

Christ and His Harlot Church

by David Wilkerson

God is calling the church and backsliders to return to Him, and He is willing to forgive and restore those who have turned away from Him.

Duration: 50:26

Scripture: Hosea 1:1, Hosea 2:3, Hosea 14:4, Hosea 14:6, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Harlot Church"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Hosea and the theme of Christ and His Harlot Church. He calls out to backsliders and those who have grown cold towards the Lord, assuring them that the grace of God is available to bring them back to the love of Christ. The preacher describes the life of a backslider as one filled with pain and confusion, where the pleasures they sought outside of their relationship with God ultimately dry up and leave them unfulfilled. The sermon concludes with a call to repentance and a reminder that God desires for His people to return to Him and experience His grace.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit Series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, PO Box 260, Lindale, Texas 75771 or calling 903-963-8626.

You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. Go to Hosea, please.

I want to talk about Christ and his harlot church. Hosea, just go to the first chapter, if you will, please. Hosea, leave it out on your lap.

Now, I'm fishing. I'm fishing for backsliders today. I want every backslider, everyone who's grown cold toward the Lord, everyone who's turned away from the Lord and gone down the wrong path, I want you to know that the grace of God is here this morning to bring you back, to bring you back to the love of Christ and to bring you back into the fullness of the Lord.

He wants to speak to you. And this is a message not only for the backslider but the church and the body of Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word.

We pray that your unction and anointing be upon us. Lord, we have nothing of ourselves to give but our very bodies. We have nothing of merit.

We come on the merits of the blood of Christ and the merits of being in Christ. And Lord, I pray that you speak the mind of Christ. You speak the mind of God.

Lord, speak to your church. Speak to your body. Let the Holy Ghost come.

Let the glory of God come on this church. Lord, in the annex and the overflow rooms and here in the main auditorium, breathe with life and power and anointing and unction from the Holy Ghost. Lord, we need you.

I have to have your power. I have to have your anointing to deliver this word. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Bible said Christ is married to his church. He's married to his people.

Oh, backslidden children, turn for I am married to you, God said through Jeremiah. And here in Hosea, the prophet Jeremiah was used by God to show us the pain the Lord suffers when we cheat on him, when we turn against him and we turn to harlotry. I want you to read, go with me to Hosea 1 and read with me, please, verses 2 and 3. The beginning of the word of the Lord to Hosea.

And the Lord said to Hosea, Go take unto thee a wife of wardens and children of wardens. For the land has committed great warden departing from the Lord. So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Gilem, which conceived and bear him a son.

Now, Gomer was a well-known, notorious prostitute. She was a harlot. Turn, if you will please, to Hosea 3, verses 1 through 3. Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love flagons of wine.

So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and for an omer of barley, half an omer of barley. I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days. Thou shalt not play the harlot.

Thou shalt not be for another man, so I also be for thee. That's the backslider. That's the one who's turned to harlotry.

Go take a wife who is a harlot. So he went and took Gomer. The harlot here represents, now he's speaking, first of all, to Israel.

He's speaking to both Judah and to Israel, the ten tribes. And we're going to talk about Ephraim. And Ephraim is interchangeable with Israel.

This was the power center of Israel, of the ten tribes. And the power and authority was in Ephraim, one of the largest tribes. And Gomer represents not only those in the body of Christ, but those in the ministry also who have another love.

They have departed from their first love. And the scripture says very clearly that this represents the backslidden condition of many people in the body of Jesus Christ today. I honestly believe Hosea is about the church of Jesus Christ of the last day.

All the lessons that we learn here are so very powerful and so clear. The love of the church of Jesus Christ has been called like morning dew that evaporates. And there are some of you sitting here this morning that God wants to deal with.

You've lost the fire. You've lost the love of God. You once were, you knew that you were in the Bridehood of Christ.

You came to Him and confessed your sins and you have yielded yourself completely to Him at one time. And something has happened. Another love has come into your life.

I'm not just talking about adultery, but there was something that's taking your time and your mind and it's taking you further and further away from that commitment you made to Jesus. When you came and you made your vows, you said, Lord, I'll serve you. And we have seen so many go through the doors of this church.

And I'm just talking from my heart, how many I've met on the street. And they said, Brother Dave, how are you? They know me. I don't know them, but they were at this church at one time and they were full of Christ.

They were in love with Christ and they were growing. But something happened. They don't attend church now.

