

(A Living Challenge) Encouraging Your Brother

by Dale Gish

The sermon emphasizes the importance of encouraging one another in the faith and maintaining a strong community in Christ.

Duration: 1:21:16

Scripture: Jonah 2:1

Topics: "Church Unity", "Christian Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a heartwarming story about a little boy with Down syndrome who falls while racing with other children. The other children immediately come to his aid, helping him up and making sure he is okay before continuing the race. The preacher uses this story to illustrate the importance of unity and caring for one another in the church. He encourages the congregation to share their testimonies and experiences of how God has been speaking to them during the sermon.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. We were sitting there singing and I was just thinking, well, I'd like to hear another song.

I just love to sing There's Power in the Blood. I think about how lost I was. I think about Jonah down there at the bottom of the sea, in the belly of the whale.

That's about as low as you could get. You know what he cried out down there? He said, salvation is of the Lord. That was his declaration.

Did you ever read that in the book of Jonah? Clear down there at the bottom of the sea, salvation is of the Lord. He said, out of the belly of hell, cried I. And do you know why he said salvation is of the Lord? It's because nobody else could reach him down. And God spoke to the fish and it spat him up on dry ground.

And I just trust that God can reach down to wherever we are to a yielded heart in each of us. And there's salvation there. Can we just sing a couple of verses of There's Power in the Blood? Why don't we stand? And let's sing it with joy.

Let's sing it with conviction. And let's sing it to our God. Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's power in the blood, power in the blood.

Would you all reveal a victory wave? There's wonderful power in the blood. There is power, there is power. Would you be free from your passion and pride? There's power in the blood.

Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? Would you do service for Jesus, your King? Amen. You may be seated. If there's anything that would bring us together to the foot of the cross and just look up together and be one.

That's all. Amen. Well, I'm going to tell you this evening I had more on my heart to continue on from this morning.

I had more that I wanted to share. I have more to share. It didn't near all come this morning.

This book is full. When the Holy Spirit guides and brings discernment from the Scriptures, I'm going to tell you, God in the cloud by day, I'll just say it that way, and in the pillar of fire by night, God never moved forward. God has blessed me with a family.

One evening it was time to go from the place where we had been. So, we got in the van and we started our journey home. A few miles down the road, I realized that we were not all there.

And it smoked my heart. I hit the brakes. I turned around.

Because I'm not about to go home when we're not all together. Because we're a family. That's where I feel like we may be this evening.

I want to shift gears a little tonight. I want to shift down. I don't want to leave anybody behind.

Because we're a family. Oh, that we could hear each other's hearts. So, we gather tonight in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we greet you in the gentleness of our Lord. I like what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 1. He said, I beseech you by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. That's a good beseeching, brothers and sisters.

And that's the way I'd like to stand here this evening and beseech us that we would love one another out of a pure heart, fervently. And encourage one another along the way. Today, let's go forward together in the Kingdom of God.

I'd like to remind us that we are a building fitly framed together. I'm going to say that these are building blocks. And here we are.

And you know, I myself might have a tremendous weakness in this area. I might have great need here. I might not be all that good of a building block.

I might be a flaw. I might have tremendous imbalance in this area of my life. It looks like a reject.

But the Word of God teaches us that God hath placed each member in the body as it hath pleased Him. And the brother that God has placed beside me might have a tremendous strength in this area where I am so weak. And the brother that He placed over here on this side of me might balance me out right here in this area.

And I balance him out. God does that. We're a building fitly framed together.

And the Word of God says that we've been compacted together. You know, the shocks of life. The vibrations and the disappointments of life have compacted us together.

And we're a tight fit so that the enemy can't get any wedge driven in between us. I have a burden that that's the way it would be here. So, I'm going to beseech us this evening by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ that we love one another out of a pure heart, fervently.

That we be encouraged in the Lord. You know, when a barber uses only sharp tools, he's not going to have very many customers for long. They're going to go somewhere else.

They'll stop coming. There are times when the barber simply needs to use some cream. He needs to use some soothing oils.

Some lotions. And when he uses those things combined with sharp cutting tools, he has happy customers. And they become very beautiful people.

Very attractive people. And I believe that there's a parallel in that for us as Christians. I feel like we've been having some fairly sharp messages lately.

And I didn't feel like we needed another one tonight. As I tried to hear from God, sometimes we just need a Savior with some soothing oils. We need the balm and Gilead, brothers and sisters.

And so I trust that by God's grace, we can come that way this evening. So, let's pray. Holy Father, we come to You tonight.

We think of the song we sang this morning that says, Speak to me, Lord, that I may speak. And I was just thinking, that's the only time we ever have any right to speak at all is when You have spoken to us. And we desire to pass it on with the gentleness and the meekness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have read in Peter, Father, where it says, If any man speak, let him speak as of the oracles of God. Oh, Father, that we might speak that way. Wisdom.

We know that the natural man, Father, receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. I pray that we would be spiritually discerned this evening, so that we can hear each other's hearts.

We want to hear Your heart, Father. But we want to hear each other's heart too. It's all a part of the big picture.

The body of Christ. All the members connected to the head. We worship You tonight, Father.

Have Your way. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. The Scriptures say of our Lord that a bruised reed will He not break and smoking flax will He not quench.

