

A Spiritual Call

by Jim Binney

Jim Binney's sermon emphasizes the importance of having a spiritual cause and the need for dedicated ministry to support pastors and spread God's Word.

Duration: 1:00:35

Scripture: Proverbs 29:18, Matthew 6:33, Luke 5:1, Luke 5:4, Acts 9:15, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Ephesians 2:10

Topics: "Calling Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a spiritual cause in life. He starts by sharing a story about a fireman who risked his life to save a baby, only to discover it was just a doll. The preacher warns that sincerity alone is not enough, and that we will be held accountable by God for what we have committed our lives to. He urges the audience not to waste their lives and to seek a spiritual cause. The sermon also references a survey where many Americans expressed a desire to know their purpose in life, and highlights the need for young people to devote themselves to a spiritual cause rather than worldly pursuits. The preacher then shares a story about a young boy who questioned why the army was afraid of Goliath, emphasizing the need for young men to dedicate their strength and youth to a spiritual cause. The sermon concludes with a passage from Luke 5, where Peter is transformed from a businessman to a minister of the gospel after a direct encounter with Jesus.

Transcript

God raised our ministry up some years ago, and I'll tell you how it happened. I was a pastor, I had pastored for 16 years. For eight of those years, I was the president of a statewide pastor's fellowship in Michigan.

We had about 60 pastors in that fellowship, and it was my job to kind of mentor them and disciple them and help them in any way I could, as well as run the organization. But what happened out of that is that I began to see that these pastors had nobody to pastor them. And it doesn't occur to a lot of people that there hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to pastors.

And a lot of people are not aware that pastors have struggles and they don't have a pastor. And the thing that brought this to a head after several years of God burdening me and burdening me and burdening me was that a friend of mine, a pastor in Michigan, had an incident that hospitalized him in a psychiatric ward. A bus that he had for his Sunday school had a weak place in the floor.

He had put a piece of linoleum over it and taped the chair around it, put a sign on there to not use that. But a little eight-year-old boy wanted to push the envelope, jumped over the seat onto that linoleum. His foot went through the floor, wedged between the dual tires as the bus was rolling, sucked him under and crushed him instantly.

This pastor came on the scene and he saw that crushed little body and he just absolutely broke down. And for two weeks he was in a Christian psychiatric hospital, given medications and psychotherapy. He never recovered from that.

He left the ministry. He was an absolute nervous wreck until the day he died. And when I saw that and I saw that that man needed a biblical intervention, a Christ-like ministry to him that he did not receive, I determined that we were going to establish that.

And that's what we've been doing on the estate of the late Agnes Moorhead. She willed her estate to Bob Jones University to be used for spiritual purposes. And so for 15 years we rented it from Bob Jones and we did the work of the Lord in the house of a witch.

Figure that out if you can. But God in his providence has relocated us now and through a series of circumstances to Greenville, South Carolina. But we do not at this point have a facility.

We were using a bed and breakfast to bring the pastors in and counsel them for a week. But that's been sold. And so we I just want to ask you if you would to pray with us that God would raise up the means and show us the exact place and give us a facility where we can bring them together and very comfortably for a week, feed them, counsel them, exhort them and encourage them.

Over a thousand have gone through this one week ministry so far. And hundreds of others have been encouraged by phone or on the road as we are here. But our ministry is dedicated to that and we would appreciate your prayers.

And also we're looking for churches who are who are willing to support a ministry like ours. We're a faith ministry. So keep us in your prayers if you would.

All right. Let's turn in our Bibles to Luke chapter five. Luke chapter five.

I want to challenge your hearts this morning. And I pray God will through me to have a cause. And when I say a cause, I mean to have a spiritual cause.

And I would ask you before we even begin this message, what is your cause? What is the purpose that drives you? What is your mission in life? What do you see as God's purpose in creating you? What are you working toward and praying for that will last for eternity? Do you have a spiritual cause? In this passage of Scripture, we see a man named Peter who is given a spiritual cause and he is transformed from a profiteering businessman to a sacrificial minister of the gospel. And it all comes about by a direct confrontation with Jesus Christ Himself. In Luke chapter five and verse one, and it came to pass that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret and saw two ships standing by the lake.

But the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships which was Simon's and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.

And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes and their net break. And they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Isn't it interesting? Every time in the Bible a person came in the presence of God, he was convicted of his sinfulness. Isaiah said, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and I said, Woe is me.

Job said, I have heard of thee with mine ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, and therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes. You come into the presence of God, dear friend. You enter into the light of His glory and majesty.

Every wart on your spiritual face will stand out in bold relief. You won't be saying, I just love myself. You will despise yourself.

He said, Depart from me, I am a sinful man. He knew he was in the presence of deity. For he was astonished in all that were with him at the draft of the fishes that they had taken.

And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.

Our Father in heaven, as we come before thee today, we ask once again for a fresh anointing, fresh oil, fresh bread for a new hour. I pray God, as we have gathered here today, that each of these men will have a heart and a mind and a will and a conscience that is stirred by the Spirit of God. May we go from this place having been refreshed, having been challenged, having been convicted, but above all, having been changed.

