

Returning to God in Enemy Territory

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the need for believers to return to God and seek His deliverance while living in a world influenced by sin and the enemy.

Duration: 56:09

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3, Isaiah 35:5, Isaiah 42:7, Isaiah 53:5, Isaiah 61:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Luke 4:16-21

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher invites the congregation to come forward and receive freedom and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that anyone who wants to be free from sin and darkness can find liberation in Christ. The preacher declares that the scripture has been fulfilled in their ears, meaning that the promises of God are available to them now. He encourages the congregation to not remain in captivity but to choose to move towards the voice of God and experience the freedom and blessings that come with it. The sermon concludes with a call to thank God for the freedom they have received through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

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You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. I have a message this morning, and it's for the people who are Christians, or at least you desire to be.

You have a profession of Christ that is on your lips. But you are living on the enemy's ground. The enemy has access to you.

He has access to your life. He controls large degrees of your life and testimony. And I believe today that the Lord is going to set you free.

I believe it with all my heart. He has spoken something to me. And I'm going to talk about returning to God in enemy territory.

Not after you get out, but before you get out. Returning to God. Let's pray together.

Now, Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Lord, I can preach your word, but only you, Jesus, can open prison doors and set the captive free. I come in weakness, and I trust you for strength, a quickening of my mind and physical body.

Lord, a quickening of your word, that your word would have force and effect and authority against the powers of darkness. Lord God, I'm asking for an anointing today to cast down all the arguments that the enemy has built in the minds of those that he has captivated. Arguments which tell them that this is the way it has to be.

They will never get out. Just live your life the best you can here. And Father, I thank you, God, today that by your word and the anointing, you're going to cast this down.

This is an imagination against God. Lord, this is a depravity of the devil's mind. And Father, I thank you, God, for today.

Lord, you're going to set people free. I believe today that there are lives in this house that will never be the same again. They will say, this is the day I got up.

This is the day I came back to God. This is the day the Lord began to do his marvelous work in my life. This is the day I began to clap my hands again and rejoice genuinely in the house of God.

This is the day the voice of the condemner was banished from my ears and heart forever. This is the day I came alive in the knowledge of God. Father, I thank you for what you're going to do.

Lord, I have stood in your presence. I've heard from you. Now I'm asking God for the grace to deliver this in a manner that every person here can understand it.

And I thank you for this grace in Jesus' mighty name. If you go to Daniel in the Old Testament, please, Daniel chapter 9. Now, Daniel chapter 9 is written about a period in Daniel's life where he is about 80 years old. The people of Judah, which Daniel was part of, and Israel, which was part of the divided nation, all went into captivity.

After the reign of Solomon, you know that the kingdom of Israel split. They were destined to be God's people. But because of compromise and intermixing with the ways of the heathen around about them, they lost touch with God.

They lost heart for the things of God. And had they known the end result of their spiritual laxity, perhaps it would have made a difference. It's not that they were without warning, but they didn't take heed to the warning.

And in the northern kingdom, suddenly the kingdom of Assyria came in and literally swallowed the northern kingdom over a course of time and dispersed the people. The northern kingdom was virtually assimilated, except for those who had a genuine heart to worship God that had left earlier, many of them. And of course, at the time of the invasion, it came into Judah, the southern part of Israel.

There were warnings. Jeremiah was one of the prophets that was warning Judah about their false security. There was a rise in Judah of false prophets that were telling the people that there was nothing but peace and prosperity ahead, nothing but security and safety.

But in the midst of it all, Jeremiah's voice was raised up. And he began to warn the people about the consequences of a spiritual laziness that had gotten into many of their lives, an indifference, as it is, to the things of God. And through Jeremiah, God wept, really, because he was known as the weeping prophet.

But the tears were really God's tears through Jeremiah, because he knew the end result of this laxity was going to be his own people, eventually captivated and brought into an enemy land. And that's, in effect, what happened. The Babylonian Empire came and, in three successive sieges, took captive virtually the majority, as it is, of the people of Judah, and left only the poor and those that were politically insignificant to tend the land about them, so that there would no longer be a threat to the Babylonian Empire.

And among those that were taken captive was a young man, supposedly at that time in his teens, roughly the age of Joseph, when he went into Egypt. And now Daniel, of course, has been given favor. We know a lot about the story, the life of Daniel.

And now in Daniel chapter 9, he is approximately 80 years of age, and he has been faithful to God, in spite of living in a place that wasn't his fault, really. But he was in captivity with everyone else, but yet Daniel himself was not captive. He was living in a captive land, but he was free to worship God, free to serve God, free to love God.

And in Daniel chapter 9, verse 1, he says, In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. Now, undoubtedly, Daniel was a man of prayer, and he was an ardent God-seeker in his generation.

