling, that every demon's knees were knocking together in the vicinity, I'm absolutely sure.

And secondly, when that fire fell, something began to happen in the hearts of at least 3,000 in that very, very, very religious crowd that had stopped short of where true worship is. Something began to happen in their hearts. And inwardly they said, the Lord, He is God.

The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God. And 3,000 people turned and said, what must we do to be saved? And Peter, the apostle told them, turn away from your sin, turn away from everything that offends God and turn to Him with all your heart.

And you will receive this gift of God's Holy Spirit, God's divine power. Folks, we need the Holy Spirit now. We need God's power now.

There is no way to return to divine purpose without the Holy Spirit. And there's no way to receive the Holy Spirit genuinely unless we are engaged with the divine purpose of God. The two work together.

And when they saw the power of God, this generation needs to see the power of God again. It has enough teachers, it has enough religion. It needs to see the power of God in surrendered vessels.

The fire of the Lord fell. The scripture says, consume the sacrifice. And that's my cry now.

God, consume me with your presence. Consume my feebleness with your strength, my confusion with your knowledge, my blindness with your vision, my hardness with your tenderness, my selfishness with your compassion. Oh God, that's all I can cry out is consume me.

Consume me, Lord, because I know what I am without you. I know what I would be without your strength. I know where I'll go if you don't touch my life.

And so God, all I can do is come and say, take this vessel. Take it, oh God. Take it and consume this vessel.

It says the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and it licked up the water that was in the trench. It licked up, in other words, it consumed everything that had the power to put out my light and your light. Everything that had the power to cause us not to live for him.

God said, I will consume it. I will do it. I will do it sovereignly.

I will do it supernaturally. An impossibility was swallowed up by victory. Bottom line, we need to be the church again.

Every one of us. And I guess the question we have to ask our own heart is, do the people really matter enough that we're willing to do that? Are we going to pursue a self-focus, which of course has no real concern for its neighbor or its children? Or are we going to follow the one who went to a cross that we might be here today, suffered that we might have wholeness? Are we willing to be embracers of his compassion and his passion? And are people really worth it? Are they really worth it? And that's the question when you leave this church today that you have to ask yourself when you look on the streets

here in New York City, are they really worth it? Is it worth me giving my life in entirety to God? Is it worth me calling out for the true power of God? Is it worth turning away from that which robs my strength, whether it's a secular or a spiritual pursuit that falls short of the cross of Christ? Is it really worth it? Is it really worth it when people betray you? Is it really worth it when they turn and spit in your face? Is it really worth it when they laugh at you in the workplace and call you an idiot? Is it really worth it in a society that marginalizes everything of Christ, convinces our children there is no God, laughs at college students in the classroom, mocks them and calls them idiots because they believe that there's a creator? Is it worth it? That's a question only you can answer. But in my heart, I've come to the conclusion it is worth it, it's worth it.

And if you and I are ever gonna make a difference in this generation, we have to have that particular part of the spirit of God that was on Elijah when he looked at this preposterous religious situation before him and said, come near to me, come near to me. You don't have to back away from me, you don't have to live at a distance, you can come close because I'm not gonna hurt you. And he had the power to hurt and they knew it.

But implied in that invitation was I'm here not as a judge of you, I'm here as an ambassador of God's mercy, hallelujah. The cry of my heart is just oh God, use my life to turn others back to you again. And let your Holy Spirit look up the water in my trench, the things that are around me that make it, would make it impossible if they're allowed to exist.

The impossibility of my own character, the impossibility of the lack even of ability to do the things you've called me to do. I want you to join with me in this church to pray for the mightiest baptism of God's Holy Spirit we have ever known in our generation. We need to be filled with the spirit of God.

There's no way humanly this can be done. But when we are ready, when we've made that decision, when we're willing to come to an altar and lift our hands and say God, I don't care how long it takes, but I'm staying in your presence, I'm gonna keep pressing in, I'm gonna keep praying until you touch my life with the fire of your Holy Spirit, until you burn out of me oh God, in your mercy everything Lord that would drive me into weakness and falling short of where worship really is supposed to be. I'm not content just to be religious, I'm not content just to come to a house once a week, maybe even twice, I'm not content while a generation around me perishes.

God, you have to take me farther, you've got to do more in my life. You've got to lead me, you've got to guide me, you've got to do what only you can do. There is a holy discontent that God will stir in your heart and in my heart so that we will want his presence because the day is coming my friend when the rain is gonna stop and people will be coming to where you are.

