

# When the Only Prayers You Have Left Are Tears

by Carter Conlon

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*The sermon explores the theme of prayer and the experience of weeping bitterly, using the life of Peter as a case study to illustrate the dangers of knowledge and pride, and the importance of humility and faith in our relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 36:38

**Scripture:** Luke 22:62, John 20:19

**Topics:** "Prayer And Sorrow", "Holy Spirit Guidance"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the deep sorrow and sense of failure that can lead to tears in prayer, focusing on the story of Peter's denial of Jesus and subsequent restoration. It emphasizes the peace and mercy that Jesus offers, encouraging listeners to seek the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance in their lives.

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## Transcript

Message title is when the only prayers you have left are tears. When the only prayers you have left are tears. Luke chapter 22, please.

I'm just going to be sharing one verse, verse 62. Father, I thank you with all my heart for this service today. I thank you for bringing us together.

I thank you for strength. I thank you, God, for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. For Lord, you're the only one who can make your word come alive.

You are the only one God that can take this word and make it a living word inside of our souls. You're the only one who can bring freedom for that's what you came to do. Came to set us free from the sorrows of this life, mistakes we've made, misunderstandings of even who you are.

You came to set us free from captivity and open to us the treasure of your heart. And so Lord God, I ask you for the great privilege this morning of speaking from your heart. And I ask you to demolish the works of hell, everything that's tried to destroy anybody in this house today.

God, I ask you that you would deliver the captives. And I thank you for it in Jesus name. Amen.

I want special greetings. Pastor William Carroll this morning was online watching us. God bless you.

Brother Will, we love you. And also to the North Jersey campus, Brad and Lisa Geis have to head out to California after the service today, a sudden passing of a nephew. Brad and Lisa, we love you.

We thank God for you. And we stand with you. We stand with you in prayer and believe that out of this situation, God will give you the ability to comfort in a very, very special way.

Thank God for you. And thank God for your ministry. Luke chapter 22 verse 62, when the only prayers you have left are tears.

Now I'm going to be talking this morning about, now I'm talking about the people who go to pray and all you can do is weep when you try to pray. And I'm not talking about tears of gratitude. I'm not speaking about tears of joy.

Those are good things and thank God for them. But I'm talking about that type of, the type of tears that's a deep inner bred sorrow. It's a sense of failure, a sense of unworthiness.

I don't belong to the presence of God. I don't feel like I fully understand him. I walked with him at one time and I've walked away and I've done things that I shouldn't have done or I thought things I shouldn't have thought.

I spoke things I shouldn't have said. It's that deep inner sense. I trusted God one time.

I trusted that he was going to change my life. And I even turned away from certain behaviors and walked towards him, believing that my life would be different. But now every time I go to prayer, whether it's at an altar in front of an auditorium in a place like this, or in my own personal prayer closet, when I get down on my knees and bow my head, all I can do is weep.

And there are some people here this morning, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You don't know, there's no words left. You don't know what to say.

All that comes to your heart, all the only manifestation that comes into your life when you start to pray is tears. I want to study a little bit this morning, the life of Peter, one of the apostles. And in Luke 22, verse 62, it says, so Peter went out and wept bitterly.

It was a season in his life of anger. It was a season of misunderstanding. It was a season of he never ever thought would ever come into his life.

He started out this walk with Jesus by Matthew chapter four, verses 18 to 20 said that Jesus was walking down a certain shore and he saw Peter and Andrew, his brother, fishing. He began to speak to them and challenged them to leave what they were doing and to come and follow him. The scripture says they immediately left their boats and their nets and they began to follow him.

Most everybody here, if you are a believer in Christ, you've left something, you've put something away to follow him. Maybe it's an old relationship. Maybe it's a practice that you were involved in, a course that you thought your life should take, a career that you thought would satisfy you.

And you walked away from it because you felt in your heart, God calling you to something different, something deeper. You can't really be converted without that initial desire to say, I want to leave this old

way of thinking. I want to leave this whole way of living.

