

Rising Up To A Higher Calling

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of rising up to a higher calling and embracing the greater plans God has for our lives, surpassing our own limited impressions and desires. It highlights the need to let go of self-preservation, surrendering to God's sovereign and unique purpose for each individual, leading to a supernatural life filled with God's blessings and impact. The message urges listeners to move from a focus on merely 'getting out' of struggles to actively 'going in' to what God has prepared, seeking His will and purpose above all else.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Philippians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 1:27, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Romans 8:28, Acts 21:13, Psalm 27:1, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Higher Calling", "Surrender to God's Purpose"

Description

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Transcript

I want to talk to you this evening about rising up to a higher calling, a higher place than maybe your self-view has allowed you. A lot of people have an impression of what kind of a life would make me happy or what my life could be, but I want to suggest to you tonight that no matter what kind of an impression you may have formed in your heart this evening, your impression is far short of what God has for you. He has something so much higher.

As a matter of fact, the scripture says it's not even entered into your heart yet to understand fully or to see the things that God has prepared for you because you love him. He's got something sovereign for you. He's got something unique for you.

He's got something that only he could do through your life. That's what makes it a supernatural life, and that's how you know that he lives. So, Father, I thank you tonight for the touch of heaven, my God, in this sanctuary.

I thank you, Lord, that you've enabled us in this little town of Grantville, Pennsylvania, in this Bible school to travel the world. We don't even have to leave the campus, and we can go into all the world, into homes everywhere tonight. Thank you, Lord, for all of the countries that we are now in, everywhere that our songs have been heard, our prayers have been lifted up, where your word is being understood and loved and acknowledged.

Thank you, God, for the man, the woman, that's at home tonight, despairing, wondering if anybody even cares or knows that they're even there. Lord, you do, and you have sent us tonight into their home, whether it's in a car, in a park bench, in a hotel, an apartment, it doesn't matter. We are there now.

And, Father, I thank you, God, that you will give strength that only you can. I ask you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. God, my voice is limited, but yours can create a galaxy.

I can only speak one thought at one time, but you can speak on a thousand different levels. Speak to every heart. Speak to every circumstance, every situation, every secret fear, every struggle, every trial, every difficulty.

My God, draw us out as your people in this, especially now in this day in which we're living. Draw us out into something that you have for each of our lives. God, help me tonight to reach every heart.

In Jesus' name, amen. Matthew chapter 16, if you have your Bible with you or any kind of electronic device where you can just quickly text that in, Matthew chapter 16 verses 24 and 25. It starts this way, Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Luke chapter 17, also Jesus talking about these similar verses to this, a similar thought to this one, and he talks about this concept of losing the life that you could have had, that God had for you. He prefaces it with these words, Remember Lot's wife.

Now, Lot was a man who was taken out of a perishing city. I don't want to go into all the details. It doesn't matter for those that are listening online in particular, but it was a perishing place.

It was a place that was really under the judgment of God, and God in his mercy sent messengers to take a man called Lot and his wife and two daughters out of this place before he judged it. And just as he's doing for you tonight, he sent me and he sent others here tonight, those that have prayed, those that have worshiped. He sent us to help you, to take you by the hand as Lot and his wife and daughters were, and to lead you out of where you are into the place of safety that God has prepared for you.

Now, in this particular journey out of this place, this city called Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife turned around and in a sense, longingly looked back and hoped in her heart, I think, to preserve what God had told her to leave behind. And this is the dilemma that a lot of people face today. There's something in your life that you want to preserve.

There's something that God is trying to draw you out of where you are. And you have a vision in a sense of what happiness is. You have a vision of what your life could be, but that vision is very, very short of what God has for you.

And he's got you by the hand. He's trying to lead you out. But many, many people look back at what should be left behind.

And they look back longingly, thinking that there's something there of great value. When God says, no, if you are in Christ, you're now a new creation. The old things in your life have passed away and all things have become new.

So the Lord is saying, I want you to leave behind what needs to be left behind. This was the dilemma of the people of God that in one season in the scripture were brought out of a place of captivity called Egypt. And they were brought into the wilderness and that whole generation ended up living in a very dry place.

And here's the reason why. They wanted out of captivity. Like somebody listening to me tonight, you're a drug addict, you're online, you're an alcoholic, you're hooked on pornography, whatever it is in your life and you want out.

And so your whole vision in the sense of your life is if God will just get me out of here, how wonderful my life is going to be. And so in faithfulness, he heard their cry, he sent a messenger and he actually brought them out into a wilderness place for a season. The problem with this early generation is that they didn't want to go in to what God had for them.

They wanted to come out of what was oppressing them, but they didn't want to make the journey in. And a lot of people are like that today. They want out of addiction, they want out of a bad relationship, they want out of unforgiveness, they want out of all this stuff.