I guess the question is, will you be able to say, come near to me, come near to me and let me explain to you who God is. Let me tell you about how kind he is, how powerful he is, how wonderful he is, that will be the message. And so, the altar call the Lord's put on my heart this morning is just this, oh God, use my life to turn others back to you again.

Let your Holy Spirit lift me, carry me, take me, empower me and take away the impossibility that stands before me. And every one of you here today, all of us, we all know what those impossibilities are. It's that area of your life you say, God, if you don't touch this, I'm never gonna mount it.

I'm not gonna mount to anything. If you don't touch this, this will always impair my ability to represent you. You've got to come and touch this area of my life.

And you know what that is. You know exactly what it is. But the cry of my heart, you know, realistically, we are about 8,000 or so people in this church.

If we had, can you imagine the first 121, 3000 in a day? If we had the fullness of what they had, how many people in New York City do you think would come to Christ? How many people would be compelled to stand up on the subway and just say, I just got to tell you what God has done for me? How many people in the marketplace just couldn't stay quiet any longer? How many people in the college campuses would stand up with such an anointing it couldn't be denied? Words of wisdom that can only come from God. Wisdom that cannot be countered because it's born of God, empowered by God. Let that be the cry of your heart this morning.

Use my life, Lord, to turn others back to you. Deliver me, God. Deliver me from the impossible places.

Deliver me, God, from that which would prevent this temple from being a place that people can come to and find you. In Jesus' name. We're going to stand in a moment.

We're going to worship just for about five minutes or so. If God's speaking to your heart, I'm going to ask you to come and join me, please, at the front of this auditorium. In the annex, you could step between the screens, if you will, and the same in North Jersey.

And at home, you can just stand up in your living room if you want to. We're going to pray together. We're going to believe God together this morning.

Alleluia. Father, God Almighty, I am in the same boat as everyone at this altar. You've been showing me my heart, Lord, and I don't like what I see.

And I know that you do it, Lord, so that you can come and consume that, which would consume me. And you do it for all of us, Lord, that we can be a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. And you do it because you long to show mercy to a generation.

And mercy begins in the house of God. And so, Lord, I ask you, God, to come down upon us and consume the sacrifice of our lives with your power and with your presence. Give us the ability, Lord, to do what you've called us to do, and to be the people that you desire us to be.

Burn out of us, Lord, all of the dross, all of the things, Lord, that mar your testimony, that cause us to fall short. And give us the life, Lord, that can only come from you. Father, we ask you, Lord, for an infilling of your spirit, God, in this church.

God, that you would turn us literally into another people, a people that will glorify you, Lord, in our homes, in our neighborhoods, our communities. God, where we live, where we work, in our own families. People that will bring glory to your name.

When they saw the fire, they said, the Lord is God, the Lord is God. So let them see the fire of your life and presence within us, God. Deliver us from religiousness.

Deliver us, God, from all the places we would stop short of what you call us to be as your people, each of us, Lord, myself included. Help us, oh God, help us. For your holy name's sake, and for the people's sake

in this city, Lord.

You're the only one that can do this, Lord. No amount of dancing around any altar is going to make any difference now. You're the only one that can do this.

And so we come to you, Lord. And we're not willing to settle for any false fire. It has to be you.

It has to be your life. It has to be your life inside of us. It has to be your power.

And so all we can do is back up and pray. That's all Elijah knew to do, just to back away and pray. And so we back away from trying to make anything happen in our own strength.

And we ask you, God, fill us, Lord. Fill us, oh God almighty, fill us. Fill us, Lord, lift us out of poverty and into the strength of your victory, Lord.

Lift us out of darkness and into the light. Lift us out of prison and into freedom. Lift us, oh God.

Lift us out of the selflessness of our own hearts and into the selflessness of your heart. Let it be your heart that overshadows us and your power that lifts us, Lord. Father, I thank you for these things.

God, I praise you with all my heart. I know you answer prayer for you yourself, said, if a son asks for bread, will his father give him a stone? If you know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? And so, Lord, all we know to do is ask. I don't know what else to do, but simply to ask you, God, to do something for this church and this city, Lord.

God, and not only this house, but every house, Lord, where your people are, that you would visit us, oh God, in a sovereign way like we've never known. Visit the city, oh God. Visit every church, Lord.

Let there be no pride, let there only be unity, oh God, in your body. And raise our voices to speak again. And Father, we thank you for it with all of our heart.

In Jesus' name. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, God. Jesus, Son of God, bless this city, Lord.

Bless this city, God. Raise it from the dead. Lord, raise it, God, into life.

We thank you, Lord. Thank you, God. Thank you, Jesus.

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