

The Glorious Death of the Righteous

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the hope and peace found in the glorious death of the righteous, illustrated through biblical examples and personal testimonies.

Duration: 45:34

Scripture: Numbers 23:10, Psalm 37:30, Proverbs 15:6

Topics: "Righteous"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging our incapability to understand the word of God and find the path on our own. He surrenders his life as a vessel to speak on behalf of God and asks for divine guidance. The speaker emphasizes the importance of ordinary believers in the church, who may not have high profiles but have the power to impact society. He shares personal experiences of witnessing miraculous transformations in hospital rooms, where imprisoned hearts were released, bitterness was melted away, and relationships were reconciled. The sermon concludes with a reference to Numbers 23:10, where a seer hired to curse the people of God instead desires to die the death of the righteous.

Transcript

I'm going to speak this morning on the glorious death of the righteous. The glorious death of the righteous. If you go to the Old Testament, please, to the book of Numbers, chapter 23.

This is a message you can probably keep the tape because you'll get an opportunity to apply it someday in your own life. The glorious death of the righteous. Father, I thank you, God, with all my heart, for your mercy.

I thank you for the incredible and unsearchable depths of your love. I thank you, Lord, for how kind you are with those that are called to represent you. And so often we misrepresent you in this world, but yet you're kind.

You guide us, you lead us, you teach us. You love us with a love that is beyond our own understanding. You have to lead us into it, Lord, because we can't learn it on our own.

We're incapable of understanding it. We cannot find the path. You have to guide us on this path.

Today, Lord, I yield my life as a vessel to speak on your behalf. And I ask you, Lord, to animate my mind, spirit, my physical body. I ask you, God, to speak through me to every heart of every person that you've

gathered to hear your word today.

I pray, Jesus, that what I speak would be animated by you. It would be your heart. And you give us ears to hear and hearts to embrace what you're about to speak to your church.

Lord, you've been speaking this for weeks on end. And for many of us, you've been speaking to us for years, but we've not fully yet been able to hear this. Father, I pray, God, for great grace to speak it and greater grace to live it.

And I ask you in Jesus' name. Numbers chapter 23 and verse 10, one verse of Scripture, Who can count the dust of Jacob and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. Now, for those who know the story, this is a man who's actually hired by a king, or at least the king felt that he had hired this seer, as they were called in this day, to curse the people of God who were on their journey to the place of promise.

And God met with him, and clearly instructed this man that you're only to say what I speak to you. And perhaps for the first, and I don't know if it was the last time, he had heaven opened to him, and he saw some things. And from the vantage point that an enemy king of the people of Israel took him to, he looked at the children of God, heaven opened to him, and he saw something.

And he said, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. He saw something so incredible, so personally desirable, that at the moment that he spoke it, I believe that he truly desired it. Just like people who come into this house, and you're worshiping God, and you might not even be living for God.

But there's a sense in your heart, this is the way to go. This is where life is found. This is what I've longed for.

I have a sense that I was created to glorify God. I was created to worship God and to live for God. And this man truly had this revelation.

It was a momentary thing, just as it is for many, tragically, who sit in the house of God all over the world. It's just momentary. It's an open window for a second, and they see something, and they truly desire it in their heart.

But this particular man was never able to make the personal commitment that would lead him to the end of that which he saw. Too many things in his own heart, too many ambitions, plans, dreams. I don't know what it was.

I do know that he taught this enemy king methodology to seduce the people of God, to draw them away from the singleness of purpose that God desired for them to have. And because of this, he ended up dying a very violent and a very tragic death. But he saw it, and for a moment he desired it.

Proverbs 14.32 says, The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous has hope in his death. The Bible speaks of this hope, which the righteous have in death. In the book of Hebrews chapter 11, I'll just read it to you for time's sake.

Let's see, Hebrews chapter 11, verse 21, it says, By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. Here's a righteous man. He's about to

pass into eternity.

He's still blessing other people, not overly concerned perhaps about the frailties of his own body or for whatever reason his health was leaving him or his life was about to depart. But a righteous man is still reaching out and still blessing. I love the concept.

I love the thought of that. I pray God that may be my life in the last moments, that I not be sitting there just kind of gasping and self-consumed, but reaching out to whoever's in the room, whether it be my own family or somebody who's visiting or perhaps a staff member if it happens to be in a hospital or home at that time. And he worshipped.