And I pray you would use me as your servant, Lord. Speak through me. Take this tongue of wood and these lips of clay and somehow use me as an earthen vessel to convey the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May Christ be magnified. May the Word of God be preeminent in our thinking. And may we go from this place knowing we have been in the presence of God.

We ask in Jesus' name, amen. As we read this passage, I'm reminded that there is a great need in our circles to have a spiritual cause. There was a survey done of people and they were asked what was important to them.

And here's a question that 34 percent of them asked. Thirty-four percent of Americans surveyed said they wanted an answer to this question if they were able to talk to God, what is my purpose here? The need of young people today is to have a cause. A teenage boy was sent by his father as an emissary to his brothers in the midst of a battle and when he came on the scene, he saw that the army was quaking in fear because of one man, Goliath.

And he looked at his brothers and he looked at the men of the army of Israel and he says, why is this? What's going on? Is there not a cause? And if there's a need of young people today, it is for young men to devote the strength of their lives and the health of their youth to a spiritual cause instead of a carnal cause. I am tired and weary of seeing young men with strong, healthy bodies, which God has given them for a purpose of serving Him, who devote themselves unashamedly and unreservedly to chasing a leather sphere around a wooden floor or a cow hide around a cow pasture. Instead of giving the strength of their youth and remembering God, their Creator, in the days of their youth, when the days come not, nor the evil days draw nigh, they give all of their strength to getting a trophy, to getting a ribbon, to getting applause because they scored more points than anybody else.

I'm sick and tired of seeing lovely young ladies who God has given a beautiful voice to glorify Him with, who instead of glorifying God with their voice, want to be a rock star, want to take their clothes off in public, and they want to encourage the lust of the flesh. What a waste of God's creation. I want to challenge every young man in this room.

You better determine why God made you, why He put you here, and what your cause is. Because when you get to the end of your life, you're going to want to look back on your life and not on your deathbed, not in a rocker chair in a nursing home, when you're toothless and friendless and familyless and valueless and you look at your life and you say, what is my life? It was a vapor that appeared for a little time and vanished away, and what do I have to show for it? There are men by the score, grown men, who have actually prostituted every God-given gift that you ever had in order to make money, in order to be a businessman, in order to be wealthy and have lands and houses and cars, and you've never given a thought that maybe God created you and your gift for raising money and your gift of organization and administration to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Men today don't have a cause.

We're drifting, we're purposeless, we're no different than many in the world who are driven by their own carnal desires and their selfish lusts. God help us. We need a generation of men who will have a cause.

Somebody asked Helen Keller one day, they said to her, can you think of anything worse than being blind? She said, yes, having sight but no vision. A lot of people have sight, they don't have a cause. They don't have a vision.

In this passage of Scripture, what we see is the Lord Jesus Christ moving into a man's life. And when the Lord Jesus Christ has contact with Peter, his life is radically changed because now he has a cause bigger than himself and longer than his lifetime. How do you know if there is a call or a cause on your life? How do you identify a spiritual cause? Look at here if you would at verse 1. In verse 1 of Luke chapter 5, it came to pass that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret and saw two ships standing by the lake.

But the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. Let me explain to you something before we get into the heart of the message. There is a cause in this world.

The identification of the cause or the need of the world is clear here. They did not press upon him to be fed. They did not press upon him to see miracles.

They did not press upon him to be healed. They pressed upon him to hear the word of God. There is a need in this world, men, and that need is to hear the word of God.

They don't need to hear the philosophies of men. They don't need to hear the music of the world. They don't need to hear what others think.

They need to know what God said. And there is a dearth and there is a paucity in this land of ours of the word of God being preached in spirit and in truth. And whether it's preached one-on-one in a soul-winning encounter, whether it's preached man-to-family in family devotions, whether it's preached teacher-to-students in a Sunday school class setting, whether it's preached behind a pulpit, makes no difference.

We need a generation of men who are committed to and devoted to the cause of the word of God. These people wanted to hear the word of God. They needed to hear the word of God.

But there was a second need they had, not just to hear the word of God but to see the son of God. The crowd pressed down on him and the people couldn't see. He wanted to position himself in a way that everyone could see and everyone could hear.

They needed to see the son of God. You know, I love, I think as what Philip said, sirs, we would see Jesus. They sought to see him, the Bible says.

Zacchaeus sought to see him, went up in a tree just so he could see Jesus. I read a story about a family out on the West Coast, a wife who was cooking tortillas. And she, when she turned a tortilla over, she noticed that the fire had burned into the other side of that tortilla the actual face of Christ.

Well, she got all excited about that. She emptied her fish tank and lined it with cotton and put that tortilla in that fish tank, put a little spotlight on it, opened her doors. And 10,000 people lined up to see the holy tortilla.

And you know why? Because there's a hunger in the heart of man to see God. And the way they're going to see the son of God and the way they're going to hear the word of God is when the child of God enters into partnership with the son of God for the propagation of the word of God. Isn't it interesting that Jesus comes to Peter, an illiterate fisherman, and asked for his help? And why? He needed a platform for preaching.

