

When Deliverance Looks Like Old Rotten Rags

by Carter Conlon

Deliverance from spiritual depression can come through seeking God's intervention and provision, even if it seems unconventional or unexpected.

Duration: 32:36

Scripture: Jeremiah 38:6

Topics: "Deliverance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal experiences of witnessing God's miracles and the power of the Holy Spirit breaking down divisions in a community. The speaker encourages listeners to take time to thank God for their current circumstances, emphasizing that there is no happenstance in life. The sermon also calls for individuals to repent and get right with God if they have strayed from His path. The speaker emphasizes that salvation is not a formula, but a matter of the heart, and urges those living in despair to embrace God's will and start thanking Him for where they are.

Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning from Jeremiah chapter 38, if you'll go there, please. A message called, When Deliverance Looks Like Old Rotten Rags. How many are suffering from depression? I want honesty here this morning, put your hand up.

All through the sanctuary, just put your hand up, so others will be encouraged. Not encouraged, but they'll see they're not alone in this. This is about getting out of depression, spiritual depression.

And it's not a depression that comes on the backslidden. Now if you're backslidden, there's a depression and there's a real reason for it, if you're not living in right relationship. I want to talk to you today about somebody like Jeremiah, who's living in right relationship with God.

He's doing everything he knows to speak truth. And yet suddenly, this incredible spiritual depression, because of opposition, comes on him. I want to show you how God gets him out of this depression.

And folks, if you'll listen, there'll be a victory here today. There'll be something deep come into your heart. I know this is from the heart of God.

I was sitting at my desk last night, I was about to work on a message I've been working on for a month. I was about to finalize it all in writing, and the Lord just said, no, put that away, I've got something else. And

in just a moment of time, he unlocked this.

And I do believe it's going to be a key for freedom and victory for many who are here today. Father, I thank you, Lord, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. God Almighty, I'm asking you in Jesus' name to come and do what only you can do.

Lord, you've got to unlock the treasury again. You've got to open to us things new and things old. You've got to show us, Lord, the way that you do work, and how your kingdom advances, and how, Lord, we can find the life that we so long for in Christ.

God Almighty, I'm asking you that you open every prison door today and let every captive go free. We cast down every thought of the enemy, every thought of our own frailty, of our own hearts. We cast these things down and bring them into subjection to the word of God and to the victory of Jesus Christ.

Oh, God, thank you for what you're doing in this house. Thank you, Lord, for such a fresh touch of the Holy Spirit. Guide us, Lord, today.

Guide us into the future, Lord. Give us your heart. That's all we ask for, Lord.

Give us your heart and then give us an empowerment of the Holy Spirit to move in the direction that you would have us go in as a body and individually. We thank you for this. I thank you, God, with all my heart for the anointing that breaks every yoke in Jesus' mighty name.

Jeremiah chapter 38, beginning at verse 6. Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into a dungeon of Malachi, the son of Hamelach. That was in the court of the prison. And they let down Jeremiah with cords.

And in the dungeon there was no water but mire. So Jeremiah sunk in the mire. That's a type of when we've lost sight of the promises of God.

We don't see a way out. There's no water in this place. Just some kind of a sinking, depressive feeling that there seems to be no way out of.

Now when Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they put Jeremiah in the dungeon, the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin, Ebed-Melech went forth out of the king's house and spake unto the king, saying, My lord, the king, these men have done evil in all that they've done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they've cast into the dungeon. And he's likely to die for hunger in the place where he is, for there is no more bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee.

Take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die. So Ebed-Melech, Ebed-Melech, Ebed means slave. And that was his title, slave Melech.

So Ebed-Melech took the men with him, went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts, that means old castaway garments, and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm holds, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

And they drew up Jeremiah with cords and took him out of the dungeon, and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison. When deliverance looks like old rotten rags. Have you ever been in a place where it's so perplexing? When you and I know what God is able to do, but yet he seemingly doesn't do it.