And God in his mercy hears the cry and he'll actually take you out if you cry out to him. But did you know tonight that he has something much bigger and better than just a wilderness experience or just a testimony of what used to be in the past and somehow he brought you out? He wants to bring you into something that only he can bring you into. This is what I feel that Jesus was saying.

If we seek to save what we think our life should be, we will lose the life that God has for us. Isn't that something? And think about Lot's wife, for example. She turned around, she looked behind, and what happened because of that looking behind? She brought incredible loss not only to herself but also to her family.

You and I know the story that her looking behind longingly at what should have been left behind. Now she was destined in a sense to have a life. She was destined to bring a blessing, and you think of what could have been in that family.

But then the history tells us what actually happened when she turned around, looked behind. She lost everything that God had for her, and it brought incest actually into her home and her family. And from her two daughters and her husband came two tribes of people, the Ammonites and the Moabites, that both became enemies of the people of God.

It's amazing when you look at it. One person who just looks behind and is not willing to leave it behind. There's certain things we've got to leave behind, even the things we thought were good.

Obviously when she turned around, there had to be something she thought was good back there, whatever it was. I don't know. Did she have a sewing business? I don't know what it was.

Did she have some kind of a vision of maybe she could improve that old situation? But she turned around and looked back, and when she did, she brought incredible heartache into thousands of other people ahead of her. And you think about those who will not go into the life that Christ has for us, the heartache it brings into our own families, our own future. Everybody associated with us can begin to suffer because we made the choice not to go into what God had for us, but we tried to preserve what we thought our life should be.

That's really the point. Whoever desires to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

I mean that's, loses it in a sense, let it go. Let go what I thought my life should be. Let go what I thought was going to make me happy.

Let go what I thought would bring me fulfillment and just say, God, I don't know what you have for me, but whatever it is, it's better than anything that my own heart or mind can come up with. So I'm just going with what you have for me. So I'm willing to lose what I have.

I'm willing to let it go so that I may possess that which you have for me, and it will bring a blessing into the lives of others all around. You know, I was brought up under a lot of pressure. My father was denied an education because of World War II.

Actually, he was in his first year of college and had to leave to join the military and fought in World War II. When he came back, the opportunity for an education was gone. So I was his first born son.

So he started to vicariously live his dream through me, and I was going to be the next lawyer. My grandfather was a judge, by the way, and I was going to be the next lawyer in the family, and I was going to succeed, and I was going to have every opportunity that he didn't have, and he saved all his money to send me to college and all the rest of these things. The only problem is I had absolutely no desire in my heart for the things at that point that he wanted for my life, and it brought an incredible pressure into my life.

I became fearful at the age of 15 because I felt like he could never live up to his expectation of me. I started to suffer panic attacks. Many of you know my testimony, and by the age of 24, I had suffered for nine years before Christ set me free, in a minute of time, literally, when he set me free, when I became a believer in Christ.

And then it was at this point that suddenly I was no longer afraid of crowds. Suddenly fear no longer had a strong hold on my life. Suddenly what was denied me now became accessible to me.

I already had an undergraduate degree in law and sociology, and so I had an opportunity, in a sense, to go to law school. I was only three years away from being a lawyer, and suddenly that which was denied to me was now made available. But on one hand, I'm a believer in Christ, and I feel God calling me to do something, but I have this other desire in my heart.

I'm thinking, well, I'd make a great Christian lawyer, if there is such a thing. I'm not sure, but I would make a great Christian lawyer. And I remember the battle that started to rage in my heart because now what was no longer accessible, what wasn't accessible to me at one point in my life now was accessible.

And on one hand, there's what I thought my life should be or could be, and then on the other hand, it's a complete mystery in a sense of what God has for my life. And so I could have made the choice of seeking to save my life, if that makes sense to you, of choosing my own direction and making it a Christian thing. You know, and that's what a lot of people do, that we choose our own direction and we make it a Christian.

I'm a Christian this, I'm a Christian that. And we do some good, there's no doubt about that, and heaven is still our home. I'm not talking about salvation here, but a lot of what we could have been.

You know, I think of the 100,000 people in Africa that in one service raised their hands to receive Christ, many of them Muslims, that none of that would have happened. I'd be in a courtroom somewhere arguing a case before a jury and would never know what my life could have been. And you think of all the blessing that could have been missed if I would have sought to preserve my own life.

And so as young people in this Bible college, and those that are listening online tonight, I want you to seriously consider these things before you make any decisions for the future. You see, I don't know what God has for you, but I can tell you that it's much better than anything that you think that you might have for yourself. Paul the Apostle says in the book of Philippians chapter 3, verses 12 to 15, he says, not that I have already attained or I'm already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

In other words, I've been called for a purpose that only God fully understands what that purpose is, and I don't fully understand it, Paul could say, because I haven't attained it yet. I will only know once it's finished what it actually was. But I'm moving forward, and I want to lay hold of that which Christ Jesus has laid a hold of me for.

