

# Book of Acts Series - Part 47 | Calloused Hearts

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of sharing the good news of Jesus, even in the face of human free will and potential persecution, and highlights the mystery of why some people believe and some don't.*

**Duration:** 38:06

**Scripture:** Acts 2:37-38, Acts 28:23-24

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of reading and understanding the Bible in a deeper way. He encourages the audience to approach the text with a mindset of seeking the lessons and messages that God intended for us to learn. The sermon focuses on the final words of the book of Acts, where Paul witnesses to a group of leaders about the kingdom of God and tries to persuade them about Jesus. Some are convinced by his message, while others choose not to believe. The preacher highlights the power of the gospel of Jesus to transform lives and nations, and emphasizes that the main focus of the church should be evangelism rather than politics.

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## Transcript

We've been studying the book of Acts for months and months now, and now we're at the end. We're at the final chapter, and we're going to read the final words of the book of Acts. And we've learned that this book of history, the early history of the Christian church, was written by the only Gentile writer of a New Testament book, Luke, who was converted, it seems, under Paul's ministry, the Apostle Paul.

And it gives us the beginning of it in Jerusalem, in Acts 1 and 2, and the Spirit coming down, and the first sermon preached by Peter, and then the history of the church, how it expanded. We learned that first everybody thought Christianity was a sect of Judaism, because Jesus was Jewish, all the apostles were Jewish. That's the way the Roman Empire looked at it, like, who are these crazy people? They're Jews with a little bit of a twist in their religion.

But it wasn't that way. In fact, the gospel started to go to the Gentiles in Acts 10, when Cornelius, an Italian soldier, was converted. And then we learned that the persecutor of the Christian church, a religious zealot trained in Phariseism named Saul of Tarsus, he went from persecutor of the church to convert because of a miraculous confrontation he had with the risen Jesus supernatural on the road to Damascus, where

he was going to harass some more Christians.

And then he became a leader and became an apostle, once sent forth on a special mission. And the book of Acts makes a turn, and now we don't follow Peter and James and John in Jerusalem, we follow the church at Antioch, sending out Paul and Barnabas, later Paul and Silas, and they're making trips through Turkey at first, then into Greece. But Paul's desire was always to get to Rome.

God put that in his heart. Rome was the center of the known civilization then, the mightiest empire the world had ever known, the Roman Empire. And he's going to get to Rome, as we found out, but not the way he thought, because he goes as a prisoner.

And he almost dies in a terrible storm on the ship, which we covered in chapter 27. And now in chapter 28, he gets there, and he's not thrown in a dungeon, but he's put in a house, chained, but in a loose kind of way, because he is a Roman citizen, so they have to be careful how they treat him. There's a soldier there, but the soldier gives him freedom, and he's in a house.

And later it seems he goes to another rented house, and he's met by Christians, but he especially wants to talk to the Jewish leaders there in Rome, because there's synagogues in Rome, just like there were every place the Jewish people went, and this was their meeting place, and it continues to this day. The Bible tells us that he ends up calling for the leaders of the Jewish religion there in Rome, the leaders of the synagogue, and he wants to talk to them, because remember, he's steeped in Judaism. He's a Jew of the Jews.

He's a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and he wants to tell them that this Jesus is the Messiah, while rejected when he came to earth, he wants to show them that by his own life and by scripture, no, Jesus is the one. He is the Messiah. So now we read the final words.

Now once again, before we look at this, let's think about this. Usually if Pastor O.S. Hawkins or myself or anybody else were preaching a sermon, you're going through the Bible, God makes something real to you, and you pick your verses, and you go where you want, and that's your sermon. But we can't do that when you read through a book and preach expository messages.

You have to look at the chapter, look at the paragraphs, and then say, why did God inspire this and put it in the Bible? What's the lesson for us? So remember that when you read, you just don't read like you read Time Magazine or the New York Times. You read it, and then you step back, and you meditate or chew on it and say, let me extrapolate. What are the lessons? What's happening there that I can pull out for 2,000 years later and say, this is why God put it in the Bible.

What am I to learn from it? So now we're at the very end. So let's find out now as these leaders come to where he is. Let's look at this passage, shall we? They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying, and he witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the law of Moses and from the prophets, he tried to persuade them about Jesus.

