

# Spiritual Struggles

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Christian gospel and the all-encompassing work of Jesus on the cross. It addresses various struggles individuals face, such as inherited spiritual issues, addictions, abuse, and feelings of unworthiness, while highlighting the everlasting love and freedom offered by God. The message encourages listeners to turn to the truth, embrace God's love, and experience victory and newness in Christ.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:3, John 3:16, John 8:32, Acts 29:9, Hebrews 7:25, Galatians 1:15, Ephesians 2:4, Luke 4:18

**Topics:** "Transformative Power of the Gospel", "Embracing God's Love"

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## Description

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## Transcript

But as most of you know, my name is Fred Tomlinson and it's a privilege to be able to talk to you again. It really is a privilege, honestly. I'm just so grateful to God for these opportunities.

During the early years of my life in an evangelical assembly, the attendees in the assembly were all sincere, good people and I'm very grateful to God for that background. But these were people who professed to believe the Bible from cover to cover. Everything, and indeed everyone, seemed to be just nice and predictable.

Everything went smoothly in the meetings and everything was pleasant. It was wonderful. I grew up in that environment through the early 20 years of my life.

But it was actually in my early 20s, I was exposed to a Christian ministry that was truly birthed by and was flowing in the Holy Spirit. Something was hugely different and there was this acute sense of the Lord's presence. The ministry itself was bathed in the love of God.

The teaching that came forth was focused on the power of the Christian gospel. The outcome of that, if I just add this as an aside, absolutely transformed my life and my experience of God in my own person, in my own life. As the years went by, I was brought into the eldership.

There are a few people listening to me today who were around in those days. I'm going back as far as 1970 now. But something in my own personal ministry that kind of caught me off guard was that so many people who professed to be Christian believers confided, I suppose as trust was established, but they began to confide.

This has happened over the decades. They confided in me about spiritual issues in their own lives that were concerning, and frankly some of them were alarming, but issues and struggles that they were having in their spiritual lives. Clearly, the neat and tidy assembly folk with the neat and tidy lives experienced the same issues and the same things were going on in their lives, I'm sure.

But they were not being exposed, at least not in public. It strikes me as being incredibly grievous that dear souls dear men and women claiming faith in an almighty savior were at the same time locked in an endless struggle with issues and bondages in their lives, all sort of cloaked beneath the harmonious singing of words, of hymns, such as, My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee. You know, to myself back in those early days and to so many today, this is considered to be the normal Christian experience.

Let me just dig in a little. This is a rather different presentation today than what I would usually be doing, but you know, I'm thinking of some of the kinds of issues and struggles that people came to talk about. I'm not going to tell stories about people at all, but just to give you sort of indicators of what I'm referring to.

For some people there were just dark hang-ups in the spiritual realm that they, it turns out, really had inherited from their parents. Ezekiel, in his prophecy, in one of his prophecies, he captured this that I'm thinking of right now and presented it with a couple of very succinct and yet powerfully thought-provoking phrases. For example, he said, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

Or again, he said, your mother is like a vine in your blood. Features of experience that are passed on somehow from generation to generation. For countless others, the issues were addictions that they may have unwittingly exposed themselves to.

In some cases, they'd expose themselves to powers that are completely incompassible with the Christian life. I'm thinking of sexual addictions. I'm thinking of addictions to the internet, which may have a link to the first category I just referred to, but not always.

People who are addicted, I mean truly addicted to movies. People who are truly addicted to food. People who are addicted to materialism.

All addictions, each and every one of them, that again are incompatible with the life of a true Christian man or a Christian woman. Incompatible to godliness and spiritual life and communion with God. There are other people that have talked to me.

People whose inner hearts have been scarred, having been victims of abuse. Sometimes it's been betrayal within the sacred union of marriage. On other occasions, it's been women who, as girls, were subjected to what I frequently referred to as the ultimate betrayal, where they've been abused by their own fathers.

On other occasions, it's been men who, as boys, were abandoned by their fathers, each and every case leaving wounds that are sort of gaping open doors to demonic spirits. Added to each and all of these kind

of things that I'm referring to, there is that sort of hollow satanic voice that seems to state the obvious, that this is your life. You'll never be truly free from these issues, these bondages, these addictions, because you've tried and you've tried and many people have prayed and prayed, but they still can't seem to get past these issues.

But I want you to just listen for a moment to the truth. It was, perhaps we need to be reminded that Satan doesn't possess the last word and he shall never ever have the last word. Hallelujah.

Jesus had the last word. He had it, remember, when he was on the cross, when he said, finished. What a wonderful word, finished.

And as Charles Wesley added to that word, he said, the great redeeming work was done. Accomplished is the sacrifice. Glory to God.

Jesus accomplished something on the cross that was dynamic in the ultimate sense, far, far beyond any of the efforts and the struggles and frustrations and pains and wounds and everything. He did something. I understand, of course, that primarily, supremely, it was to provide salvation for our souls.

