

The Gospel of the Grace of God

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of yielding to God's plan and seeking a supernatural relationship with Him, which brings joy, confidence, and a deep sense of connection with God.

Duration: 47:35

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 7:55, Acts 20:20, Acts 20:24, Acts 22:13-14, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Grace Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the transformative power of the Gospel of the Grace of God. He emphasizes that when someone truly encounters God, they are changed from the inside out. This change is evident in the way they begin to care for others and speak with kindness. The speaker encourages the audience not to be discouraged by the slow progress of change, but to trust that the seed of new life is growing within them. He concludes by leading the audience in a prayer of salvation, acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God and expressing gratitude for forgiveness and a future in heaven.

Transcript

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If you'll go to Acts chapter 20 beginning at verse 20. Now this is the Apostle Paul and he's speaking to people, not at the end of his journey, but certainly getting close to nearing the end. And how I kept back, Acts chapter 20 verse 20, Nothing that was profitable unto you, but I've shown you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy

and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Now, Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, if you don't animate your word, then it's only a dead letter. It bears no life, but your word is alive. O God, I pray today for an anointing to speak clearly and simply, and yet profoundly be able to reach every heart and overturn every contrary argument to truth.

I ask for an anointing today that has a great weight upon it. Lord, that men and women would not be able to throw away those pangs of conscience that only the Holy Spirit can bring. Father, I thank you for taking me far beyond any natural ability, any prepared text, and moving me into that which is directly in your heart and in your mind for this moment and in this sanctuary.

God, I thank you for this with all my heart, in Jesus' name. I initially titled this message, The Joy of Letting God Be God, because Paul says in verse 24, he said, I have a witness of the Holy Spirit that ahead of me is a very, very difficult time. But he said, I'm not moved by these forebodings, because I've determined to finish my course with joy.

Now, the word joy in the original text means a rejoicing, to be caused to joy. It's an exultation. It's an exuberant joy.

It means good cheer, mirth and gladness of heart. Now, Paul is saying, in essence, I've found such a joy in my life that I'm willing to endure any hardship. Even the witness that bonds and afflictions might abide me.

You know, this is always the measure of a man or woman who has truly found God. If you've truly found Him, if you're truly walking with God, if you truly know the life of Christ that God promises through faith, being lived within you, it's no longer about using God to escape the trials of this life. There's a whole Christianity that that's their whole view of God.

When I come to God, there'll be no more storms. I'll get through. I'll never be without anything.

And I'll get through this life without trial, without hardship. But that is exactly the opposite to that which was the walk of the apostle Paul. Paul said, no, the Holy Spirit is showing me that tough days are ahead for me.

And I'm not going to escape these tough days. Now, he could escape them if he chose not to yield fully to the plan that God had for his life. But Paul chose to yield to this plan of God.

And he said, no, I have an exuberant joy. I have a cheer of mirth. I have a gladness in my heart that is not dependent on any circumstance that this world offers me, be it the world's praise, be it the world's criticism, be it the joy that this world can give or the hardship it can bring.

Paul says, no, my joy is not about this. I've found something in my God and I'm not willing to let it go. I've run this race.

And, you know, from Paul's testimony, his life was anything but easy. He was scourged. He was stoned.

He was beaten. He was misunderstood. He was betrayed.

His life was just a constant series, as it is, of physical and spiritual beatings. But yet Paul had this ever-increasing, I believe, and abiding joy within him. He found such a walk with God that he could be

laying in a prison cell and at midnight begin to praise Him, even though his back is bleeding, the stone is cold, his feet are in the stocks, as the Scripture says.

But he begins to praise God. And God is so moving with this man and so abiding in the trust that has come into the heart of this man, to his Savior, that the prison begins to shake. I've heard it said that when Paul began to sing that God's foot that rests, of course, heaven is his throne.

It says the earth is his footstool. God's foot began to tap. And when his foot began to tap, all the prison doors began to be shaken and fell off their hinges.

Now, let me just share with you something about the Apostle Paul. I'm going to read to you. You don't have to turn there.