Scripture tells us that Jeremiah was dropped into a place that was in the vicinity of the king's treasure house. Because when Ebed-Melech went to get him out, it says he passed into the house under the treasury and took what was needed as it is out of the treasury to get him out of this place of despair. And he's dropped into this place, he's in the vicinity of the king's treasure house.

In other words, he's imprisoned by isolation and despair. The wealth of the king is somewhere above him, unseen and out of reach. Have you ever been there? You know what God is able to do.

And sometimes that's the way we are. We're gripped with despair. We know that God has the resources to get us out.

And we wonder why nothing is happening. We come into the house of the Lord and we've examined our heart ten times, ten over. We've forgiven everybody that we know that we should forgive.

We've done that which we believe to be right. And yet at the same time we're saying, God, why are you not getting me out of here? Why am I in this place of sinking? What is it, Lord, that is keeping me here? Is this how you reward the righteous? Living for you, God, is this where I've ended up? Is this what my life is going to be? Am I doomed to be in this place of despair for the rest of my sojourn here on this planet Earth? You and I agree with those who prayed in Acts 4, verse 24. These were Christians who were being persecuted.

They got together in the prayer room and they said, Lord, you are God. You've made heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is. And so we agree that God is all-powerful.

We know that everything is created by the word of His mouth. We know that nothing can resist Him. We believe that He came as lightning and fury in Psalm 18 when David the psalmist cried out as a child of God and said, God, I am overwhelmed.

My enemies are all around me. I'm fighting outside as Paul said. I'm fighting inside.

It seems like the battle is never ending. But you came and we agree that you should come. The scripture says in Psalm 18, He came as lightning on the wings of the wind.

He scattered the enemies of the child of God and He drew them out. And David says in Psalm 18, He gave me strength so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. He gave me such authority and power that all of my enemies were ground into the dust and none of them were able to rise up again against me.

And so we agree that God is able to do this. We cry out and say, Lord, at least turn the clay to solid ground. At least do that.

Did you not allow Peter to walk on the water? Then why am I sinking in this place? At least turn it to solid ground that I may stand upon that which threatens to swallow me up. God, we say, strengthened me to climb out. Doesn't your word say in Psalm 18 verse 33 that He makes my feet like hinds feet? Gives me power to climb upon the high places.

God, at least give me the power to climb out of here. If you're not willing to take me out yourself, empower me to get out. I can't live like this anymore.

I can't live with this in my heart. I can't live day to day with this burden that's in my soul. Doesn't your word say, Isaiah 40, 31, that those who wait upon God are given wings as eagles? Aren't we supposed to rise

up above our circumstances? Isn't that what the preachers preach in the house of God? Aren't we supposed to be given this power to rise up above everything that comes against us, comes against my mind, comes against my home and family and my situation? God, then why am I still here? Instead, all I can say is as the psalmist, let me just read it to you for time's sake.

In Psalm 38 verses 6 to 10, I'm troubled, I'm bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long. My loins are filled with a loathsome disease and there's no soundness in my flesh. I'm feeble and sore broken, I've roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

Lord, all my desire is before you and my groaning is not hid from you. My heart pats, my strength fails and as for the light of my eyes, it is also gone. This is King David and he cries out, he says, I am so pressed down.

Lord, the light of my eye is going out. I'm losing heart, I'm losing hope. My heart is panting.

God, I have such a troubling in my heart and I don't know why it's there and I don't know how to get out. The Hendrickson Pulpit Commentary speaks of at least one author who believes that the groaning of Jeremiah is most likely what came to the attention of Ibn Malik. And he was the king's servant, he was a slave, he was from a conquered nation, he was an Ethiopian.

Whether he had been betrayed, whether he had been captured in battle, however he got there, he was made a eunuch in the king's palace. He'd known betrayal, he'd known pain. I want to tell you something, folks.

Until you've suffered, you don't really hear the cry of the suffering. Until you and I have gone through, doesn't the scripture say that we comfort by the comfort wherewith we have been comforted of God? If we've never come to the place where only God can comfort us, if you and I have never walked there, then we really can't hear the cry of the poor. We really don't.