His own strength is leaving him. He's leaning upon his own staff. But he's not only blessing, he's worshipping.

Verse 22 says, By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones. Here's another man who's dying, a righteous man. And he's prophesying as it is of the future.

He's not bound by his death bed. He's speaking about what's to come. And he's so sure of it, he says, Take my bones with you when you go.

You're not staying in this place, and I'm not staying here either. I've been down here for a season, but I don't belong here. So take my bones when you go.

Take my bones home. I don't know if you've ever heard the song. There is a song that was written here one time about that.

I have read about this. You see, before I came to Christ, I was afraid of dying. How many can relate to that this morning? Now I know in Hebrews it says that Christ came and delivered those who through the fear of dying were all their lifetime in subject to bondage.

I remember being a police officer in the early years and the fear sometimes that would come into my heart when confronted with potentially violent situations. Fear of dying was always very, very much there, very much a part of my life. And then coming to Christ and beginning to read in the Bible about these Old Testament patriarchs who just, the scripture says, they gathered up their feet into the bed, blessed their families and gave up the ghost.

I love that. I love the picture of that. And I was always intrigued by that.

It must be wonderful to die the death of a righteous person or to die in a state of that kind of confidence, that kind of righteousness where death is not feared. Death is looked as just a temporary doorway into something much better that's been desired all of life. And not leaving whimpering and moaning, but leaving blessing, leaving a sword, leaving a house that has an assurance of the faithfulness of God behind.

I've seen a significant amount of death in my life. I've seen unrighteous people die and I've seen the terror in the hearts of the unrighteous. Irrespective of what kind of confidence they had built into their minds about their own destiny, at the moment of death it seems to elude them.

And they're terrified. I've seen people clinging to things and crying out. Terrible to see a person who's unsaved go into eternity.

There's this awareness inside that this is not good where I'm going to. I've seen the death of people who have recently come to Christ. I saw that with my father and mother.

I've watched them die in peace, but yet they didn't have a great measure of time to walk with God and to develop the kind of a confidence perhaps that people that we read about in the Scriptures knew. I've never been more impacted by the death of a righteous person than in this last week when my mother-in-law, Patrice's mother, who I'll just call Mama for the sake of time. Some of you may know who she and her husband are.

They have attended this church from time to time. They haven't been able to come here from Canada for a few years because they are advanced in age and, of course, couldn't get health insurance in order to travel. But when they used to come here several years ago, they would sit down in these rows over here.

And what really distinguished them is they would never leave the church on Sunday. They would come here for about 9 o'clock Sunday morning and they'd be sitting in those seats if we'd have to take them in the pastor's room and feed them and do things. But if we didn't, they would never leave.

They just would sit there all day. And we didn't have pre-service prayer back in those days, but they really didn't care. They just sat there.

They just so loved the presence of the Lord, so loved the Word of God, so loved the goodness of God. I was led of the Spirit, came home on a Wednesday night and my son, Jared, said, Dad, we have to go. We have to leave now for Canada.

Mama is dying. And I called and my son said, if you can, you should come. It was 11.30 in the evening.

It's about a 15-hour drive. Jared had been up for 24 hours. I was very tired.

But the Holy Spirit prompted us. I called Pastor Neil and I said, Pastor Neil, what do you think about this? He said, Go and go now. And I thank God that you did.

We arrived the next day. I don't know what time it was. It was early afternoon, maybe 3.30, 4.30 in the afternoon.

Came into the hospital room. Now, Teresa had told me that there was an unusual anointing of the Holy Spirit in this room. Now, people quite often say that when Christians are passing away because God does bear witness to those that are His.

And family find comfort in that, and I understand that, and there's truth in that. But she was understating the presence of the Holy Spirit in this room. When you walked into this room, it was like walking into Times Square Church Sanctuary at some of the most divine moments we've ever known in this house.

You couldn't do anything but weep or clap or cry or praise God or rejoice or repent if you needed to get your life right with God. The family was gathered. Some friends were there.

We worshipped. It's all we could do. Picked up guitars, began to sing some of the old-time gospel that Mama so loved.

We sang songs. We praised God. And they weren't all mournful funeral-type things.

There were songs like, I've Got a Mansion, just over the hilltop, and songs that she loved. Whenever we would stop, she had been able to converse up to that final day. And whenever we would stop, she would do everything she could to let us know.