They're back to their old crowd. They're back to their old ways. And many of you are here this morning.

You're in the annex. You're in the overflow rooms. You're all through this building.

And God has a message for you. First, I'm going to tell you right out. Though you may have angered God, you can't get away from the love that he has in his heart for those who've come to him and a part of his body.

You may be wounded. You may be broken. You may have strayed.

But if you would hear the word of God this morning, you just hear and listen, God will show you his heart. It's not how you feel, it's who God is, what he is to us. And when you get to know his character, when you get to know who God is, then that changes everything.

Absolutely changes. Takes the fear out of your heart of ever returning. Here's a wife.

He takes this harlot, he takes Gomer, a notorious harlot. And God said, this is a teaching tool. Now, I at one time couldn't believe that this was anything but a parable.

I've changed my mind on that. I've changed it very strongly because I believe that with all the details here, it's so clearly revealed and it so represents the heart of God toward his church. He goes and takes this notorious prostitute, this harlot, and he marries her, hoping to change her, hoping that she'll be a faithful wife to him.

And really, he loved this woman. Something had happened. There was a love placed in his heart for this prostitute woman.

And the Bible said she conceived him a son. Now, this represents intimacy. This represents the one that Christ has gone after and taken out.

Folks, he found you in harlotry. He found me in harlotry. He found us in our absolute despair, loving other things, loving the world, the pleasures of this world, the things of this world, all wrapped up in ourselves and other loves that had entered our lives.

And he takes her into his home and into his heart. And she conceives and bears him a son. She bears another child, daughter also.

But at the same time that she has been intimate and all looks well, it looks like this woman has changed. It's a lifetime change. It seems like a miracle.

Here is intimacy. Here is fruitfulness. That represents the one who has come to Christ and has known intimacy.

They've won souls to the Lord. There's been fruitfulness and there's been faithfulness for a period of time. But Hosea is shocked and overwhelmed because he discovers that she's been cheating on him.

Not only does she cheat with one man, but she has many lovers, the Bible says. She's sneaking out, she's sneaking out on him, so to speak, and she is embracing other loves. And the prophet discovers this unfaithfulness and he's heartbroken, absolutely heartbroken over it.

That was played the harlot with many lovers, Jeremiah said. Can you imagine the pain and the brokenness? Can you imagine the pain and brokenness of a married couple that could be sitting in this church now? And apparently things seem so well. The past is forgetting.

Many of you have been saved from drugs and alcohol and you've had to forget. Maybe you're a wife and you married a drug addict or you're a man who's married a woman who had a prostitute to support her habit. And here you sit this morning and you have forgiven and for a season you've been intimate and things were going well.

And so I have a good marriage. And then suddenly you discover that during this time of intimacy and during this time of apparent faithfulness, there's been cheating and there's been unfaithfulness and you come upon your wife in the arms of another man, embraced in a kiss, embraced and it's all suddenly exposed. And the pain of this man's heart, Hosea's heart, is overwhelming.

He's saying to himself, I knew what she was like, but I thought there was a change. I thought there was, I protected her. I showed her affection.

She was intimate with me. She promised to be faithful. And he becomes so overwhelmed with his pain.

He names her Leruhama, which means no more mercy. In other words, no longer mine. No more mercy.

I have had it with this woman. I thought it was changed. I thought there was a miracle and I have had it and that's enough.

No more mercy. I will drive her, chapter 9, verse 15, I will drive her out of my house. I don't want anything more to do with her.

Gomer backslides into an old lifestyle. Now, I told you I'm after backsliders today, not to condemn you, but to show you your way back into the arms of Jesus, to show your way, to show you that there is a path and there is a way back. God told Hosea, this is the house of Israel.

This is a picture of my beloved people. They've fallen into harlotry. They've gone back to their old sins.

The Bible said your maker is your husband. Your maker is your husband. Isaiah 54, 5. Your wickedness is before my face.

This is what Hosea is saying. I see your wickedness. I know what you've done.

You can't hide it anymore. Everybody knows that you've turned from me. You have left me.

You have forsaken me. You're no longer mine. God speaks to the prophet Hosea and what he's actually saying, do you understand now how I feel when my bride, when my wife cheats on me, when my people have other loves in their life other than me? Do you understand the pain that God feels? Folks, I don't think we understand the pain when we turn aside to the things of this world, where we leave our first love for Jesus Christ.