That's a good Scripture to meditate on if you want to get an accurate picture of our Lord. Jesus will not destroy a broken blade of grass. That's amazing.

He won't pinch out a flickering, dying wick. Can't you just see Jesus bending down to straighten up a broken blade of grass that others have trampled on? And in a way that seems a little strange, but the Scriptures make a pretty strong connection between people and grass. Surely the people is grass, Isaiah said.

And if we're honest, we do get bruised. Don't we? We do give advice. It's not taken.

Good advice. We do get hurt. We do get broken.

And so I trust that tonight we can be like Jesus toward each other. There are times when our faith flickers and threatens to go out. At least there's times when it doesn't shine as brightly as at other times.

And you know, we can put on a front. There's times when we can make it look like we're never discouraged. We can make it look like we're always on top of things, but there are times when those kind of people are more of a nuisance in the Kingdom of God than they are a blessing.

Because they're not honest. We need to be honest. You know, Paul in the Scriptures was honest.

He got discouraged. And it's almost like he wanted us to know that he got discouraged. He said, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of the trouble which came to us in Asia.

How we were pressed out of measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. And I don't know how you are, but to me, that's discouraged. Pressed out of measure.

That's a lot of pressure. So that we despaired even of life. And you know, I marvel that the Apostle Paul would even let himself get into that condition.

I mean, he was a man who had seen the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Paul said. Have we not seen Christ? He had had direct revelations from God.

He had been caught up to the third heaven. He had seen things and heard words not even lawful for a man to utter. And you know, brothers and sisters, if you had done that, if you had been there, that would be a tremendous deterrent to discouragement.

It would. And Paul had done that. There was a clear calling on his life.

He knew exactly what God wanted him to do. And with that clear of a calling, and with that clear of an anointing, I marvel that the Apostle Paul would even let himself get that discouraged. Pressed out of measure, above strength, so that he despaired even of life.

And Paul said, I wouldn't have you ignorant of that. I want you to know that. That happened to me too.

But here tonight, lest you think I'm laying the foundation for discouragement, and that it's okay to be discouraged. It's perfectly fine and normal. Don't worry about it.

I say, God forbid. No, indeed. Yes, it's probably normal.

And yes, it happens. And no, we're not going to cover it up. But we need to know that discouragement is a tool of the enemy.

I heard a little story a while back. It just said that a man had a dream or something like this. And he went into the storehouse of the devil.

And he saw it was clear full of bags of seeds of discouragement. And he asked the devil, why do you have so many bags of discouragement? Why don't you have seeds of other things? And the devil said, because of all the things that accomplish my purpose, those seeds grow the best in the hearts of the Christians. We don't want any of that among us.

We need to get out of it. Discouragement is a dangerous thing. It opens the door to many temptations, to bitterness, and all kinds of emotions and temptations.

We need to get out of that horrible pit. And so I say, let's not just read about Paul being in discouragement. Let's keep reading and see what he did about it.

There are times when we need to just simply spread our wings of faith and be a butterfly. Amen? And rise above the things that bog us down. I believe I would like to turn to that passage of Scripture.

Let's just turn and read it. It's 2 Corinthians 1. I'd just like to look at verses 8-10. Paul is speaking here about the God of all comfort.

He understands our trials. And we are able to comfort each other in every trouble with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. So Paul is talking about being strengthened and comforted here.

In verse 8, he said, For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. And for a Christian, there's two sides of discouragement.

There's the situation that got you there, and that's very real. But there's the other side too, that he can trust in God which raiseth the dead. And when he can switch his focus, that pulls a man out of discouragement.

It always does. And he speaks here in verse 9 that it is the sentence of death. I believe what he's talking about here is that discouragement, that kind of pressure, is the sentence of death to our spirituality.

That's what he's saying here. Verse 8 describes his discouragement. And verse 9 calls it the sentence of death.

And there's not a one of us can handle that, brothers and sisters. Discouragement and despair is a sentence of death to your spirituality and it will not lead us to life. We need to get out of that condition.

And Paul says in verse 10, speaking of God, who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver, in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us. And I don't know what all that Scripture means. It may have more than one meaning.

But I believe Paul is talking about discouragement, having a sentence of death to his spirituality, and God delivered him from that. And he was very honest. He said, He's delivered me from it in the past.

He's delivering me from it now. And He's going to have to deliver me from it again in the future. He knows that life is tough.

Life is rocky. Pressures come. And God is the deliverer of those feelings.

So, our desire this evening is that we be encouraged in the Lord. I think I would like for that to be the title of the message. Encouraging your brother.

And that includes your sister. Encourage means you give courage to someone. You build up their courage.

You give them courage. That's what encourage means. Discourage means you take someone's courage away.

You lower their courage level. Depression is when all their courage is gone. And brothers and sisters, that's a dangerous place to be.

Our desire this evening is that we would be encouraged in the Lord. And I want to emphasize, in the Lord. That is a great grace of life.

To be able, in whatever situation you're in, to be able to take your eyes off of the things around you, to take your focus off of the situation you're in, and just fix your gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ, upon God the Father, and the joy of forgiveness, and the beauty of holiness, and the empty tomb, and the cross of the Lord Jesus, and bring all that back into focus. And, oh, there it is again. I almost forgot.

I mean, we're that way. And we need to be able to take our focus off of the situations around us, and get our priorities straight again. You know, when we're in a mess, oftentimes we like to focus on the mess.