We'll pass by through our day, our concerns. This servant, he obviously had things to do. He had commissions in the king's palace, and the king's word had been decreed.

Men were given permission to put Jeremiah in this dungeon. And he's known betrayal, though. He's known pain.

He's known struggle. He's known suffering. And there's something that comes into the heart when you and I have gone through this valley of the shadow of death.

There's something that gets into us. There's a compassion that is worked into us by the Spirit of God that is not found in the natural man. And this man takes it upon himself.

He's obviously got some access to the king. And he goes to the king and says, listen, what these men have done to this man of God is not right. And the king listens to his reasoning and sends him out to deliver him.

Psalm 102 talks about how God works. In verse 16, it says, Now here's how the glory of God comes. You and I pray, Lord.

I prayed every day. I prayed in the sanctuary every Sunday morning when I come in to pray. God manifests your glory.

Sends your glory into the sanctuary. Sends your glory into every one of our hearts. But in verse 16 of Psalm 102, it says, Now how is this glory manifested? God says, I'm going to write something down.

And it's going to be written down for another generation, another time than the time in which it is written. That when the glory of the Lord comes, something comes into the heart of God's people that hears the cry of the destitute. That hears something beyond what the natural ear can hear.

All of a sudden, people in the busyness of their day simply just stop in their busyness. And they start hearing a cry that no one else in the palace is aware of. They go to the king and say, king, this is not right.

This shouldn't be happening. Give me permission and give me power to go get this man out of his miserable state. Give me the authority that I need to do this.

Verse 19 says, He has looked down from the height of his sanctuary, and from heaven the Lord beholds the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose those that are appointed to death, to declare the name of the Lord in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem. God looks down from heaven to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose those that are appointed to death. Jeremiah is in this well.

Ibn Malik knows that he's going to die there. You and I don't know how much time he had left, but I want to suggest to you that in the natural, his time was short. There was no water there.

The scripture says that they were not lowering water down to Jeremiah. You can only live three days, folks, without water. There was no bread there.

There was no food there. There was no hope there. There was very little light.

You could probably see just a little dim light at the top of the cistern into which they dropped him. There was no comfort whatsoever. And Ibn Malik, as I said earlier, had probably known this betrayal and captivity at the hands of others, and personal pain.

He approaches the king and says, I need to go get this man. Would you give me the permission to get him? The king gives him permission. And then in verse 11, it says, Ibn Malik took men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury.

So he goes into the treasure house. Now, this is amazing. Now, if we were to say, God, give me the resources, take me to your treasure house and give me what I need to get this man out of despair.

I wonder how many of us would have had the eyes to see what Ibn Malik saw. I wonder how many of us would go into the treasure house of God and come out with cast away garments and old rotten rags and says, Now, this should do it. This is exactly what I need to get this man out.

Oh, the ways of God are not our ways. His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts. Praise be to God.

I dare say there's hardly one of us that would come out. We'd come out with a bag of gold to throw down and say, Here, you know, throw these gold pieces out of the well, bribe people to give you water until we can come back with a ladder to get you out. We would have so many schemes and so many plans, so many devices would come out of our minds and our hearts if we're given access to the treasure house without the heart of God.

And he gathers what he needs. It says old cast closet means old cast away garments and old rotten rags. This is exactly the deliverance that was coming to Jeremiah.

Now picture Jeremiah for a moment with me. Picture him putting his hand over his eyes. He's looking up from this place of despair and he's trying to see God's deliverance for him in this time.

He's praying, he's crying out, he's groaning. God, help me. And some of you, that's all you've been able to pray lately.

You're putting on a face. You put on your church face in church. You put on your work face at work.

But you go into your prayer closet at night if you even have a prayer closet or maybe all you can pray at the end of the night. You sit down beside your bed and say, Oh God, please help me. Please get me out of this place.