She would stare at each one of us in the room, don't stop singing, because Mama loved to worship God, loved to praise the Lord, loved to come to this house, loved to listen to the tapes. She was part of this congregation. She heard every message I think ever preached in this church.

My daughter Katie picked up the guitar and began to sing her favorite hymn, My Jesus, I Love Thee. And as she began to sing it, a deeper sense of God came into the room. Katie finished the song and turned and said to everyone in the room, all of the family that were there, she's leaving now.

I don't know how she'd do that, and I don't know how we knew it, but we knew it. There were not a lot of visible outward signs. She was still very conscious, still very looking at us.

But we all stood up and came to the bedside. I can't describe what happened next. I'm short of words, but let me say it as clearly as I can.

The Spirit of God came on Teresa. She began to pray, but it wasn't a prayer. She was prophesying.

She said, Mama, Jesus is about to walk into the room. The same Jesus you've trusted all your, or for 24 years of your adult life. He's carried you.

He's never failed you. He's sustained you. He's coming into the room now.

He's going to take your hand, and in a moment, he's going to walk with you through the veil of death. And he will be faithful to you through this veil, and he will take you into eternity that he's prepared for you. And as she finished speaking, Mama died, just left.

The Spirit, I'd never seen this before, a person who was worshiping God right to the end, just giving up the ghost and leaving. Teresa and I and Teresa's dad gathered that night, among others, and we prayed. And I'll never forget the prayer of Teresa's dad, when he said, Oh, Jesus, I would die gladly tomorrow if I could die that kind of a death.

If this is what you would give me, if this would be my end, oh, God, I would gladly die tomorrow. Now Mama was saved at the age of 59, and she was saved during a season of great personal trial and loss. At the age of 59, she and her husband had lost everything.

They were in a business, and the business went bankrupt. They lost everything from riches, really, to a very difficult financial situation. She fell down the basement stairs and broke two vertebrae in her back, and because of it, had a steel rod put into her back and was in excruciating pain most of the time.

She went into a very deep personal depression. At this time, somebody handed her a copy of the Cross and the Switchblade. It's a small world, isn't it? She read the Cross and the Switchblade and gave her life to Jesus Christ.

She lived 24 years for Christ, and from the beginning was a person of prayer. She believed in prayer. Only once she said to me that my faith wavered.

There was three Catholic charismatic ladies that sort of embraced her after she gave her life to Christ, and they began to pray together, and God gave them a burden from my soul. I was this young, really wild cop that was married to her daughter. And Mama said to these three Catholic charismatic ladies, they said, well, she said, I know you have a burden for him, but you don't know him.

And they said, yes, we don't know him, but we know who God is, and we know what God is speaking to our hearts about him, and that God is going to use his life. And so she joined them and began to pray, and she said, from that moment on, I never doubted the power of prayer. Now, some people would say it was late in life to begin a new life in Christ.

Fifty-nine years of age, a lot of water under the bridge at this point, and that's the argument, I suppose, that the devil quite often uses when people come into meetings like this. You begin to hear of Christ. You begin to hear of the new life in Christ, and yet there's so much baggage with you.

And the devil is always there to say, well, it's too late. This is good for young people, but now you're fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-five. It's too late for you to start.

And even if you did move this way, what good could your life ever do in the kingdom of God? But you see, the Bible promises for the righteous. Let me just read this to you, Psalm 5, verse 12. For thou, Lord, will bless the righteous with favor and will compass him with a shield.

Now, righteousness is described as knowing that your sin is forgiven because you have trusted that Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the price for your sin. That is righteousness. Righteousness means you are considered clean, as if you never sinned.

It is a righteousness that God is willing to give to everyone who trusts in his Son, Jesus Christ, as their personal Lord and Savior. It is not earned. It is not deserved.

It is not merited through good works. We cannot do anything to earn this. It was paid for two thousand and some years ago on a cross.

Jesus died, gave his life, suffered the wrath of God that all sinners for all time have deserved. And he himself said, Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That is what Mama did at fifty-nine years of age.

Her life began to be surrounded with favor. He said, I will put so much favor, it is as if I have surrounded you with a protective shield. I will guide you.

I will lead you. Psalm 37, verse 17 says, The Lord upholds the righteous. Proverbs 24, 16 says that even if he falls seven times, he will rise up again.

