

The Healing Power of Afflictions

by David Wilkerson

David Wilkerson's sermon explores how afflictions serve as a healing power that draws us closer to God and helps us grow in faith.

Duration: 48:48

Scripture: Psalm 77:1-2, Psalm 103:10-14, Psalm 119:67, Psalm 119:71, Psalm 119:75

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon focuses on the healing power of afflictions, emphasizing the importance of trusting God in times of suffering. The speaker shares personal experiences and biblical examples to illustrate how afflictions can lead to spiritual growth, restoration, and a deeper understanding of God's love and mercy.

Transcript

Thank you, choir, orchestra, thank you so much. And we welcome all of our visitors to Times Square Church this morning, and we would like to let you know that after the service we have an afterglow service, which is just friendship. We have some New Yorkers that will greet you and talk to you.

Any question or try to answer any question about New York or the church, you don't sign anything. We don't try to get you on our mailing list. You can do that if you want to, but they'll have some refreshments and a gift, either sermon tape or music tape or one of our books.

And for the main auditorium and the balcony, you come down the stairs and go through eight and nine. Isn't this exit eight and nine on this side, the ancillary building? And in the annex and overflow rooms, you go to room 204 and you'll find these New Yorkers waiting to greet you, and you can meet people from all over the world that visit here. A lot of people come from all of Europe and Africa, and they're going to visit other parts of the country, and many are stopping here to visit, and we welcome you and thank you.

God bless you. If you're here for the first time, I can't see you, just raise your hand, please, and let us say amen. God bless you.

Up balcony and in the annex, delighted to have you. I want to speak to you this morning about the healing power of afflictions, the healing power of afflictions. I have two verses I want you to see, Psalm 119, if you have your Bible and would like to turn, and you can leave it there open once you get to 119, leave it open on your lap if you would, please.

Verse 67 of Psalm 119, before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word. 71, it is good for me that I've been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Now can you swallow that? Are you willing to take God at his word? Lord, verse 71, especially, it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn his statutes.

Oh, hallelujah. Verse 75, I know, Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that you have, in faithfulness, you have afflicted me. Now that's even harder to swallow, but that's God's word.

Heavenly Father, we have a world in affliction, we have a church in affliction, we have people everywhere suffering as there's never been suffering in history as far as we can see and determine. Lord, we bring a word from heaven, we bring a word from your heart. Lord Jesus, change our attitudes, change our thinking, change our heart, Lord, concerning those things that we go through, that we may see Christ, we may see God in every circumstance in our life.

Lord, let the word go forth with your unction, your anointing. Give us ears to hear what you say, Spirit, Spirit of the living God, use my vessel, use my voice, use my heart, and just speak the words to this people as you've spoken them to me. You've spoken comfort to me through these words.

May we be comforted by the Holy Spirit as you move. Thank you for your presence in this house. Thank you for being with us.

Now, Lord, I yield my body, my spirit, my mind, my voice to you to be a vessel to deliver this word, we pray in Christ's name, amen. I don't need to explain to you what afflictions are. Those are the circumstances and the troubles that keep you awake at night, cause you to lose sleep, trying to figure out how to make your way through it, how to figure out what's happening to you.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, the Bible says. But I'm convinced more than ever that God uses afflictions to heal both saint and sinner. Let's take the sinner first, and I'll give you, for example, Manasseh, one of the worst kings in the history of Israel.

He was a worshiper of Baal. He established altars, he built altars right in the temple court to Baal. He was, he sinned, the Bible said, worse than the heathen.

He offered his own children in sacrifice, casting them into the red hot belly of Baal's idol in devil worship. He was into soothsaying, he was into fortune telling, he would not listen to any prophet. He turned against God.

He was one of the most vile tyrants in the history of Israel's kingdoms. And he shed blood, the Bible said, needlessly, a bloody tyrant. And God comes, God raises up an enemy.

God raises up the Assyrians and they come, they capture Israel, or rather Jerusalem, and they take King Manasseh as prisoner, and the captives of Jerusalem. And folks, when you read history, Josephus' history, and learn how they tortured them on their forced marches, being marched hundreds of miles through desert, and hardly any food or drink. And the Bible says of this man, this evil, wicked man, and when he was in affliction, he sought his God and humbled himself greatly before God.