I want to walk with God with all my heart. And I believe it's going to make a difference, not just for me, but for my family, for my friends, for my future. I believe that with all my heart.

Matthew chapter 10, verse one tells us that he, among others that were walking with Jesus at that time were given power to go out and to proclaim the message of freedom and deliverance from things that were oppressing people and to heal those that were sick. They were given that power. And this is one of the things that you and I have become aware of when we're young Christians in particular, that God has called us to something much deeper than ourselves.

He's called us to be ambassadors of freedom from all the oppressions that can come into people's minds and into their hearts, not only ambassadors, but channels through which his power flows to others. And that we can go out and help people in their times of illness and sickness, and whether it's a mental sickness or a physical sickness, whatever it is, we can touch them in a sense with the power of God. Just our words have the power to make a huge difference.

Matthew chapter 14, verse 29 tells us that Peter at one point in his life, got out of the boat and walked on water. That's the moment now. You may judge Peter if you want, but none of us in this room have ever walked on water.

I assure you, if you have, I would really like to talk to you after the service today. Nobody's, I'm sure many have tried young people that went to summer camp. I know a lot of people in summer camp, they do this walk on water exercise to see who can get the farthest.

Nobody gets very far when they try to walk on water, but by faith, he stepped out into the impossible. And he began to understand that things that could swallow other people had no power to swallow him. That the impossible things of life became possible when God is calling you to do it.

And if you're a believer in Christ here today, you know that. Things that were impossible to you before, you maybe had no power to speak the truth, but now you're speaking truth. You had no power to do certain things in your life, but God called you out of where you were into another place.

And that which normally would cause you to sink suddenly had no power over you. And because his word was calling, his voice was calling you, you were given the supernatural ability to do things you could never have done in your own strength. Matthew 15, 15 tells us that Peter had a thirst for learning.

He was always that voice that was seen to be above the fray and above the crowd, always the first in rightly or wrongly. And in this chapter, Jesus is speaking the truth. And Peter is the one who said, explain this to us.

I want to understand this. It's a type of a person that comes to church, opens their Bible, says, God, I want you to speak to me. I want to know what you're teaching me.

I want to understand mysteries. I want to know truth. I want to walk in truth.

I want to be a person of truth. In Matthew 16, 16, when Jesus asked the disciples, after so long walking with him, he said to them, who do men say that I am? And one said, oh, some say John the Baptist, or one of the old prophets of old coming back to us again. But then he turned to them and said, who do you say

that I am? And it was Peter that said, you are the Christ.

You are the son of the living God. You are the promised one. You are everything that the prophets of old have ever promised God would do for us.

You are the one who's coming to set us free. You are the one who's going to establish a kingdom on earth that will never end, a kingdom of truth, a kingdom of righteousness. That means right living, where everything is right, a kingdom where there's no pain, no sorrow, no sickness, no trial.

You are the one. You are the son of God. And Jesus said to him, you are blessed, Peter, because flesh and blood didn't, you didn't get this through flesh and blood, but my father in heaven revealed this to you.

In other words, you have laid hold of the truth that humanity and themselves are incapable of understanding. I thank God. There is a point in every believer's life that we get this revelation deep inside of us.

He is the Christ. He is the one who gives life. He is the one who redeems.

He purchases us, us out of darkness and calls us his own children. He's the one who's coming again to receive us so that where he is, we will dwell with him forever as well. He's the Christ, he's the son of the living God.

And then shortly after that, Jesus looked at him, singled him out because of the revelation that was in his heart. And he said, you are Peter. And upon this rock, which meant the statement he had just made about him being the Christ, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against.

In other words, Peter, I'm, you have just, there's something inside of you. And when that begins to be the cornerstone of what I'm building, I'm building a church, people who understand this kind of truth. And no matter what hell throws against them, hell will not prevail.

And when they pray, the gates of hell will not be able to withstand their prayers. There are sovereign supernatural people upon the earth. Peter, upon this rock, I will build my church.

The gates of hell will not prevail against it. Matthew chapter 17 verses one to three, the scripture says, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain. And he was given to understand Christ as few in his time ever would.