He needed a place to do his ministry. And so he said, Peter, would you help me? Would you come out and roll out here a little bit and help me? Now, think about this. Jesus didn't need Peter's boat.

He could have walked on the water. That sure would have got everybody's attention. He could have ascended halfway into heaven, just, you know, a few feet above the earth, just ascended there in suspension and preached.

That would have got their attention. He did those things in his lifetime. He could have done any number of things.

But why did he choose to enter into partnership with Peter? There is a partnership we have with Christ. I want to tell you this. Christ is with you all the time.

But when you see the word, lo, in the New Testament, there is a special emphasis. It's like saying, listen up, hear this, this is important. And Jesus said, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

And lo, I am with you. He will be with you at work. He will be with you as you sleep.

He will be with you at your dinner table. But he will be especially with you when you enter into partnership with him, when you give him the boat of your life and you say, you can have everything I have. I'm afraid a lot of men are like that farmer that went to the airport, Christian man, fearful man.

And he asked the person behind the desk, he said, how high does this plane fly? She said, well, I think it's going to be at 20,000 feet. And he says, don't you have any that fly any lower than that? Well, I think, yeah, we can probably find one at 15,000 feet, any lower than that. She noticed he was carrying a Bible.

She said, doesn't the Bible say, lo, I'm with you always? He said, no, it says, lo, I am with you always. Now, that's the faith of a lot of Christian men. They don't want to know how high can I go for God.

They want to know how little do I have to do to get into heaven. And I want to tell you something, men, God, the eyes of the Lord are running to and fro throughout the whole world to find the man whose heart is perfect toward him. God is hungry for a man who will enter into partnership with him.

There is a cause here, bigger than you, bigger than me, and we need to have that cause. Now, how do you identify a spiritual cause? Well, first thing I want you to see in this passage is that it was God energized. That is, it originates with God.

The burden of these circumstances originated with God. This situation, the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, but the prompting of Peter came from God. The Scripture records that he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's.

Now, I don't understand that. I don't understand how God does this. I don't understand how the Spirit of God can go up and down the rows of churches all over America, and he will bypass some but put his hand on the shoulder of one.

He bypassed Peter's partners. He didn't ask Peter's partners for their boat. He went to Peter.

You see, God has a plan, and when God puts his hand on the shoulder of a man and he says, look, I need you to work in partnership with me. I have a cause for you. A true spiritual cause always comes from God.

It doesn't come from mama. It doesn't come from papa. It doesn't come from the preacher.

It comes from God. Now, it can come through human agency, but it's got to originate with God. And when we have that sense, as Peter did, you know, God is behind this.

God is doing this. There is something special and unique about that call and that cause. And what the Scripture is saying here is that Peter had that cause upon his life.

It originated with God. Now, somehow, God selects us. He goes through a process.

He chooses us, and then he checks us out. He said to Peter, I want you to thrust out a little from the land. Now, he said that before he said, launch out into the deep.

You know, he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. There are a lot of men say, oh, yeah, I want to preach to hundreds, and I want to be a missionary to thousands, and I want to build a big church and have a great movement.

Well, that's well and good. But have you witnessed to the neighbor next door? Have you been faithful as a father and a husband? Are you devoted to his word and prayer? You see, before God says, launch out into the deep, he's going to check you out. He's going to check your references.

And he wants to know, how faithful are you to the little things, the basic things? How committed are you to the disciplines of the Christian life, of a Christian man? Before I give you a big responsibility, I want to see how you respond to a little challenge. So he says, Peter, thrust out just a little bit from the land. Now, I got to tell you something.

Peter was tired. Peter was exhausted. Peter didn't feel like doing this, but he did it anyway because God wanted him to.

Now, God did not say, Peter, I want you to heal the sick. He said, thrust out a little from the land. He didn't say, Peter, I want you to preach to thousands.

He said, I want you to thrust out a little from the land. He didn't say, Peter, I want you to raise the dead and write a couple of books of the New Testament. And to be an apostle, he said, I just want you to thrust out a little from the land.

And that's what God's saying to you today. Will you thrust out a little from the land? Will you be faithful in that which is simple and that which is basic and that which is right? Will you get your eyes off the glory land of success and applause and accolades of men? And will you commit yourself to the basics, down to earth, where the rubber meets the road, discipline of the Christian life? That's what God is looking for, first and foremost. He investigates us.

He wants us to push out a little bit from the land. We want to see the big picture. We want to know what God's plan is down the road.

God didn't work like that. You know, the Bible says, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Now, what does that mean? Now, if you can imagine that that door, yonder, is the ultimate will of God for my life.

And I am here. And I want to know how can I get from here to there? I want to know, God, what do you have for me over yonder? Well, you know what? Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. And when that was written, dear friend, there were no flashlights.