In his affliction, he turned to God. He began to pray, he began to intercede, and the Bible said he humbled himself greatly. And as a result of that, he was restored to his throne and became a fighter for God, tearing down the very idols that he had built and established.

And you may know of sinners too, those who seem to be the most wicked, the most vile. And folks, you can't give up on them. God has ways, God has ways through affliction to bring your loved ones.

And sometimes you have to stand back in pain. You see a special loved one, somebody near you, you see them going through affliction and pain and you stand back, you can't do anything about it. But folks, if you're praying and seeking God, God can use that affliction to bring conviction and bring them to Christ.

King David said his affliction came from the hand of God. The Lord in faithfulness has afflicted me. Folks, listen to it.

Let those words sink in. I can't go any further unless you deal with this one scripture. In faithfulness, God, God, God has afflicted me.

Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now I keep his word. It's a good thing for me that I was afflicted that I might learn his statutes.

How did the word of God become a lamp to David's feet? How is it that he can tell the whole world, I delight in his word? How is it that he's come to this sweetness and to this prayer life and to have a heart after God? How has he come to this? He's had a revelation from the word of God that God was working in his life through his afflictions. Unless the law, that's the word of God, I'm reading from Psalm 119.92. Unless the law, the word, had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. If I wasn't established in the word, in my affliction, if I didn't allow God by his spirit to draw me to the word, to put his fear in my heart, if I didn't go to him and let him talk to me, let him deal with issues in my life, I wouldn't be here.

I would have gone astray. I would have lost it. You can say to me that I can't believe that God, a loving God, could allow such troubles in my life.

But I want you to listen, and folks, this is something that we have to learn. If we don't see God in all of our circumstances, if we don't believe that every step of a righteous man is ordered by the Lord, you'll crash. Your faith will be shipwrecked.

If you don't understand that God has his hand, I'm convinced of this, that in all my circumstances, good and bad, everything that comes my way in my life, I believe that because I've committed my life to him, and I believe that the angel of the Lord tempts around about them that fear him, I believe that God is ordering my steps. Sometimes it's into the flood, sometimes it's into the fire, sometimes it's into the furnace, but I know God is with me and he has a reason for everything he's doing. For you, O God, have proved us.

You've tried us as silver has tried. You brought us into the net. You laid affliction on our loins.

We went through fire, through water, but you brought us out into a place of abundance. You see, David's not asking questions anymore. He said, I know God's doing something in me.

I know that I would have backslidden. I know who I am. I know it's in my heart, and I know how God had to get my attention.

David now saw God's hand in all his afflictions. He knew that his father was digging into his heart. He knew, in fact, Lamentations 3.33, though God caused grief, yet he will have compassion according to the

multitude of his mercies.

He does not afflict willingly, nor does he grieve the children of men to deprive them of their cause. I want you to hear this in the Spirit. You see, God gets no delight, he says, in the death of the sinner.

He doesn't get any delight about sinners being damned. That's not his delight. And now Jeremiah and Lamentations said this is God's unwilling work.

He doesn't do it willingly. In fact, the Hebrew means without heart. He said, God, this is not, he does this unwillingly, his heart is not in it.

I grew up in early Pentecost, and back in those days, they took the Word of God literally. Spare the rod and damn the child. You know, apply the rod.

And my father had a leather belt hanging on a nail going down to the basement. And when I did wrong, and I was just like every boy and more so, and I know my preacher dad loved me, but when I failed, he would take me into his room and sit me down and explain what I did wrong. And he said, now, David, this is going to hurt me worse than it hurts you.

But I never believed it. But my father would apply the belt. He would apply it to my heart, I mean, to my backside and my heart.

But you see, the hardest part was not the spanking. Now they call that child abuse now. God has so made the human body, there's a place for spanking very lightly.

I'm not trying to be facetious, but folks, the hardest part was all when my father says, come here, David. And he put his arms around me and said, I love you. And that's probably one of the reasons I'm here tonight, this morning, preaching the gospel.