The scripture tells us that the, that inner glory of God himself, that was in this man, Jesus Christ, the son of God, who was fully God and fully man, this inner nature, that was the power, the presence of almighty God literally burst forth. And he saw him in all of his glory. And not only that, he saw Moses and Elijah standing on the mountain top, Moses and Elijah were already long dead.

And he had the revelation, the realization that in the power of God, the dead live. There's a divine purpose. They began to speak to him about his coming death in Jerusalem.

He, he, the whole package was there. The divine nature of Christ, his power to keep even that which has died and what the plan was for the future. He saw it all.

He understood it all. And in all this knowledge, though, something began to happen to Peter that you and I need to be aware of. He became so knowledgeable that he began to tell Jesus how the future should

unfold.

Matthew chapter 16, Jesus was telling his disciples, the son of man is going to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. They're going to put me to death. And on the third day, I'm going to raise again.

And the scripture says, Peter took him aside and said, no, and began to rebuke the Lord himself. This is not the way it's going to go. That's the danger of those of us who have walked with God for a season.

We get so smart. We learn so much that we start telling God how the future is supposed to unfold. This is what my life is supposed to look like.

This is what you're going to do for me. Yes, Lord, I'm going to be the best Broadway actor there ever was. I'm going to be the best lawyer, the best doctor I'm going to be.

And God, you're going to help me to do it because this is how my future is going to unfold. And that's exactly what we begin to do unwittingly. We begin to tell God and may we never do that.

May we never get to the point where we're telling God what the future should look like. His ways are higher than our ways. His plans are higher than our plans.

His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Then he began to boast of his own strength. Matthew 26, 33, Jesus was telling them, the shepherd, according to scripture is going to be smitten.

That means that the shepherd is going to be killed and all the sheep are going to be scattered. And Peter said to him, even if all are made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble. No, sir, not me.

I know too much. I've walked too far. This journey is not a novice journey for me.

You can trust me, Lord, I'll be there. And then again, in verse 35, he said, even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you. He was boasting, you see, of strength he didn't have.

He was boasting of knowledge that was not yet perfected. He had been clearly, clearly warned of the Lord, Jesus Christ himself, that something was coming his way, that he would need faith to get through it. The Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for you that he may shift you as wheat, but I've prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren. Now, keep in mind, he's, he's telling this as Peter's trying to throw back, he's actually arguing with him. He's not listening to what's being said.

He's, he's not really wanting to hear that the pathway might be something other than what he thinks it should be. He's not wanting to hear about how weak he really is without the power of God inside of his life. He's not wanting to listen to these things.

And he's, he's throwing back arguments against the son of God, but Jesus is telling him, Peter, when you have returned, or I love the King James version of the Bible, when it says, when you're converted, strengthen you, when you're, when you're changed, when you're made into another man than the man that you are, strengthen those that are coming after you who are going to need strength. And then suddenly everything starts to change. Judas comes with his band of religious robbers into the garden of Gethsemane with torches and lanterns and rage, wanting to be rid of this Christ, just as so many are

wanting to be rid of Christ in our generation.

Peter takes his sword out. He's got a small sheath. He takes it out.

And I think he aims to take the head of the servant of the high priest off and only manages to cut one ear off. Jesus tells him to put his sword away, takes the servant's ear and puts it back on his head. And it's completely healed.

And then Peter is sending into a tailspin because his whole world is falling apart. This isn't the way it was supposed to be. This is not the way I understood the kingdom of God.

You're letting yourself be taken captive, but yet you have the power to walk on water. I saw you on the mountaintop. I saw you transfigured.

Didn't you tell me that upon, he could think it upon my life, the church was going to be built and would not be prevailed against by the gates of hell. But yet I see the gates of hell coming in. I see these angry people taking you captive, mocking you.

And I know you have the power to stop this. You don't have to yield to this. Didn't I tell you, Jesus, you don't have to do it this way.