We just focus on that thing. And we look up at God and we just... Our focus is on the mess. And you know, we need to turn that thing around.

I've heard it said that we gaze at the problem and glance at God. Well, we need to gaze at God and glance at the problem. We just need to turn the thing around and it makes a world of difference.

It really does. That's what David did when he was at Ziklag. You know, David and his men came home from battle one day, and their city was burnt with fire.

And their wives and families were gone and had been kidnapped, and they were not there and they did not know where they were. And the men were so discouraged that they thought about stoning David. And while the men were getting ready to stone David, the Word of God says that David encouraged himself and the Lord, and I seriously doubt if he did that by looking at the situation around him, and on where they were going to stone him.

He fixed his gaze upon God. That's what Stephen did. And I don't think he forgot about the situation he was in, but he changed his focus.

I trust that God can give us that grace. And I want us to know that we don't just do that when things are bad. You know, we get that mentality.

When things are bad, just get your focus up here. Brothers and sisters, we need to do that when things are good. I have heard people say that things are going well, everything is going their way, and they just say, I'm encouraged in the Lord.

But are they really encouraged in the Lord? Or are they encouraged that everything is going their way? You know, the test comes down the road a little ways when everything turns around and goes the other way. Are you still encouraged in the Lord? Or were you just encouraged because everything was going your way? You know, my father had a poem that he liked to quote when I was a little boy growing up. And a couple of those lines really stuck with me.

It said, If you can meet with triumph and disaster, and meet, treat those two imposters just the same. If you can meet with triumph and disaster, and treat those two influences just the same. You know, we need to take our eyes off of all of that, good or bad, and get our courage from the Lord.

That will even out our walk with God. That's what Job did. It didn't matter if God was serving him at his table, or if God was yanking the tablecloth and everything on it came crashing to the floor in pieces.

Either way, Job said, the Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. He wasn't going to get his courage from the good or the bad of things down here.

He was going to get his courage regulated from God. I trust that we can do that. Now, I say that knowing that God does need to be our focus.

That is part of the armor that we have against discouragement. That's the shield of faith that we have that will not let our situation regulate our courage in the Lord. But I also know that no man is an island.

We greatly affect one another. We can encourage each other, and we can discourage each other. And you know, there are times when our brother or our sister is discouraged.

And we can lift our shield of faith and protect our brother. Jesus did that. Did you know that? Jesus didn't judge a man when he was at his lowest point and in his hardest trial.

A bruised reed will he not break. Instead, he came to their defense with his own shield of faith. That's a lesson that we need to stamp on our hearts, I believe.

Jesus used his own shield of faith to protect a hurting brother. You think about the fatherless and the widows in the Scriptures. Kind of a defenseless category of people.

God is very defensive of those people. He doesn't justify their sin, but He does give them protection. You think about a man like John the Baptist.

John the Baptist, there was a point in his life where he got extremely discouraged. He was in prison. He was confused.

And his faith was flickering big time. It was almost smoking flax. If you read that account.

I mean, there was a point where he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, Are you he that should come, or should we start looking for somebody else? I mean, that was John the Baptist. That was the one who leaped in his mother's womb before he was even born, because he knew that Jesus was the Christ. That was the man who cried out with conviction, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Because he knew that Jesus was the Christ. But there was a point where he was in prison. And he was discouraged.

And he was confused. And he wasn't even sure if Jesus was the Christ. And brothers and sisters, I can just hear us today.

You know, old John needs to repent, and get right with God, or he wouldn't talk like that. But Jesus didn't do that. You know what Jesus said when John was extremely ugly spiritually? When John was at his lowest point, Jesus said, There's never been born of women greater than John the Baptist.

He's a prophet. That's what he is. Yea, I say unto you, I'm more than a prophet.

What a shield of faith. And I just want to say, if you would do that more here at Charity, and I think I'll add this, because this is on my heart. If you at Charity would do that a little bit more for us at Cleveland, and if we at Cleveland would do that a little bit more for the brothers at Ephrata, what a blessing that would be.

That's a burden that's on my heart. Just to take a few minutes for a special phone call. Just take a few minutes to send a card with a prayer.

You know what I think we're talking about here? Pure religion and undefiled. Our first son Caleb died. He died at birth.

You know how that is. Kind of like the death of a vision for a while for a young couple. There was a point there where the cards started rolling in.

We got over two dozen one day. And we didn't get that many every day, but lots of cards came for lots of days in a row. We had lots of cards.

Got to the point where the mailman said, what's going on here? Do you think we received courage from that? Do you think we received some strength to go on? Do you think from those cards it kind of changed our focus a little bit off of our misery onto the beauty of fellowship? It did. And it'll do it again. I was just thinking, if there was someone here at charity that's discouraged, and they got ten cards in the mail one day, and several more the next, and the phone rang a few times, and a couple cars drove in and left supper, what would that do? I mean, that's practical Christianity.

I think that we need to let that sink into our hearts. And I know there are some who do well at that. But I also think that we could use that prompting.

So may God have His way with that. And prayer, brothers and sisters. We need to pray for each other.

I want to just look here. Are we still at Corinthians chapter 1? We read in 8, 9, and 10 there about Paul's trouble, and how God delivered him from the sentence of death, and he knew he would do it again. But

look at verse 11.