Picture the surgeon who's in the operating room and the staff is preparing for the operation. And there's a child laying on the operating table who has cancer and has been diagnosed as malignant. And the surgeon stands over that child and he's about to cut, and he knows he's going to inflict pain.

But there's a tear in his eye because you see that child is his. And that makes all the difference, that there's a loving father. And when he has to allow affliction in our life, it's because he's trying to remove the cancer.

He's trying to move that which is in our hearts that would destroy us. When affliction comes our way, the first thing we're apt to do is blame the devil. We talk about satanic attacks.

Now, folks, we can talk to you about Job, and Job was afflicted by Satan, but he had to have permission. God had to take down the protecting wall that was around Job. We talk about spiritual warfare.

We talk about the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking who he may destroy. We know that Paul was buffeted by a messenger from Satan. We know that Paul, at times, was hindered by the enemy, hindered by Satan in going a certain place.

But I want you to know, friends, listen closely. I have said that time and time again. I'm under satanic attack.

This is the devil at work, trying to destroy me. I've said that many times. But I want you to just follow me in the Scripture for just a moment.

There's no way, not any of this that I've mentioned, not any of this. Yes, the devil can do the attacking, but he can't touch a child of God without permission. He cannot touch you.

He cannot afflict you. He cannot change you. Let me talk to you, let me give you the Scripture.

Psalms 89, 20, God said, I have found David. I anointed him with my holy oil. My hand and my arm shall strengthen him.

The enemy shall not deceive him. The son of wickedness shall not afflict him. The son of wickedness can't touch.

I found David. I found this man. This is my child.

This is David, my son. And I've got a strong arm to protect him. And I'm pronouncing to the whole world that the enemy, Satan, cannot afflict him.

He cannot afflict him without permission. Satan shall not afflict him. In Zechariah, the third chapter, and the Lord said unto Satan, Satan came to stand before God with the brethren, or with the saints, to accuse them before the Father.

And God said, Zechariah, third chapter, and the Lord said to the devil, or to Satan, Satan, the Lord rebukes you. Now, folks, I want to tell you what I believe. I believe with all my heart.

Before the devil can touch you as a child of God, before the enemy can afflict or do any damage at all, he has to go to the throne of God. And he has to stand right before Christ. And there's the Heavenly Father.

Now, he has to bring a greater argument than the blood of Jesus Christ. He has to have something on you. He has to have something that is greater than the blood of Jesus.

And there's nothing conceivable to the mind of man that is greater than the blood of Jesus Christ. He cannot break the bloodline. As the mountains are around Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about the people from now and forevermore.

The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon thee, lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity. The rod of the wicked, or the rod of Satan, cannot be put on the back of God's people. Now, folks, I have said, and we said, this is of the devil.

Indeed, there are attacks from the devil. There was a messenger that was allowed to go and buffet Paul. And we know it's in the flesh.

Now, folks, I would have to condemn 50 years of preaching about this if I came to a conclusion suddenly in my older days, at my old age, some new doctrine. No, there are attacks. There are attacks.

But there has to be permission, and there has to be something that God knows that just as the king of Assyria was used as God's rod of affliction, he can only be used, and he can only be used for a time. And he cannot touch, he cannot kill you, he cannot destroy you. This was the limitations put on the devil when he came to afflict Job.

Yes, you can touch him, but folks, Paul the apostle said, I prayed three times that God would release me from this messenger of Satan. Now, that was from the devil, so he is afflicted. This is a messenger from Satan.

But God said, My grace is sufficient for you. My grace will let you not only endure, but stand strong. And he acknowledges, it's because I was a man of pride.

I had visions that if I told them, if I testified about them, would make me a very proud man and could have destroyed me. And God was saving a man that he loved, allowing this affliction. There's another response to afflictions, and it's this.

I'm being afflicted because I'm paying for my past sins. And then suddenly we repay all those sins that we have committed in the past. And then we set them up against, we put them, we stand it up against the affliction we have and say, Well, I can't understand this.

I fasted, I prayed, I've done everything that a Christian should do, and I'm still under affliction. And it has to be because God, I must have crossed the line somewhere. I must have sinned so much against light.