What are you thinking? Aren't you supposed to defeat the armies of Rome and establish the kingdom of God for us here and now? Didn't you come to make the nation of Israel a praise in the earth? What are you doing? Why did you tell us all these things? If you're not going to do it the way you said you were going to do it in Peter's mind, that is. And so as Christ has taken into his trial, where he's being both mocked and examined, of course, on that road to being crucified for the sins of all humanity. Peter's warming himself by the fire when he's approached and somebody says, hey, you were with him, weren't you? And he says, no, not me.

I wasn't with him. And then in Matthew chapter 26, he's approached a second time. And somebody says, you were with him.

I know you were because you're part of that same group that's been hanging around him. And you see, you got to understand in Peter's mind, he's frightened, but I think he's more angry than frightened. I think he's more confused than angry and frightened together.

I think he's just in a complete tailspin because he's been walking with Jesus for three years, experienced all these experiences, and it's just not working out the way he thought it would. And then the scripture says he denied with an oath. In other words, I swear to God, I am not part of that party.

That's really what he said. And then he's approached a third time. And they said, you are one of them because you're a Galilean and your speech, your accent actually gives you away.

And the scripture tells us he began to curse and swear. And really, when you look at it, what it really means is he cursed himself with an oath and began to swear. In other words, may God strike me dead if I know that man.

I swear to God, I don't know him. And I don't know if it's just fear in measure, I'm sure it is, but in measure it's anger. I feel let down.

This is not working out the way it's supposed to. I'm so confused. I thought I had it all together.

I thought I understood the way things are supposed to work out. And that happens to a lot of people in the church of Jesus Christ. I walked with you, God.

I believed your promises to me, at least the way I read them. And now my life is not turning out the way I thought it was going to turn out. Things are not working the way I heard this preacher on television tell me if I'd send him a thousand dollars, I'd be wealthy.

And he had scripture to quote. I was told that to become a Christian meant my trials are going to be over. I'll be happy, healthy, wealthy, and wise all my life.

Here I am unemployed, lonely. My health is starting to fail. I don't know if I know you.

I don't know. And somebody comes and says, so I hear you're a Christian. I don't know.

I don't know how much of a Christian I am. I'm so disappointed in my heart. And the scripture says, he went out and he wept bitterly because you see Jesus turned.

The Bible tells us and looked at him right in the eye as he was cursing himself with an oath. And then he remembered the words that he said that he hadn't really understood what was being told him, but now it started to become a reality in his heart. Oh God, what have I done? Oh God, have I, have I gone too far with what I knew against what I knew? Have I, have I so failed you that there's no hope? Is it, is it true that I can still be part of your church and you will still give me the strength that hell will not prevail against me? You, you said that you hope that you prayed that my faith would not fail, but, but you see, I cursed you with an oath saying, I cursed myself with an oath saying, I don't know you.

And the scripture says he went out and wept bitterly. And that's what I'm talking about today. Some people can't pray without weeping.

It's a deep sense of failure. I tried to walk with you. God, I turned from what I thought was wrong.

And I turned to what are the words, what I thought was right. But I, I've, I've just done things. I never believed I would ever do.

And I said things I never believed I would say it. And even though I was a follower of yours, I did things. I never believed I could be capable of doing.

I'm afraid to even come in your presence. And the scripture tells us that a little later on, just a few days later, some people were gathered in an upper room at the evening time. The doors were shut because they were afraid of the Jews and Peter would have been there and wondering in his heart, what would he say to me? When he appears, have I, have I gone too far? Have I sinned away my moment of grace? Am I rejected because I played this game for just a little too long and Jesus comes into the room and I can just imagine that moment that their eyes met.

You see the last time their eyes met Peter saying, may God curse me if I know this man. Now it's a few days later and Jesus comes into the room and he looks at Peter and he says, peace be with you. Peace.

That's amazing. Peter, you don't have to fear your curse for I became a curse for you when I hung on the cross. The Bible says, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.

Don't have to fear your curse. I took your curse upon me. And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his side and the disciples were glad.

And then he said to them again, peace to you. As the father has sent me, I also send you. You see, I'm sending you now, Peter, as an ambassador of mercy.