There were no spotlights. There was no means of throwing a beam for a great distance. There was only the means of holding up a candle or a lamp or a lantern and it would make a circle of light in the darkness big enough for you to see to take a step.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. And so today, what God shows me to do today, I will do today. Now, I've taken that step.

Well, now I can take another step. And then you get down here to the ultimate will of God and you look back and you say, Shazam, it was a light unto my whole path. But not in advance.

God doesn't always show you today what you're going to be doing 20 years from today. But God will show you today what you need to do today. And if you're faithful to do what He told you to do today, He'll show you then when you get to it what you do tomorrow.

And that's what He's doing with Peter. He's kind of investigating it. He's checking out.

He's investigating. But He's also giving him clear direction. He's saying, Peter, I want you to move out into the water.

And ultimately, He's going to say, I want you to launch out into the deep. Now what He's doing is, and I believe this, I believe too many men are content with the shallows, the shallows of thinking, the shallows of living, the shallows of spirituality. We won't go out into the deep.

We want to stay close to the shore. And we argue with God and we say, but God, the shore is where the rest is. I'm tired.

But God, the shore is where the crowd is. The shore is where security is. The shore is where safety is.

But I got news for you men, the shore ain't where the fish is. If you want to do something for God, at some point, you're going to have to launch out into the deep. At some point, you're going to have to push off from the shore.

At some point, you're going to have to take a step of faith. Now, there's a very thin line between faith and stupidity. And I've walked that line many times in my life.

I think I've crossed it a few times. And God, in His mercy, has overlooked it and pardoned me for it. But the fact is that I would rather, as one of my football coaches used to say in high school, if you got to fall, fall forward and get an extra yard.

If you got to make a mistake, make the mistake on doing too much, loving too much, attempting too much, believing too much. If you got to make a mistake, make it on the side of faith and not doubt. Don't hang back because of your fear of leaving the shoreline and say, I got to stay here.

This is where the money is. This is where my job is. This is where security is.

This is where my family wants me to be. Maybe God has a different plan. But it's going to take a cause that beats in your heart that will drive you to such extremes.

God forbid that any man in this room, as a Christian man, would not have a spiritual cause bigger than himself. Any cause of God is energized by God. And God wants to know.

God checked Peter out. Are you willing to do what I tell you to do? God's checking you out, dear friend. And God will leave you incrementally, but God will lead you if you'll let Him lead you.

The second thing about a spiritual cause is it stretches your faith. Launch out into the deep. God's saying, look, I want you to do what I'm telling you to do.

You cannot see the fish, but I know where they are. You don't need that fish sonar. I'm going to tell you exactly where they are.

But you've got to trust me and you've got to trust me to take this step. What step is God telling you to take that you haven't taken? What direction is He giving you? What part of your faith is God wanting to stretch? Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. I remember as a young man at Bob Jones Academy, I'd just become a Christian at 17.

And I remember they just came out with a policy that if I was on my own, I paid my own way through school. I had to work to do that. But they came out with a policy.

If your bill is not paid, excuse me, at the beginning of the semester, you cannot continue school for that semester. And that's a good policy. So but I was coming up to that policy and I was I was short.

I think I was short like \$218. I had a friend of mine and we prayed together and I said, God, please provide this money for me. Well, my friend got another friend and then a girlfriend gave them coffee, empty coffee cans, sent them to every room in the men and women's dorms and they told everybody, if Jim Benny doesn't have \$218, he's going to be kicked out of school.

And they came to me very proudly with all these coffee cans stuffed with bills. And I counted it and I was mad. You know why? God didn't answer my prayer, man did.

I have I've gotten over that. I have learned that that if you will give unto the Lord, he will give back to you. That man shall give unto your bosom.

And they gave to me and I was angry. And so the next time I had a need, I said, I'm going to tell anybody. I want God to answer my prayer.

And I had two pairs of shoes. I had a dress pair of shoes and I had a pair of of torn, stinking, stained tennis shoes. When I wore those tennis shoes, I had to tuck them under the chair, hoping the green gas wouldn't escape from under the chair, you know.

But my dress shoes had a hole in them and I had to send them to the shoe shop and it was going to cost \$4.50. And I remember I was on my knees in prayer. I was reading and I read in Philippians 4 where it says, My God shall supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory. Philippians 4, 19.

I believe it's 19. Is that correct? And so I made a note of that. I said, Now, God, here's what I need.

I need \$4.50 to get my shoes out of hock. And I ain't telling nobody. And I got off my knees and I walked to the post office and in my little post office box, it was one letter, no return address, postmarked three days earlier.

I opened the letter and it was simply a clear white page and in the middle it said, Philippians 4, 19. And there was a \$5 bill attached. Man, I went out post office waving that thing like a battle flag.

And I was telling everybody, Look what God done. I went and got my shoes and got an ice cream cone to boot. Now from that day to this day, God has stretched my faith.

And I have seen over and over and over, there is a faithful God. But He is waiting for somebody to go to their knees and trust Him to do the impossible. He is a God who is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask, above all that we think.

Just ask it, man. Think it in your mind. Think right now.