I don't think we understand the pain and the agon that we cause him. We think about our own loneliness and the sense of no longer having the presence of the Lord in our life, but we very seldom contemplate or think about how we've wounded the heart of Christ. He is a feeling Christ.

He's touched with the feelings of our infirmity. Jesus weeps. He's still a man in glory.

He's a glorified man. He still has his manhood. He is God, but he is also man in glory.

If you and I saw him right now, he would have the form of a human being and he would look just like a man, just like the man standing before you. Not the same features, but the same feelings and the same heart. He still has that manhood.

And he is so grieved over this woman. And he says, no longer God is speaking. This is an illustrated sermon for Israel.

Israel, you've sinned against me. And it's an illustrated sermon for the church of Jesus Christ in the last days. You committed yourself to me, but now the things of the world have entered in and you've turned away from me.

You're no longer. You're no longer mine. You know that, and I know it.

You're not for me, no matter what you say, no matter how you try to excuse it. You're no longer my wife. You've left me.

And some of you have left the Lord. You've actually truly left him. You've gone your own way.

He's also saying, you see how quickly you can judge Israel for their backsliding and how slow you are to consider mercy for Israel. And perhaps he goes on to say, is there something of this in your own life, Hosea? He lets you see yourself and the pain that he feels. Hosea is commanded to take her back.

Once again, he forgives her. God said, I will have mercy upon the house of Judah. She comes back and she conceives again, this time a son.

But once again, she plays the harlot, the scripture says. Once again, Hosea is angry and he's hurt and he's broken hearted. Again, she's indulging in her same old habits.

And this time he turns to the boy and God says, now call his name Loami, meaning not my people, not my child. This is not my wife. I am not her husband.

First, no mercy. And now not my people. At this point, God has every right to give up on, or Hosea has every right to give up on Gomor.

I've had enough of her backsliding. I've had enough of her sin. I've had enough of this.

I can't endure this any longer to every right, morally, legally to shut her off and never see her again, cut off all her resources. And folks, it could end here. And if God has every right, legally, morally, to cut us off at a certain point, he has every right.

The story could end right there and God would be totally justified. God could have been justified if he'd have cut you off when you fail, when you went back, when you wounded the heart of Christ. He had every legal right to cut you off or cut me off.

How patient he has been, how loving and how kind he is. To bring you into the house of God this morning in your backslidden condition, bring you here in the house of God, even though you've walked away from his love and bring you back and bring you a message directly to you this morning, this time and this place. This is all about Christ and his bride.

How many times he had the right to give up on me, give up on you. And folks, we are guilty of the worst kind of harlotry, the kind of harlotry that causes an individual to be shut in with God and say, I love you, Lord, with all of my heart. I have eyes for no one but you.

You're everything in my life. And then turn right around and feast your eyes on pornography. Be so intimate with Christ and then go out and commit adultery and fornication.

I think the worst harlotry of all these last days, it's for the body of Jesus Christ. And this is committed by many of us. I ask God every day to help me with this kind against, fight this kind of defilement.

We say that we are one in Christ. We are one body. And then we're all going to heaven together because of the blood of Christ.

And yet we won't talk to one another. We have individuals we won't speak to. We have denominations that fight.

Their leaders don't talk to one another. I just came from Brazil. There are two assembly of God movements.

One movement has about 20,000 churches. The other has 30,000 churches. Ten years ago, they were one.

Now they're split. There's no communication. There is no working together.

I had to go to Brazil, told by one denomination, if you want to come to Brazil, you come to us and nobody else. And the other said, well, you come to us and they allowed a limited number to come in. I had to make

a choice because of the division.

That is the worst kind of harlotry. This is what should cause God to say, no longer mine. This does not represent my church.

This is not who I'm about. The church in New York City is divided. Very little fellowship among ministers.

Pastor Carter's trying to start a pastor's prayer meeting here, inviting pastors from all over the city to come and pray. Pray for that. That'll work.

But everywhere I go on the face of the earth, especially in Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism, absolute division. Men who won't speak to one another and men who speak against one another and fighting and bickering and the young people by the thousands are leaving the church saying we want nothing to do with it. And I meet the young pastors who say we're tired of these high, mighty leaders who will not fellowship.

It's different down here on our level. And thank God one day God's going to return the tables and drive that out. These are robbers in the house of God.

He's going to bring it back to the house of prayer. Hallelujah. He should have called it Ami, not mine, not my bride.