From First Timothy, Chapter 1, verses 12 to 17. Paul says, I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me. For he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

Now, Paul knew that the joy and the life he had was an enablement of God. This is what makes true conversion so miraculous. It's not a person trying to do something in the natural to please God.

Now, Paul had tried that, but he had never arrived at any measure of success or fulfillment in his heart. It's finding Christ as Lord and Savior, and then God coming to that man or woman who yields their life to Christ, indwelling them by the power of the Holy Spirit, and bringing into their life what Paul calls an enablement. That's why the Scripture says, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

All things are passed away and all things are become new. Paul knew that he had been enabled and that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. That's an amazing thing.

Paul is saying, in essence, God saw me as something that other than what I was when he revealed himself to me. Now, Paul was anything but faithful when God found him. As a matter of fact, he was almost exactly the opposite to what a faithful man of God should be.

We will talk about that in a moment. And Paul was always overwhelmed at this incredible grace that had found him one day. He hadn't found it.

This grace found him on his journey, and he was overwhelmed. He said, I was enabled to become another man, and God looked at me, and he didn't see me as the enraged religious man that I was at that time, but he saw me as a faithful man. And Paul was always overwhelmed at this, because, of course, the Scripture tells us that the Lord, he sees the end from the beginning, and he calls things that are not as if they are.

Many are sitting here today, and you are one thing in a certain aspect or characteristic of your life. But God looks at you, and if you're willing to yield your heart to him, he says, no, that's not what you're going to be ten years from now or five years from now. It could even be as quick as this evening.

I'm going to change you. You're going to become another man. You're going to become another woman.

I'm going to take this deadness out of your life, and I'm going to put the life of my son in there, in its place. And you're going to become a new creation in that part of your life. Oh, folks, when you begin to walk in supernatural relationship with God, there is a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory that comes into your soul.

In verse 13, he says, I was before a blasphemer. I was a persecutor and injurious. In other words, he hurt people, and he did it deliberately.

He blasphemed God. He harmed the church, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in an unbelief. In verse 14, it says, the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Jesus Christ.

In other words, God revealed to me something of his love through his son, Jesus Christ, and because of this, I was filled with the ability to believe. Everything to Paul was supernatural. Everything was attributed to God.

Paul was a man who knew what he had been without God, as religious as he might have been. He knew how far all of his religiousness had fallen short of the glory of God. This is a faithful saying, he said, and worthy to be accepted, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

But for this cause, I obtained mercy. Paul says that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Here's what Paul was saying.

God would show and was willing to show that through my life, he was willing to change any man, any woman who would come to him. Paul said, I consider that I was the worst sinner in the face of the earth. And he very well might have a point there, because when you read about his life, he did some pretty nasty things.

But Paul says, God came to me, and God changed me. And God gave me a supernatural, brand new nature. He made me into a different man, and implanted within me a joy.

And this joy has taken me through suffering, which Paul knew he could not have gone through in his former religious state. He knew that he needed the grace of God every moment of his life, and that God was establishing in him a testimony that others, many, you and I today included, could look to, and ultimately we could follow and know that we're safe and secure in it. Now, Paul had once been an angry man.

He had a knowledge and a form of pursuit of God, but as I said earlier, both fell far short of who God actually is. He could speak from personal experience. In Romans chapter 10 and verse 2, when speaking of his brethren, he said, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Paul had been an extremely zealous man for his religion. He was inwardly angry. He was angry at people who claimed to have found God outside of the box of his religious thought.

Paul was infuriated that he would put so much effort into, as he saw it, being acceptable to God, and all around him now were gathering these people that he had formerly considered to be nothings and nobodies in society, tax gatherers and prostitutes, and the marginalized people of his generation are gathering all around. They're all claiming to have this brand new and inward life. There's a joy abounding in them.

They're beginning to express this joy to people around them, and others are leaving as it is the rigidity of his religious pursuit, and they're finding for themselves this newfound relationship in God. And Paul became exceedingly angry at this. There's hardly an anger that's deeper than the anger of religion that is

not in right relationship with God.

