

# Persecution, Preaching & Joy

by Danny Bond

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God to deal with those who persecute us, while being filled with the word of God and preaching the gospel.*

**Duration:** 42:51

**Scripture:** Acts 8:1-8, Romans 1:16, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Joy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the missionary shares two powerful stories of individuals whose lives were transformed by their faith in God. The first story is about an American naval officer who, while stranded at sea, remembered the words of Jim Elliott, a missionary who had said, 'When it comes time to die, make sure that all you have to do is die.' Through prayer, the naval officer was miraculously saved and went on to preach the gospel. The second story is about an 18-year-old young man who dedicated his life to the Lord and desired to take the place of missionaries who had died in South America. The missionary emphasizes that even in tragedy, God can use it to reach people all over the world. The sermon concludes with an invitation to give one's life to Jesus Christ and experience the freedom and joy that comes from knowing Him.

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## Transcript

God, we are amazed at the Bible, how the more we study it, the clearer it gets, the deeper it gets, the more colorful it is, and the greater its impact upon our hearts. And that's the best part of all, Lord. To be brought by the Word of God into the arms of God, to be filled with your love and the knowledge of you, and in the process to be changed, and to see you do in us, Lord, what we could have never done without you.

God, it is so good to know you. It's so good to have your Word. And we pray that as we study it now, you would open up our hearts and pour in the life of God into our souls, and illuminate us with the knowledge of God that is here.

And may we learn from what is here and apply what is here to our lives and live it out in these days in which we dwell upon this planet. May we be the light of the world. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. On the shore of a lonely river deep in the Ecuadorian jungle, five missionaries were murdered by the primitive Alca Indians. News of the massacre shocked the world.

They had gone there to witness to them, and the men that they went to witness to threw spears through them and killed them. When the word went out to the world, people were shocked. Many decried the promising careers of these missionaries that were cut short.

The five young wives were bereft of their husbands, and the children were left fatherless. One of the wives of one of the martyrs is Elizabeth Elliott. She records some of the things that happened immediately as a result of the news of their death.

She says, to the world at large, this was a sad waste of five young lives. But God has his plan and purpose in all things. There were those whose lives were changed by what happened on Palm Beach with the Alca Indians that day.

Listen to this. In Brazil, a group of Indians at a mission station deep in Mato Grosso, upon hearing the news, dropped to their knees and cried out to God for forgiveness for their own lack of concern for the fellow Indians who did not know Jesus Christ. From Rome, an American official wrote to one of the widows and said, I knew your husband.

He was to me the ideal of what a Christian should be. An Air Force major stationed in England, with many hours of jet flying, immediately, upon hearing of this news, began making plans to join the Missionary Aviation Fellowship, of whom the martyrs were a part. A missionary in Africa wrote, our work will never be the same.

We knew two of the men, their lives have left their mark on ours. Off the coast of Italy, an American naval officer was involved in an accident at sea. As he floated on a raft, he recalled the words of Jim Elliott, which he had read in a news report before his accident.

His words went like this. When it comes time to die, make sure that all you have to do is die. And as he lay there contemplating those words at sea in his little raft, he prayed that he might be saved, knowing that he had more to do than just die if his time was to come, because he wasn't ready.

God answered his prayer, and as a result, he was saved gloriously. That day out at sea, and then he was gloriously rescued. And he lived and went on to preach the gospel.

In Des Moines, Iowa, an 18-year-old teenage young man prayed for a week in his room and then announced to his parents, I'm turning my life over completely to the Lord. I want to try to take the place of one of those men who died in South America. And on it goes.

What seemed to be such a horrible tragedy from a human point of view, from a divine point of view, was part of the glorious plan that God had to reach people all over the world. This is the way that God works. We must keep an eternal perspective so we can understand when tragedy strikes, if God is in that life, then God is going to use it to get into the lives of many other people.

So we come to Acts 1. I'd like to read Acts 8.1. I'd like to read from verse 1 down to verse 8. Now Saul was consenting to his death. And at that time, a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, except the apostles and devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made a great lamentation over him.

And as for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

And then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

And the multitudes, with one accord, heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits or demons, crying out with a loud voice came out of many who were possessed and many were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was, as there always is when Christ works in the heart, great joy in that city.

For this time today, I just want to look at two things here, and that is the persecution from Saul, what happens as a result, and then the preaching of Philip. To begin with the persecution from Saul. If you remember, Jesus, before he went back into heaven, told them that he wanted them after the power of God came upon them at Pentecost to go out and preach the word in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and then the outermost parts of the earth.