Folks, she goes out, Gomer goes out now and she takes the torturous path of a backslider. Can I talk to you for just a moment about what that torturous pathway is? It's very clearly outlined here in Hosea. Hosea says, plead with your mother, speaking to the children, plead with your mother, plead for she's not my wife, neither am I her husband now.

We are separated. She has left me. Tell her to forsake her sins and return.

He said, go tell my wife that I want her back, but she has got to separate herself from her sins. She's got to break away from all these other loves and come home. Gomer answered, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and water and my meal and my flax, my oil and my drink.

Folks, this is the believer that's gone back to the old crowd, gone back to that career, that worldly crowd of drinking, carousing, partying. It's this, this represents career, this represents a way of life, going back to an old lifestyle, going back to old friends, going back to those who once led you astray. I'm going back.

I'm going to find my pleasure. Somehow Jesus was not enough. Somehow that intimacy was not enough, because often I believe that the roots have never been taken out of the heart, never been plucked up by the roots, the remains of sin.

Now we have that Adamic nature, yes, but some stronghold has not been broken. We're not allowed that strong to be broken by the power of the Holy Spirit. I will go after my lovers that gave me my bread, back to my old crowd, sexual fornication, love of the world and the things the world has offered.

Now, this is the choice he made, and look at the torturous path, and this is the torturous path of every backslider. And I'm going to tell you, I'm just going to read this from the Scripture, and you'll know if you're sitting here this morning, and you know that you have slipped away, I'm going to explain to you the torture that you are either in or will experience. There is torture when you go after your own loves of this world.

There's a torture for it. Verse, chapter two, verse three, lest I strip her naked, lest I strip her naked. You know what he's saying? He said, look, I've been supporting her.

All her resources are for me. She has nothing except what I gave her, the clothes on her back, the money for food, everything. I have supplied everything, but she's not going to do it on my dollar now.

She's making her choice, and she's going to come down so far. All the resources are going to be cut off, and the Scripture says she will become helpless as the day she was born. She'll become helpless.

God said, I'm going to cut it off. And folks, that's exactly what happens when you choose to go your own way. You choose to walk away, back to your old lifestyle, back to your old sins.

All those resources of the Holy Spirit, the peace, the joy, the sense of his presence, the sense of his favor, that getting up in the morning with joy and not that dark cloud hanging, that demiculous sword that's hanging over your head, that sense of lostness, that sense of having lost the favor and the blessing and the touch of God, that something's gone dreadfully wrong because of your choice. Stripped naked, naked of all of those wonderful joys and the blessings of being in his presence and the fellowship of the body of Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the saints. He said, I'm just going to strip her naked.

And secondly, he said, verse three, I will make her as a wilderness and set her in a dry land and slay her with thirst. It's a vivid description of the life of the backslider, lost in the wilderness of pain and confusion. The pleasures are drying up.

There's no fulfillment in those things that she left her husband for. Thirsting for reality, thirsting for some meaning in life. And then Hosea said, I will hedge her up with her way with thorns and make a wall that she shall not find her path.

He said, I'm going to construct a wall. Now, this was not a literal wall, but he said, I am going to take effort. I'm going to do everything in my power to put thorns in her pathway.

I'm going to block her path to her other lovers. I'm going to block her path. I don't know what that is.

That's the Holy Spirit, I'm sure, bringing people to you, witnessing to you. You turn on the radio and there's another thorn. You hear somebody speaking the word and you remember his word.

And then he said, I'm going to construct a wall right in front of you. There's no way over it, around it, under it. You're going to stand in front of a wall in total confusion.

He says, I'm going to close you in. Everything's going to go wrong. All your pathways are going to end in emptiness.

Everything is going to go wrong in your finances, in your relationships. Everything is going to go wrong. You're going to hit a wall.

Now, why is all of this being heaped by Hosea? Why is this being heaped on Gomer, his straying wife? The answer is given very clearly. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better than it is now. I'm going back because I remember how it was.

I remember it was to have direction. I know what it was to have the peace of God. I knew what it was to lay down and sleep at night and have rest in my soul at night.

I know what it is. I know what it was like to be loved, to know I was loved. I remember the intimacy.

I remember all the good things. And now what I have does not compare. Oh, thank God that God never would let Hosea give up on Gomer.

The Lord instructs Hosea, go yet or go again. This is chapter three, verse one. Love her, though still an adulteress, according to the love of God toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods.