I must have done something so terrible in the eyes of God that he's having to, he's having to afflict me. He's having, he's allowed this in my life because of some hideous thing. And those things will be brought to memory.

There's an example of that in the scripture, the life of Aesop. Aesop was music director and choir director in the temple under the reign of David and Solomon, both. And he was a praying man.

He was a godly man. He was a trusting man. But there came a great affliction into his life.

And he says in Psalm 77, and it's all in Psalm 77. He said, I am so troubled that I can't speak. There was an affliction that came into Aesop's life.

Godly man. And he said, it was so overwhelming, he gives us no details. But he said, it was so overwhelming, he says, I am so troubled.

I am so troubled I can't speak. And then you can hear him in this 77 Psalm. You hear him saying, I stretched out my hands to my God.

I stretched out my hand. But there was no answer. He said, I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

In chapter 73, he says, God is good to those who have a clean heart. God's good to those of a clean heart. In other words, you have to be good to avoid affliction, which is a wrong doctrine.

All our goodness in the world doesn't keep us from affliction. Then he goes on. But for me, my feet were almost gone.

And my feet almost stumbled. He said, I almost crashed. I almost backslid because I was envious.

And then he looked around and he saw the prosperity. He was envious at those who were prospering and those who didn't seem to have a problem in life. And were not afflicted as far as he could see.

And something rose up in his heart. And he says, I have fasted. I have prayed.

I've cleaned my hands. I've sought to. And if you read the 73rd chapter, you'll find it all there.

And he said, I've struggled to be pure and walk righteously before the Lord. And all I get are afflictions. And there was a jealousy that came into his heart.

Only conclusion. And he lets us in on the cause of his troubled heart. He said, I don't understand this.

I don't understand why I'm not being blessed. When all around me, ungodly people are being blessed. And he said, it's because it's sin.

And you see, there was a problem in his life. He was envious. And that envy could have destroyed him.

There's nothing more danger, no more serious or crippling than envy and jealousy. And it could have destroyed him. God loved this man.

God would not let him go. And you see, when you're in this kind of situation, when you are struggling with thoughts from the enemy and from the flesh, that God is allowing some hardship in your life because you've been such a dirty, filthy sinner. And even though you've been serving the Lord, you still slip, you still go back and you failed.

And so now God's getting even with me. No, no, no. Well, because you see, you come then at this place to what I call trial by the word.

Until Joseph's time came, the word of the Lord tried him. Tested him. And you see, we always tell people, and I preach this, and you hear that when you're in trouble, go back to the Red Sea.

Go back to the manna. Go back to the water out of the rock. And look at all the miracles God did in the past.

Well, He did that. He did that in chapter 77. He went back to Israel.

He went back to the opening of the Red Sea. He went back to the miracles. The cloud and the manna and the water out of the rock and the healing of bitter waters.

And it only got worse for him. You see, when you're being tried by the word of God, you can go back. You can go back.

And you can look at all the miracles. But it's going to take more than just looking back. Because He said, I remembered God and I became troubled.

I remembered all the miracles. And you see, why is He feeling troubled after looking at the miracles and doing what we're supposed to do? He said, because I don't see that in my life. I don't see my Red Sea opening.

I don't see water out of my rock. And see, we're tried by the word of God. It will try you.

And, folks, if you stay there, you can shipwreck your faith. If you try to figure it out, no. Because, you see, yes, go back.

Remember the good things God has done. But you hold on to your faith. God is with you in your trial.

Now, let me give you a statement. I want you to remember it. God is not with me in spite of my failures, my sins, my slothfulness.

He's not with me in spite of it. He is with me in it and through it. He's with me in my struggles.

He's with me in my pain. He's with me in my failure. He never leaves.

He never forsakes. He is still there. And that's the lesson.

And Asaph finally learned that, and God brought him out to a glorious victory. Hallelujah. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ who died.

Yes, brother, He is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Scripture says there are sins and iniquities while I remember no more. There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that be in Christ Jesus, who walk with the Spirit and not the flesh.