God says, I won't let you go. Once you've trusted in Christ as your Savior, I'm going to walk with you. I'm going to talk with you.

I'm going to hold you up. My life is going to become your life. You're going to have an exchange.

You're going to give me your failure, and I'm going to give you my victory on the Calvary. You're going to give me your fear. I'm going to replace it with love.

You're going to give me your powerlessness, and I'm going to give you the power of the Holy Ghost. You're going to give me all of the things that have held you down, and I'm going to cut these cords, and I'm going to raise you up in the strength and power of Jesus Christ. The Lord upholds the righteous.

Psalms 55, verse 22 tells us that he'll never allow even burdens to take away our hope. He says, Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, and he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. Oh, the righteous can be attacked.

The righteous can go through fire and go through flood, but he says, I will not let the righteous be moved. I will stand with those that have trusted in Christ. Oh, the measure of his grace, the measure of his love and power to every soul who trusts in him.

Psalms 97, verse 11. The scripture says, Light is sown for the righteous. There's clear direction for those that are righteous.

There's clear understanding. I'll tell you, Mama could pick out a false prophet in the weeds at 100 yards without her glasses. Hallelujah.

Because there was something in her of God. She knew who God was. She had suffered in life.

She had found a savior and was not about to be robbed by some smooth-talking devil on a television set. And there's gladness for the upright in heart. Mama was a lady who turned from sorrow to joy.

One thing that people who knew her said, she was such a delight to be around, such a nice person to come into her presence. Psalms 92, verses 12 to 14 says, The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, and he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. And those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, and they shall still bring forth fruit in old age.

They shall flourish. Don't listen to the lie of the devil. No matter what you've done or how old you are, God says you will flourish.

You will flourish. You'll be replanted. You'll be born again.

And if you should be fortunate enough to live to 83 or 85 years of age or even beyond, you will still, Jesus said, bring forth fruit in your old age. Now righteousness is not just a declared position. Righteousness, there's an outworking of this righteousness.

The new life of Christ comes into us, and Christ begins to live his life through us. Proverbs 29, 7 says, The righteous considers the cause of the poor. There are evidences of righteousness in a person's life.

I remember after Mama and Gampy, as we call them, got saved, they began to attend a fairly large church in Canada, in the city that we were in. And every Sunday after church, all of the struggling, all of the people who are perhaps we consider at times on the fringe of not only the church but even society sometimes, the single moms, people who had lost loved ones, all were welcome at their house. You had to see it to believe it.

This cram in of all the people that had nowhere else to go, and maybe poor in the eyes of the world, but loved in the sight of God. And they were fed bacon and eggs and cheese. I remember, because half the time I was in the kitchen as well helping out.

It was just breakfast extraordinaire every Sunday morning all through the day right to the service Sunday evening. There was an evidence of righteous. The righteous considers the cause of the poor.

The righteous person looks out beyond their own struggles and needs and begins to see the way God sees things. Begins to understand that I may not have a lot, but what I have, I'm going to begin to give it for the betterment of people around me. This was Mama's life.

This was her testimony. Psalm 37:30 says, the mouth of the righteous speak wisdom. And here's a lady who was confused, a lady who, before Christ, went through some very difficult days.

But at the end of her life, the really hurting found a friend. Nobody was rejected. Anybody could come, could sit and talk for hours at a time.

And also Proverbs 15:6 says, in the house of the righteous is much treasure. Much treasure in her house. There's a lady saved only 24 years.

But you see, I didn't tell you the whole story. There was an undeniable anointing of the Holy Spirit in that hospital room. Every bit as strong as I've ever experienced here in Times Square Church.

And I'm not, I'm not overstating this. Trying to be accurate and very careful in what I say. Remember the psalmist cried out in Psalm 63.

He said, Oh God, my soul thirsts for thee. My flesh longs for thee in a dry and thirsty land. Verse two, he said, to see your power and your glory so as I've seen you in the sanctuary.

That's the cry of many of our hearts. Oh God, we feel your presence in the sanctuary. I long to see this in the street.

I long God to experience this same glory, not just when we come to church and corporately worship you, but outside of these walls as well. And that was the legitimate cry. But I walked into the hospital room and was aware that the power and glory of God that I've seen in the sanctuary was in that room.

Every bit as strong. God was bearing witness in that room to that which was his. The Holy Ghost bears witness to those that are his, those that are God's.