His prayer was interwoven with his understanding of Scripture. It's almost impossible, really, to pray without knowing the Scriptures. What then do you pray if we don't know what God has promised? If we don't understand His character and His working, then tell me, what do you pray? How do you effectively pray if there's no diligent searching of the character of God? Because prayer is, and the answers to prayer, and the faith we have in prayer, is really based on the character of God.

It's based on the one who is faithful to do that which He has promised for us. So, if we don't know the character of God, if we don't understand the way He works, then it's very difficult to have any kind of an effectual prayer life. But Daniel's prayer, when you read chapter 9, you can see it's conclusively interwoven with his understanding of Scripture, because it's through the Scripture that God had always revealed His intent towards His people.

Daniel chapter 6 and verse 10 tells us that his habit was to daily, that's three times, he was to pray and give thanks on his knees while facing Jerusalem. Now, this was not just a happenstance, it was not just a habit. Daniel's life, even his prayer life, was based on the truth he had seen in the Word of God.

Now, I believe that Daniel had seen 1 Kings, if you'll go there with me, please. 1 Kings chapter 8 and verse 44. Now, Daniel had seen this.

This is the day when Solomon had dedicated the temple, and he had prayed a magnificent dedication prayer about the people of God. And this is the time when they're at the virtual pinnacle of their military strength and their supposed spiritual and financial prosperity. And Solomon dedicated the temple, and the

Lord confirmed this prayer with his presence, confirmed that he would answer this prayer, and Daniel was aware of this.

And in 1 Kings 8, verse 44, he says, If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shalt pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen. You see, Daniel went three times a day on his knees and faced Jerusalem. He was a man who prayed in obedience to the Scriptures.

He didn't pray just randomly in the air, but the prayer that he was aware of that would bring about the deliverance of the people was a prayer of obedience. God says, I want your face to be looking in this direction. Now, it's the same that the Apostle Paul says, our face is not to be towards Jerusalem anymore, but towards Jesus Christ.

And Paul says, while we behold Him, we are changed into the very image of Christ by the Spirit of the Lord. We are to be beholding everything that the Holy Spirit would reveal to us about Jesus Christ. We are to look at it.

We are to behold it in the Word of God. Then when we pray, we are to face it with faith in our hearts, because Christ is our inheritance. Christ Himself is our inheritance.

I thank God that we're going to heaven one day. That's wonderful. But heaven is not my inheritance.

Christ is my inheritance. I thank God for that with all my heart. And the Bible says, clearly I'm to know Him and behold Him.

And as I see Him, the Spirit of God within me will begin to conform my mind and my heart and my physical image, as it is, into the image of Christ. I will be turned, as it is, the Scripture says, by the Spirit of God into another man. And so Daniel, in the understanding of his day, is obeying the Scripture and he's praying with his face towards Jerusalem.

He says in verse 45, he says, Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive into the land of the enemy, far or near. Yet if they shall bethink, or I guess that would be better translated, if they shall rethink their position in the land, whether they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication to thee in the land of them that carried the captives, saying, We have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness.

And so return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive. And pray unto thee towards their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name. Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven, thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause.

And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee in all their transgressions, where they have transgressed against thee. And give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them. For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt from the midst of the furnace of iron.

That thine eyes may be opened unto the supplication of thy servant, unto the supplication of thy people Israel, and to hearken to them in all that they call unto thee. For thou didst separate them from among the

people of the earth to be thine inheritance, as thou speakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God. And Solomon's prayer was just a very simple prayer.

God, if by neglect they are found captivated, if they do something foolish and end up in the enemy's territory, and in that territory, as the prodigal son did, they begin to come to themselves and say, What am I doing dwelling here? Why am I living in this place of captivity? I was called by God to be separate to him. I was called to glorify his name. I was called to have such a glory of God on me that the nations of the earth, or the powers as it is that control these nations, would tremble when they see the hand of God come upon my life.

And here I am living in captivity. And Solomon had prayed and said, God, if they find themselves in that place, then, O God, answer their prayer when they face to Jerusalem and call out to you. And, beloved, I want to tell you something today.

No matter where you're living today, no matter what kind of situation you're in, with an honest heart, not just a heart that says, O God, I hate my circumstance. No, it's got to be beyond that. It's got to be, God, I hate my sin.

I hate what sin has done to me. I hate what sin does to everyone who walks in sin. I hate the putrid condition it brings into my soul.

I hate the disgrace it brings to your name before your enemies that just love to scorn you through the failures of your people. God, I hate it. And, Lord, I'm asking you now.

I'm looking to you, Jesus, face to face. And I'm asking you now, according to every promise you've ever made in the Scripture, to deliver me out of the grip of my enemies. And this was the prayer that Solomon talked about.

And, of course, God came down, you'll find it in other passages, and confirmed that prayer with his presence and made it very clear that if this was the heart attitude of those that called out to him, he would set them free. And I tell you today, if this is your heart attitude, not just an attitude that says, I'm tired of the consequence of my sin. No, it has to go far beyond that.