Folks, you see it all over the world today. Not in just one specific religion, but in any religion, including Christianity, that is not founded on truth. When a person who is deeply religious, apart from truth, finds somebody who really has the life of God, the very first response that quite often they express is a response of anger.

How could these people claim to have this that I've worked so hard to attain, and yet I don't seem to have found it myself? Paul's anger soon boiled over into impulsive and violent action. The religious person quite often will turn to violence, whether it's a verbal violence in the home. How many husbands and wives, one has found Christ as Lord and Savior, only to come home from church with this glow of God's grace and joy on their face, to find an angry religious partner in the house, accusing them of every wrong thing that they've ever done, verbally violent towards them? And the wife or husband may have been a different type of a person before, may not have even been faithful in their marriage, may have been angry, may have been a liar, and these things are all gone, but that doesn't seem to make any difference to the religiously angry person.

It's most often the fruit of trying to mold God into something that He is not. The person who's trying to fit God into his way of thinking that God should be is usually highly offended at somebody who comes by in the simplicity of heart and says, I've found Him, hallelujah, I've found Him. The one you've been looking for all your life, I've found Him, I know who He is, hallelujah.

In Acts chapter 7, if you'll go there with me, please, in the New Testament, go back a little bit from our opening text. Now, in this chapter of Scripture, there's a young man named Stephen. He was a young man of incredible faith.

And Paul is most likely in this crowd who heard this young man present a compelling argument for Christ. And in this compelling argument, he exposed the religious hearts which had a history of rejecting truth. And, of course, that would include Paul.

He told them it should have been an astounding thing to see this young man stand and present this incredibly brilliant defense of the person of Jesus Christ. And then as he's presenting this defense, he looks up and he says to the people, he said, are you stubborn and obstinate of heart? He said, you resist the Holy Ghost, even as your fathers have done. God has come to you.

And here before this angry, violent, religious crowd is a young man who's truly found the life of God. He has an inward radiance. He has a joy that can't come from anything but a living relationship with the Savior.

And Paul hears this compelling testimony and argument. And in verse 54, it says, when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on Him with their teeth. And in the original text, here's the inference.

It means they were torn in the very seat of their emotions as when a child is taken away from its mother. Just as if you took a baby away from its mother, they were cut to the heart because this young man standing before them was speaking about a relationship with God that was much simpler, much cleaner, much purer. And of course, it was founded in truth.

It was something that they were unwilling to embrace. And because they were unwilling to embrace it, they began to grind their teeth against it. And an anger rose into their heart.

They gnashed on Him and said, how dare He challenge our standing in God? How dare He actually infer that we are resisting the Holy Spirit? How dare He infer it? Oh, the audacity of the hearts of fallen men, especially religiously fallen men, when God Almighty Himself is reaching out to them and offering them eternal life. And all they do is gnash their teeth against the messengers. How dare He infer that my relationship with God is not going to take me to heaven? How dare He say that there's another way than the way that I have learned and created in my mind and the God that I have formed who loves me and accepts me no matter how I live or what I say or what I do? How dare He stand and make this inference? The scripture goes on to tell us in verse 55 about Stephen, it says, he being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Now, Paul looked on a young man because he was in the crowd who claimed to have an open vision of God and Jesus Christ standing victorious at his right hand. Something that he had been looking for all his life but was unwilling to receive it in the manner in which it comes. Here is just a young man.

He does not have the scriptural history. He does not have, as Paul saw it, the religious integrity. He has not pursued God as Paul thought he should have pursued Him.

But yet he has an open heaven, something Paul, I believe, was longing for but never had all of his life. And he sees Jesus Christ standing completely victorious, raised from the dead at the right hand of Almighty God with all power and all authority. You see, Paul did not know this kind of a Savior.

In verse 59, it says, they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Paul looked and he saw this young man surrender his life with such confidence. He saw something that I know that he inwardly knew he did not have.

This young man was not afraid. He was absolutely caught in the joy, as it is, that Paul speaks about in this beginning text that we read today. Stephen was about to go through what Paul would eventually have to go through after his conversion.