A prodigal son in that room came home. A prodigal son who wouldn't mind me saying this because he's really been transformed. But just a week or two before he said, if mama dies, I'm going to stay in my own city.

I'm going to get a case of beer and drink and you guys go and enjoy yourself. That same prodigal son walked in the room and fell on his mother's neck and wept and came back to God. I saw imprisoned hearts released.

People who are behind prisons emotionally or relationally. I saw these prison doors in this hospital room. In an hour and a half, I witnessed prison doors open.

People sharing things they hadn't shared for years. Speaking in a way that they're not used to speaking. I saw years long bitternesses melted away.

Relationships were reconciled. And I'm not talking just a little bit of not speaking. I'm talking people that might have been slandering each other.

I saw bruised hearts healed. I saw everything that Jesus said in Luke 4 and verse 18, the spirit of God had sent him to do. I saw it happen in that room in an hour and a half.

Undeniable. The miraculous was happening all around and nobody could deny it. And nobody who was there would even dare deny it.

Outside we met a carpenter with strong and calloused hands who was so moved by mama's passing that he could barely speak. At the funeral home, the line of people took an hour to pass through as they came from all over to pay their last respects to this woman of God who lived only five years in this community, moved there at 78 years of age and died at 83. Spent a lot of her time with a walker, walking through the grocery store, perhaps just talking to people, welcoming people into her home.

The sanctuary was rather large. It was two-thirds full. It was a shock.

The flowers were more than I've seen at a funeral in years and years and years. How? How did it happen? You know, it's simple. She loved people.

Everyone was welcome. Everyone was accepted. Everyone was loved.

She made biscuits for the carpenters. I hired the carpenters. There were three carpenters I hired.

I paid them \$85 an hour. That's all three of them to work in the house where she lived, to call, to find out she would have them shoveling snow. She'd have them bring the groceries in.

Everything, bathing the dog, no matter what she'd have. She'd say, the boy's here. I'm paying them \$85 an hour.

Or she would make biscuits and sit them down and always, always talk about Jesus. You know, I was deeply rebuked by the Holy Spirit. Challenged, maybe is a better word, because I walked into the hospital room and I became aware of something.

These carpenters know me. They know I pastor a church. I helped pastor a church in New York City.

They know I stand in a fairly high profile pulpit. But I doubt any of them would have come to my funeral had I died. They know me.

I know them. There's a difference. You see, Mama made them biscuits, just like Jesus did in John chapter 21.

He made them biscuits. He's working men and loved them. Peter, do you love me? In other words, do you understand that this is a love relationship? Do you know what the whole foundation of why I've come, of why I've called? Do you know what it's all about? Do you understand it's about love? Do you understand it's not about just all right theology, as important as that is, and it's not about pounding a pulpit, as wonderful as that might be.

It's not about crowds, as wonderful as that might be. It's about love. It's that kind of love that brought the plumber and his wife to the funeral.

I saw so many broken people, brought carpenters, big, rough carpenters who live hard, but hardly speak they're so moved by this woman's passing. The line of people from the community that were passing through, who were touched by the life of an 83-year-old woman who'd only been five years in this community. The Bible says that her house will be full of treasure.

The next few days are almost indescribable of the joy, the reconciliation, the hope and the singing that went on in her home. We would gather at night, and some other Christians came. We would pick up guitars, we'd begin to sing, and the worship was just out of this world and the praise and the treasure of a house and a family that are walking together in unity, not a hard word spoken.

And ironically, it's not the high-profile preacher from New York that is leading the people into this kind of treasure. It's Mama, with her love and her biscuits. I've been deeply challenged by both her life and her death.

I want to tell you why. If you would ask me about Mama a year ago, I'd say she's a nice lady, loves the Lord, goes to church. But I wouldn't have called her anointed.

Isn't it funny how we so lightly esteem that which Jesus greatly values? And so the high-profile preacher walks into the hospital room and hell is being shaken, heaven is open, miracles are happening, I've got nothing to do with it. God just says, sit down, I've got to teach you something. The agent that the Holy Spirit is using is an 83-year-old woman who is laying in bed hours from death, worshiping, just worshiping God.

Her son comes home. I can't begin to describe it, how we lightly esteem. It talks about Jesus in Isaiah 53.

It talks about the fact that it's not what we desired. He didn't come in a manner we desired, so we lightly esteemed him. We sometimes wrongly lead people to believe that high-profile is anointed.