Well, they had preached the word in Jerusalem. And by now, Jerusalem had been gospelized, you could say. But they weren't really making any big moves to go anywhere beyond Jerusalem.

Here we read they were scattered throughout all the regions of Judea and then out to Samaria except the apostles. They were scattered by a crisis and persecution. And what came from it was gloriously positive, even though the persecution was so negative.

It began on that day. Look at verse one. Saul was consenting to his death, death of Stephen.

And at that time, the great persecution arose literally on that day. So when they're done killing Stephen, they rally together and then they turn on the city and begin to root out and ferret out and find all the different believers that are out there and persecute them as a result. From one day to the next, things can change so fast in your life as a Christian.

From one day to the next, people had to get up, grab their things, their belongings and run and move to different cities and go out to where they knew not what was waiting for them and find a new life. It's amazing to me that the brethren here are so redemptive as they go there rather than becoming bitter, rather than becoming revengeful. They go out.

We read preaching the word of the Lord. And that is such an example to me. Everything happens in its time.

It happens God's way. We need to learn to let God work his plan in our lives one day at a time. They were scattered by the crisis and great lamentation was made over Stephen because they lost a great champion.

He was gone to heaven. We read Saul was consenting to his death. In other words, as Saul, as they stoned Stephen, the picture is this.

Saul was standing there watching. And he did not see this as murder. He was consenting to his death and he didn't see it as murder.

Why? Because his religion had blinded his eyes. In First Timothy 1, 13, he wrote years later, I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly. He was blinded by his religion.

And so as he was consenting to his death, you have to realize this, that consenting to evil is as bad as committing evil, even though he wasn't standing there throwing the stones because he was too refined. You might say to do so. He was consenting to it.

If you think about it, there's a great parallel between his religion and that of Cain's early in the Bible. You remember Cain brought his offering to God. Cain was too refined to slaughter an animal.

And so he brought the fruit of the ground, but he was not too refined by his religion to slaughter his brother. And so it is with Saul. He's too refined to throw the stones, but he stands there and he's not too refined to give consent to the murder of a fellow Hellenistic Jew.

It has been said that religion without the Holy Spirit is the cruelest force in the world. It bears the imprint of its father, the devil, the old serpent, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning. And that's true.

Religion without God truly being in your heart is the cruelest thing in the world and the greatest persecutor of Christians. And actually three, we read Saul made havoc of the church. Look at this entering into every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

What is amazing to me is this man actually was refined. He was born a Roman citizen. He was tutored as a Jew by Gamaliel, who was the leading rabbi of his day.

He was by culture schooled in the way of Greek culture. So Roman citizen, erudite, educated Jew and refined Greek man by culture. And yet you find him entering into every house, not just dragging off men, but also the women and committing them to prison.

This guy is sadistic. He is brutal and he is bent on one thing. You know what it is? Destroying the church.

And he actually believed that he could. Later, he wrote in Galatians 1:13. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.

He tried to destroy it in Acts 22. Look at this turning a Bible. Hold your place and turn to Acts 22 for out of his own mouth.

Looking back, he said he declares, I persecuted, I persecuted this way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women. So he not only burst into houses and took people to prison, he also took men and women to their death. When you read the New Testament, you read of Saul, Paul, as he's converted.

His name is Paul. He writes of in his travels how he would take collections for the poor. Do you recall that? For example, in Romans 15:26, he records that he was taking a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

I always wondered why he was so obsessed with collecting money for the poor saints at Jerusalem. I also wondered why there were so many poor saints at Jerusalem. You know why there was? Because he killed them.

Years later, when he would come back to Jerusalem as a converted man and preach the gospel, can you imagine when you'd be in a meeting like this and he would look into the faces of a woman whose husband he had killed? He would look into the faces of children who no longer had a father because he had killed them in his persecution. You begin to understand the man. Why? At the end of his life, before he was martyred, he said, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.

He said, because I persecuted the church of God and he never got over it. Then he spent the rest of his life raising money for the families whom he had taken away, the breadwinners, the mothers, the fathers,

the brothers. It's quite a picture.

And so here he is when we read that he made havoc of the church. It is an expression in the Greek that is used of the ravages of a wild boar. He just tore through the people of God and God had his plan for him.