You now know what forgiveness looks like. You now know what grace looks like. You now know.

You now know things you didn't know before. And I say to you, peace, the father has sent me and I'm sending you. And then when he said this to them, he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy spirit.

You see, you can't do this work. You can't walk this walk without the Holy spirit of God inside of your life. And neither can I, I need the strength of God and you need the strength of God.

I need the peace that Christ offers. And I thank God with all of my heart that in spite of what any one of us in this room have done, in spite of what we've said, how we've lived or not lived. If Jesus Christ himself were to appear in this sanctuary, he would look at you and say, peace.

I want peace with you. And I want you to be at peace with me. I died for you because you couldn't save yourself.

I died for you because you had no strength to live the way that the word of God says you should live. And so I want you to recognize that I have come for you because I desire peace with you. That's what the angel said when Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill towards men.

In other words, God has come. God didn't come as a 25 foot angel. He came encased in the body of a baby.

He came in a child whose diapers had to be changed by somebody. Almighty God trying to tell us, trying to show us any way we could understand that I am not offended by your weakness. I came to get you.

I came to save you. I came to bring you home. I came to give you a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit.

I came to give you life, not just eternal life, but an abundant life on this earth. I came for you because I love you. I've loved you with an everlasting love.

And even though people can forsake one another, I will never forsake you. I engraved you on the palms of my hands. Receive the Holy Spirit.

Then the Bible goes on to tell us that there was another man named Thomas. He had also walked with Jesus for those same three years. And they told him, we've seen the Lord.

And he said, unless I see his hands and the prints of the nails in them and put my finger into his side, my hand into his side, I will not believe. There's a lot of people like that. I just don't believe anymore.

I've just seen too much. I've just been around too long. I've just seen too much failure.

I don't believe. And after eight days, his disciples were again inside and Thomas was there. And Jesus came in with the doors being shut and stood in their midst.

And what did he say? Peace to you. Peace to you. And he said, Thomas, come here.

Give me your finger. Here, stick it in the holes in my hands. Give me your hand.

Put it in my side. You see, he's not offended either with our questions. He's not offended by our struggles.

He's not offended when, you know, Thomas is just that kind of person that says, I'm just tired of believing. I want to see it. I'm tired of believing that God's going to give me a wife for a husband.

I want to see it. I'm tired of believing that one day I'm going to have peace in my heart. I want to see it.

I'm tired of believing that my children are going to come home when I pray. I want to see it. And I'm done believing until I see it.

And Jesus was showing with Thomas and showing you and I that I'm not offended by your questions. I'm not offended by your struggles to believe. I'm not offended by your weakness.

I really just want to have peace with you. How could you not love that kind of a savior? He had every right to take the whole works of his disciples and just throw them to the wind, but he didn't come to die for us because we have it all together. Came and died for us because we need a savior, a savior of compassion, a savior that's willing to cleanse us, a savior that's willing to be touched with the feelings of our weaknesses and say, here, give me your hand and stick it right in his side and say, don't be unbelieving.

One day, everything that you're having to believe for by faith now will be a reality. You will live eternally with God. There is a mansion being prepared for you and there is a divine plan for your life while you live on the earth, whether you and I fully understand it or whether we don't.

I'll tell you one thing for sure. God has not failed us. He cannot fail us.

He will never fail us. So I want to challenge you this morning. Be at peace with God and let God be at peace with you.

So pastor, what do I have to do? What do I have to do? You do what the disciples did. You let him speak peace into your heart. You realize that he's not offended by your struggles and you open your heart and let him give you his Holy Spirit.

I want you to hear me on this. We are in a dark day and we will not be able to get through to the other side without the Holy Spirit of almighty God. Once you and I realize that it's the desire of Christ to give us his Holy Spirit, then it becomes easy for us to open our heart and say, Lord, you want to give me your spirit.

You want to dwell inside this physical body. You want to lift me out of my trials, my misunderstandings, and my questions. You want to answer the deepest cries of my heart.