But folks, I've come to the understanding that it's all going to be turned around in heaven. It's not high-profile. It's the life that has the love of Jesus flowing through it.

It's the person. God forgive us for what we've done in this church age. Everybody sits at home and watches their television, and now you just support the high-profile man of God.

And so he rips off your money, and the society goes to hell all around. When God says, no, that's not the way it is. I have a body.

I have a church in every city, every town, every village. They're ordinary, but they're extraordinary people. They walk through the supermarket with a walker, but they leave the savor of Jesus Christ everywhere they go.

And what the preachers can't touch, they touch. They're not high-profile. They're not esteemed highly, even in the church, but they walk through this life, and their life exudes the love of Jesus Christ to a perishing world.

And they can fill a church with mourning people to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ with the simple act of loving people by the power of Almighty God. Balaam cried, oh, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last day be like his. You know, when I die, I remember I was thinking after this week, I don't want people to come to my funeral just because I was a high-profile pastor or did things.

I said, well, isn't it great he did this, or isn't it great he did that, or went here, or did this. I don't want it to be that way. If you're going to come to my funeral, let it be because I loved you.

Now, I've got a ways to go. I will be the first to admit it. I'm not there.

I don't love people like Mama did. But I'm on the journey. You see, Balaam wouldn't take the journey.

He saw the end, but wouldn't take the journey. Now, I see the end, and I realize where I am and where this end is, there's a journey for me to take. There's some areas of my heart that God's got to deal with.

And, folks, you can't will to love. It just doesn't work. You'll get on some love kick for a month, and then it's over.

That's right. It's got to be deeper. It's got to go deeper.

It's got to be a God thing, for lack of a better expression. But by God's grace, I've determined in my heart to take this journey. Pastor David is on this journey.

You've been hearing him preach lately. You realize that there's a deeper work going on in his life than I have ever witnessed before. I feel like Elisha sometimes, where God says, well, you can stay here or you can go and follow.

And I'm going on this journey. I don't care if there's ten or a thousand people at my bedside when I die, as long as they know that I love them. As long as somehow God's love was flowing through me to them.

I want it with all my heart. You see, when I got saved, I was a very hard man. Death didn't bother me in the least.

I mean, as long as it was somebody else's death, it didn't bother me. My wife Teresa prophesied to me, oh, when I was 25, 26, I was still very hard, hard preacher. I still saw the law and everything.

And she said to me, when you die, you're going to be remembered as a man of great love. I never forgot that because I thought in my heart, God, that would be a miracle for you to do that. It is a journey.

I honestly don't know how to do this, but I know the one who can. And all I have to do is ask. And he says, I'll give it to you.

I'll seek. And he said, you'll find. Knock and it will be open to you.

1 John 4, 8 says that he that doesn't love doesn't know God. For God is love. Now this morning, there are some people here that you're not even on the journey because you're not saved.

You yourself haven't experienced the love of God. In a moment, I'm going to be inviting you to come to this altar to give your life to the one who loved you with a love that is beyond anything you can ever understand in this life. He doesn't want a legal relationship with you.

He wants a love relationship with you. That's what it's been about. That's why God became a man.

That's why he took your punishment on the cross. It wasn't to prove a point. It was because he loved you.

And there are others that are just like me. You've come to Christ and you've been walking with Christ and you have it theologically down, but you are experientially short. I care.

I just don't know this kind of love. My life outside of the pulpit I don't think would affect the community in five short years. Matter of fact, I'm sure of it.

But I'm going there. I'm going there. I hope you'll come.

I hope you'll walk with us on this journey. Because ultimately, Paul said, if you give your body to be burned and you have not love, it's of no profit. If you understand all mysteries and have faith, it can move mountains.

Your voice is just an empty noise if you have not love. I never would have thought that Mama would be used so powerfully to provoke my life. And I'm sorry before God that I didn't esteem her more while she was here.

But she's taught me more, I believe, than all of my preaching tapes since 1994 have taught her. She taught me more. In an hour and a half in a hospital room, I learned more than she learned from ten years of my preaching.

By God's grace, I'm not letting go of this lesson. Pray for me. Pray for the pastors of this church that we can truly be men of love.

Now, Father, I pray God for your church today. You are speaking to all of us, Lord. You are challenging us.