What would you really like God to do in your life? Think big. I mean, say to yourself, If I could do anything with my life for the glory of God, what would I do if money was no issue? If gifts didn't matter? If God could use me to do anything, what would it be? Think it. And then ask it.

And then get out of the way. Because God is able to do exceeding abundantly, not just above it, not just abundantly above what you ask or think, exceedingly abundantly, above all that you ask or think. And God is looking for men of faith, men who will believe Him to do the impossible, men who will connect heart to heart with a God, a sovereign God, an omnipotent God, who desires to do these things on your behalf.

A spiritual cause is God-energized. A spiritual cause stretches your faith. Thirdly, a spiritual cause confronts your fears.

And let me tell you something about Peter. He was scared about launching out into the deep. He didn't want to do that.

He argued with God. He said, Master, we've toiled all the night and taken nothing. You know what he's saying? Been there, done that, bought the T-shirt, and it didn't fit.

And I am not, I am very nervous about going out there again and making a fool out of myself. You know, there's nothing like the fear of failure. And there's one guarantee that you will never fail, and that's to never try.

And there are a lot of men sitting back on the tailbones with arms folded and brows furrowed and chins buried in their breastbone, defying God to move me. Because I'm not going to stick my neck out. I'm not going to make a fool of myself.

You see, in order to be really used of God, well, you've got to be somebody. You know, the Bible says we have this treasure in earthen vessels. You know what that means about you? You're a dirt pot.

You know what that means about me? I'm a dirt pot. Now, what God wants us to do is to use that dirt pot for His glory. And I contend that sometimes the baser the vessel, the greater the glory within.

Don't distract from the glory of God within you by gold plating, silver coating, a jewel encrusting your dirt pot. Don't drape it in purple and try to give it fancy titles. Just realize you're nothing but a dirt pot.

You preach to a whole church of dirt pots, Pastor. They get up in the morning, shave the face on their dirt pot, comb the hair on their dirt pot, put clothes over their dirt pot. They get in their dirt pot mobile, drive to their dirt pot church.

They sit in their dirt pot pews along with a bunch of other dirt pots. And then they look down the row and they say, my dirt pot's better than his dirt pot. Or they say, now listen, or they say, I have the worst dirt pot here.

And God could never use me. You don't understand, Brother Benny, never been to Bible college. Didn't even graduate in high school.

Don't have much education. Don't have many people skills. You see, I'm really not qualified to serve God.

The pastor now, he went to college and seminary. He's got a lot of gifts. Now pastors, they're different.

They can be used of God. But I can't be used of God. I'm just old dirt pot.

Well, let me tell you something. God specializes in using dirt pots. And God's looking for dirt pots.

And all God wants you to do is give your dirt pot to him and say, here am I, Lord. Fill me, send me, and use me. And he will.

But there has to be a cause. There has to be in your mind. There has to be a reason for your existence.

It has to confront your fears. And there's a reason that we have fear of man. A fear of man's opinion.

By the way, I think the number one problem in fundamentalism today. I shouldn't say the. A major problem is the fear of man.

We're so scared of what the brethren think. There's one term I hate. It's our camp.

He's not in our camp. When people say that, I wonder, what camp is that? Listen, the fact of the matter is, we are afraid of people's opinions of us. And you know why? Because we love the praises of men more than we love the praise of God.

And when the fear of God moves into a man's heart, the fear of man is displaced. Let me tell you something about the fear of God. When you have the fear of God, and that's a Bible term.

It occurs over 150 times in the Bible. When you have the fear of God. It doesn't mean just a awe of God.

That's a big part of it. There is an awe when you think about God. When you see a tsunami, there's an awe about that tsunami.

But when you realize that this is just a little finger of God Himself, His power, there's a reverential awe. But there's not just an awe. There is an awareness.

The fear of God means you're aware all the time that He's right there in you, with you, beside you, in front of you, behind you. You're constantly aware that He's there. That's the fear of God.

But the fear of God is also an association, a sense that I have an intimate relationship with my God. When I was in the Navy, I worked for the chief of neurosurgery. His name was Dr. Oldershaw.

He was a legend. When he walked down the hospital corridors, the corpsman would stop talking, snap to attention. And imagine my surprise one day when they asked me to head up the neurosurgical clinic and work directly with Dr. Oldershaw.

Man, I was flabbergasted. But I went in there, and I'll tell you what. I'll tell you something about the staff in the neurosurgical clinic.

When Dr. Oldershaw came in, everybody stopped talking, sat a little straighter, worked a little harder. We were aware he was there. We were in awe of his professional ability.

Listen, when we were in brain surgery, working on some poor guy from Vietnam, giving him a cranioplasty, and Dr. Oldershaw said to me, I slapped the scalpel in his hand, and I didn't say, Well, you know, Dr. Oldershaw, you might consider something else. And you know why I didn't do that? I was in awe of the man. But then one day he called me into his office, and I'll never forget.

Benny! I ran in there, snapped to attention. I said, Aye, aye, sir. He said, You ever been sailing? He's looking down at his papers.