It's interesting that, as I mentioned, as these people are scattered by his persecution, none of we don't read of any of them taking vengeance. You don't read of any vigilante posse that gets together to try to take out Paul. And that is because Romans 12, 19 says, for it is written, Vengeance is mine.

I will repay, says the Lord. John Bunyan, is that name familiar to you? He wrote the book Pilgrim's Progress. He himself was persecuted for preaching the gospel.

He was arrested, torn from his family and thrown in prison. That's where he wrote Pilgrim's Progress. He wrote these words.

He said, consider that though Cain was a murderer, yet God disallowed any man from meddling with him under the penalty that his revenge would return on his own head sevenfold. So when Cain killed his brother, God said, even though he's a murderer, I'm going to mark him. Don't you kill him? I will deal with him.

And Bunyan points that out. He says the reason is because he persecuted his brother for righteousness sake and so espoused a quarrel against God. For he that persecutes another for righteousness sake, sets himself against God and fights against God and seeks to overthrow him.

Such a one, a Christian, must leave well alone. Why? So that God will have his full blow at him in his time. And that is why he says to his saints and to all who are anxious to revenge themselves, dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.

Those are such good words, because, you know, as you give your life to Christ and you make a difference and you do shine as the light of the world and you do share the word of God, you will encounter persecution of all different kinds. And there's going to be the human tendency there to want to get revenge somehow. That's human.

But we need to realize these people are fighting ultimately against God and that he wants us to leave them alone so he can deal with them. And I thank God that he's a rescuing God. Saul made havoc of the church.

When we get to the next chapter, we're going to find God made one of his greatest ministers out of one of the church's greatest persecutors because the people left him to God to deal with him. I love what Jeffrey B. Wilson said about all this. He said Satan's malice is always frustrated by God.

And made to minister a blessing to his people. The all things of Romans 8:28 will be shown to have no exceptions. I like that.

Satan's malice is always frustrated by God and made to minister a blessing to his people. Romans 8:28 will have no exceptions and there was no exception here. We find that to be so true as we move from the persecution here to the preaching of Philip.

Philip is driven out of Jerusalem away from his duties as a servant waiting on tables for the widows. And in the process, he's driven in the direction of Samaria. And we read that he preached Christ to them.

This man is amazing to me. He's a great study in the power of the Holy Spirit and what he can do with a willing heart. We read of Philip as a man who was basically picked out from among the people of God in the church and asked simply to do a task of waiting on tables and oversee overseeing the daily affairs of the church.

He was willing, he was humble and he had a heart for God. And as those apostles gave themselves to the word of God and prayer that were freed up by the deacons taking care of things, if you could put it that way. Even though he was doing that kind of ministry in the church, waiting on tables, he was obviously very careful to listen to the teaching of the apostles.

And then when the persecution hit, he was so filled with the word of God that as he was driven to Samaria, he opens his mouth and begins to preach. And there's so much in there that God can use. And he becomes one of the great preachers in the pages of the book of Acts and in the city and the nation of Samaria, he becomes so effective.

Listen, many of us want to be used, but we don't take the time to be filled with the word. We don't take the time to read it and to listen to a preach. And we don't take the time to read, listen to messages that really minister to us until they stay with us.

Philip did, and God used him. God can only use what's already there in you. And as much of the word as you put in, use as much as he has available to him to use.

Then we take a lesson from Philip. So he goes up to Samaria. Why? Why Samaria? And why Philip? God always has a reason.

It's interesting to me that there is a big reason here. You know what it is? The Samaritans were held in disdain by Jewish prejudice. Now, from the Jews point of view, they had a great reason.

What happened was that the the Assyrians came in to that area of the country and took the Jews away captive. And then they brought in people from other nations to populate the area. And what happened then with the Jews that were left and these foreigners, they blended their beliefs together and they had sort of a hybrid of Judaism and other religions.

As a result, then the Jews of Jerusalem didn't like to go to Samaria and they didn't like to mingle with them because they kept their worship of Jehovah pure at the temple in Jerusalem. Thus, they didn't like to deal with the Samaritans at all because they were involved in idolatry. So the origin of the prejudice is very legitimate, you could say.

But by the time you get to this point. In history, where Christ has come and the apostles have been saved, they're not real big on going to Samaria, Peter, James and John, don't forget John, when he was with Jesus and they went up near Samaria and at one pass when they went by Samaria and they didn't receive the word of the Lord, John said, Lord, shall we at this time call down fire from heaven and torch everybody in Samaria? Should we do that, Jesus? Wouldn't that be good? And Jesus said, John, where are you at? That's a loose paraphrase. But he he said, John, you don't even understand what this is all about.