No condemnation to those who be in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Now, there's another response, and I believe it's the right response to afflictions. And it's this. Lord, are you trying to say something to me in this affliction? Do you have a message? If I've been blinded to something that you're trying to speak into my life, the Scripture makes it very, very clear that God does speak, and He speaks through afflictions.

Now, this came into, this message was born out of something I've learned through some personal afflictions. Sometimes the worst afflictions come from friends, from people, that can fix you and turn on you and speak evil of you. And I remember over my lifetime in ministry faces, I can remember of those who are supposedly my friends and turned on me and wounded me deeply.

And looking back, I remember one occasion when someone got in touch with me that I thought was a friend that I had helped mentor and did so much in the way of help financially and every other way and just poured out on me. Incredible. I was a liar.

I was a cheat. I was arrogant. And just a torrent of stuff that broke my heart and wounded me.

And I went home and I said that's the most devilish thing, that is the devil himself trying to destroy my rest. But there was something nagging at me, really nagging in my spirit, something that was burning and turning inside. And I went to the Lord in prayer, I laid flat on the ground, and I said, oh, God, I have a wounded heart.

And I went through all the things, you know, I blamed the devil, all these responses. I thought, well, try and examine what sin did I do. I went through all this stuff we go through trying to come to a conclusion about why we are afflicted.

The Word of God, I quoted verses that seemed to not match this problem, this situation, you know. And the Lord, in that still small voice, said, I've allowed this because I've been talking to you about something and you're not listening. And, boy, I heard it.

I knew it the moment he whispered. I knew that one issue that God was putting his finger on. And the Lord said, allow this now.

I want you, if you will obey me now. He said, I want you to do something now. And, folks, this is the wonderful thing about the love of God and the love of Jesus for his children.

He says, remember when I told you how my father would deal with me, chasten me, and then want me to hug him? And then he'd hug me? Well, you see, that's the way the Lord is. He loves, he chastens. And the Holy Spirit led me, said, now, get your concordance, and I want you to read and get in your mind every scripture you can on the tender, loving, kindness of the Father.

I opened up my Bible and I got it. And, oh, folks, here's what I started reading. I pray that you're merciful.

This is David in his affliction. I pray, Lord, that your merciful kindness come and comfort me, that I might live. I read that, and the Lord said, you understand what I'm saying? I'm going to comfort you now, and you take all, learn who I really am right now.

And when these afflictions come, the Lord is gracious, full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercies. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are above all his works. His tender mercies are above all his works.

Whatever you're going through right now, mercy is there. God's mercy is there. God's tender, loving kindness is there.

He's not out to spank you or hurt you. He's there to deal with you. Please don't go out of here and try to say, well, I don't know what it is, and I can't handle that.

Just go to the Lord. Go to the Lord with an open heart. If there's an issue there, he'll tell you.

He will not condemn you. He will not push you aside. He'll say, now, let me love you through this.

Let me love you through this. I have numerous books, and I'm going to wrap this up in just a moment. I have numerous books on apologetics, and men try, godly men, wonderful men of God, intellectual men and women, have tried to explain the suffering of those who suffer, especially those who suffer week after week, month after month, and year after year.

And nothing seems to change. Prayers don't seem to get through. I think of so many in wheelchairs.

I think of so many that are suffering and hurting. And I've read and read this. In this past week, I read a number also of messages from those who are into apologetics, but it never satisfies me.

It doesn't really answer something that is just something that doesn't add up. I cannot explain to you theologically why some of the most godly people we know, praying people, trusting people, suffer. I can't explain to you fully how my own son, one of my sons, is still going on and on in pain.

This is the fourth year, I think. I don't try to get an explanation. I have something I know that I know that God is trying to do in him.

I know it. There's something just from the Holy Spirit. David, just be patient.

I'm working on something. I can't tell you theologically. I can't walk you through it.

I'm not that intelligent. I couldn't exegete the word enough to put your mind at ease. But I do see something that anchors my faith and helps me.

I have human witnesses. Human witnesses to the faithfulness of God in long time affliction. In unthinkable affliction.