I said, No, sir. He said, Would you like to go sailing? I said, Yes, sir. He said, Meet me Saturday morning.

We're going sailing together. Dismissed. Aye, aye, sir.

And I walked out of the room, and I got a step out of the room, and it hit me. The legend, Dr. Oldershaw, just asked me to have fellowship with him. That's an association.

Now, let me tell you something. The fear of God means I have a reverential awe of his might and his power. And there is a fright there of his justice.

But the fear of God extends to an awareness that I am his, and he is mine, and he is in control of me. And the fear of God says I have an association with him. He's my friend.

I can speak to him face to face as a man speaks to his friend. Now, when you fear God more than you fear man, you're going to do what God says instead of what man says. But this cause that God wants to give you will confront your fears.

What fears are keeping you from serving God? What's holding you? What are you afraid of? I love that story in Joshua Chapter 3 where the priest carrying the Ark of the Covenant came up to the Jordan River, and they got 3 million Jews behind them, a swollen river in front of them from the flood season. And God says to them as they were carrying that, they walked up to the edge, and God says, now look down at that water. He says, when the sole of your feet touches the water, I'll part it.

Now, if you were in their shoes, what would you have done? I mean, think about it. Now, God, let's be reasonable here. You part the water, and then I'll put my foot out.

No, God says pick your foot up, hold it suspended over that water. Now, move forward, man, and as you shift your weight with the blessed Ark of the Covenant on your shoulders, all the responsibility of 3 million Jews behind you, when I see the soles of your foot touch the water, then I'll part it. That's walking by faith, not by sight.

And that's overcoming fear in the name of God. That's not holding back and say, well, if you'll provide the money, and you'll provide the facilities, and you'll provide the support, and you'll provide popularity, I'll do it. No, God doesn't deal that way.

God says, you've got to face your fears. You've got to have a reason. You've got to be sure that God is behind this.

But if God is behind it, don't you be far behind it. I think Peter was discouraged, quite frankly. I think Peter was in a stage of abject discouragement, and there's reasons for that.

Pastor, some of you may be discouraged. You may have beached your boat, and you've washed your nets in your mind. When you started out as a young preacher, you had great visions.

You had dreams. You had lofty aspirations. Your faith was unlimited.

But then the reality of the routine of the pastorate hits you full in the face. The honeymoon period is over, and now you're dealing with people. And as one pastor said to me, the ministry would be a wonderful thing if it wasn't for people.

But you're dealing with people, and they're problem people. You get discouraged. Why was Peter discouraged? He was discouraged because he was problem conscious more than he was power conscious.

He got his focus on the problems. Jesus said, you know, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Now I'm telling you, launch out in the deep.

And Peter says, wait, there's a problem here. I had a staff member one time, bless his heart. By the way, in the south, that can mean anything.

When you say, well, bless his heart, that could be that is the ugliest baby I ever saw in my life. Bless his heart. Well, this staff member came to me one day, and I was a visionary.

I had big dreams and big plans, and he said, Pastor, I want you to know, I see my purpose as your staff member to restrain your idealism. I said, thank you very much. I don't need anybody to restrain my idealism.

I need somebody to implement it. The fact of the matter is that Peter was discouraged because he was problem conscious more than he was power conscious. He could only see a glass half full or half empty instead of half full.

He could only see the thorns instead of the rose. He could only see the worst instead of the best. What do you see? Are you a man of faith or a man of pessimism? Peter was discouraged because he was focused on human ability instead of divine power.

He was looking to what he could do instead of what Christ could do. And any time you start looking at what you can do and your puny little resources, you'll get discouraged too. Peter was discouraged because he was fixated on natural laws instead of supernatural miracles.

There's only one way to get those fish, Lord, and we have tried it. We have been all night and we have caught nothing. And we know because of natural laws that you're not going to catch any fish out there.

Peter's faith was limited. In this passage, Jesus says, Now Peter, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft. Peter said, Now we've toiled all the night and caught nothing, but nevertheless at thy word I will let down thy net.

Look at it. One's plural, one's singular. Jesus said, Get every net you got, Peter, and stretch them coast to coast because I've got a miracle coming your way.

Peter says, Yeah, right. I've got a humor, this guy. So I'll let out one net just to say I've followed his direction.

He was fixated on natural laws. Peter was blinded to the future because he was bound to the past. I can't tell you how many men I have met over the years who cannot see with vision and faith because of their past.

There might be a sin in their past. There might be an attempt at ministry and a failure in their past. There might be a person in their past who hurt them, wounded them, offended them.

And they said, I will never let that happen again. I think it was Brother Ricky, weren't you? That was at pastor school we were talking about this. A few years ago, Dr. Jack Hiles invited me when I first started this ministry to come to First Baptist in Hammond and to present our ministry.

And God led me to go on the platform and just ask a simple question. About 6,000 delegates there that day, maybe 7, I'm not sure, but the place was absolutely packed. I said, How many of you men in this room today know personally a preacher of the gospel, a Bible preacher who was once in the ministry and is no longer? Curtis Hudson was sitting over here.