So God, knowing that you want to be at peace with me, even though it looks like I've not wanted to be at peace with you, I simply come and I open my heart and say, Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit. Give me the power that I need to live life the way that you've called me to live it and to be the testimony that you've called my life to be. I thank you for loving me in the midst of my failure, all my questions, my struggles, and my trials.

You've never stopped loving me and you didn't die for me because I was perfect or could get it together. You died for me simply because you love me. And so, Lord, I just come to you.

I say, God, help me where I don't believe. Strengthen me where I'm weak. Give me courage to believe that all things in my life do work together for good because I do love you and I'm called according to your purpose.

And I thank you, Lord, for not being offended by my questions and not being offended by my struggles. I'm opening my heart to you because you opened your heart to me. I'm opening my heart to let you give me your Holy Spirit so that I can stand and be a witness of mercy because that's really what the kingdom of God is all about.

There are no strong people. There are no weak people. There are no big ones and no small ones.

It's a total, utter, complete kingdom of mercy. If you find yourself this morning needing mercy, if you find that in your heart you've been warring against God, you're not the only one. You're in good company throughout history.

If you find that the questions that you've had have caused you to even back away from him and you don't even trust him, just like Peter, maybe you might be here this morning and say, I don't even know what I'm doing in church today. I don't even know why I've come. I don't even know what would happen if God were to appear.

But if you'd be open to letting him touch your life in a fresh way, if you'd be willing to receive the Holy Spirit of God into your life, you're going to stand in a moment. I'd like to invite you to come to the front of this auditorium between the screens in the Education Annex, the same in North Jersey at the campus. And those who are at home, you could just stand in your living room, perhaps.

And say, Lord, here I am. With all my flaws, my misunderstandings, my frailty, my failings, God Almighty, I'm asking you to give me your Holy Spirit. I'm asking you, Lord God, that I can make peace with you and that I can become the man or the woman that you've called me to be.

If that's the cry of your heart, we're going to worship just for a couple of minutes. And as we do, I'm going to ask you to slip out of your seat wherever you are and just make your way down to the front of this auditorium. And we're going to pray that God fill us with his Holy Spirit this morning.

God bless you. Please stand, if you will, in the balcony. Go to either exit.

Make your way down the main sanctuary. Just slip out of wherever you are. I want peace with God.

I want peace with God. I want God's peace in my heart. Just slip out wherever you are.

Just come. Just join these that are already coming. And we'll pray together in just a few moments.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord. I'd like you to pray this, just a simple prayer with me today.

Lord Jesus, thank you for wanting to be at peace with me. I want to be at peace with you. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for not being offended with my questions and my misunderstandings.

I ask you, Lord God, to give me your Holy Spirit so that I can be the person that you have designed me to be. I now know that your kingdom is a kingdom of mercy. God, that will be my message to this generation, that you, Jesus, want to be at peace with all people and to give them your Holy Spirit.

I thank you for this. Let me pray for you, please. Father, I pray God for these men and women who come to this altar, Lord, looking for life, looking for answers to questions, looking for forgiveness and peace with you, Lord.

God, there is no peace greater than that which you offer. My peace, you said, I give you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. And so, God, I thank you with all my heart for peace that passes understanding, because it comes from the heart of God.

Thank you, Lord, that our lives don't have to work out the way we think they should. We put them into your hands, Lord, and you are a faithful Savior, God. You will, you will, you will design our path.

Each of us, Lord, you'll take us on a path that will best glorify your name. We simply choose to trust you, God. We choose, Lord, we choose to trust you.

You have shown yourself to be worthy of being trusted. And so, God, help us, help us, Lord. Keep us from this day forward.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit. We need your Holy Spirit to walk this walk. We need you to be a living testimony of who you are.

We can't do this on our own. We can't reason it with our own minds. We need the power of your Holy Spirit, Almighty God.

And so, Lord, we open our hearts. And whatever way you choose to do that, Lord, simply breathe on us as you did to your early disciples and give us of your Holy Spirit. And, Father, we thank you for it with all of our hearts, and we praise you for it in Jesus' name.

Amen and amen. Praise God.

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