And he saw this young man surrendering his life with such incredible confidence in his God. And then in verse 60, it says about Stephen, he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Now, Paul heard Stephen cry with a passion that displayed something in his spirit which was the opposite to his own. Paul is standing there. The only cry in him is, kill him, kill him, kill him.

And Stephen is saying, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And Paul, if there was any measure of honesty in his heart, which I believe there had to be a measure, it must have had some effect even momentarily on his conscience. But in chapter 8, verse 1, it says, And Saul, which, of course, was the name that Paul initially had, was consenting unto his death.

There had to be a question in him. Where did this young man get such power? But he most likely pushed it away. Saul was consenting unto his death.

Saul, at this point in his life, is like the man who consents to the death of his own conscience. If you walk away from this sanctuary today, if you are not a Christian person, and you walk away from here putting

down, putting away everything that you've heard, the joy of the Lord that's been in this house, the incredible praise of God, the truth that you are now hearing from the Word of God, you have to be a man or woman who consents to the death of your own conscience. God gave you a conscience, and He gave you a conscience for the purpose of bringing you to Himself.

You and I were created in the image of God. We were created for God. We are eternal creations.

We are created for fellowship with God for all of eternity. We sinned in the Garden of Eden, and the sin nature was passed on to all men. And because of this sin nature, we've fallen short of what we have to be to dwell in the presence of God for eternity.

But God was not willing that any should perish, so He became a man, and He died on the cross, a vicious, horrible, and cruel death, and took the place of every man, woman, and child that would ever call out to Him for forgiveness. To put this truth away today, you have to consent to the death of your own conscience. In Acts chapter 9 and verse 1, we see this internal anger against God beginning to grow until He has a divine encounter with God.

It says, And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings in verse 1 and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he went to the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? You see, Saul was no longer content just to persecute people locally. Now he's got this national ambition, as it is, to stand against this truth that he had no power to live in his own life until on his journey he has a divine encounter with God.

He had an appointment with God, really. I believe many people here today, you have a similar appointment with God. You come into this house and you think it's by happenstance.

You are traveling to New York City. You're on your holidays or something like that. You were invited to church.

A friend asked you to come here, and you just thought, well, this will be interesting. I like the music anyway. I may not like the preaching, but I do like the music.

And you've come here today, expecting to escape, expecting your religious view, as it is, of yourself to remain intact, only to find an encounter with God. Now there's something perplexing about this encounter, because God is not near as angry as you are. Here is an angry man.

He's religiously angry at anything that professes life outside of his experience. And now he encounters the God who created him on a road to Damascus. And on this road he's a scorner and a hater of people who claim to have a simplistic relationship with God that is received simply through faith in the fact that Jesus Christ died for them.

He can't handle it, because he's lived his life for religion. And he fell to the ground, and he heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Saul, in other words, why do you hate me so? Why do you hate my people the way you do? Why do you have this deep resistance in you to the love of God? Finally, Paul asks a question that he should have asked a long, long time ago. He could have saved a long journey.

And he said, who art thou, Lord? Who are you? Have you ever thought of just stopping and saying, God, could you show me who you are? Lord, who are you? I remember asking that question years ago as a young police officer, walking the beat, before I came to Christ. I remember walking into a church one day. Well, I think it was a church.

I'm not quite sure. It looked like a church. Sitting down in the back, because the door had been opened.

There was nobody there. And I asked the question, who are you? How do I get to you? You'd be amazed. God will answer that question if you ask it in sincerity.

Who are you, Lord? And Jesus said to him, I am Jesus, whom you persecute. It's hard for you to kick against the pricks. In King James language, what does it mean to us? And here's what it means.

This word that he says, you've been kicking against these things, it means stings of conscience. It means proddings that I have brought into your life, that I've been attempting to lead you to a certain place. It means divine impulse.

I've been moving upon you, Paul. I've been goading you as it is. I've been guiding you.

But every time I get close, you turn and you kick against me. I've been wooing you, Paul. I've been telling you that I love you.

I set Stephen before you. And I set many Christian people before you that you've been hauling out of their houses. And you've been taking them to prison.

You brought them bound and chained. But I've been in them, Paul. And I've been speaking to you through them.