We came to save them. Later, Jesus went to Samaria and he ministered to the woman at the well and she was converted and went out and the whole city came out to hear Jesus. Remember that? OK, so now John, who had earlier wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans, he's in Jerusalem, he stays there with the apostles.

So does Peter. Why is it Philip that goes there? Because Philip was a Hellenistic Jew. He didn't have that prejudice and he was free to go there with no baggage and just preach the gospel to the Samaritans.

The man was amazing and he was godly and he was humble and he was used. His message. Acts eight, five.

Philip went down to Samaria. It's funny. Sometimes people will look at a map and they'll come to you and say, I found a discrepancy in the Bible.

It's not accurate. I saw on my map that Samaria is north of Jerusalem. Therefore, Philip could not have gone down to Samaria.

The Bible is wrong. You see, you can't trust it. It's so funny when people do that because Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preach Christ to them.

Everywhere is down from Jerusalem around there. Jerusalem is on a hill. It's very high in altitude.

You leave Jerusalem to go anywhere in the area is down. So he went down to the city of Samaria. It's OK.

The Bible is accurate. You don't have to get hyper about it. So he went down to Samaria and he preached Christ to them.

We can trust our Bible. And the amazing thing is how God used him. You see, the persecution changed his geography.

But know this, it did not change his message. It did not change his message. The crisis that came to his life did not change his message, though it drove him to another location.

He wouldn't let go of his message. He preached Christ. We read in verse five.

He preached Christ, the whole gospel. See, Philip and Stephen were forerunners of Paul and he preached Christ. I want to take you to just for a minute to Romans chapter one, verse 16.

Field your place and turn to Romans 1 16. Paul was a man who never changed his message once he started preaching. I'll tell you, with examples like this on the pages of the Bible, why do men who claim to be men of God and stand on pulpits do any other thing than preach the word? I mean, this is the way it's done in the Bible here in Romans 1 16.

Paul writes and he says, for I am not. What does it say? Ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel.

I don't hide it. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Why, Paul? For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes for the Jew first and also the Greek.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel. What an amazing statement. Think about this.

He had been imprisoned in Philippi. Beaten and imprisoned and tortured in Philippi. He'd been chased out of Thessalonica.

Act 17. He was smuggled in the same chapter out of Berea when he preached the gospel at Athens. They laughed at him when he preached the gospel in Corinth.

They thought he was foolish. The foolish things of the world confound the wise. When he went to Galatia, they stoned him until he died on the road.

God raised him from the dead. He went on preaching. So this man in prison, chased out of town, smuggled out of town, laughed at, regarded as a fool, stoned to death, raised from the dead.

This is the man saying, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. What does it take in your life? I wonder what it would take in mine. Of difficulty to make me become silent and ashamed and to push it away and just preach a different message.

I can look back along the way of my life. So I've been preaching the word for a while now and decades. And at one point in my life, I looked around the horizon, all the Christian scene, and I had to come to grips with a very stark reality that if I was to stick to the Bible, I would limit the size of my church.

Because the word of God separates light from darkness, it's confrontive. Jesus said, think not that I came to bring peace on earth, but a sword. He said, and mother will be divided from daughter, husband from wife, as some come out of the darkness into the light.

He said, the peace is going to come in heaven. Down here is where the light is divided from the darkness. I came to call men out of darkness into the light.

And because not all will come out of the darkness into the light, it's going to divide people. And so my own life, I had to stop and ask myself, what are you going to do, pal? Are you going to soften up your message? Are you going to sugarcoat it? Now we're going to step on a few toes here. Now I'm going to step on a few toes.

So get ready, folks. Sin. I know that hurt.

So that's kind of a caricature of the whole thing. But I had to stop and say, what am I going to do? Am I going to soft pedal the word of God? Am I going to downplay it, water it down and, you know, fill it in with a bunch of fillers to make it relevant and interesting and this and that? If so, I can have a bigger crowd. Or am I going to preach it like Jesus did and face persecution because of it? I don't have to be obnoxious on purpose, right? Though sometimes that happens, but it happens in other states, not here with me.

But you understand what I'm saying? Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. He went through this and he went through all these kinds of sufferings and in prison and everything else for preaching the word. If he would have just he was a genius.