We have to get to a place where, by God's grace, we hate sin. We hate what sin does to the name of Christ. We hate how sin diminishes his testimony in our lives and makes our lives ineffectual in declaring his glory to a lost generation.

We hate what it does. We hate the reproach that it brings to his very name. Now, Daniel was, no doubt, of the same spirit of those in Hebrews 11, 13.

The Scripture says, Having not received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them. And, beloved, that's sometimes the way we are. We might be living in a place where all we can see around us is captivity.

But there are precious and exceeding great promises in this book given to us of God. And the Bible says that by these promises, you and I become partakers of the divine nature of Christ. It's an amazing thing.

And they might be far off to you right now. But, beloved, they're not as far as you think they are. They're a lot closer than you actually have ever realized.

Now, the seeking of God led Daniel into a very fierce conflict. Under King Darius. You remember that Daniel was there at the end of the Babylonian Empire.

He had been through the whole of the Babylonian oppression over the southern kingdom of Israel. From the time of a teenager to about 80 years of age. Daniel was there when Belshazzar, the last ruler of Babylon, was in the palace.

He took the holy things out of the temple that had been pillaged and plundered. And gave the holy vessels to all of his concubines and his friends. They began to drink in these things and mock the holy things of God.

And at that point, a hand appeared and wrote on the wall. And God said, I've numbered your kingdom. I've weighed it in the balance.

You're found wanting and I've finished your kingdom. It's over. Daniel had the courage to stand when the king sent for somebody who could interpret the writing.

Daniel is now 80 years of age. And Daniel had the courage to stand before a heathen king who apparently had power. But seemingly, in Daniel's heart, there was no power this king had over his life.

And he said to this king, he said, you knew that God dealt with your forefathers. About these issues of pride that are now in your heart. But you've not humbled yourself, Belshazzar, even though you knew this.

And he says, now God has numbered your kingdom and it's over. It's finished. And he stood and declared to this king that his kingdom was done.

And that very night, the army of the Medes and Persians invaded that city. And this particular king, Belshazzar, was slain. And I'm only making a presumption, but I'm presuming that this new king, that there was an interim king between Belshazzar and Cyrus.

And Cyrus, of course, was the king that eventually signed the decree allowing God's people to go back home to Jerusalem. But there was an interim ruler called Darius. More than likely appointed by Cyrus just for a brief season.

And he would have undoubtedly become aware that Daniel had stood up and made a declaration. Because to this king, Belshazzar, that his kingdom was over. And so, I suppose, in a heathen king's way of thinking, this guy is on our side.

That's the easiest way I can say it. And Daniel ends up second in command of this new kingdom. It's an amazing thing.

And he's beginning to see in the Scriptures, in this position of highest authority, that God is making incredible promises to his people. Now, in Daniel chapter 9, as we started out earlier with verses 1 and 2, Daniel makes an incredible discovery during this time of the reign of Darius. And he made a discovery reading the book of Jeremiah.

And he says, In the first year of his reign, I understood by the books the number of years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. He discovered incredible truth.

Daniel looked at it and he said, Now, one commentator at least says, This was about sixty-eight years after the Babylonian captivity had begun. And Daniel, being a God-seeker and a man of prayer, sees what seemingly few perhaps were, but not too many were understanding. And he looked at it and said, God, I see something.

The day of our liberty has come. The day of our freedom is at hand. And I don't think Daniel is just keeping it to himself.

I think that Daniel is walking around. I don't know if he could proclaim it publicly. Many believe that Daniel was the vessel that God used when Cyrus the king finally came into authority.

That Daniel was the man because he was second in the kingdom. That actually approached Cyrus and perhaps showed him the book of Jeremiah. It's conjecture, but many Bible scholars believe that.

That Daniel was the man who showed Cyrus what the words of God were. And of course, you'll understand in a moment why he had some influence. Because he became known as the man that could shut the mouths of lions by the power of his God.

And Cyrus knew this. And so he would have respect as it is in the court of this heathen king. And so, Daniel, if you got a revelation from Scripture that some phenomenal thing was going to happen to God's people, would you keep it to yourself? I don't think so.

I don't think so. I think you'd be walking around. I think you'd be opening the Bible.

I think you'd be talking to everybody who could listen. I remember when I first got saved, my own family sometimes used to dread having me come home for dinner because I was seeing things in here. I wasn't living there yet, but I was seeing it.

There were still areas in my life that were where there were weakness and there were struggles and difficulties. But I was seeing something. I was seeing that there was a time of God's favor that had come upon me.

I was seeing that no power of evil could hold me captive any longer. I was seeing, yes, I had paid price along the way for my sin because the Bible says the wages of sin is death. And, yes, there was a measure of having reaped that because of living in sin.