But you've not been willing to hear me. You've pushed away this conviction that's been in the back of your mind. And I believe at this time that Paul's mind must have flooded him at that moment.

I believe that all the people that he had persecuted, he had a vision perhaps at this moment that every one of them seemed to be speaking with one voice. Every one of them seemed to have the same heart. All of them seemed to have the same source of life that had become their strength.

I believe that Paul had this revelation just in a moment of time. Oh God, it's you I've been standing against. As I've stood against your people.

As I've hauled them out of houses. As I consented to Stephen's death. It's true.

They all had something inside. They all spoke with the same voice. Jesus said, no, it's not my church.

It's me that you've stood against. You see, because they called out to me, I forgave their sin and I came down and took up residence within their lives. They have become the temple of the Holy Ghost.

It's me, Paul, that you've been standing against. If you are here today and you're one of those people who are angry at people who claim to have a relationship with God. You're not standing against people.

You're standing against Christ himself, who is inhabiting a people who have turned to him with all of their heart. Paul, it says, trembling and astonished in verse 6, said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? And the Lord said, Arise and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do. In verses 17 and 18, a

man called Ananias went his way.

He came into his house. He put his hands on him and said, Brother Saul. The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, has sent me that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And immediately they fell from his eyes as it had been scales. And he received sight immediately and arose and was baptized. Here is Paul, this formerly angrily religious man, now an ordinary man that he would not even give the time of day to.

He comes into his house, lays his hands upon him, and God, through the simple act of faith, takes the scales of religion off of his eyes. He begins to understand, in some measure, this newness of life that God promises to those who trust him. He arises, and the scripture says he's baptized.

That means he's immersed in water, which is a sign of putting away the old life, the old way of doing things. And as Christ was raised from the dead, being raised into newness of life by the power of his endless life being lived within us. In Acts chapter 22, Paul speaks of this experience.

If you'll go there with me very quickly, please. Now, Paul is talking about this moment when Ananias came into the house. In Acts chapter 22 and verse 13, he says, He came to me and stood and said to me, Brother Saul, receive your sight.

And the same hour, he said, I looked upon him and he said, The God of our fathers has chosen thee, that thou should know his will and see the just one and should hear the voice of his mouth. Now, these are the things that are not recorded earlier, but these are the things that really made an imprint on Paul. Because I believe in verse 14, everything that every man has ever longed for is found in the three things in this verse.

That Paul found the joy of walking with God. That you should know his will. Oh, folks, there's no greater joy but to know the will of God.

God, why was I born? What is the purpose of my life? Did you know today you can have those questions answered? God will show you. He will guide you. He will lead you.

You will know why you live on this planet. You will know how God has chosen to be glorified through your life. That's why Paul says in our beginning text, I don't care if bonds and affliction abide me down this road.

I have found an abiding joy. I know the will of God. And I know that through the will of God in my life, good is going to come.

I know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. I know that even if I go to jail at the end of my days, God will do something through my life that will bring honor and glory to His name. Paul said, I know this.

I'm no longer going to use religion to my own ends. I have abandoned my life to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. God told me I could know His will, and I will know His will for my life.

And he says that I should see the just one. That I should have this open vision of heaven. Like Paul said, I longed for it when I saw Stephen stoned.

He had this open vision that I didn't have. But Ananias came into the house and said, Paul, you too can know the will of God. And you too, Paul, will have this open vision of the just one.

Oh, thanks be to God. That's why Paul wrote to the Ephesian church that the eyes of your understanding could be opened. And you would see the one who sits at the right hand of all authority and power.

That you would see His exceeding greatness. He stands above every name that is named. And any kingdom that ever will arise.

Hallelujah. He is the fullness. He is the one who fills all in all.

And He is the head. And you are His body, the church. Paul said, oh, church, that you could see this.

That you could understand this. And lastly he said, and you should hear the voice of His mouth. Hallelujah.

Paul said, no, I don't live for strategies to advance the kingdom of God. I live to hear the voice of His mouth and to obey Him. I live to hear the one who created the world by the words of His mouth.