He said, Hosea, yes, she's an adulteress, but she represents my church. This is Israel, but it's also the spiritual Israel. Yes, she's a harlot.

She's sinned. But go and love her and listen to what it says. Love her, though still an adulteress, according to the love of God toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods.

She's still not at the place she should be in repentance, but God's love reaches out. What an incredible thing. When I think of the love of God in my life, what an incredible thing.

Most of you would be sitting here who've been delivered from horrible pits of despair, horrible wickedness in your past life, and how in his love he came and found you. Many turned against the Lord and God in his grace never cut off his love, even though there was anger in his wrath and in his pain. God says, you're no longer mine, I can't endure this, yet there's something happening in his heart.

And he said, Hosea, I'm trying to say something in my church. I want them to know who I am. This is who I am.

And we learn in Hosea 11 that God was using Hosea to teach us how he's going to treat his bride in the last days, because he now refers to Ephraim. Ephraim really is a type of Gomorrah. I loved Israel, called them out of Egypt and they turned to harlotry, they turned to their idols.

God said, I took them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with bands of love. I took off their yokes, but they knew not that I had healed them.

I'll ask you a question. How patient has God been with you in your sins? Let's talk about the failure in your life right now. Maybe you have not run off into some deep kind of sin, but there's something.

Let's just name it. Is there adultery? Is there fornication? Is there pornography? Is there cheating? Is there some other love that centered your life, the love of the world? Is there pride? Is there driving ambition in you? You drive over people, you're running around with a temper. Folks, I saw ministers in my last tour, I saw ministers that snapped their fingers and caused my drivers to weep.

Dictators, absolute dictators. In front of me, they acted so sweet and gentle and turned right around to all those that worked with them and said, you blow the line. And my interpretation, he's threatened to fire him if he doesn't do what he said.

And I think to myself, how patient God has been with these men. How patient has he been with you and your sin? Why has he not exposed you yet? Why has he not dealt with you in anger? How many times could you have been exposed in your lifetime for sins that you committed that could have taken your reputation, taken everything away from you, and yet God preserved you. God forgave you.

He's been merciful to you. Do you have that same kind of mercy for those that you find in sin around you? Are you willing to show that same kind of love of God and mercy when God has been so merciful to you? God said, I took them by the arms and they knew not that I had healed them. I drew them with bands of love and I took off their yokes that they knew not that I had healed them.

Now, God didn't overlook the sins of Gomar. No, no, no. She had to take this torturous path.

She had to be nearly turned over to her sins. It came very close to her being turned over to her sins. The Bible said God's people are bent on backsliding.

People who still pray and seek him, but yet there's a bent toward backsliding. Why didn't God give up on Gomar? Why did he keep instructing Hosea to bring her back? Listen, here's what God is saying. How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I make you as Adma, destroy thee as Eboam? That's the type of Sodom and Gomorrah.

My heart is stirring in me. My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of my anger.

I will not destroy it. You see, God was angry. Folks, we anger God.

That anger is based on the pain of God. That anger is at the devil. That anger is the anger that says, if you knew what you were missing, if you only knew my heart.

And there's an anger of the lack of understanding and the lack of foolishness. And he said, I'm not going to execute my anger. I'm not going to execute my wrath because there's something stirring in me.

My heart is stirring in me. My repentings and my compassions are being kindled all together. He said, I'm not going to overlook your sin.

There are consequences to sin. When you walk away, there are consequences. And there were, there was a time she had to be isolated for a season where even though she knew she was loved, there was a time of isolation.

And some of you have known that awful isolation, hearing a word, yes, you're loved, even knowing that God loves you. But that I can't seem to get back to him. I can't seem to get back to that intimacy.

There are consequences, deep consequences to sin and walking away from God. But he says, how can I give up on you? If you return and seek me again, I will rain righteousness down upon you. In other words, God says, I'm going to fight for you.

I'm not going to give up on you. And there are some others sitting here, listen to me now, God is fighting for you. He's not going to give up.

There's a holy fight in him. He said, I'm going to fight for you. You know, we read about him taking a wife into the wilderness and wooing her.

But first he said, I'm going to come to you as a lion and I'm going to come roaring. And what he means by that, God said, your sin is not hid from me. Your goodness has faded like a morning cloud.

What shall I do with you? The Bible said, he shall rise and roar like a lion. I will cut into your heart deeply and I'll heal you by my prophets. I will slay you.