But I saw, I saw the promises of God and there was no stopping me speaking about it to anybody who would listen. I remember at one point they used to dread me coming for breakfast after the Sunday morning service because I would follow people around the house with the Bible. And say, look at this, look what it says.

Look what God is about to do. Look where He says He wants to take His people. And it's just a revelation.

You see, beloved, Isaiah says the lame take the prey. The hungry heart gets the food. It's not by might or power.

It's not even by understanding. There's a revelation that comes to the hungry heart. The Word of God just lifts off the page and the Holy Spirit whispers into your heart, this promise is for you.

This promise is for your family. I'm going to take your family out of captivity. I'm going to give you a new lineage.

I'm going to establish them just like God spoke to Abraham. I'm going to do the same thing for you. And whereas your life was a reproach to many for many years, I'm going to now take it and make your life a blessing.

I'm going to make your children a blessing. I'm going to make children not even born to your children a blessing. I'm going to do something so far beyond your natural ability.

You've heard that. Many who have known God for any amount of time have heard this. And I can see Daniel studying the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah chapter 25, verse 11 and 12. Jeremiah said, speaking now about Babylon, he says, This whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment. And these nations shall serve the king.

Or actually, he's talking about Israel at this time. And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years. And verse 12 says it shall come to pass when 70 years are accomplished that I will punish the king of Babylon.

And that nation sent the Lord for their iniquity and the land of the Chaldeans. I'll make it a perpetual desolation. In other words, God is saying, I will punish those who have been allowed to punish you.

Yes, there have been forces that have been allowed to come into your life to punish you. Because of your careless neglect of the things of God. But God says there is an end to it.

I will never let my people be triumphed over. I'll never let my heritage be swallowed up forever by the powers of darkness. I will allow you to be chastised even by the enemy.

But at the end of that chastisement, the Lord says, I'm now going to punish those severely that have been used to punish you. In other words, He said, I'm going to make it a perpetual desolation. And that means, I'm going to destroy it and it will never be built again.

The enemy will try to rebuild. You know, at Babylon, so many have tried to rebuild Babylon, but it can never be rebuilt. God says, I'm going to destroy it and it's never going to have any power over your life again.

Folks, you can take that to the spiritual bank today. If you've got an enemy that's been against your life, that's been hounding you, and if that enemy's been there because you've been neglectful of the things of God, God says there's a time coming, it might be a little ways off, but there's a time coming when you're going to hear my voice calling you again. And when you hear my voice calling you, you can get up, you can begin to move towards me, because no power of hell can stop you.

You are mine. I bought you with a price. No one can take you out of my hand.

Hallelujah. Jeremiah chapter 29, if you go there with me. Verse 10.

It gets even better. And Daniel is reading this undoubtedly because he's studying the book of Jeremiah. Chapter 29, verse 10.

He says, For thus saith the Lord, that after 70 years be accomplished. Can you imagine how excited he must have been? It's 68 years they've been in Babylon. He's aware of it now.

And he sees this coming. And he says that after 70 years be accomplished in Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word towards you and causing you to return to this place. Now, that's, of course, Israel.

For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord. Thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end. Then, he says, you will call upon me and you'll go and pray unto me and I will hearken to you.

Oh, beloved. That's why the scripture says today, if you can hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Today, if you can hear him calling to you, call to him unashamedly.

Jesus, I hear you calling me. I'm as dead as Lazarus. I'm so overpowered by the enemy in this area of my life that I stink.

But God, I hear your voice calling me. And he says, you will go and pray to me and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

All your heart, God says. Not just a casual seeking. Not just a, Lord, I've come to Times Square Church and I just want to be pacified in my sin.

No, he says, you're going to find me and I'm going to answer you when you call out to me with all your heart. Jesus, I want your kingdom to come. I want your will to be done in me as it is in heaven.

I want my inheritance now. I want the life that you've got for me. I want, oh God, whatever you've got for my life.

Take me where you want me to go. Make me what you want me to be, oh God. Send me where you'd have me to go.

I'm sick of sin. I'm sick of living in the land of the enemy. By God's grace, I'm going to get up and I want you, Jesus, with all of my heart.

He says in verse 14, and I will be found of you, says the Lord, and I will turn away. Here's the very first sign that you have come back, as it is, into right relationship with God. He says, I will turn away your captivity.

I will turn it away. I will break the power of evil over your life and I will gather you from all nations. In other words, I will take you from all the mixture that's gotten into your life.

All the places where you have found yourself. I'll take you out of all the captivity and all the theology of the damned and doomed. I will take you out of these places.

And he says, I will gather you from all nations and from all places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you again into the place from where I caused you to be carried away captive. He says, I will visit you. I'll reveal my thoughts to you.

You will pray to me. I will listen to you. You will find me.

You will search for me with all your heart. And I will turn away your captivity. I will set you free, says the Lord.