But his work was a comprehensive work, an all-inclusive work. It was a dynamic work, finished. How those words, which was actually only one word when he stated it, but it sort of echoes and resonates down through the generations and men and women of all races scattered around the globe through the centuries of caught by the blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit, something of the power and significance of that word that brings such promise and relief to the human heart that's struggling and longing for freedom.

I wonder if you can hear also the great proclamation of the Lord coming from his throne in glory, behold, I make all things new. Of course, we understand that there's an aspect to that which pertains to that which we will not experience in this world, but it has to do with a sort of a future. It has an eschatological thrust to it, as you could say.

You know, beloved, whoever you are that's listening to me, I don't know you. I don't know any of the details of your life. I don't know any of the issues that are going on in your person.

But listen to Jesus again. He said, Satan is a murderer and a liar. One of the supreme things that Satan murders is the truth.

He's a murderer of the truth. And Jesus said again, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Glory to God.

That's a reference to the true biblical Christian gospel and relating directly to the redeeming work of Calvary and made effective in the lives of men and women down through the ages right up to this present moment by and through the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit. Amen. And what I'm attempting to do in this somewhat more brief presentation here and talk this morning is to enable you to begin to turn to the truth.

I want to turn you to the truth. The truth, says Jesus again, will make you free. Amen.

It's not a limited freedom. It's not limited to certain features in human experience or in our spiritual lives. It's a comprehensive word.

It will produce in you, if your heart is open to the truth, to receive it, to believe it, to sort of grab hold of it. The apostle Paul writing to the Philippians, he talks about apprehending that for which God has

apprehended me. There was a time in my early life when I started a career as a policeman.

And one of the very first things I did when I was on the street, I'd like to tell you the story, but I can't, was to apprehend someone who was running, who needed to be caught. And when I finally got to, I grabbed hold of him and I will add only this to my story. In that moment, because it was the first time I'd ever done it.

I was so blessed as I had the screaming engine of a police car pulling up alongside of me, who'd watched the whole thing and sort of bared me out of that situation. But in any event, I grabbed hold of him. Under no circumstances must I permit him to get free again.

And Paul says that he was apprehending Christ for the purpose for which he, Christ, had apprehended him. He was saying he's got hold of me and I'm getting hold of him that I may ever more fully experience the reason that he apprehended me in the first place. And if we've got a heart that's open to God and open to the truth, it may be that you're hearing, I don't know, for the very first time that there's victory in Jesus.

There's freedom from these enslaving addictions and from these wounds that are very, very real, that you've never really been able to get past in your spiritual journey. But I'm here to tell you on the authority of the Word of God that there's freedom that is available for you. There's victory which has been purchased at the cross by Jesus and the Holy Spirit is here.

He's speaking through his own Word. He may be speaking through this broken vessel, me, to you on this occasion and stating to your heart, only he can speak to your heart, that there's freedom for you. You know, listen to another word, an ancient word.

If you want to turn to it and perhaps you will later on if you're not doing it now. I'm quoting from the book of Jeremiah and in chapter 31 and verse 3. Just listen to these words. This is God speaking prophetically through a man.

He says, and I'm quoting deliberately from the old King James. You'll understand why in a moment. I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

And the old King James is abandoned by many because of its archaic language and so on. And there's a lot that can be said about that. But it's interesting that here the word in the old King James is not you, which is a perfectly good word, but I think it's kind of a polite word.

You people. But thee is more direct. It's personal.

It's individual and it's God speaking to men and women. He's speaking to you today. He said, I have loved thee, you, the one I am directly speaking to.

It's to you personally I'm talking. And he says, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. It carries through the idea of singleness.

The focus is sharp. God's focus is on you, my dear friend today. It's as though God is saying, yes, I'm talking to you personally.

I know your issues. I know your struggles. I know your heart.

And I'm here. This is how God would speak. Of course, I'm paraphrasing very loosely.

And it's as though God is saying here, I know all about you. I know everything about you. And I have loved you.

You, thee, thee. I love you as though there was no one else. It's singular.

I'm speaking to you. I have loved you. It's wonderful.

For God so loved the world. Of course, it's a very biblical concept and one of the most famous verses and well-known verses of the Bible. John 3.16. But here the emphasis is particular.

It's personal and necessary. How important it is for us as we, in our secret hearts, are seeking and longing for that something that only God can accomplish in our hearts, in our lives. And then at that point, it's so precious that it's as though God is singling us out.

Of course, he loves the whole world. Of course, he loves all the other brethren in the same way. But he's talking to you.

He's talking to me. And again, I say how important it is that there are just times when I feel I'm just alone with him. And he, God, is talking to me and he says, I've loved you, Fred, with an everlasting love.

Everlasting. Before the heavens were created. Think of it.

How amazing is that? Before you were born. Before your mother and your father loved you. God says, I've loved you with an everlasting, a timeless love.

And how wonderful, because with that kind of love, with that kind of God, no sin that I can commit can ever weaken his love for me. It may damage my fellowship with him. Certainly, that's another issue.

But it will never, never, never weaken his love for me. It will never, never, never weaken his love for you. No issue can change it.