I live to hear the one who stood on a hilltop and said, Lazarus, come forth. And a dead man four days came out of the grave. I live to hear this voice in my life.

I will obey the voice of God as long as I live. I do not count my life dear, Paul said. I'm not concerned about what the future holds.

Because I know who holds the future that's ahead of me. Hallelujah. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God.

It's Paul that said, I fear to one of the churches, lest you should be turned from the simplicity that is in Christ. Now, Paul was speaking from experience. Paul had known what it's like to be a religious madman.

Paul had known the futility of trying to obey 600 laws every day. And if you broke one, you broke the whole law. Paul knew that that kind of a relationship only created a killing anger within every man.

An anger at God that ultimately manifested itself against God's people. Paul knew it. And he said, don't be converted from the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ.

My God, help us to understand in our generation. Help us, Holy Spirit, to understand the simplicity of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Paul said it this way. God came to save sinners of whom I am the chief of all sinners.

Paul says, if I can be saved, any man can be saved. Any woman can be saved. I hauled the church off into prison.

I murdered Stephen. I was there. And part of the crowd that killed this young man of God.

I hated God's people and the testimony of God's people. But I did it in ignorance and in unbelief. And God was merciful to me.

And God enabled me to be another man. And God helped me to hear his voice. And God showed me how to know his will.

That's why Paul said, I believe that if any man is in Christ, he becomes a new creation. How many of the promptings of God have you been kicking against? I kicked against it. I could have been saved much earlier than I was.

There were Christian testimonies around me. But I kept trying to push them out of my life. There was a guy on the job when I was a policeman who used to read his Bible at lunch all the time.

I remember how utterly annoyed I was at this. But I was very attracted to the calmness and the joy in his life at the same time. It's a strange dichotomy.

I pushed it away. I sought for fault in the man. To justify pushing away this wooing of the Holy Spirit in my own life.

I wonder how many times I did that over the years. Can you be stopped? I guess that's the question the Holy Spirit is asking today. Can you be stopped? Paul could be stopped.

Can you be stopped? Can you be stopped in your perception of who God is? If it's a wrong perception. Can you be stopped or will you pursue this perception right into hell? Can you be stopped? Can you be brought to truth? Can you be brought to the place where you see God humbling himself and becoming a man? Undertaking a three-year journey through this world that ended being spit on and slapped and ridiculed and mocked by your sin and by mine. Can you see this passionate love of a Savior for your soul? That he was willing to endure these things to have you back to himself for eternity.

He didn't do it to fulfill some legal obligation in his heart. He did it out of a motive of love for you. Can you be stopped? Can you be stopped? Paul says, I was enabled to become another man by the love of God.

Can you be stopped? Can God speak to you? Are you able to acknowledge that your ways may not be right and his ways might be higher than yours? Can you yield to God? If you can, I promise you, you will enter into a joy that you will not sell off for anything this world has. I beg you. I beg you.

I beg you in Christ's name. Don't die in your sins. Jesus came to save you.

What he requires is that you believe that he took your place on the cross. And that you determine in your heart, I'm not going to live in sin anymore. I'm not going to live this kind of a life.

I'm going to turn and live a life that brings honor to God. And when you determine to do this, he says, I will forgive you and I will come and dwell in you. That's who the Holy Spirit is, the third person of God.

And he says, I will send the Holy Spirit. He will live within you. And you will be enabled to become another person.

You can't explain this to a religious man because he doesn't understand it. It's not about religion. It's all about a relationship with the living God.

Now, Father, I have, as best as I'm able, delivered your heart today. I pray that in this sanctuary and in the education annex, there not be a single person within the sound of my voice that would turn away from the greatness of your love. Help us to understand that you came to save those that were lost.

It was your whole mission. You caused Paul to begin to enter into that abundance that comes from your heart. He could not be turned from it.

Oh, Jesus, I pray, God, would you help those who don't know you today? Would you help every man, every woman as deeply as they may be entrenched in opposing views to truth? Would you help them to bend their knee to God? Father, I ask this in Jesus' name. If the Holy Spirit has been speaking to your heart today, and you can say to me, Pastor, I want to give my life to Christ, would you just slip your hand up right where you are? Would you do this? In the sanctuary, God bless you. Those who have been running from God, I see people up in the balcony in the back.