I feel that way. I'm 68 years of age, and I could formulate some plans, there's no doubt about that. I could envision what my life should be for the rest of my days, whatever I've got left, and I could actually seek to save my life at this point, and not go the full distance of what God has for my future.

And a lot of people might suffer if I made that wrong choice and did that. But Paul says, brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. And therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind.

And if in anything you think otherwise, God will even reveal this to you. Paul says, I'm moving towards what God has for me. And thank God he did.

Aren't you glad he didn't listen to Agabus on the shores of the sea when Agabus came to him, a true prophet of God, and took his belt off and bound his hands and says, thus it shall be to the man that wears this belt, you're going to be bound, and imprisonment and bonds await for you. And remember, Paul said to them, what do you mean, to break my heart? Are you trying to turn me basically from the will of God? And I love the Scripture that says, and when he could not be persuaded, we said, let the will of the Lord be done. Isn't that amazing? When we couldn't turn him from it, we said, let the will of the Lord be done.

Aren't you thankful that Paul didn't turn? Aren't you thankful he didn't seek to save himself? Aren't you thankful, I know I am, that he went to prison? I'm thankful he went to prison because he wrote some great letters that I'm actually reading from to his friends. And you can just see the people on the shore, poor Paul, God was doing miracles through his life, and poor Paul could have saved himself here. Instead, he's

in prison, and the poor man, all he's got is a pen and some parchment, and all instead of doing miracles and big crusades, all he can do is write a few letters to some of his friends he left behind.

Not fully comprehending, all things do work together for good to those who love God, and are they called according to his purpose. And here's Paul is penning the doctrine and theological practice for the church for the next 2,000 years in a jail cell, and he has no idea, but he knows that all things work together for good, and he has pressed towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It's not always the easy path.

It's not always the path that looks to be the most attractive. It's not always a path without pain. It's even a path that could cause you to lose your freedom.

It could be a path of hardship. It could be difficulty. Maybe Lot's wife looked behind and remembered the nice comfortable bed back at home, and all that was ahead of her was a cave in a little place called Zohar, and maybe, maybe it just looked so uncomfortable ahead, that's why she turned and looked back.

Maybe she remembered the soft pillow and the warm comforts. I don't know what it was, but I do know she turned back and brought heartache into her home. Heartache into the nation, heartache into many lives when she had the opportunity like the apostle Paul to go forward.

You see, self-preservation is at the core of the weakness of today's church. Theologically, we live to preserve ourselves. Going to church, what's in it to make me happy today? What's in it to make me more comfortable today? What's in it to bless me today? And because of that focus, the church, the testimony is very weak in this generation, but by God's grace, we will rise up one more time.

I'm speaking tonight to people online. I'm speaking to the drug addict, the depressed person, the one who's addicted. I'm speaking to the one who's struggling to forgive.

It is you that God has chosen to make a difference in this. You are the end time army of God. You are plan A in the kingdom of God.

It's time to get up. It's time to get out. It's time to go in.

Not just get out of addiction, but go into what God has for your life. Go into the fullness of the spirit for you. Go into whatever that journey is going to be and wherever it's going to lead.

It's, in a sense, throwing our head in the ring. It's a figure of speech, but we throw out in the ring and say, I'm into the fight. For the glory of God and for the souls of men, I'm in.

Right to the end, no matter what it costs me, I'm in. If you'd be otherwise minded, Paul wrote, God will show this to you. God will.

If there's a duality in the heart, if there's something in my heart or yours that is caught between two opinions, I don't know about you, but I am not willing to live in the wilderness. There's so many people who live there. They come out of bondage and that's all they can talk about.

Jack West used to talk about a man that he knew that kept his testimony folded up in a little piece of paper in the drawer, in the top drawer, and loved to share his testimony. So people would come to his house and he would send his grandson up and say, grandson, go get my testimony. And he would bring it, they'd open it up and read it.

And it was something that happened like 40 years earlier. It wasn't current, it wasn't fresh. And one day somebody came to visit the house and he said, grandson, go up and get my testimony.

I want to read it. And so the grandson came back and he said, I'm so sorry, grandpa, but the mice ate your testimony. It's gone.

They got in the drawer and they ate your testimony. You see, he just had an old thing, just all folded up. And I don't know about you, but I don't want to live like that.

I want a living testimony of the living reality of Christ every day. And if you'd be otherwise minded. And so my question tonight, especially to those that are coming in online, what's the focus of your life and your prayer? Are you just wanting to get out or do you want to go in? You see, this is the choice that you have to make.