No failure on our part can extinguish it. You know, when you feel you've just totally messed up. Maybe it was back then somewhere, or maybe it was more recent.

And you feel you've just messed up. And you're so grieved with yourself. You're so grieved with perhaps some kind of betrayal that you've engaged in.

But when you've totally messed up like that, he is still with you. It doesn't change his love. It's an everlasting love.

Isn't that a profound and wonderful thing? When you feel, as I feel very often, totally unworthy of his love and his grace to me, he's still there. He's still there. He's still loving you.

He's still loving me. When your faith is falling or failing, and how does the song put it? When faith is failing and your strength is almost gone, he's still there. And you know only this time I'm quoting from John's Gospel in chapter 15 verse 16 where he says, I have chosen you.

Okay, it's not the word thee there, but we've got the picture by now, I hope. He says, in spite of everything. That is the most wonderful aspect of truth that I can get hold of, that in spite of everything about me, in spite of everything about my life, in spite of everything about your life, what you've inherited, what you've subjected yourself to, what you've opened your spirit to, God is saying, I've loved you.

I've loved thee with an everlasting love. Nothing will change it. Nothing can change it.

Amen. I've chosen you. It hardly gets more wonderful than that.

Think of it. Open your heart to it. And beloved, he is here by his spirit now.

I can say here I'm miles away from where you are. But the fact is it applies to you where you are. He's here, he's there with you to make you new.

Amen. Hear him again. This is Jesus.

He says, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and to set free those who are downtrodden. Glory to God.

This is the gospel. This is the gospel. You know, right now, you know, I'm thinking of a young prostitute sobbing and sobbing.

She was crushed as having found herself in the presence of a holy God and the love of God. She's crushed as she is compelled to think of her lifestyle and her past. Or I'm thinking of a dear man who became a friend who many years ago had a sex change medically.

But he met Jesus and he, believe it, he's been happily married for decades. And we still have him as our friend. Glory to God.

And just how wonderful. Of course, I could go further back than that. I could find myself thinking about someone we know as the Apostle Paul.

Read what he has to say in Acts chapter 29 and verses 9 and 11 in that area. As he rehearsed this, what he had been responsible for to the church of Jesus Christ, to the fledgling church, the damage he brought, the pain, the suffering, even death to some of the Lord's people. And then in our minds, we've got the words of Jesus saying, inasmuch as you've done it unto any one of these, the least of my little ones, you've done it unto me.

That was Saul, Saul of Tarsus, as we know him in that period. But he discovered something. He discovered that he, Jesus, is able to save to the uttermost all that call upon him.

And of course, we know that he was also able to write to the Galatians and remind them that God had chosen him even from his mother's womb, he says. He chose me. Isn't it wonderful? It's amazing.

It's amazing grace. How sweet the sound. His love has no limit.

His grace has no measure, no power, no boundary known unto man. Hallelujah. If you're fully aware of the Lord speaking into your heart today, because I'm sure that there are those who fit into one or other of these kinds of categories that I'm talking about this morning.

If you have a sense that the Holy Spirit of God is putting his finger on a live nerve in your life, he's addressing some aspect of your life that is very, very real to you, perhaps that you've been struggling with for an awful long time. And then I'm going to pray for you in just a moment here. I can't invite you to come forward as we would have done in days of old.

We can't lay hands on you in that way, but I'm inviting you. You can bow, even if you don't do it literally, you can bow in your heart before him. And I want you to believe him right now.

He is the one who is able to break the power of cancelled sin and set the prisoner free. He's here to set you free, my dear friend. Let's just pray.

Father, how can we ever express our appreciation for the love and grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ? How can we ever even fully understand the scope, the potential, the power of the blood that was shed at Calvary and now yet speaks in heaven forgiveness and acceptance for us, Lord, in spite of everything. And I pray, Father, this morning for those who are listening to me who sense that they have a need for you, Lord, to do that impossible or otherwise impossible thing for them. And I pray for them, Lord.

I pray, O God, that you will break the power of the enemy. I pray, Lord, that you will loose chains. Even now, we may not hear literal chains collapsing, but I pray in the name of Jesus that you will break the chains of bondage and addiction and slavery and, Lord, the fears and aches and pains and suffering that go with it all, Lord, and those wounds that never seem to heal.

Father, in the name of Jesus, bring healing, bring release. Make these precious men and women new creatures in the truest and most full sense that you're able to do it while we yet live in this world, Lord, I pray in Jesus' name. Quicken faith by your Holy Spirit and by your word, Lord, and bring faith that believes, that grabs hold, Lord, and put the shout of victory into hearts and even into mouths on this day, on this occasion, Lord, and have glory brought to your name and have a people in the earth, Lord, who are reaching into your heart for the full enjoyment of salvation, of deliverance from everything that once held us captive and hindered us from ever becoming whom you desire to make us to be.

Lord, we want to be like Jesus. We want to be like Jesus, Lord, by your Holy Spirit, working and living in our hearts and through our lives without hindrance. And so, Lord, answer our prayer and bring your people through, Lord, to full freedom in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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