Some were convinced by what he said, but others, notice, would not, not could not, they would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement. The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet, this is from Isaiah 6, go to this people and say, and this is a very mysterious part of scripture, go to this people and

say, you will be ever hearing but never understanding.

You will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise, they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them. The problem wasn't with God's intention. It was with this calloused heart that couldn't see or feel.

Therefore, I want you to know, and now he's like signing off his original mission to the Jewish people first. I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen. After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.

Last verse, for two whole years, Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. So that's boldness.

The Holy Spirit made him bold to say the truth, and without hindrance, none of the authorities were stopping him from receiving people. By the way, I just thought of this. Isn't that interesting how there are seasons in life for ministry and seasons of life in your own life? He's traveling sometimes.

He's preaching in synagogues sometimes. He's being chased out of town. He stays in Ephesus for three years, Corinth for 18 months.

He's locked up in Caesarea in a prison for two years. That's a different season. Now, for years, a couple of years, he's in this rented house, free as it were, but with a long chain connected to a soldier who's guarding him.

And now he doesn't preach publicly, but people come to him, and he talks. Look at all the different ways God can use you. Some people only use it.

God only uses you if you stand up in front of a group of people and you preach like a pastor. That's not true. God uses us in different ways at different times.

Amen? God can use you in a luncheonette. God can use you walking down the street, talking to someone. We have to be open to the Spirit's help and guidance so that we can be a blessing wherever we go.

Now, let's just go a little bit further. While he's in this place for two years, he wrote Colossians, and he wrote Philippians, and he wrote Ephesians, and he also wrote the little short letter Philemon. Those are called the prison epistles.

Most of the commentators agree now that after this, he was released again, and he went preaching, and then he was arrested again, probably after two years of ministry, which we're not sure of. He was arrested again, and that was into a dungeon-like prison. And that's when he wrote 2 Timothy, the last letter that he wrote, and he already knows that his time is coming to die and to be offered up as a sacrifice to God.

So what do we learn from this? It's written for a reason. What can we learn? What can we extrapolate since we're studying this paragraph by paragraph, kind of through the book of Acts? The first thing we learn is that he spoke both at the beginning of the passage and at the end of the passage. He spoke about two things, the kingdom of God, and he tried to prove who Jesus was.

And those messages should never change. He spoke about the kingdom of God and about who Jesus was, that he was the Christ, from scripture and from his own testimony. So what we learn is that he had to clear up the confusion about the kingdom of God.

What he told them about the kingdom of God, as it's not like a physical king and like an empire or a country, a nation like Israel. That's not the kingdom of God is about. It's not about a physical leader anymore and a senate and an army and you have a land and you try to conquer more land.

That is not the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has nothing to do with that. And this was the coming of the new covenant, which was not understood by most people.

Because if they were Jewish, they were thinking of Israel. And if they were Romans, they were thinking of the Roman empire. And now he tried to bring out to them that the kingdom of God is invisible, that the king is Jesus, but his kingdom is in the hearts of men and women.

This is where God rules or doesn't rule. This is where he's accepted or rejected, not in voting, not in democracy, but in the heart. The heart receives him and is transformed.

And now you're part of the kingdom of God. Now King Jesus is the ruler of your life. And those members of that kingdom come from Burma, from Dallas, from France, from Brazil, from Poland, from Africa.

The kingdom of God is not something you could see at any one moment. This was a revelation to them. They had never heard of such a thing, that it's invisible, that it starts and ends with the heart.

You only have as much of God as you have in your heart. That's the only place he can rule and reign, is in my heart. He's not trying to get into the Senate or the House of Representatives.

He's not trying to get in the White House. That painting is wrong where they have him knocking on the UN. He's not trying to get in the UN.

He's knocking on the hearts of men and women. He's knocking on the heart sometime of his own church, which turns away from him and becomes lukewarm. Lo, I stand at the door and I knock.

He's knocking on the door of a church, not the physical door, but the spiritual heart door of a church. Let me come in and fellowship with me so you can be what I plan for you to be. So he told them about the kingdom of God.

He also told them, which we should always be telling people, is who Jesus is. And he tried to prove to them from the Old Testament scriptures, both the law and the prophets, he showed them verses that were written hundreds of years before, which spoke about the Messiah. And then he showed them Jesus fulfilled these things.