It says, "...Ye also helping together by prayer for us." I believe that the prayers of the saints praying for Paul in his time of pressure helped bring him out of discouragement. If I could use that word there. "...Ye also helping together by prayer for us." And we need to pray in faith.

You know, I had a brother show me a verse one time. I'll show it to you. It's in Philemon.

You can turn to Philemon. Just before Hebrews James. Paul was in prison.

That's where he was. And the Colossians were praying that he would be released so that he could come and visit them. And in verse 22, Paul writes a letter to them and he says, "...But withal, prepare me also a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." You know, there's a lot of faith in that verse if you look at that very closely.

Paul said, I'd like to come. And I'm putting some faith in your prayers. Thank you for praying for me, but prepare my lodging.

Get my bed ready, because I believe in your prayers that I will be released and I'm coming. Could we pray that way for each other? I had a brother show me that verse and I just said, Thank you, God. Praise the Lord.

You know, if we pray that way in faith for each other, that will do something to a fellowship. And you know what you're going to do when you pray that way? You are going to rejoice when God answers their prayers. What a picture of the family of God.

When we do these little things, these little acts of kindness, acts of thoughtfulness, hold each other up in prayer that way, we just simply give courage to each other. We encourage each other in our walk with God. Now, I would like to challenge us one more time this evening, as we think about arming ourselves against discouragement.

When there's discouragement, I believe it's an indication that there is a battle. And when there is a battle, there is an enemy. And when there's an enemy in a battle, we need some armor.

And so I want to just make a little point here concerning arming ourselves against discouragement. There is an armor that we have as children of God against the emotions of the flesh. Against the flesh being in control and regulating our courage in the Lord.

There is an armor of God that He has provided for us. Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the whole armor of God. And we need to do that because they have power against the enemy.

But to take a look at this, let's turn to 1 Peter 2. There is something here that I would like to consider. And what it is, it's the mind of Christ. That's what we're headed for.

You know, if we have the mind of Christ, that means that we think like He thinks. That means that we see things as He sees things. And I'm going to bring that a little closer home.

That means we see our brother like He sees our brother. You know, I marvel at that. There's Scriptures that are a good meditation.

And one of them I believe is in Colossians where it says that He may present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight. That's an awesome verse for me because I know myself. And I say, now wait a minute.

I know myself better than that. And He can present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. That's awesome.

And I want each of you to rejoice in that. But I tell you, God brought me to a screeching halt right there when He revealed to me the joy of that verse. It's like He came down and said, wait a minute.

Your brother gets to stand there too. Your sister that you don't really appreciate. There's power in the blood.

Don't take that promise just for yourself. Spread that thing out into the fellowship. And I don't want you to take it all to yourself either.

I get to stand there too. Praise God, there is power in the blood if I get to stand there faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. But let's look in verse 21 of chapter 22.

I was going to say this, that when we have the mind of Christ, that is a tremendous deterrent to discouragement. Peter deals a lot here with suffering wrongfully. And I believe that's an area that we don't do real well in.

I'm just going to kind of lay that out here because I believe it's connected so often to discouragement. We don't do real well in suffering wrongfully. Here in America, suffering wrongfully is almost extinct.

It's almost unheard of. And it has its effect on us in our churches. And maybe it's because we haven't laid down our rights.

Maybe it's because the flesh is not completely metamorphosized. But I believe that our unwillingness to suffer has produced lots of frustrated Christians. Just stay with me on this for a minute.

Just simply because we are not prepared to suffer. If in our mind, we don't think we should suffer, we've got the answer figured out, we've heard from God, and maybe we have, but we want this thing to go through. Then when suffering comes, suffering wrongfully comes, discouragement is going to nail us good.

But on the other hand, if we're planning on it, it can actually bring joy when it comes. And that's tremendous. Let's look at 2 Peter 2, verse 21.

For even hereunto were ye called. And I just want to stop there. There is a calling upon our life.

God has placed a calling upon our lives. This is one that the world will never get a hold of. This is something that we have that will set us apart from the world around us.

This calling. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in His steps. And I want to tell us this evening that when we are not prepared to receive what we have been called to, it will bring us to discouragement.

It will bring frustration. What I'm leading up to is the armor that we have from God against discouragement. Let's read it in chapter 4, verse 1 right here.

It says here, For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. There is armor in that verse, brothers and sisters.

Arm yourselves with it. It's the mind of Christ. I'll read it again.

As Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. I want us to think for a minute how much of our discouragement is based on the fact that things did not go the way that I thought that they should go.

How much of our discouragement is based on the fact that it's not fair? And I've been cheated. Or I know better than my brother. How much of our discouragement is based on that very thing? We need to be honest.

Those things are not the mind of Christ. Christ did not fight it when things did not go His way. You know what He did? He committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously.

That's a beautiful response that the mind of Christ will produce in us when we suffer wrongfully. Revenge does not belong to us. God said it.

Vengeance belongs to Him. It's mine, He said. And so, let's let Him have it.

I would like to read yet in chapter 2. I just want to read v. 19-21 or 2. It says, this is thankworthy. And this is the mind of Christ now. This is Christ's mind.

This is armor against discouragement. This is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

For even hereunto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. And look at v. 23.

Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously. I believe there's armor in that verse.