In other words, I'll convict you with the words of my mouth. Then you shall tremble in return. What he says, I'm going to put you under preachers and prophets and men who will bring you a word that will cut your heart and convict you of your sin.

I'll heal you with the prophets because I love you. I'll bring you into the wilderness. I'll cut off all your resources so that you'll remember what it was like.

And he said, I will cut you. And you're hearing a prophetic word this morning. He's coming and cutting to the very core of your soul.

He's coming down deep now and saying, today, today is the day. Right now, I'm dealing with you, giving you a revelation of who I am and what I want out of you is only to simply to repent and return and come back to my grace. Now, how does this story end? And what happens to Gomar? Does she come back and become a faithful, loving wife? Does she forsake her harlotry and become a true wife to him? And when you find the answer to that, you discover the answer to how the Lord is going to bring forth a spotless bride in the last day.

And the devil will not be able to scream, she's still a harlot. Because what the world may see, they may see what they consider spots and wrinkles, but not in the eyes of Almighty God. He's going to have a spotless church through his eyes, what he sees.

Let's get the answer. Chapter 14, verse 4. I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely, for my anger is turned away.

Verse 6. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return. That's Gomar, dwelling under the shadow of the mercy and the love of Hosea.

That's a picture of the church. God says, I'm not going to execute my anger on you. I'm not going to give you what you deserve.

If you would just respond now to my love. Just say, I return. Come.

Come back to my love. Come back to my arms of grace. And I'll heal your backsliding, and I'll love you freely, for I'm no longer angry.

And my branch will be spread over you. And beauty shall be as the olive tree, and the smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return.

They shall revive and grow. The scent shall be as wine. There's a sweetness coming out of this relationship now.

And if I read my Bible correctly, Gomar comes back and she becomes a faithful wife. There's a sweet-smelling savor now, and she's abiding under the protection of his branches. Ephraim shall say, and this is the words of Gomar, or Gomar shall say, what have I to do with idols anymore? I have heard him and obeyed him.

I'm like a green tree now. From me is thy fruit found. He said, she said, now I'm going to be a fruitful tree.

I'm going to be a faithful wife. I'm going to close with something. I was listening to one of Brother Carroll's, William's messages, and he had a thought there.

I pictured, there's in Psalm 23, 6, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And he went into the Hebrew meaning of it. Follow me all the days of my life.

And it comes from an illustration of, perhaps, like on a football field, and somebody is running in the wrong direction. And this, it means to run after and tackle. I mean, to literally take hold and stop.

Surely goodness and mercy shall tackle me, because I'm running in the wrong direction. Notice, I'm not only going to fight for you, I'm going to run after you, and I'm going to tackle you, and I'm going to say, listen to me, I love you, I'm not mad at you, if you just return. Surely goodness and mercy shall chase me down, and follow me the rest of my days.

Thanks, Latter, God's not mad at you. I know, as sure as I know my name, that God is after so many backsliders here today. I want you to stand in the annex overflow rooms, here in the main auditorium.

I want you to stand. Folks, I delivered this message in conversational language, just to try not to stir your emotions, but let the Word of God do work in your heart. Please stand at attention wherever you are.

And in the annex, the Holy Spirit of the Lord is there, as well as He is right here. I didn't know how many would be here that have strayed away from the Lord's first love. Some of you may have never known Him, but God's been moving in this church.

He's been moving in a powerful way, trying to get at the hearts of those who have been slipping and running from Him. He brought you a message of love and grace. I understand He did last Sunday, too, with Pastor Carter in this pulpit, and He's doing it again.

I don't want people to come down here who just feel bad about themselves. I'm talking about those who, in all honesty, have to say, Pastor David, this message is for me. I have slipped.

I have drifted away from Christ. Folks, I would deliver this message if only one person came. That's how much God loves you.

That He would arrange a whole service just for you. Just to meet you. In the annex.

I'm going to pray right now. In the annex in the auditorium, as I pray, the Spirit of God is moving on you. You say, Pastor David, I want to accept that love.

I'm coming back to His grace. I'm coming back to His arms of mercy. Unless you think you say, well, if He's that kind of love, then I'll just go backsliding.

He'll love me and come back. No, no, no, no. That's turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.

And folks, what that leads to is hardness of heart where you can never get back. Because He said, beware of the transgressors, for they'll be forsaken. Those are the hard hearts.