Jack Hiles was sitting behind me over here. And when I asked that question in that great auditorium, every single hand went up. I think it might have been Curtis Hudson who audibly groaned and moaned when he saw that.

And so I said, How many of you know two? And every hand went up. I said, How many of you know three? And 90% of the hands went up. In that one meeting of fundamental preachers, there were, conservatively speaking, at least 10,000 preachers who had been in the ministry and had gotten out because they had been disappointed for one reason or another.

And they were blinded to the future because they were bound to their past. And I want to tell you something, men. If you're ever going to have a spiritual cause, you're going to have to forget those things that are behind.

And you're going to have to reach unto those things which are before. And you're going to have to answer the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But no man will ever move forward who's looking backwards.

So a spiritual cause confronts your fears. But this is an important thing, too. It exposes your sinfulness.

Depart from me, I'm a sinful man, O Lord. You want to find out how really wicked you are, you surrender to the call of God on your life. Because before God uses you, He will expose that sin to you.

And He'll show you. God used Isaiah. Isaiah said, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

And what was the first thought that came to his mind? Woe is me, for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up in all of his beauty, he saw himself in all of his ugliness. Now the next step is that he was cleansed because the angel came with a coal and a tong from off the altars and touched it to my lips and said, Lo, this hath cleansed thy lips. And then the next step was, Who shall I send? And who will go for me? And then Isaiah said, Then, and only then, here am I, Lord, send me.

But when did Isaiah say that? After God showed him what a wicked, vile sinner he was. You want a call of God on your life? You want a cause to serve God for? I want to tell you something. Before God puts His imprimatur on your walking orders, before He signs the signature of your ordination papers, before He gives you a royal commission from heaven to serve Him, He will check you out.

He will slice you and dice you and examine you. And if you've got any hidden sin in your life, if you've got any corruption that's never been brought to the light of day, if you have got anything you're hiding from the eyes of God, He will expose it. And that in itself is a reason a lot of men don't want to take the step.

Got sin in your life holding you back. You don't want to let your sin go. Apart from me, Peter said, I'm a sinful man.

He realized it because that was Jesus in the boat. That was God there. But it always exposes our sinfulness, but gratefully, a spiritual cause brings glory to God.

They were astonished. And all that were with them at the draft of fishes which they had taken. And can I say quickly that a spiritual cause is very costly.

They forsook all and followed Him. They forsook all. Peter sold his boats.

He left his daddy in partnership in his fishing business. He walked away and he never looked back. He forsook all and followed Him.

Listen, if you do not forsake your mother and your father, you cannot be my disciple. If you don't give up everything and willing to give up everything, you're not ready to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. But let me add lastly, and this is the beauty of it, a spiritual cause is rewarding.

He said, Peter, you shall be fishers of men. Now look, Peter had devoted his life to making money, catching fish. And now Jesus said, I want you to do something that lasts for eternity.

I told you the other day, there's only one thing that lasts for eternity. And it's not your fishing boat, and it's not your catch of fish, and it's not the money you make by selling your fish. There's only one thing that lasts for eternity, and that's a human soul.

And the only effort that you are going to have that will last for eternity is the effort you put into winning a human soul or helping a human soul be edified. The only lasting legacy, dear friend, you're ever going to leave. You can forget leaving a business.

You can forget establishing a school. You can forget building houses and buying lands. The only lasting legacy that you're ever going to leave behind you when you lie cold in death in that casket is the souls you've touched with your life.

My wife got a call one day from a preacher. She was cooking for our guest. And we had, I think, three couples there that week.

And she was cooking the food, and she cradled the phone on her shoulder. And God, fortunately, gave her wisdom as she began to talk to this preacher. A man on the phone was weeping, sobbing uncontrollably.

Just sobbing and asking questions about our ministry. Later, he came for a week of counseling. For the first two days, he could not open his mouth without crying.

This was a broken man. You know, the Bible says that a man's spirit will bear his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear? And what that says to me is that there is a built-in backup system for your body. You ever meet somebody in a wheelchair, but they had the joy of the Lord in their life? You ever talk to somebody in a hospital bed who's dying, but ministered to you more than you ministered to them? And you know why? By the spirit of a man will bear him up in his infirmity.

That's a physical problem. But a wounded spirit, who can bear? What's the backup system for the spirit? And I want to tell you something. It's not within you.

It's not within your flesh. God has two. Bear ye one another's burdens.

And so fulfill the law of Christ. Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. But I want to tell you, there's not a man among us here today that has the wherewithal within your own constitution, when your spirit is wounded, to bear up under that.

God didn't create you for that. God didn't put that in you. But God gave you brothers in Christ, and God gave you a Savior to bear you up.

This man was calling for help. And he's weeping. And he comes for help.

And here's what we found out. That phone call was made under his desk in his office. There was a man in his church that had physically attacked him in his pulpit, and who had led a rebellion against him to get him out of the church.

And he had withstood that man. And he had withstood that opposition. But the church had split.