If he would have just brought in some of his philosophy that he had and everything else, he could have made it so much more palatable for everybody. But he refused to do it. He wasn't ashamed.

And there's a reason why. And this is the bottom line, because it is the power of God to salvation. If you water it down, if you change the message, it becomes what Paul said to the Galatians, another gospel.

And that won't save. It has to be the gospel unadulterated, pure as Christ gave it, because that alone has the power of God to salvation. So Romans one 16, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

It is the power of God to salvation. He chose the word translated here power. The word in the Greek is the word from which we get our English word dynamite.

I am not ashamed of the gospel for the dynamite power of God to salvation. The reason is, is in the gospel message. You have the spirit of God and the omnipotent power of God.

So the message goes out. You hear it. Your ears register it.

Your brain registers it. But then there's the whole dimension of God's Holy Spirit. So you may listen to go, huh? I'll think about this.

Yeah. While you think about it, the Holy Spirit's going to work on you. And there isn't anywhere you can go to get away from the love of God and the presence of God and the power of God.

And so over a period of time, the omnipotent power of God, who's omnipresent, he works on you. He speaks of his love and his grace to you and his power comes to your heart. And you come to the point where, you know, he's real.

You know, he's alive. You know, his way is the way you know salvation is real in Jesus Christ. And you just know because God has made it so real to you.

It's the power of God and the salvation inherent in the gospel. And what goes with it is the omnipotent power of God to convert the soul. I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God and the salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Paul, Philip and Stephen were Jews first. They were also Greek. They were saved first.

Then they went out to the Gentile world to tell them as well. The message he preached was Christ. That's the message we must preach as well.

The man is amazing. The message is Christ. And there are multitudes that respond.

Go back to Acts eight, six multitudes who believe the multitudes with one accord. In Samaria, he did the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. But when they believe, go down to verse 12, when they believed.

Philip, as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. So there's a multitude that believe the multitude with one accord came together and believe these things. This is significant to me because what happened is follow this.

The pure message. Cut right through their blended beliefs. The pure message cut through their blended beliefs.

If you know where Second Kings is in the Old Testament, turn their Second Kings 1724. I alluded to this already, but I want to take you a little further on it. Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Abba, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim.

These things will be on the test. And they placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.

And it was so at the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the Lord. Therefore, the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them. Then down in verse 33, they decided to fear the Lord after that.

So down in verse 33, you read this interesting phrase. They feared the Lord and served their own gods. How about that? They feared the Lord and served their own gods, their idols, according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.

That's why I said they have blended beliefs. They fear the Lord and serve their gods. You know what it is? It's Jehovah-Canaanite worship.

Jehovah-Canaanite worship. You know something? Jehovah-Canaanite worship is still with us. Blending the world with the things of God.

To these people so used to hearing a blended message comes the pure word of God. And what they do is they believe it because the heart is so hungry for the real thing. They believe it.

We read back in Acts 8, 12, they believed the Greek word is Pistou. It means to have faith in, upon or respect to, to entrust one's spiritual well-being to Christ. When you come to this word in Greek or translated believed, it usually occurs in the present tense.

Follow this, because I'm defining salvation here and saving faith. When you come to this word, believe it usually occurs in the present tense, which stresses faith. That is not simply a one time event, but on going belief in the heart, ongoing trust.

And the reason it's ongoing is because it is supernatural. Saving faith is supernatural. When you read the word they believed, it means they trusted their whole eternity on Christ.

And it's an ongoing trust that's produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit. And it continues throughout your life. Once there, once put there by God, it continues.

This is not just an intellectual assent to the facts. This is a belief with the mind on the facts, but then the will surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And then it involves the emotion as you have sorrow over your sin and joy over God's mercy that forgives it.

So real belief, real saving faith is mental. It believes the truth. It's emotional.

It has sorrow over your sin that issues forth and repentance. And it's volitional. You surrender your life to God.

It isn't just I believe the facts. No, it's a long way from that. And it's also a gift from God.

We are saved by grace through faith. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and that not of yourself. It is the gift of God.

Lest any man should boast. Salvation is all of God and all of grace and all free. Don't you love it? I'm so glad because I qualify.

And that's how I got in. And that's how all these multitudes get in. They believe what his message is, the multitudes who believe.

And then there's this manifestation of satanic activity and actually seven, which is always the case when there is real conversion, though maybe not this radical for unclean spirits or demons crying with a loud voice. Came out of many who were possessed and many were paralyzed and the lame were healed.