I'm thinking of Elder Sam, this church who's on our Elders Board. Sam has been suffering pain, excruciating pain for 15 years. He's downstairs right now praying.

He leads a group in prayer while we're preaching. Sam's been operated on time and time again. We just sent him months ago to Europe for an operation on his back.

And he's still in canes. He walks with canes and he can't sleep at night. But you see, you read Hebrews 11, all the heroes of faith.

To me, Sam is a hero of the faith. This man prays for me every day. He prays for the pastor of this church.

He's a praying man. Every time I see him, he has a word from the Lord and the love of God. And the sweetness of Christ that's coming out of him.

And Sam told me this morning, he says, I know what God knows about me. I know, I see God in what has happened in my life. I think of Jimmy Macri, my secretary's husband.

Jimmy's had, since he's a child, he's had cluster migraine headaches that are mind-boggling. He's lost 90% of his sight and most of his hearing. But I've never met a sweeter man.

I've never met anyone as kind. I call him Mr. Fantastic. And the reason, every time you see him, even though he has excruciating pain, and he has clusters of headaches that not the most potent drug can relieve.

There's no drug that has been able not to relieve his pain. In fact, he's home today with a cluster, just a block from here. And yet, every time I see him, how you doing Jimmy? Fantastic.

Fantastic. You see, I have living proof. Yes, the word, but you see, we're human and God just lays these scenes before us.

You can look around and you can see it. I see it most of all in my wife, Gwen, who's here this morning. 25 operations, four or five for cancer.

Cancer in both two daughters and the death of our 12-year-old granddaughter to brain tumor. And I have seen. You see, Gwen has never, never complained.

Never. She's lost a good part of her sight from back at her generation. But I see she could tell you through 50 years, 50 years, suffering.

Well, there have been a lot of good years, pain-free. But she'll tell you, God has had his hand every step. And Gwen is my hero.

I look up to her every time the enemy would try to cause my faith to waver. I look at her and her braveness. I look at Jimmy, I look at Sam.

You have these witnesses before you too. That God is faithful. And God shows forth his tender mercies in the hardest of times.

If God has done, and with this I close, if God has done anything in my life, if there's anything of worth in my life, if I have learned anything, I have learned it in my darkest hours. I have learned it in times of pain. I've learned it in times of agony.

And God, because I just held on and said, God, I believe you're in this. I believe I can see you in every circumstance. That takes the load off.

You don't have to try to figure anything out anymore. Hallelujah. God is with you.

The devil's a liar. Take a stand and say, God is with me. And God in his time, God in his way, many of the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them from them all.

Some of us are delivered when Jesus comes. Many of us are going to be delivered in various ways, and in his own time and way, he will deliver. But I believe that I'm delivered the moment I am above my pain.

When I'm above it, I am delivered. The deliverance is that the devil can't hinder me anymore. He can't lie to me anymore because by faith, by faith, I've been raised, I've been resurrected out of my doubts and fears, and now I stand on faith.

I can face every problem because I know God's in it with me. Hallelujah. Sand to your feet.

Hallelujah. Glory be to God. Do you believe God is with you? No matter what you face.

Folks, we've got to believe this because of what we face coming in our times. We've got to get a hold of this. Whatever happens, whatever happens, and this is not resignation.

This is not just going into some kind of state of mind that you say, I don't accept it. No, it's an act of faith that says that I believe, I believe that God will go with me through this, and I'm not going down. I'm going to hold on and believe God right through it.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your precious word. Lord, there are people listening to me now that are enduring great afflictions, great affliction, but I ask you, Holy Spirit, to bring peace of heart and mind and a confidence that God who has promised will keep his word. David said, comfort me by your word.

Lord, there are times that no man can comfort us. Nobody can give us a word, but we go to your word and we find about your tender loving kindness and your multiplied mercies for us. Thank you, Jesus.

Give hope and faith to everyone in this house and all who hear me. In Christ's name, amen. Now, in closing, I want to open the front of this church.