Hallelujah. You're going to be able to walk out. You're going to get up and your enemies are going to have no power over you.

Because God says, I'm going to make a decree. I'm going to make a decree. I'm going to speak a word right to the king of your enemies.

And I'm going to tell him, let my people go, that they may serve me. Let them go. And he said, surprisingly enough, this army that once took you in chains, this army that once humiliated you, this army that was used to bring chastisement into your life, are going to just stand idly by as you get up and put your pack sack on your back and just walk out of the enemy's camp and head again into the place of promise.

They're going to be powerless to stop you because the Lord says, I'm going to speak a word. And they're not going to be able to raise a hand against you. Not even a dog will bark against you.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Again, in Jeremiah chapter 33, you'll have to keep in mind that Daniel is reading these scriptures. Now, this is a trifold as it is prophecy because it deals with physical Israel, but it also deals with you and I who are grafted in as it is to the lineage of God. And, of course, it also deals with the future kingdom of Christ that is coming.

Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, chapter 33, verse 1, the second time while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the maker thereof that hath formed it and established it, the Lord is his name. Call unto me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Or, in other words, it means that have not been intimately known by you, have not been revealed.

You have to understand that this is being revealed to Jeremiah before the captivity. The captivity has almost come. It's almost complete.

But God is speaking about freedom before the captivity even happens. Hallelujah. If you can even catch this, he's already made a plan of deliverance before allowing the chastisement to even begin.

He knows when it's going to end. He is in control of everything. The enemy has no power whatsoever.

The enemy can only do what God allows him to do. I believe that's why Paul says all things work together for good. And Paul, even if I wind up in jail, God, there's a purpose to this.

You're doing something in me. If I end up under a pile of rocks after preaching the gospel, there's a reason for this. God, you are doing something because you are in absolute control.

Oh, for a heart of trust of the Savior. Oh, for a heart that trusts God every day and in everything. Oh, for a heart that is finally rid of the why God questions and says, Oh, God, thank you for what you're doing in my life.

Thank you, God. Thank you, Lord. Even the things I don't understand are being worked together for my good.

God, you are doing something. You're establishing a testimony in me, Lord. Jesus, thank you.

Thank you, God. Not even my enemies can come against me in greater measure than you allow them to. And if you allow them to come against me, there is a reason why it's happening.

You are doing something in my heart, oh, God. Hallelujah. Thanks be to God for a heart of trust.

Call unto me. He says, I'll answer you. I'll show you great and mighty things which you are not.

At this point, of course, the children of Israel are not acquainted with anymore. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts and by the sword. You see, the captivity now is in full flight.

They have come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it's to fill them with the dead bodies of men whom I've slain in mine anger and in my fury. For all the wickedness I've hid my face from this city. He says, yes, my own people are going to rise up and they will try to win the battle in their own strength, but they're not going to be able to win it.

He said, because I've hidden my face. Beloved, try like we may. We cannot walk the Christian walk in our own strength.

It's impossible. We cannot be holy in our own strength. We cannot defeat the devil in our own strength.

We cannot out reason the powers of darkness in our own strength. The only way we can ever do these things is when we are beholding the face of God and we know deep in our hearts that God's face is beholding us. We know there's nothing that's breaking that fellowship between us and our Savior.

Behold, he says in verse 6, he's now talking about his people. I will bring in health and cure. And he says, I will cure them and I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.

He said, I'm going to bring a cure. I'm going to bring them to a place of rest. That truth is going to set them free.

I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return and will build them as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy and praise and honor before all nations of the earth which shall hear all the good that I do unto them.

And they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it. Now, God said, I know you're going to be captivated. I know you're going to fail.

But even that is going to have a purpose. Because in it, you're going to become sin sick. And you're going to call out to me and I'm going to come to you.

And I'm going to get a name for not you, but for myself. Your testimony is not going to be of yourself. You're going to be a man or woman that says, Oh God, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

That's going to be your testimony. Oh God, that you'd even consider walking with me. You'd even consider using me.

You'd even consider letting me speak your word. God, I'm overwhelmed at your grace. I'm overwhelmed at your goodness.

He says, I'm going to get a name for myself. A joy and praise and honor before all nations. Because they're going to hear about the good that I'm going to do to you.

And they're going to fear and tremble for all that I'm going to procure for you. All that I'm going to bring into your life. Verse 10, he says, Thus saith the Lord, again there shall be heard in this place, which you say shall be desolate, without man and without beast.

Even in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man, without inhabitant, without beast. In other words, when you've gotten to the place where you say it's hopeless. God says, this is what I like to begin to work.

When you've gotten to the place where you say there's no hope. This place is going to be empty and desolate with no joy, no life. And when the devil finally has you convinced.

And in your heart you say, God, there's never going to be any life here. There's never going to be any fruit. And the Lord says, when I hear that.