But if you're here now and you slip from Him, I want you to just get out of your seat and come and stand here. I'm going to pray with you and we'll leave Christ. I'm going to leave the Holy Spirit to do a miracle in

your life.

The Lord's coming after you. Not with a hammer, not with a sword. He's coming to you with His arms outstretched.

Just follow these that are coming. In the annex, get right out of your seat. Go into the lobby and the ushers will show you how to get into this auditorium.

Come down the stairs, down the aisle and meet me right here. We'll pray with you. Up in the balcony, go the stairs on either side and come down.

I want only those who say, this message was for me. I really know what God is saying to my heart. Heavenly Father, while I pray, I ask you by your Spirit to sweep over this congregation.

Go into every nook and cranny of this building in the annex and speak clearly. Oh God, thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your incredible love for your church.

We're coming after now, Lord, by grace. We're coming after those who've been slipping away. Something else has taken the heart.

That fire, that zeal is not there anymore. There's a coldness, a lukewarmness that's crept into the heart. Oh God, don't let them leave this church that way.

God, you brought them here this morning for a purpose and you brought this message for a purpose. So, minister to us now in Christ's name, I pray. Just be patient, allow the Holy Spirit to have time.

He's dealing with you. Don't resist the Holy Spirit. Don't resist the Holy Spirit.

He comes in powerful times like this because it's your time. It's your time. Today is the day.

What a shout in heaven. What a shout in glory when you say, yes, Jesus, I hear your voice. I come.

I receive your mercy. I receive your love. Heavenly Father, I pray for a miracle now.

I can't do it. Lord, I feel so helpless. We can deliver the word, but God, your Spirit has to come down and complete a work.

Open up these hearts and let them know how much you have been coming with love and saying, now, now, give me all. Turn away from everything in this world. Turn away from everything that would hinder you from giving me your whole heart.

Lord Jesus, there has to be a wholehearted surrender today. A wholehearted turning to you. I want you to pray this prayer out of your heart.

Dear Jesus, I am coming to give everything to you. I'm tired of running. I'm tired of this world.

There's nothing satisfies but you, Jesus. Come now. Put your arms around me and let me know I'm loved.

I receive your love. Forgive me, Jesus, for being so selfish. Forgive me, Lord, for all the things I've done against you.

I repent and I give you my heart, everything in my heart. Now, Holy Spirit, come upon me now with the assurance that I am yours. And let me pray, Lord Jesus, thank you.

Thank him right now. Just give him thanks. You have to thank him for finding your heart right now.

I thank you, Jesus. Son, give me your hand. Right here.

Son, give me your hand. Lord Jesus, give me both hands. Lord Jesus, thank you for what you're doing.

Break him, Lord. Totally break him. Lord, there's a great sorrowful sin, but I'll let the joy of Jesus come into his heart through wholehearted repentance.

Glory to God. Son, he's doing the work of your heart. Give me your hand.

Lord Jesus, are you giving everything to him right now? Come on. Lord Jesus, thank you. Put your hand on him now.

Embrace him. Let him know. Let him know.

I thank God for the tears, but it has to go beyond your tears now. There has to be a commitment made. Lord, take all the desire of the world out of my heart.

Take all the desire for the things of this world out of my heart. And I'll tell you, some of you are going to have to change who you're running around with. You're going to have to change your relationships.

You're going to make some changes in your life. That's what this is all about. You come down here to make changes.

The Bible said you're to forsake those who walk in the path of iniquity. You're to forsake them. I'm not talking about your husband or wife.

I'm talking about any friend that would lead you astray. You've got to make a decision. I'm going to break away from every ungodly relationship.

Every ungodly relationship. That's part of it. Father, finish the work of cleansing and healing.

Lord, we thank you for what you're doing in this church. You're saving many people. You're bringing backsliders home to your love and grace.

Lord, what a miracle we're seeing happen week after week. Lord, you're going to be sending the glory to this church like we've never seen or understood. Let the glory of the Lord be upon us.

Let the glory of God be upon us. I want everybody within the sound of my voice. Now, maybe you go to church, you're visiting and you don't understand the raising of hands and praising the God, but my particular Bible, I may have a different one, I don't know, but it says, I would that men everywhere lift holy hands.

Lift holy hands to the Lord. And let's just thank him for his grace and his love for us. Lord, we give you thanks for your grace and your love.

Wonderful, Jesus. Wonderful, Jesus.

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