There's some, and also those in the overflow rooms and watching through the large screens, you can step forward for prayer, but here in the main auditorium, I invite all of those in this building that have heard this word and you are, listen closely, you have been overwhelmed with what you're facing. It could be financial, it could be physical, it could be marriage, I don't know what it is, but you came this morning overwhelmed at the breaking point, and there is a breaking point. You go one way, you either get bitter or you turn to the Lord with all your heart.

And if you're at a breaking point, I want you to step out. If you want God to turn you around, you don't want to go into doubt, you don't want to go into unbelief, you know where that leads to, that finally leads to atheism. No, God is saying to your heart right now, come this way, follow me.

Up in the balcony, go to the stairs on either side, come and we'll pray for you. Now, if you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you've turned your back, if you've been running from God, and God brought you here this morning, and you feel your heart stirred, and you feel the tugging of the Holy Spirit, you get out of your seat and come here. And the same in the overflow rooms, you just go in between the screens and stand there, and you can hear me and I will be praying for you in just a moment as we wait on the Lord.

Up in the balcony, there are numbers over here that need to hear this, and God wants to do a work on your heart. Step out and we'll pray with you in just a moment. I want to read a scripture to you from Psalm 103.

He has not dealt with us after our sins. He has not rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. He knows our frame.

He remembers that we're just dust. Look this way, if you will, please. You heard what I just read.

God says, in your difficulty, He said, you have my sympathy. You have my sympathy. And just as the surgeon has a tear in his eye when he has to operate on his own son, the Lord is right here now feeling, touched with the feelings of your infirmity.

He's touched. He feels. He's not a dead idol.

He's a living God. We have a resurrected Christ. And I can't, through my word, I can't inject faith into you.

I can't change you just by talking to you. It has to be the Holy Spirit. And I believe the Holy Spirit is here this morning.

And you can just ask, why don't you ask right now, Holy Spirit, open my heart. Just say that, Holy Spirit, come open my heart to receive. And you can't get it just from sermon tapes.

You can't get it just from preaching. You have to have your own personal experience. And say, Lord Jesus, faith comes by hearing the word of God.

Help me now. David said, if I hadn't had your law in my heart, I would have failed. If I didn't have this word in my heart, can I tell you this most important thing I can tell you now? And we say it, and it's been repeated over and over again.

And the reason it's repeated, because that's the one way that faith will come. Through hearing, reading, and asking God to show you. When you, this afternoon, somehow, someway, even if you're at McDonald's, or if you have your Bible, just turn it, and start reading through the Psalms.

And start reading some of these, like chapter 34, chapter 34, 103, and 106, and 121. And read chapters, and let faith arise in your heart, and apply those words. Whatever it says, take it to heart, so that the Lord can change you.

Now, if you don't know Christ, you simply, right now, ask him to cleanse you, and forgive, and blot out your sins. He said his faith will just forgive and cleanse you. If you've been cold and indifferent toward him, God

saw that you stepped out.

He knew what was in your heart, or you wouldn't have come forward. And having come forward now, just say, Lord Jesus, embrace me. I come to your love.

There's no condemnation, but there's love extended to you from the Father's heart. And just say, I receive your love. Lord, forgive my unbelief.

Forgive my sloth. Forgive my laziness. And help me, by your Spirit, to be moved, to be established in faith.

Heavenly Father, I pray for everyone that came forward. And I pray for those that are in the annex, watching on the screen. Lord, will you touch there, in that room.

Holy Spirit, you are there. You're in this place. And will you bring peace, and rest, to those who would just turn to you with all their heart, and say, Lord, I thank you.

You never left me. You never forsook me. Now, Lord Jesus, will you bring faith.

Will you instill faith, through your Word, through your presence, and by your Spirit, I pray. Will you pray this prayer from your heart, right now. Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, you abide in me.

And that's what the Word says. And I ask you, Holy Spirit, to restore me. Restore my faith.

Give me hope and peace. And let me come into rest. I lay down all my trials.

I lay down all my fears. Believing you, Lord Jesus, to forgive me, and cleanse me, and set me free. Now, look this way, now.

You don't have to beg God. You don't have to plead. He said, I am, He's a ready God.

He said, I have a readiness to forgive you. He was waiting just to touch you. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Did you receive the Word? I said, did you receive the Word? Let's sing.

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