And when I hear you now call out to me, I'm going to begin to do something. And he says, there's going to be heard again in that place. The voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

Well, we are the bride. Christ is the bridegroom. The voice of them that shall say, praise the Lord of hosts.

For the Lord is good, for his mercy endures forever. His mercy will be your testimony today. It's not that I figured out what happened and figured out how to get out of Babylonian captivity.

No, no. I had gotten to the place where there was no hope but God. But I saw a promise for my life in the scriptures.

And I called out and said, Jesus, I want you with all of my heart. God says, the voice of the bridegroom is going to be heard again. And your testimony is going to be, he is merciful.

And he is good and his mercy endures forever. And of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land as at the first, saith the Lord.

What's more, Daniel knew that this was the time appointed by God for the people to return from captivity. There was an appointed time. And the revelation really that must have brought something exciting to Daniel's heart was just simply this.

This is the appointed time. And it's right at this time that an incredible conflict begins. Some demonically inspired leaders who are envious at the position that this ruler Darius has put Daniel in.

Daniel is second in the kingdom. Begin to conspire to stop him from praying. Beloved, I want to tell you something.

There is a conspiracy of hell against you if you have been praying. If you have been facing Christ and believing God, you're starting to see promises in the scriptures that talk about freedom. Not just for yourself, but perhaps for your family and for others around you.

And you're seeing this thing now, a demonically inspired conspiracy starts to stop him from praying. And the threat is simply this. Nobody prays for 30 days.

Now, Daniel had another choice to make. And if they pray to anybody but Darius, the king, they're thrown into a den of lions. You see, the lions didn't happen early in the ministry of Daniel.

It happened right at the end of Daniel's ministry. Right at the point where he's getting the revelation. Right at the point where he's seeing what the scriptures are saying.

Right at the point where he should be pressing through like he never pressed through before. This is where the greatest attack of the devil will come against him. And beloved, I warn you, if you're seeing in the scriptures that your freedom is coming, if God is beginning to reveal something to your heart, the enemy will come like a roaring lion against you.

He will roar at you about your past failure. He will roar about your powerless condition. He will roar about the things that are going to happen to you.

And the disgrace and damage that's going to come into your life if you persist in this pursuit of God. But I remind you today, the devil is a liar. He is an absolute liar.

He cannot stop what God has begun in your life. He cannot stop. And Daniel determined in his heart, I see freedom coming.

I'm not stopping pressing into God. And three times a day he went on his knees as he'd always done. And he opened his windows.

He didn't do it in secret. He opened his windows. He said, God's going to set us free and I don't care who comes against it.

There's freedom coming into my life. There's freedom coming to the people of God. And he faced Jerusalem and he began to pray three times a day, knowing that he was going to be thrown to the lions.

But God gave him favor. And God shut the mouths of the lions. And because of it, Daniel was given favor with Cyrus, the new king.

Cyrus, who knew that Daniel served a God who could shut the mouths of lions. Cyrus, who signed the decree saying, let the people of God go home to Jerusalem. Let them rebuild their cities and towns.

Let them rebuild the temple of God. It came from a man who said, I'm not turning back. I'm not stopping from what I see in the Scriptures.

I'm not giving in to the lies of the devil any longer. The devil will always try to make it darkest just before the dawn. Many here have been praying and fasting for your families these last several days.

The devil will try to make it dark for you now. He'll roar against you and try to get you off that praying ground. He'll try to shove you off the ground of the Scriptures and believe in God.

He'll roar at you and try to make you convinced that your circumstances have more power than God's promises to you. He will do everything to get you off that ground of prayer. In Mark 9, let me just share with you.

The father brought a son to Christ that was demon possessed. And Jesus, remember the Scripture, he said, if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. And the father said, oh God, I believe, help my unbelief.

And Jesus charged the spirit. He said, thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. Now, it's interesting that he identifies it as a dumb and deaf spirit.

A spirit in a sense that has closed his mouth, closed his ears. He can't hear, he can't speak the things of God. That's why he's in this captivity in the first place.

And God responds to this father's prayer. And Christ commands this spirit to come out of this boy. The Bible tells us that the spirit rent him.

And the word rent in the Greek is tor or mold. It's mauled, as in mauled by a lion or some kind of a wild bear or something like that. He was rent, thrown about, mauled about as it is, in so much that he appeared to be dead.

And all the people around looked and said, he is dead. And it's amazing. Jesus had already spoken the word.

And after he'd spoken the word, it's like this force of a lion came against this boy. But the word was already spoken. And everyone looks and says, well, it looks pretty hopeless to me.

We heard the word of God, but we look at the situation, and it's gone from bad to worse. Beloved, when you're praying for your children, it very well might go that way. Because God will bring your sons and daughters to the end of themselves.

Don't try to intervene. Don't try to stop the work of God. Don't try to get in the way of what God is doing.