And he was in distress. He crawled under his desk, and he picked up a gun with a hair trigger, and he put it to his head, and he was going to kill himself. And he looked up, and he looked in a trash can, and he saw a magazine that I had written an article in.

And he remembered about the ministry that we had. And he reached over and grabbed that magazine, got the phone number, and reached up and grabbed the phone. One hand held a gun to his head, the other hand held a phone, and he was weighing every word that my wife said.

Little did she know this. But as she was whipping up the potatoes and cooking the green beans, she was asking God for wisdom. And God gave her the wisdom, and He came.

That church today is no longer in existence. And the man in that church, who was a rebellion against his pastor because, in his words, he didn't like anybody telling him what to do, was sent to prison because he found his wife with another man and killed them both. And this pastor said to me, Would you like to hear the rest of the story, Brother Benny? I said, Yeah.

He said, Well, you know this guy who didn't like to be told what to do, and didn't like to obey spiritual authority, would you like to know what his job is in prison? I said, Tell me. He said, He washes the toilets for the chaplains. Does God have a sense of humor? That man today, he came to the manor for a week.

We cried with him. We prayed with him. We counseled him.

He got hope back in his eyes. He was laughing by the time he left. And today, he's pastoring a church, a little country church in a little tiny town in Ohio.

And that church has doubled and tripled and quadrupled in the few years he's been there. And he's established a lighthouse for Jesus Christ, and he's excited again about the ministry. Now, I want to tell you something.

When I look in that man's eyes, and I realize here's a man who was on his way out, who was about to die, and now he's alive in Jesus Christ. You don't think that's rewarding? Listen, I'll take that any day over a big salary, or perks, or benefits, or a company car. I'll take that any day over anything that human man can give me.

If you ever want a soul to Jesus Christ, and you look in those eyes, and you saw the light of Jesus open up in their eyes, and their life was changed, that's rewarding. If you've never enjoyed that, you missed out on it. My question to you is, what is your cause? This is a definition, I leave you with this, of a spiritual call on a man's life.

It's a chronic conviction, or prompting, given by the Holy Spirit, and confirmed by the Word of God, and the local church. But it's chronic. It won't leave you alone.

You can't get away from it. And especially it's chronic in seasons of prayer and intimacy with God. When you're close to God, and this thought keeps coming back, maybe this is what I ought to do.

Maybe this is where I ought to go. Maybe God is leading me to be in the ministry, a missionary, a pastor, a Christian school teacher, a rescue mission director. Maybe God is leading me into a ministry full time.

Maybe God is leading me to get more involved in my local church. It's a chronic conviction, and prompting, given by the Holy Spirit, and then it's confirmed by the Word of God, and the local church. That's a call of God.

It doesn't have to be full time. It can be any cause. What is your spiritual cause? When you get to the end of your life, and God says, what is your life? What are you going to show Him? A woman in Boston, a mother, a single mother, made a decision that a lot of mothers and a lot of fathers have had to make.

She lived in a high rise apartment. I mean, it was in New York City, I'm sorry. She lived in a high rise apartment.

And she needed to go to the grocery store, but her baby was asleep in the crib. Baby hadn't slept well, needed that nap. And she thought to herself, should I bundle her up and risk waking her, or should I just run down there and get back? I can be back in just a few minutes.

And she made the decision to go. And she went out of the apartment building down the street two blocks to a little deli to get some food that she needed for her baby. She got it all sacked up, and as she was sacking it up, she looked outside the plate glass windows and she saw there was a stirring and a movement in the street.

There was a lot of excitement, cars and people walking by. She walked out on the sidewalk to see what it was with her sack of groceries in her hand. And she looked down the block and she saw great billowing clouds of black smoke going up into the air.

She realized it was her apartment building. She dropped everything on the ground. Ran as fast as she could.

But by the time that she got there, the firemen had cordoned off the place and the whole building was in smoke and flame. And as she was there, she was screaming, But my baby's in there! My baby's in there! One young fireman overheard her cries. He said, I'll go.

I'll try to find the baby. And as he went in, he found his way into that apartment. It was filled with smoke.

He couldn't see. He got on his hands and knees. He crawled into the bedroom where she said it was.

He found the crib, blindly reaching over the crib. He found this little bundle wrapped it in a blanket, crawled back out. And as he was going down the steps, the plaster was falling and the timbers were cracking and the whole building was in flame.

He walked out the front door. The entire front facade of that building crashed in smoke and ashes and dust. But he made it to the applause of the crowd and he walked up to the wife and proudly presented this little bundle to her.

And then she turned the folds back and one by one of the blanket and instead of a look of happiness, it was a look of horror because she found a doll. Now, was that fireman sincere? Oh, yeah. And I'm telling you, man, I don't care how sincere you are, you're going to stand before God someday and God's going to say, turn the fold back on your blanket.

I want to see what you've committed your life to. I want to see what you've risked your life for. What is your life? It's even a vapor that appears for a little time and vanisheth away.

Don't waste your life. Don't go to the end of your life without a spiritual cause. Would you bow your heads, please, and close your eyes.

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