Those who have been running from God, you want to get back to the Lord and give your life to him again. You want to live for him. As we stand together, I'm going to ask you to come and join me at this altar, and we're going to pray together.

Everyone who's been running from God, you've been dealing with anger, and you don't know why this incredible anger is in your life, but you want to yield your life to him. Would you make your way here? Let's stand together. Just slide out from where you are.

Make your way down. You're distant from God. You want to come home to him, back slidden.

Just come. Just come. Everybody who's been running from God, unashamedly slip out of your seat.

Both balconies, education annex here in the main sanctuary, just make your way down. Join these that are coming. Those that are just simply tired of running from the love of God.

And today you want to yield your life to him. You want him to be everything to you. I encourage you to bend your knee today.

Bend your knee to God. He loves you. He loves you with an everlasting love.

In spite of your sins, in spite of how dark and far you may feel from God, you're no worse than Paul was. Today, come. Let him begin to change you.

Let him forgive your sin. Let him touch your life. Let him bring you into a brand new relationship with himself.

Don't run from God any longer. I beg you in Christ's name, don't run from God. Come to him.

Join these that are coming. We have many coming. Just join them, unashamedly.

Unashamedly step out of your seat. Come to these altars. Let's sing and then we'll pray together.

How many at this altar this morning could say, Pastor, I am the man or the woman that you preached about this morning. Can I see your hands just unashamedly? Just raise them up. I am the religiously angry man or woman.

Because I know that I had a word from God in my heart for this gathering today. Now the Lord's going to set you free. And you're going to become a recipient of incredible mercy.

Remember the promise to Paul was the same as the promise to you. You'll know my will. You'll have a vision of the Holy One.

This is Jesus Christ. And you'll hear his voice. Now that voice will be a strong inner prompting.

It's not an audible voice. It's a strong inner prompting. As you get into his word, you'll just simply know where to go and how to get there.

God will do it supernaturally. You'll begin to change. From this moment on at this altar, if you are receiving Christ as your Savior, you'll begin to change.

You'll be turned, as has happened to everybody in the Scriptures who has encountered God in a truthful way, you'll be turned into another person. You'll be turned into this person by the power of God within you. It's the evidence that what you have is real, is that you are turned into another person.

You find yourself suddenly caring about other people. You find yourself speaking in a kinder manner than you used to. The change is line by line, little by little, step by step.

Don't be discouraged if you plant a seed today and tomorrow there's not an orchard in your backyard. It's little by little, step by step, because the seed of new life is in you. You begin to change.

Some of you will go to the mission field. Some of you will be preachers of the gospel. Others will be giftings of God will begin to unfold in your life.

And you will be doing things and helping people in a manner that was formerly impossible. And it will be all to the glory of God. And eventually one day you'll get to where Paul came to.

I don't care what's ahead of me. I've found a joy that I'm not giving up for safety and security. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus Christ, I am a sinner. And I thank you, Lord, that you died to save sinners like me. I'm sorry for my sin.

I don't want to live in sin anymore. Today, like Paul did, I bend my knee and I call you Lord. And I open my heart and I ask you, Jesus, to forgive my sin and come into me and be my Lord and my Savior.

Today you promised me that I will know your will. I will understand who you are and what you've done for me. And I will hear your voice guiding me all the rest of my life.

I believe that I will have a joy inside of my heart that nothing in this world can ever take away from me. Oh God, thank you for loving me, coming to me, saving me, giving me hope and a future. Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God.

I believe that you died to pay the price for my sins. I believe that on the third day you were raised from the dead by the power of God as proof to me that my trust in you is not in vain. On the basis of my confession, I believe with all of my heart that I am at this moment forgiven of my sin and guaranteed a place in heaven with God when I die.

Teach me about this. Guide me into this life. Keep my heart pure.

I thank you in Jesus' mighty name. Now give him thanks. Just give him thanks.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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