These people in this city will read on later.

They were held in the power of Satan through this very satanic, influential man named Simon, the sorcerer. And his influence is so deep that many of the people in the city are demon possessed. Simon is nothing to be trifled with.

We'll get to him next time. But these people are possessed by demons. C.S. Lewis once made the comment that such people as this possessed by demons are with us today in our culture, even though you can't see an outward manifestation like this, a possession.

He made the comment that Satan and his demons adapt themselves to whatever world view prevails in a given society. In third world countries, you see the real radical demonstration of demon possession in the Western world. You see Satan adapts to the world view and he's equally at home with Western materialists as he is with a sorcerer in a third world country.

So we see the same thing happening. It's just hidden more. But when Christ comes to the life, the power of Satan that holds you captive is broken.

And that's what happens here. And so unclean spirits crying with a loud voice, they cried out as they came out of the people that were possessed as they came to know Christ. Say Philip wasn't going around Samaria rebuking the devil everywhere.

He was going around Samaria preaching the gospel. And when people believed that the demons had to come out, Christ cast them out when he came in. Isn't that a relief? Because you encounter somebody in your life who's really evil, wicked, mean and nasty.

And you think, you know, they've got to be so bad. They must be possessed. What am I going to do? And you may in your life at some point really encounter a true demon possessed person.

OK, where's the demon possession? Cast them out, you know, for dummies handbook. I'm talking reality. You'll run into people in your life.

What are you going to do? What are the right words? I should have gone to that seminar on casting out demons. Now, what you need to know is the gospel and you preach it to that individual and omnipotent power of God will be there and they will have the choice to receive Christ or reject Christ. If they receive him, he will cast out the demon.

So it happened here. Wide scale. So this manifestation of satanic activity as the demons are departing from these people to let them be free to enjoy the love of God and Jesus Christ cast out by Christ.

That's the way it always is. And I'm so thankful to God that he can break the power of Satan in my life, in your life, because the devil is real. We see that here.

And as Vance Havner once said, Satan produces mental. Follow this mental and spiritual anesthetics that are more potent than any shot from a needle. He can numb you.

Do you know that Paul wrote in his epistle, the second Timothy, second Timothy epistle, chapter two, verse twenty five. Listen to this. He said that he instructed them in humility, correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God will grant them repentance so they may know the truth, what happens when you know the truth, then come to their senses.

And here it is. Escape the snare of the devil. Having been taken, it actually says this, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

Paul is saying the word of God is preached so people can know the truth of the word of God. Christ comes into the life and they can then escape the snare of the devil. Having been taken captive by his will, Satan can take you captive.

That's it. To do his will. And he does.

If you reject Christ. So the choice is yours and the choice is mine. Either I let Christ have his way in my life.

Or Satan will have his way in your life. You say, no, I'm free to do whatever I want. No, you're not.

You're captive to the bondage of your own will, which is shot through with sin. And Satan uses that. He sails with the wind.

He uses that to take you captive. Either you're free by Christ or you're captive by Satan. You're one or the other.

The power of Jesus has set people free, as seen so wonderfully here. And there's great joy as they magnify God, as these people give their lives to Jesus Christ. I want to encourage you today to give your life to Jesus Christ and to let him set you free in every way that a man or woman can be set free.

Psalms 144:15 says, Happy are the people who are in such a state. Happy are the people whose God is the Lord. And in Samaria, when Jesus Christ became the Lord of these people, there was great joy, great joy in that city.

Verse 8 says, Joy is the flag that is flown from the citadel of the heart when the king of kings is in residence. When he occupies your heart, joy is the flag he flies on your life. And it becomes evident to all.

And you know something, there is nothing more winsome in all of life than the joy of the Lord in a Christian. That is the greatest light that will shine in this world until he comes back. Give your life to Christ.

Know his freedom, know his love and give his love away to anyone that is open to receive it. Let's pray. Father, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to you.

Take all of our lives. Work your saving work in every heart here today, Lord. Jesus, set the captives free.

Holy Spirit, fill us with your power to loose the bonds of Satan, to put an end to the habits that have been built up by yielding to darkness. May your word find its way into our hearts today. To bring freedom to the captives and great joy as a result.

Lord, we love you so much. You're so good. Loose us, Lord, and we will go forth to serve you.

Free us, Lord, and we will be free indeed. And we will give you all the glory. For we ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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