I believe the mind of Christ is in that verse. And I believe that when we bring that mind of Christ into our fellowship, it's going to have a tremendous effect. When you sit down and try to talk through some things that are hard to talk about, when you have differences of opinion, I get to stand there too.

There's some room for variation. And I'm not making room for anything. That's not my heart, brothers and sisters.

I'm in here my heart. There is room to sit down and share hearts. Let's give each other room to make a mistake.

I'm going to be honest with you this evening. I'm weary. I love each one of you so much.

I would just like to close with a couple of stories. I want to remind us that we belong to God. This church belongs to God.

It doesn't belong to anybody here. Jesus said, upon this rock, Jesus Christ, I will build My church. My church.

And so, we belong to God. And in closing, I would just like to tell a couple stories. And one of them, I love Bible stories.

I really do. I appreciated the children's lesson this morning. But there's one story about Miriam.

Miriam was the sister of Moses. And she sinned greatly against God by speaking evil against her brother Moses, the servant of God. And God was very displeased with her and He smote her with leprosy and she was cast outside of the camp.

Miriam. Leprous. Outside of the camp.

And I want us to consider something of the heart of God here that I think would be good for our fellowship. The whole camp of Israel never moved forward while Miriam was outside the camp. God in the cloud by day and God in the pillar of fire by night determined when the camp moved forward.

Amen? Amen. And it never moved. You can see something of the heart of God here.

That that camp never moved while Miriam was leprous outside of the camp. And Aaron pled to Moses on her behalf. And Moses pled to God on her behalf.

And people were praying. And what an intercessory chain on behalf of Miriam for a hurting soul. The whole camp never moved.

And you know, God honored that chain of intercession. He healed her leprosy. And when she was back in the camp, and when she was back in fellowship, I'll just say, then the cloud by day began to move.

I think we see something of the heart of God in that. Is there a hurting brother among us? I feel like that's why God stopped me from proceeding on this evening. We don't want to go forward.

We don't want to leave one of the children behind. Just the memory of that came to my mind. The other story I would like to tell you is about the handicap Olympics.

You know what the Olympics are. It's competition. Many different races.

But there are handicaps that have Olympics too. And there was one race where the handicapped children were lined up and they were ready to go. And there was a point there where they came to their mark.

And when the gun went off, they all took off running. Hard as they could go. A little ways down the track, there was a little down syndrome boy.

He pulled out front. He was going a little faster than the others. And there was a point where it looked like he was going to win.

And all of a sudden, he got tangled up in his feet and he took quite a spill and down he went. He just wiped out right there in the middle of the track. And right when he fell, all the other children just ran over to his

side.

Picked him up. Dusted him off good and made sure he's going to be alright. And when it looked like he's going to be alright, they all took off running again.

Blessed story. True story. My desire is that that story would be a true story here at charity.

Being united. Having tremendous care one for another. Being one is such a big thing with God.

Are you doing your part to make that story a true story here at Cleveland? Remember, there the Lord commanded the blessing. Even life or evermore. Are you doing your part to bring that blessing upon this fellowship? I think I'll just close by saying we love you.

And by saying that we at Cleveland need you. God bless you. It is that way, isn't it? If we all get low in heart, we know it's that way.

We all have a lot of needs. And God in His wisdom has put us together. And most of us in this room, we prayed much about being here.

It wasn't a quick decision that we made. God put us here. And He's purifying us and guiding us and preparing us along the way as we go to heaven.

Thank you for the message, Brother Dale. I need it. I'm guilty.

I've been discouraged. I acknowledge that. And I'm sure it's my flesh I'm sure that's why I've been discouraged.

It's because of my flesh. The Bible says, If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. So, I have to admit, I've been fainting.

So, my strength is small. Yet, with all that, my heart is greatly encouraged through this weekend. I have new zeal and new vision in my heart to move forward and go where God wants us to go.

That's my testimony tonight. I think it might be a blessing if we just open the meeting up a bit. You know, we've had altar calls and you don't get to say much when there's an altar call.

This morning, we would have loved to have opened it up for people to give testimony to the message, share what God is doing in their hearts, but time wouldn't allow that. God had other things in mind and we understand that and it was good and right. But, maybe you have something on your heart this evening.

Maybe God has been speaking to you and touched your heart and maybe He put His loving finger on something in your life as the Word of God was being preached. It would be a joy if you would stand to your feet and sanctify this congregation by giving testimony to what the Lord is doing in your heart and what God has been saying to you through the weekend. So, I want to open it up for that for a few minutes here.

And, if you have something you'd like to share, just slip up your hand and we'll get a microphone to you. And, the preacher has been sanctifying us all weekend long. Now it's our turn.

Now it's our turn. You have something to share? Just slip up your hand and we'll get you a mic. Thank you.

One there. Another, just put your hand up and we'll get the other microphone out. Yes, Brother Jeremy.

I can't begin to tell you all the things God did in my own heart during this weekend. I didn't really know what to expect when I came, but God has really been putting His finger on my heart and life. Actually, preceding these meetings, God started dealing with just our hearts and directing us, encouraging us to be watchful, to be careful where we're going and tread the path carefully.

And then, coming to these meetings and God once again putting His finger on my heart and responding to the altar call and God just working those things out. And then this morning, how Brother Dale was sharing about the church in Sardis, how they were admonished to be watchful. And so easy for us to perhaps get introspected and perhaps take things personal when people talk to us or whatever it may be.