And I believe, I believe in my heart that a lot of people are not free because you're not ready to go in yet. You remember Hannah, the Bible talks about this woman who was empty inside. She was barren and she bore no life.

And for her, it was like a shame. It was an ache inside her. She felt her life was so unfulfilled and she would come to prayer meeting year after year.

She'd come to a prayer meeting and she would, she would lay her petition before God and she would go home and she would be empty again year after year. And she finally got to the place where she was so used to being disappointed that her prayer didn't have any words anymore. Scripture tells us that she, she came to the house of God and she was in such sorrow of spirit that she could only move her lips and words wouldn't come out anymore.

But you see, finally something came out of her, her heart that God had been waiting for all these years. See, he wasn't willing to bring her out until she was willing to go in. And she finally said these words, if you will give me life, I will bring it back to you for your glory.

And it was at that point that Eli, the priest told her, go home and the Lord grant you your petition. And the scripture said she went home and was no more sad. And from her empty life was born the prophet Samuel, who led the nation for 40 years.

And so many, many people don't get the answer because they're not willing to go the distance yet. They seek to preserve something. You see, she wasn't saying, God, give me this baby so that I can be fulfilled and my life can be good and my life can be happy.

Do you know the cost it must've been to her? Eli was a fat old backslidden priest. His sons were profane. They were fornicating at the doorway of the temple and stealing from the people.

Can you imagine bringing your baby there, your little boy? But you see her prayer and the sacrifice in a sense of her son to bring her son into that was God's answer to the spiritual renewal of the people of God at that time. And so I want to challenge you, especially those that are online. It's not enough just to get out.

You have to pray, God, take me in, take me in to what you have for my life. Father, in Jesus' name, in Jesus' name, Lord, your word has been spoken. And when your word is spoken, it always requires a response.

Let me be the first tonight to say to you, I am all in. Whatever you have for me, whatever your will is, give me the grace to let go of everything that needs to be let go of and to embrace what lies before. Father, God, in Jesus' name, I'm asking you tonight to deliver the oppressed online, set free the addict, give victory over circumstances and difficulties in people's lives that can't be overcome by any amount of natural human strength, and rise us up again.

Oh, Holy Spirit of the living God, raise us up to be an end-time victorious army. Give us a voice again, oh God, in our generation, Lord, give us a voice. God, you took Hannah's prayer and from a prayer that had no more words, you raised a voice that led the nation.

Lord, we put it into your hands. You're the one who took a little boy's lunch and multiplied it and fed thousands. So you can take us, God, in our littleness.

You can take us in our smallness, our nothingness, my God, our foolishness. You can take us, God, and multiply your life within us. Oh, Jesus, Son of God, it's my cry that you be glorified again in this generation.

It's the cry of my heart that the children of our time be set free. God, to hear songs of praise in our homes again, civility in our streets, truth being honored, the name of Jesus being revered. Oh, God, hear my cry.

God, hear my cry. God, hear my cry. I have no other desire.

I have no other reason to go on. God, hear my cry. Oh, Jesus, raise the drug addict tonight.

Set free the oppressed. Heal the wounded in heart. Let the poor have the treasure of heaven open to them.

God, open every prison door. Do the work, Lord Jesus Christ, that your Father sent you to do. Be glorified, oh God, in this generation.

Be glorified. Let songs of praise be sung in our streets again. Let our children dance in our schools, my God, and turn to you.

Push back the darkness, my God, that wants to swallow a whole generation. Oh, Jesus, it's all in your hands now. It's all in your hands.

I don't know what else to do, but just come to you. It's all up to you now. Even my prayers fall short, but your mercy endures forever.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I challenge you online today, tonight, all around the world, get up.

In God's name, get up. I mean, physically stand up, wherever you are, in your bedroom, on a park bench, in your living room, stand up and say, Lord Jesus Christ, I'm going in. I'm going into everything you've got for my life.

I'm not just going to concentrate on getting out. I'm going to concentrate on going in. I'm going to become everything you've calling me to be.

If you say I'm an evangelist, I'm an evangelist. If you say I'm to preach, I'm going to preach. If you say I'm to give, I'm going to give.

Whatever it is, my God, I'm going into whatever you have for my life. I'm not staying in the wilderness any longer, and I'm not living in captivity anymore. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. I'm going to ask everyone to pray this simple prayer with me tonight. Lord Jesus Christ, I give you my life.

Thank you for breaking the power of sin and the penalty of sin so that I can be free. Now take me and use my life for your glory. Take me where I can never go in myself and make me into what I could never be by my own strength.

Give me what I could never possess by my own efforts so that my life can glorify you. Let me be a blessing to my family, my home, my community, and people all around me in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to sing one song, then we're going to have communion together, and we're going to celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ tonight.

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