Now, at the time when the boy appears to be dead, and at the time when everyone around says he's dead, there's no hope for him, then the scripture says, Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. Took him by the hand. He delights in lifting us up when we've finally gotten to the place where there's no hope but the hand of God coming to touch our lives.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. The things that Daniel had clearly seen and heard from the mouth of God, he knew that God was about to do these things.

Daniel was at the very threshold of God's decree that whosoever wanted to return and build with authority, and they could build with power and provision, could do so. Psalm 126 tells us about this particular time of release. And the psalmist says, When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dreamed.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them. Even the heathen knew.

Even the heathen knew. Even the heathen knows when you get free. Those around who mock God, when you get free, and your tongue is again filled with singing, and your mouth is filled with laughter.

Laughter in a sense that, Oh God, this could never have happened apart from your hand coming on my life. Even the heathen have to stop and say, The Lord has done great things for them. And we look at that, and we say, God, I'm so thankful for Israel.

I'm so thankful for Daniel. I'm so thankful, oh God, that you allowed these people to be chastised, but then you took them home. But how does that apply to my life today? This is another generation.

Many of us are captive. Even those who profess God's name. And is there a word for us today? Is there a word? Is there any way? How does this apply to my life? I mean, this is historical, and I thank God for it.

And I know historically, these people really did come out of captivity. And they really did go back, and then of course another succession of events begins to start, and the prophets are sent, and they eventually rebuild the temple, and the walls are built. You know the whole story of Israel and Nehemiah.

But it's wonderful. But is there a word for me in this? And this is what the Lord spoke to my heart. I just want to read it to you.

And he, that's Jesus, came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. And as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read. There was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah.

When he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. In other words, he sent me to those that have no resources within themselves.

He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, those that have been captivated and bruised and crushed by their enemies and their circumstance. To preach deliverance to the captives. In other words, the release as it is.

The opening of the prison door. And the recovering of sight to the blind. Now, I've always believed that that's a reference to the spiritually blind.

Those who could not see Christ. They could not see or understand the ways of God. He said, I've been sent to them to give them sight.

And to set at liberty those that are bruised. Those that the enemy has bruised. He has trodden them down.

He has hurt them. He has wounded them. They are my creation.

But I came to set them free. And, he said, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Now, this is the end of his scripture.

But the acceptable year in the Greek text means a time in which God has pleasure. A time which he himself has chosen. And technically what Jesus was saying to the people, this is the day.

This is the time. The Spirit of God is upon me to do all of these things for everyone. Whether they are poor or broken hearted or captivated or spiritually blind or bruised by the enemy.

This is the day they can go free. That was his message. And, of course, no wonder.

Everybody in the synagogue looked at him. And they said, but who but the Messiah could fulfill this? I mean, this is ridiculous. This is the carpenter.

This is Mary and Joseph's son. And the Bible says, he closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This day, whosoever will may come. Whoever wants to be free can be free.

Who wants the chains of darkness broken can have them broken. This day, this scripture in its entirety is fulfilled in your ears. The poor can have the treasure of Christ now.

The blind can see the prosperity that is theirs in the life of Christ that God wants to live in through them. They can begin to understand, those that are captivated in sin, that they can be set free. This is a year of glorious liberty.

This is the time. This is the day. It began that day.

And, beloved, the good news is that word that Christ spoke is still in force today. This is the day of our freedom. There's no power of hell that holds you that can keep you captive.

There's no demonic stronghold that can keep binding your life and keep grinding your face into the dust. If with all of your heart you can say, I want Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I want to walk with God.

I want the life of God within me. I want the power of God to reign in me. I want to have a testimony that God has destined for my life.

I want to stand in the power of God and let the whole world have to stand up and take notice that this man or this woman has been with Jesus Christ. If you want God, He will set you today, Christ was saying, on a road to freedom. And sadly to say, when the decree was made under Cyrus, only really a small portion of the people who were in captivity got up and went back.

Some people just get so used to captivity. They just get so used to living there. Maybe once or twice they have tried to walk away and were caught by soldiers and brought back.

Or maybe they just got so used to the cage that they just thought they never could get out. Maybe their temporary superficial prosperity they were experiencing in Babylon had robbed their eyes of the true treasure that God wanted to give them back in the land of promise. But for whatever reason, really it was only a small portion got up and headed back.

I pray to God that's not our testimony today. I pray to God with all my heart that if you are captivated and you are hearing this, that you're not among those that just choose to live in captivity. Choose to just stay in this place thinking, well, this is all that God has destined for my life.

You see, you may still today be in the enemy's territory and the enemy will roar at you to divert your attention from God's voice. But yet, Jesus says, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden. I'll give you rest.

Learn of me, I'm meek and lowly in heart. You'll find rest for your soul. Come to me.