We have lightly esteemed that which you have greatly honored. Father, we have failed to understand the anointing. We've gotten housebound and in measure have lost our focus.

I pray God with all my heart that you release to love those who desire it in this house. Not a human love, a divine love, your love. It can only come from you, O God.

And Father, I believe that you're going to do this. I ask for it from my own heart. I consider myself the first person at this altar today.

And I ask, Lord, that you do it in me. I don't want to lead this church into anything but what is you. I pray, God, you help me.

I ask it in Jesus' name. Would you please stand? The Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart today, and you want to give your life to Christ? If you want to be a person who knows and understands the love of God, would you just come and join with me at this altar, and we're going to pray together. Just slip out of your seat, wherever you are.

In the annex, please, if you'd stand between the screens and we'll pray together momentarily. A call to husbands that are not loving their wives as Christ loved the church. Your children are not loving their parents.

People who are, you're theologically right, but you're practically wrong. You're not kind. People don't see it in you.

Your workplace, people are not being drawn to God. They're being driven away from God by your testimony. Have the courage to admit it.

Have the courage to come. And for those who just say, God, help me. I want to be a person of love.

I want to be a loving person in my generation. I want to leave, when I die, the savor of Christ in my family. I want to leave the savor of Christ in my home, in my community, and where I work, where I live.

The savor of Jesus Christ. I want to see the hardest of sinners touched, because God, you touched them through my life. You touched them through me.

Just a kind word. Something I said. Something I let you become in me.

Hallelujah. If you're here today and you're without the assurance in your heart that when you die, you're going to go to heaven to be with God, I want you to know that God loves you so much that he would give his life for you. And he not only promises to save you, but he promises to surround you.

Remember the scriptures. He promises to give you a new life and plant you and cause you to flourish. He promises to pick you up when you fail.

Promises never to fail you or to forsake you. Promises ultimately to take you home to a place that he is preparing for you this very moment. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and you'd like to receive him into your heart today, I'm going to ask you just to do something very simple with me.

Just raise your hand, and then we're going to pray together. That's really all there is to it. Because if God, if you are sincere in confessing your need of a Savior, if you're sincere in not wanting to live a life that is sinful and alienated from God, he will receive you, and he will forgive you.

You'll walk out of here with an inner assurance. It's not a mental argument. It's an inner experience that you will have with God, and you will know that God is real.

You will know that you're saved, and he'll begin to work in your life. If you want him as your Savior today, would you join me? Just raise your hand wherever you are. All through the sanctuary.

I think I'll raise it nice and high. Up in the balcony, Education Annex. God bless you.

There are hands all over the place. We're just so thankful that you have the courage to make this decision today to give your life to Jesus Christ. Let's pray together for these that are coming into the kingdom of God.

Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. Jesus, thank you that you so loved me, that you are willing to give your life to suffer, to be rejected and abused, to take the punishment that I have deserved for my lifestyle of rebellion against God. I'm sorry for my sin.

I'm sorry I don't want to live in sin anymore. Today, I understand your offer of forgiveness, and I open my heart to you. And Jesus, I ask you to receive me and to come into my heart and be my Lord and my Savior.

I thank you for hearing me. I thank you for cleansing me. I thank you for receiving me.

And I believe that this very moment my sins are being washed away. I am being cleansed because of what Jesus did. I am being received with God and in fellowship in his church.

Jesus, thank you. I believe now from the depths of my heart that I am a new person in Christ Jesus. I have been cleansed, forgiven, and I am saved.

I am saved. When I die, I'm going to die the death of the righteous, and I'm going to go to heaven to live with God for all of eternity. I believe it, and I receive it into my heart in Jesus' name.

Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Father.

Thank you, God. Thank you, God Almighty. Now for the rest of us, pray with me, please.

Lord Jesus, teach me to love. Show me how. Guide me into your heart, and teach me how to care.

Show me that I am anointed. You've called me for a divine purpose, and no thing you've given me is to be lightly esteemed or considered too small. Touch people's lives through my life, where I work, where I live, in my house, where I buy groceries, where I travel.

Touch people's lives. Oh, God, when I die, may it truly be said that you, Jesus, have loved people through my life. I believe this now, that because I'm asking, you're going to do this for me.

So I receive it into my heart, and God, thank you. Thank you for that you're going to make a difference in my city through my life. I receive it.

I believe it in Jesus' name. Now just give Him thanks. Give Him thanks and praise Him.

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