You see, Isaiah says he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised. He was beaten.

You could hardly recognize that he was a human being. That happened to Jesus when they crucified him. And Micah says, out of Bethlehem will come a Savior.

And he was born in He's trying to show them from all the passages in the Bible that predicted a Messiah. He's showing them this was fulfilled in Jesus. How would these men know that that would happen? How could Jesus make it so they would pluck out his beard? Exactly prophesied in the Psalms.

He was betrayed by somebody close to him, just like David said in the Psalms. How would David have known that? How could have Jesus arranged that? So guys, it's real. But not only did he show from scripture, but we know everywhere he went.

He told them, yo, look, I was an opponent of Jesus. I was against Christianity. I haven't been conned into anything.

I was trying to kill these people. I hated the name of Jesus, but I was on the road to Damascus and he appeared to me. Do you think I went through all these beatings for nothing? You think I'm in prison and in chains because I like it? No.

It's happened to me because I met him. I know he's alive. He's real.

He changed my life. I was against him and he said, why do you persecute me? Because I was persecuting his church. I said, who are you? He said, I'm Jesus whom you're persecuting.

He said, I had to fall before him and say, what do you want me to do, Lord? And he's been telling me what to do ever since then. So guys, you got to believe both from the word and from testimony. Jesus is the Messiah.

He's the savior of the world. He was born of a virgin. Come on, let's put our hands together and affirm it.

And that's what we should be doing. Not trying to get people to join the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Christianity is not a church movement.

It's a Jesus movement. We try to get people to put their trust in Jesus so they can have new life and have their sins forgiven. And he brings peace and he brings joy.

Then God will work out what church they should go to. But we're not supposed to be building churches. We're supposed to be building the kingdom of God, extending it through the preaching of the good news of Jesus.

And we still have our testimony. It might not be as dramatic. Next Sunday afternoon, you're going to hear four testimonies, the four guys I ate with.

I said, you got five minutes each. Guys, you're going to talk to our church and you'll see them and they'll be looking at you. Oh my goodness.

Because they have a testimony. Who else changed them? Look at Gary. Was Gary talking smack up there or was he talking about Jesus? How did he know? How would he know to say that Jesus never talks to me about the what I used to be? That's not a jailhouse conversion.

That's the real thing. We're to speak about the kingdom and that it's invisible and that it's the places in the heart. That's where God rules in the heart.

When Christ comes back visibly, then things will get more dramatic and more visual. But right now, the kingdom of God, you can't see it anywhere. Has no capital.

You can't go to Jerusalem or Washington DC. There's nothing like that. Has nothing to do with politics.

And you can't change people by changing laws or changing presidents. No one's going to change. Only the gospel of Jesus changes people.

A nation will be exactly what the people are. There's no way to change any nation except by changing the people in the nation. And there's only one power that can change the people in any nation.

And that's the good news. Let's say amen one more time. The good news of Jesus Christ.

That's why the main arena for the church is not politics. The main arena for the church is evangelism. Paul didn't get involved with Roman politics.

He was preaching the good news of Jesus. And from a, even in a, whether he was in a cell or a higher at home, he was extending the kingdom. So what else do we learn from this? We also learned this mystery.

That when he shared all these things, what a mystery this is. Some believed and some would not believe. Same preacher.

Same anointing. Same apostle. Same word of God.

And here's the mystery that's been going on for 2,000 years. When you share the gospel, some believe and some say, get out of my face. I don't want to believe.

Notice they didn't say they couldn't believe. Like I can't believe. No, you choose not to believe.

Paul gave them evidence. He showed his own life. What had happened? He showed them the scriptures.

What is that, a coincidence? That's a coincidence that all those prophecies were fulfilled in one man. That's all just by accident. And then he changed my life and he's changed all these other people's lives.

Like if you're here today and you're not a follower of Jesus, you've never been born again. So what, all these lives here were changed just by accident? They all just, in other words, who changed them? They were far away from God. Some of them were cursing God.

Who changed those guys in Angola? Just tell me who changed them. Psychiatrists, who changed them? Somebody had to change them. So you got people for 2,000 years whose lives have been changed and you're not gonna accept that testimony? That's all a joke? Some believed and some chose not to believe.