Please God, deliver me from this. I'm sinking in this place. And I see the promises, but I don't know how you're going to get me out.

But God, you've got to get me out. You have the power to get me out. Surely you're not going to leave me here.

Surely my enemies are not going to triumph over me in this place. And he looks up for his deliverance. And we look up for deliverance.

And we expect to see Christ come on a cloud. We expect to see this great glory. We expect to see Jacob's ladder descending down to our place of despair.

We expect to have super legs all of a sudden. We can climb out and conquer and walk through and over any adversity that's put before us. And he looks up at the top of the well and it's not an angel that's come to him.

And it's not an army. It's just a fellow bondservant who's touched with the feelings of his infirmities. That's who Christ is, folks.

He sits at the right hand of God, but he's a fellow bondservant. And the Bible says he's touched with our weaknesses. He's touched with our struggles.

He knows what it's like to go through the things that we have to go through. He himself was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. And the chastisement of what we deserve was laid upon him.

He knows what it's like to have friends run away from him. He knows what it's like to look on his left and look on his right as David and have no man care for his soul. He knows what it's like to even have those who boasted of their loyalty to run away in his time of need.

He knows all of these things and he looks down and he sees a man who's struggling and he's touched with the feelings of his infirmity. Thank God with everything in my heart that this is the Savior that we serve today. Thank God that he knows us in our struggle, comes to us in our struggle.

And coming down towards Jeremiah is something so unlike what we think the provision of God should be. We have it all figured out. We've told God how he's got to deliver us.

We know the way out and we're telling God how to do that. Just open the door and I'm out of here. Just do this God.

And we look up to heaven and say, Lord, deliver me. And now coming down from heaven as it is, coming down from the top of our pit of despair is discarded garments and old rotten rags. And God says, here's your deliverance.

I wonder that Jeremiah is just standing there stunned. Is this the way out? What does this mean? What's the significance of this? How do we explain this man being given access to the king's treasury and coming out with these things? Why didn't he come out with a golden rope? Why didn't he come out with something else? Why didn't he take a bag of money and go and buy a ladder? Why didn't he do something more dramatic? Why old castaway garments and old rotten rags? Rags speak to me of the filth and poverty of so many captivated in a world without God. Rags speaks about children without hope.

I remember in Burundi going into the village where they sang this song. You remember, only God could do this. We ask God to help us and help us come.

Only God could do this. I remember the children standing there in rags. Literally strips of cloth on their bodies.

Old dirty rags that you and I would not even keep to clean the dishes in our sink. We wouldn't do it, folks. They were that dirty and they were that old.

But here are children of God dressed in these rags. I see people without a covering. All those who try in their own righteousness, in their own good works, to have somewhat of a relationship with God or an assurance of the future.

And yet Isaiah declares all these works are like old filthy rags. I see people in society covered with dirty rags, not knowing what they are, not knowing that they can be cleansed, not knowing that there is a redemption. We live in a generation where many have cast off the garment of Christ and of those who have followed him in the scriptures.

Where so many today are like the soldiers at the cross. They take this garment of Christ and they see it as an opportunity for personal gain. How much gambling is still going on in the house of the Lord today for the garment of Christ? People who come in and say, oh, it can be mine.

And if I can just get this garment, just think of the influence and power I'm going to have. Just think of this anointing that's going to come on my life. And so many are casting lots as it is for this garment of Christ.

So many have cast off the garment of Christ's compassion. Oh, folks, we live in a generation where everyone's coming in to the house for himself. The selfishness of our day and our world has virtually permeated the house of God.

And it has its own theological backing now. People coming in believing that the garment of Christ is strictly for me. It's about how my life can be better.

It's about how I can advance or I can become more popular. I can be more influential in my world. And there's so few that are willing as Elijah was to endure reproach and to move into the mountain of spiritual poverty and ignorance in our generation that others may be saved and set free.