And it was just so good to just open my heart and life again to the Lord and say, Lord, I want to go all for You. Whatever these circumstances are, I need to deal with them, but help me keep my eyes and my gaze upon You. And then I was just thinking too that I have to confess, I haven't been throwing myself into the church like I need to.

I love you all. We love you so much. And I don't know what I would do without you.

God's just been really pressing my heart and saying, go for it. And once again, I do want to commit myself entirely to you all. I want to push forward in the direction that God wants us to go.

God has a purpose for us and I want to push forward with you all in one heart to go in that direction. God bless you all. Amen.

Thank you, Jeremy. I'd like to share that not being here before and the Lord sent us here this weekend, I'd just like to share the testimony that I see and how much it touches my heart. I want you all to be encouraged to realize that when I come in the door, when I come here from somewhere that I've never seen, that I see people that really love the Lord.

And I feel the Spirit of the Lord. And you know, in the Scriptures, it talks about when they went into the town and their peace returned to them. They moved on and I want, I think I said that right, but I want to say that when I come here, I feel the peace of the Lord and I feel real hearts and real people that love the Lord.

I really want to encourage you all to realize that there's something here that most of the world doesn't have. And don't get wrapped up in your own fears of each other and the things that can happen in your work days and in your family life and where you're going to live and how much the rent is and all the different things that can plug our lives and how much money we make and how we don't have time for the family. And realize that you have something here that's very different, that's real, that's from the Lord.

And don't set that aside. And I just want to testify to that and testify that the things that I've learned since I've been here are really deep and a lifetime's worth of encouragement for me. And I am very much encouraged and inspired to move on wherever the Lord takes me, whether when I get home, whether it be in Alaska, wherever I might be, whatever I might do to really continue to press on that it's really real.

And it's been a very deep encouragement to me to see you all striving to follow the Lord and to see leaders in the church that are willing to speak the truth and see them to be able to say what sin is and what's the better path and better way to go. And we don't have that in very many places in this United

States anymore. Leaders in the churches are cowards and they don't want to call sin sin.

They don't want to be able to point out a husband that won't love his wife. They don't want to be able to point out children that are disobedient. And we don't have that very many places anymore.

And I really encourage you guys to hang on to that, to be with each other, to love each other, to realize that you have something special. That the love of each other is not here. Just like in our own personal families, if you lose one of our family members, it's very sad.

And if you lose this or walk out and feel like you can't make it because you just can't get along, you'll be losing a great gift that God's given you. Not that we can't make it on our own, but God's asked us to not forsake to gather ourselves together. And Lord just inspired my heart today as I came to the altar and just the fear and the doubt that the devil's plagued me with even since I've been here.

Of, you know, you can't make it. You can't do it. It's a lot harder than you think it is.

And I just realized that I needed to admit that. And I want to admit that to you all and pray for me. That I will not let the devil plague me.

I grew up living a life of separation from the world. Separation from a whole bunch of things. And my family didn't live the right life.

I thought I did. And the devil tries to whisper in my ear even this morning, sitting on this bench. And I just rebuke that in the name of Jesus.

And I am ready to believe in the Lord and believe that I can do it. It's real. God is real.

And that's what I want you all to know. And God is real in this building and in your heart. Not in this building, but here in the congregation.

We all make up a body of Christ. And I just want to encourage you to love each other. In Jesus' name.

Thank you, Joseph. God bless you. Someone else? Anyone? Over here, a couple of microphones on the sister's side.

Yes. Get your hand up so he can see where you are. Yes, okay.

Down here in the front, Arlen, first, and then a little further back. Yes, go ahead. Brothers and sisters, I just want to confess to you that God has deeply convicted me of my need of not being there for you when you've fallen.

Rather even pointing fingers and trying to explain why you've fallen. So, I just want to say I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

God gave me such a vision through that story that Dale shared. Yes. Of not going on until their comrade was picked up, taken care of.

I want to be there for you. Pray for me. Yes.

This week I was facing a little bit of overwhelmness. Today, I just cried out to God that He would meet with me tonight in the meeting and would show me His heart. And while I was reading in my Bible, I came

across the verse, a bruised reed He will not break.

I just feel like God has met the desire of my heart tonight and has shown me His love. I just want to thank the Lord that He is still near to His people. And He loves us even when we don't see the way always, but He's still there guiding us.

Thank you. Someone down here? If we can get a microphone over here. You got it, Arlen? Yeah, down here.

The picture of those crippled children, you know, you think about that. They did that in all innocence and sincerity. They did that.

And I'm sure the whole crowd was deeply convicted at their competitive nature. I'm sure they were deeply convicted. It did not make sense to them because of their competitive nature.

But those little crippled children, they had it right. All the rest of the Olympic Games have it wrong. They have it right.

Amen? Yes. I'd like to testify of God's goodness. He has been good to me.

He's brought me in the midst of some fine people, and I'm thankful for that. It's brought real clarity into my mind, just seeing the godly examples around. You know, men that are willing to humble themselves and just break beneath the hand of God, the merciful hand of God.

That is such an encouragement to me. But I want to testify of God's goodness to me. Him placing His finger on an area of my life and all just convicting me.