I have relatives who were raised just like me and some believed and some didn't believe. My wife's mother was part of a family. Carol's grandmother got saved and I think half the children received Jesus and the other half said, I don't want to know about that.

That's a mystery. Is it not a mystery? Notice also when we testify and witness to people, there's no pressure on us like, oh, everyone has to get saved. No, you be faithful.

You ask God to use you. God does the converting and there's a mystery of human free will in there, free will, where people can choose to believe or choose not to believe. Our job is not to figure all that out.

Our job is just keep on trucking for Jesus. All in favor say aye. That's all our job, whether Dallas or Burma or wherever you're from, is to share the good news of Jesus.

Not your church, not five-point Calvinism, not Pentecostalism, not black is beautiful, white is right, not southern politics, northern politics, liberal, conservative. We're not supposed to be talking about that nonsense. That's not what our message is.

Right-wing republicanism, liberalism, that says nothing to do with Jesus. Please don't bring that up when you talk to people because there's nasty people on both sides of that. It has nothing to do with race or color.

In fact, you'll know where Jesus is. Everybody comes of all races. When you see certain people excluded, either generation-wise by age, and you glorify older people, you glorify young people, you glorify white people, you glorify black people, then Jesus is usually far, far, far away from that because he's the Lord of everyone.

He's the Savior of the whole world. Am I right? He's the Savior of the whole world. Oh, but Pastor Cimbala, you know, those other people, they're so different than me.

You want to talk about different? How about you and Jesus? You have trouble with different? Well, then read about Jesus. I'll show you different. And yet he loves us.

And by this shall all men know you're my disciples because you love one another. Oh, there's another mystery here. Not a mystery, another fact.

The minute the gospel was preached, some believed, some didn't. But then we find out that they began to fight and argue among themselves. And that's what the gospel always brings.

So let's talk straight. Let's do real talk. Where the gospel of Jesus preached, it's a sword that divides people.

Even though he's the prince of peace, it's not peace like we all join hands and sing we shall overcome together. No, the gospel is a sword. It divides families.

Jesus said, I didn't come to bring peace, but I came to bring a sword. I divide family members because some believe, some don't. And then the ones who believe and the ones who don't, the ones who don't go after the ones who do.

That's just the way it is. Isn't that true in your lives? Come on. Is it not true in your life? If you really stand for Jesus, you're going to have everyone applauding you.

So don't think that that's going to happen. And when people are divided against you and criticize you because you believe in Jesus, like who are you better than everyone? Like, yo, what's up with you? You never made mistakes and all that. No, that is absolutely part of the terrain that comes with the turf.

If you believe in Jesus, you're going to be in friction. Those that live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution and will have difficulty. Look, they're killing Christians now.

This group ISIS or ISIL, depending on which name you want to go by, they're moving across Iraq and they're burning churches and killing Christians. Why? Yo, because they're Christians. Don't you get it? It's because they're Christians they're getting killed.

And that happens in Pakistan and that happens in North Korea and that happens in a lot of places where Christians bear the brunt of that. But Jesus talked about that and now we see it happening. When the gospel comes, it brings division.

Right in a family, right in a family, right on the job. I've watched this with amazement over the years I've been pastor, that when people were living like their family but worse. They were the black sheep of the family, drinking, carousing, in and out of jail.

The family loved them. The minute they became a Christian, boom. What do you think you are? What are you going to that Brooklyn Tabernacle for and all that? What is that? Jim Jones? Jim Cimbalò? It's all the same.

It's all a cult. Before when the guy was in and out of jail, yo, he's my man. That's, look, that's the way it works.

So you don't get ruffled and we don't get excited. Paul didn't go, oh what's happening here? He knew this is what the gospel always does. Last word.

And this is the mystery of mysteries. And it's good for us. I said before that the gospel, the place where Jesus reigns as king, is in the heart.

In fact, as Andrew Murray, the great devotional writer, said, your whole world is your heart. That's all you really have. Your body will die.

Your body gets old. But su corazon, that's something else. Your heart.

With the heart man believes unto salvation. Christ lives in our hearts through faith. It's all about the heart.

You repent with your heart. You believe with your heart. You make confession with your mouth.