The gateway is open. The freedom has been bought. The devil's power has been openly displayed as having lost its stronghold by Christ.

There's absolutely no reason for you to sit in captivity any longer. You can get up and your enemies are going to have to stand still and watch you come forward to God. They can't stop you anymore.

If this really gets in your heart, if you really understand this, this is the day of your freedom. I'm talking about everyone who's captivated by the powers of darkness. Whether it's through lust, immoral lifestyle, anger, alcohol, drug addiction, fear, a lying tongue, thievery, adultery.

Any sin known to mankind where the enemy's got you convinced you'll never get out. Today, if you can hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Today, if you can hear his voice, you can get up and you can walk out.

And that's my simple altar call today. If you are hearing the voice of Christ calling you, you can get up and you can walk out. We're going to pray a prayer at this altar and believe God for a shout of victory.

You're going to walk away and say, out of this church today saying, When God turned my captivity, I was like a man who dreams, like a woman who dreams. My tongue was filled with laughter. On my lips were the praises of God.

And even the heathen round about me said, God really has done something for you. What did you do to get your freedom? Not much, really. I cried out to God with all my heart.

I saw that the way was made clear and I got up and I came to him. That's all he's ever asked of his people. Today, if you can hear his voice, I'm going to invite this whole sanctuary to stand.

Balcony, main sanctuary, education annex. I'm going to invite you to come forward. Those who want to be free.

If you're lost in your sin, you can come and Christ will forgive you. He will cleanse you because he died on the cross for you. If you're captivated by the powers of darkness, you can come forward.

And Christ is going to set you free today. I make no vain promise to you today. If in your heart you want truth, he's going to set you free.

You're going to have an incredible testimony when this day is out. In the annex, please just go forward between the screens. And I'll be praying for you momentarily there.

The power of God is there as strongly as his power is here. Wherever his word can be heard, just come. Wherever you are, just come.

Balcony, you can go to either exit, make your way down to this altar. Today is the day of your freedom. You're going to be free today.

I want you to come believing that in your heart. You're going to be free. You're coming to Christ.

You're stepping out, making a confession that I have been captivated. I'm living on the enemy's ground. But today, I've heard the voice of God calling me out.

And today, I'm laying hold of the freedom that is now mine in Jesus Christ. Please move in closely. Move in closely.

There's freedom. There's freedom for everybody here who wants it today. Jesus will set you free.

Now, before we pray today, you see, today, you are returning to God, many, but you are in enemy territory. You're hearing the voice of God calling you. We're going to pray a simple prayer momentarily.

By that prayer, you can be assured that God will be your strength. Christ will set you free. And his part is to give you the power to walk in freedom.

But your part and my part is to get up and move towards God, the place of promise. See, the same word came to many people, but there were many who chose not to get up. But to those who did, God didn't fail them.

And everything they began to build, even though they faced opposition, was built by the power and the strength of the Holy Spirit. God built it. You have to make the determination to say, God, you have to give me the power.

But I determine in my heart to walk away. As Paul said, forgetting those things that are behind. I'm not listening to the lies of the devil anymore.

And I'm moving away from these things for the rest of my life. I'm leaving Babylon behind me. I'm never going back.

Never, never, never going back. By God's grace, I'm moving into the land of promise. And there's going to be a new testimony built in my life.

A new testimony. I'll not be satisfied until hell shakes at the work of God that God is doing in me. I'll not be satisfied until every demonic spirit trembles when I go home on the subway.

I may not even be aware of it. But the devil is very much aware of a surrendered vessel to Christ. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Pray with me. Lord Jesus, I thank you for loving me enough to not let me be comfortable in my sin and in the enemy's territory.

I'm sorry today for the disgrace that my sin brings to your name. I have no hope of escape apart from you. And so I look to you today.

I hear you calling me. I feel your love for me. And so I look to you, Jesus, and say, Lord, I come.

I come to receive forgiveness. I come to be given strength by the power of the Holy Spirit. I come to yield to you that you can work in me the life that you have for me.

And you can make my life a living testimony of your glory. I know the enemy will roar against me and try to lie. But I don't believe him anymore.

He has no more power over me. He cannot hurt me. Because you will shut his mouth.

I condemn his tongue and all of his lies against my life. God has received me. Jesus died for me.

He rose from the dead for me. He lives for fellowship with me. And he will bring me to the land of freedom as I choose to get up and move in the direction of the sound of his voice.

Jesus, thank you for loving me, for forgiving me, for strengthening me, for calling me. O God, I believe today that I'm getting up. And by the grace of God, I'm leaving the enemy's territory.

I'm leaving captivity behind. And I'm moving forward in the grace of God. I believe that because of Jesus Christ, this very day, I am free.

I am free. I am free. Now thank him for your freedom.

Thank him. Hallelujah. Thank him.

Thank him. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. This is the conclusion of the message.

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