For years I've heard all these younger than myself preachers saying, oh, the mantle, oh, the mantle of Elijah. Oh, if I could just have the mantle. Well, I remember staying in Leonard Ravenhill's home, an older prophet of God who died several years ago.

And I remember him telling me that people came from all over the world looking for his mantle. They'd come from China. They'd come from India.

They'd knock on his door, Brother Ravenhill, before you die, can I have your mantle? He said, spiritual fools, he called them. He said, as if it's mine to give. And folks, so many people want the mantle, but what do they want it for? So many here today, you want a fresh touch from God, but let me ask you a question, what do you want it for? What is the reason why? Is it just to feel good? Is it just so you'll have some kind of a spiritual bubble to get you through the coming days? I want to remind you that Pentecost went outside.

I want to remind you that when the mantle of God fell on those believers in the upper room, they didn't stay there. They went out into the midst of a society that was anti-Christ at that moment and declared the glory of God to their generation. Many have cast off the garments of true praise, garments that we carry because we worship God for the right reason.

Many years ago, I got a phone call and it was two young men and they said, can you come and help us? I said, well, possibly, but who are you and where are you? They said, we're on an Indian reservation way, way up in Northern Canada and we need help. They said, we can't give you any money. We don't have any money, but we've saved and we can send you a plane ticket to get here and to get home.

And I remember immediately there was a witness of the Holy Spirit that I should go to this place. I remember flying in and taking numerous flights and finally ending up in what's called a bush plane, a small aircraft, just a two, three seater that lands on a gravel strip. I come into this reserve way, way up in Northern Canada and there's 1,300 people we call native Canadians.

You'd call Indians here in America or we would call them. And there were 1,300 people on the reserve. There was one shower, one shower and 1,300 people.

Well, I knew that I'm not going to get a shower for the next week. I was fairly sure of that. They took me to a cabin.

Now on this reserve, you have to understand that the alcohol was prevalent. You can't get in or out. The only way out is by airplane.

So most people were fairly poor. So once you're there, you stay there, perhaps even for life. I remember the houses that the government had built with the doors and windows broken out of them because of the drunkenness in the fighting.

They took me to a cabin. They showed me this is where you're going to be staying. I walked in.

It was absolute squalor. I can't even describe it to you. The bed stunk.

It just absolutely stunk. There's no other way to describe it. There was a bucket for a toilet in the corner and a basin with dirty brown water to wash my hands and face in in the morning.

I remember getting down beside the bed. I got on my knees and I said, Oh, God, thank you that you've seen something in me that you could send me to this place. And I praised him.

I could have been on the not about my surroundings. I could have gotten into despair and say, God, why have you brought me here? Why this place? I must have missed your will in this. Instead, I just knelt and I prayed and I thank God.

I said, Lord, you've seen something. You've worked something in me. Something is in my heart that you could send me here.

Lord, thank you. At night, I went into the there was such despair in that place that people by the hundreds would walk. There was only the size of two football fields in that at night they would walk up and down the roads all night in groups of 10 to 20 people.

They wouldn't speak and they would. I still don't understand why to this day, but they would throw small pebbles on the roofs of the homes and there were 10 roofs. So the pebbles would hit the top and bounce all the way down.

They were doing it on my house that I was in. I couldn't understand. I still don't, to this day, understand it.

But despair had so gripped this village. There was such a hopelessness. It was as bad or worse than anything that Jeremiah was in.

And I remember a spirit of praise came on me. God, you're going to do something. You wouldn't send me here if you weren't going to do something.

And at night in the makeshift auditorium that we had, there was about 500 people every night and I watched God come and do a miracle. The community was divided on certain lines. I watched the Holy Spirit come and break these lines of division down.

I watched the glory of God come into that place. I watched God do what only God could do. And folks, it's been experiences like this that have changed my life, changed the course of my life.

And no matter where I am, no matter where you are, have you ever taken time? Have you ever taken time instead of always trying to get out? Have you ever taken the time to get down after work when nobody's around beside your desk, if you even have one, in the workplace, or beside your room if that's all you got? Have you ever taken the time to thank God that you are exactly where you're supposed to be? That there is no happenstance in your life. This has not happened. This is not outside of God's control.