It just shows me the love of God for me. That He really cares enough about me to come alongside and say, what are you doing? Where are you going with this? Oh, God is good. He opens our minds and causes us to see our failures, causes us to really see the gravity of sin and what it does.

And He has touched that area of my life, and I've yielded that to Him, and I'm thankful. I'm thankful for His goodness that would lead me to repentance and just a washing over of His Word over that issue of my life. It was becoming quite festered and quite pussy.

God's goodness dealt with that, and He cleansed me with His blood. I'd like to just share something else that God's put on my heart to share. That is just a deep appreciation, a deep appreciation for the men of God, for the ministers of God.

When the brother mentioned something of authority up there, the pulpit, I didn't have to stand in shame because it's my heart's desire to come under. I don't know how all that works out. I haven't been good with trying to work all that out in the past.

I know that there was sin, bitterness in my life, but God's faithful, and He has brought me to this place, and He has put me under some godly men, and I can see it. And He is putting such a love in my heart for godly men. And He has given me such a love there that I don't want to touch anything that He is doing.

I don't want anything in my heart that would rise up and that would push against the hand and the blessings of God. I am thankful for brother Dale Gish. Thank you for those messages.

I just want to thank God for my ministers, and I consider my ministers. Brother Emanuel, God bless you. I love you.

And I want to love you more. God, give me the grace to do that. Brother Mel, God bless you.

God, I just want the blessings of God in that area of my life. Brother Denny, I love you. Thank you.

God bless you. Brother Aaron, God bless you. I want to be faithful to that calling that He has placed in my life.

I want to be sensitive to God. There is an issue in my life. I want to be quick to get that out and repent of it.

I thank God for His mercy and His grace and His love. God bless you all. Thank you.

I just want to thank the Lord for His faithfulness, for the wisdom that He has given to our shepherds to have this man come and teach us and the faithfulness that God showed us with all that He said and all that He's done in our hearts. I'm really grateful. I ask the Lord to shine the light on the sins of my life that could be keeping me from having His fullness because that's all I want, the fullness of Jesus in my life.

And He did. He's faithful and He shined the light and put His finger and pressed hard on sins that were keeping me and besetting sins. And the Word says to confess them and it's true.

It makes a difference to one another. And I just want to say how much I love this body. We never had this.

First time we've ever had anything like this. Five years of knowing what the body of Christ is. It's the most precious thing that we have ever had.

And I just pray that God would weld us together so that nothing can get in and that everyone would allow God to press His hand so hard and beg Him to until our sins, just like He did, He's doing to us. Our sins are revealed and then He can come in and we can have or lose anything. This church is precious.

It is precious. I don't know where we would be without this body and if we weren't to be faithful to the Lord after all that He has done. And I just thank Him.

I just like to bless the Lord and thank Him for helping me through a root of bitterness this weekend. I just like to thank Him for that. A couple of hands over here.

Where's the other mic? Does someone have it? Alright, go ahead. Sorry. I just want to thank the Lord for I just want to thank the Lord for what He's been doing this weekend.

I don't know how to explain what the Lord's doing in my life. But I know He's changing me and yes, tonight just hearing the message I can just see that my strength has been small. I've often gotten discouraged instead of looking to the Lord.

But I just want to thank the Lord that His grace is sufficient. I also want to make a confession to you all of that I've been pointing fingers and instead of praying for others, just saying why they do this or that, or just having a critical spirit towards others. Especially my brothers in Christ.

And I want to thank you Brother Dale for speaking to us, for allowing the Lord to speak through you. I don't want to go on any longer and judge others, but I want to be like Christ and lift others up. And I just want to thank the Lord for what He's doing.

He's worthy of our lives. I want Him to have the glory and not me. Thank you.

God bless you, son. Yes, Brother Merle. If you want a mic, you just get your hand up so that they can see.

Yes, go ahead, Merle. I too just like to thank God. It's hard to know how to put it all into words, but I am deeply grateful for this weekend, especially this morning, the deep challenges that we've got, and I agree about the picture of the fork in the road.

But by faith, I believe we are choosing the right fork. And for me, it's a bit different than some of the brothers maybe that have been here many years. They all talked about the kitchen in their old church.

And I'm sure each of us has our own kitchens. I don't have as many things like that here myself. I'm younger.

But I do have those things in my life. Maybe they're not tied here and I want to go there. I think we all do.

And I think we've also heard some of the path to get there. And I'm grateful because to me it's like a down payment. We got this weekend of what God yet wants to do.

And the difference is not Brother Dale. He came here, I believe he was faithful in giving us God's heart. And we heard it.

In fact, I sometimes sat amazed at how clear we heard it without any dilution. But now, Dale's going to go home, and it's up to us. We can make the difference.

God's always going to be there. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. But we'll make the difference.

Will we make good on the down payment? And will we seek Him? And like we heard, not to have rest until He shows Himself forth and for Zion's sake. And I had to think of it one other time in my life. It was in the previous setting we came from.

Just as we were ready to leave, it was actually as we came here, there was a weekend of meetings, and there was an old man of God came, an older man of God. And I told my wife, I said, that is what we used to hear. We had went to a young church, and there was a fresh move of God, and there was fresh preaching.