He has you exactly where you're supposed to be. You are in the office you're supposed to be in. You live in the apartment that you're supposed to live in.

You are married to the person you're supposed to be married to. You have the family that God intended for you to have. You are exactly where God wanted you to be because through your life there's going to be a difference made in this generation.

Ibn Malik looked down and he said these words to Jeremiah, Put these things under your arms. And when Jeremiah did this, these old garments and these old rotten rags, this old time compassion of Christ, this old time burden for the souls of men, this old time moving in the power of the Holy Ghost, not for ourselves but for others, that they may be brought again into the freedom of Christ, this old time burden for the lost,

this old time moving into the prayer closet and thanking God for where we are. Thanking God that in the midst of our struggle, Jesus Christ is going to be glorified.

Thanking God that children are going to praise God again in our streets. Thanking God, thanking God, just thanking God instead of whining and complaining every day for where we are. Thanking God for where we are.

Giving Him praise, giving Him glory for where we are. Thanking the people in the upper room. How could they have prayed on the day of Pentecost? Oh God, why are we an occupied society? Why have soldiers come in and burnt down our houses and raped our wives and taken our children away from us? Oh God, why? Oh God, why? Oh God, why? But when the Holy Ghost came upon them, everything was answered.

They knew why. They stepped into the marketplace and threw their tongues into their lives. Jesus Christ began to be glorified in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Praise be to God. Ibn Malik said, Jeremiah, put these old garments, put these old rags under your arms. In other words, get them inside your inner parts.

Get them close to the very fabric of what makes you a man of God and a woman of God. And you can see Jeremiah putting these old rags under his arms and these old garments under his arms and grabbing that rope and suddenly his hands are in the air. Suddenly the despair is gone.

And the scripture says he was lifted out of the prison and he remained in the court of the prison. That's what it means to be a bond slave to Jesus Christ. Paul said, I could walk away technically.

I'm paraphrasing him. I could walk away but I'm a bond servant of Jesus Christ. I choose to be in prison where God can do something through my life.

I choose to be a captive of the mercy of God for the souls of men. Put these under your arms and let them lift you out. Bless me, God.

That's my message this morning. The Lord's given me. It's 1122.

We've got a half hour or more to worship. I'm going to ask you to do something. If the Holy Spirit is drawing you, if you're backslidden, for goodness sakes, get right with God.

God played this lunatic game of coming to the house of God and then living in sin outside of his house. Get right with God. Put away what you know needs to be put away.

For those that are lost, you don't have a whole lot of time ahead of you. It's time to get right with God. It's time to acknowledge you're a sinner and you need a Savior.

Is there a formula to this? No. It's just an understanding that God became a man, died on a cross for you, and requires that you bend your knee to him. You confess your need of a Savior and allow him to be God in your life.

It's not a formula. It's an issue of the heart. And for those who are living in despair, would you finally embrace the will of God? Embrace what it means to be part of the church of Jesus Christ and start thanking God for where you are.

That's what we're going to do this morning. Start thanking God for your family, your marriage, your children, your office building, your apartment, your job or your no job. Just start thanking God for where you are.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. Blessed be God.

Blessed be God. Blessed be God. You watch God begin to lift you up.

You watch some of you are going to come out of despair today. You're going to walk away filled with the joy of the Lord. Filled with renewed sense and understanding of what it means to be carried by the Spirit of God.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. And as we move to that which is in the heart of God, God will move towards us.

And give us everything we need to get through this life and to the end giving glory to his name. Would you stand please with me if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart? You need to learn to praise God in your situation. Come on down to this altar.

In the annex you can stand between the screens. We're going to take some time to worship. Just move your way down here.

We're going to worship together. We're going to thank God for where we are. Can you do that this morning? Do it right now.

Just begin to thank God for where you are.

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