And that is what we used to hear. And it was as we left, a guidepost for us, a signpost on the way, that we wanted to go to where there was more of that. And if I can take the liberty to say in its own way, I've heard this before, even here, and we need to hear it again, that undiluted preaching, not ashamed, not afraid, not discouraged, and just giving everything that God has, and then sitting down and letting God do the work.

And I just bless you, man. I know that you're hard as you want to rise up and lead, but do it. We're counting on you.

We need it. I really appreciate it, Brother Dale, coming and preaching these challenging messages to us. One of the things I just want to focus on is one of the things he said this morning about don't shut out the prophets.

Don't shut down the prophets. And as we very well know, there have been some men among us, especially during this past year, that have, I believe, prophetically shared some concerns about the direction of our church. And there are a couple of them that have withdrawn themselves.

And then thinking of the illustrations that Dale used at the end here, about God not moving the camp on until Miriam was taken care of. And the Special Olympics. They wouldn't run ahead of their fellow athlete there until he was up and running again.

And I'd just like to make a plea that somehow we wouldn't go on without them. And we would somehow find a way to reach out to those brothers and draw them back if that would be at all possible. Amen.

I think you understand what I mean there. I do. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you, Ron. Okay.

Yes, I'd like to express what God's put on my heart. And I'll try to put it in the words God wants me to express. I just want to thank God that He knows every hair on our head.

He knows every problem in our heart. And I thank God that He sent Brother Dale down here to talk to us. And I just pray in my heart that what we heard doesn't go in one ear and out the other.

And I just pray in my heart, just like Brother Merle was saying, this evening it'll be over. But let's not let it be over. Let's kindle the fire that He started in our hearts.

That we don't have this situation again unless God is testing us. Please believe me. And God loves us more than we'll ever know.

And we've got to continue in our hearts to have faith in God because He's going to give us a trial. And this is a trial because He loves us. He loves us and He wants us to come to Heaven so happy to see Him when we go there.

But there's so much work for us to do on this earth and God wants us to do it His way. So we've got to stay out of our flesh. We've got to stay away from Satan.

We can't let ourselves be deceived. Because we can be so easily deceived. I know I can.

But I want to focus on Jesus Christ. I want to be more like Jesus Christ. We all do or we wouldn't be here.

We're not here just to waste our time and God doesn't want us to waste our time. He wants us to be close to Him every day. Don't be afraid to yell out.

Don't be afraid to open your heart. Don't be afraid to be humble. Don't be afraid to be low.

I'll tell you, I love God more than anything in this world. And I'm not up here to impress anybody. But I want people to know that I want to serve Jesus Christ.

And I want to serve Jesus Christ the way He wants me to serve Him. And if it's through accountability, it's through accountability. If it's through being humble, if I have to cry, I'm going to cry.

But I'm telling you, I want to serve Jesus Christ. I want to be a servant. I want to be a servant for the Lord.

I've never had what I had. God, I've never had this. Never.

And I don't know what all your brothers and sisters have in your heart, but I know I have a longing to get to know God. Just like Dale said, I want to feel His heartbeat. I want to feel His breath on my neck.

I want to feel His arms around me 24 7. Just not today. Just not on a Sunday. Just not on a brother's meeting, but every day of my life.

And we can all do it together. Together. Unity.

That's what God wants. So let's put our hearts together, our love together, our hugs together, our prayers together for each other. Let's look to each other and stop looking at ourselves.

I just thank you that I can say that I love everybody here and I want to serve everybody here, but I want to do it God's way. So thank you very much and I love you all. And if I've ever did anything to offend you, please come to me.

Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to confront me. Because if you're not, you're hurting God.

I want to be what God wants me to be and I thank you. And I love you all in Jesus' name. God bless you, Robert.

We love you too, brother. You're an asset to this congregation. There's something different about these meetings.

I don't know if you've noticed it, but I think it's good for us to note it. You know, many times when you have a weekend of meetings like this, you kind of end the meetings way up here, you know. But that's not the spirit that I sense in this room tonight.

It's not way up here. It's down here. There is a lowly heartedness in this congregation.

That is of great price, brothers and sisters. That is of great price. Yes, if you have it or I have that, it is of great price.

But if it is prevailing over the whole church, there is no greater treasure. God can take us somewhere if we will just stay right here. We aren't anything special.

We are not charity. We are not. We are a needy congregation who needs God desperately.

And if God doesn't come to our aid, we won't be here in ten years. That's a totally different mindset than we are now. We are not Totally different mindset.

Let's keep this attitude as a congregation. It's good. I don't sense discouragement in your hearts tonight.

But I do sense humility in everyone who has spoken. That is precious. I heard Brother Dale share the message that he preached this morning down in Virginia.

He preached it to a two-year-old church. But this morning, a 24-year-old church heard the message. There's a big difference between a two-year-old church and a 24-year-old church.

And we need to get desperate. I do sense that was not just a message that God gave us this morning. That we just pass off and go our way.

But it was from the heart of God. And that warning is a real one. I sense that in my heart.

God has given us a springboard to move forward. To get up and go. Let us seize the opportunity, brothers and sisters.

Let us seize the opportunity and build the holes in the wall. We can all do our part. Thank you again, Brother Dale and your children.

Thank you for coming. Thank you for being honest, sharing your heart with us. May God bless you as you go home.

May God keep you awake tonight as you drive home. That's my prayer for you. That God will keep you awake, brother.

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