Old Testament tells us watch over your heart with all diligence for out of it proceeds the issues of life. Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart the man speaks, the woman speaks. If your heart is evil, if it's filled with anger and hate, that's what's going to come out.

You can't be different than your heart. Well, of course. It's going to, you can cover it up for a while, but sooner or later your heart's going to come out.

And now as they hear Paul talking and they begin to fuss and fight, and some believe and some don't, he quotes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He quotes from Isaiah 6 and he says something which is very, very deep. We don't fully understand it, but let me try to handle it the best I can with God's help.

He says to the guys who rejected, this is right before they stormed out. He said, well, did Isaiah speak of you? You see, but you don't understand. You hear, but you don't get it.

Now, of course, he's not talking about these eyes or these ears. No, he doesn't talk about that because some of them had 20, 20 vision. He's talking about spiritually.

You hear things, but you don't get it. You see what God is doing, but you don't comprehend it. Why? Because the hearts of this people have been made calloused.

Some translations, it's been made dull. It's been made fat. It's been made insensitive.

One translation says, you've lost all tenderness. That's why you can't believe. I'm telling you the truth and you can see my changed life, but you don't get it.

I'm showing you from scripture, but you don't see it. God is speaking by his spirit to you, but you don't hear his voice anymore. And the devil's using that to block you.

Otherwise God would heal you. God would change you. Now, there's some mysteries here.

Let me take care of this first one, which is the most difficult one to understand. In the Bible, we learn that there's a blindness and a dullness of hearing that comes on us when we refuse the light that God keeps showing us and a callous forms on our heart. It gets fat.

It gets dull to use the words of scripture as found in the Hebrew in Isaiah 6. So now you can't hear anymore and you can't see like you used to because when you could see it, you didn't yield to it. You didn't say yes to it. And now your heart has been made hard, made dull.

There's another aspect of this that at a certain point, God sends blindness and God sends deafness because after you don't see and you harden yourself, then God says judicially, I'll make you totally blind now. You wouldn't see, you wouldn't respond when I showed you so much, so many times. So now you'll be blind, not with these eyes, with these eyes, you won't see a thing.

All you'll see is the world around you. All you understand is credit cards and filthy money. That's all you'll ever know.

That's all you'll ever think about. That's all. You'll be blind to the invisible world, to eternity, to the heart.

You'll be blind to it. You won't see anything now. Now you won't hear his voice anymore.

It wasn't that he wasn't speaking. You said no so many times to his voice. You said no so many times.

Every time you said no and no and no, and it's in his patience, in his mercy, he kept talking. And now you're getting a bigger callus and a bigger callus. And now when you get a big callus, it becomes insensitive.

You know, your hand where you have calluses and you work as a farmer in Wisconsin, a dairy farmer, you can get calluses and you don't even feel a pin pricking you. But just put that pin up here where there's no callus and you'll react so quickly. You lost your tenderness.

We don't understand all of that, but we know when we preach the gospel to people, oh my goodness, we better do it right and do it well because every time we speak, it's a chance to either believe or get harder. Come on, haven't you seen that in people? They either believe and yield or no, stubborn, stubborn, duro. And there's the one you put on yourself and then there's the one that's somewhere that only God knows where God says, you're going to be that way? Oh, you want to be deaf and not listen? Fine, you're deaf.

You don't want to see even though I've shown you so much? Then you will not see. I don't even want to think about that. That's why tenderness of heart means everything.

Do you get what the difference is? Tenderness of heart means everything. Some of those people in Acts 28 said, no, I don't want that. And he says, you know why? It's because you've hardened your heart.

You've got a callus on your heart. You can't cry anymore. You can't repent.

You can't say you're sorry. You can't say you're wrong. You're too stinking proud to say you're wrong.

Your heart is hard like a callus. And yet we read when the religion began, when Christianity began on the day of Pentecost, the first sermon, when Peter preached the first sermon, when it was over, nobody said, what an orator. Wasn't that funny? Isn't that great the way he used some verses? No, that's not the goal of a preacher.

Listen to what happened the first time he preached in Acts 2. And when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice what happened the first time he preached.

When he preached those people in Jerusalem, they were cut to the heart. They were tender. They said, I'm wrong.

What should I do? And he told them, turn to God, believe in Jesus. He loves you more than you could ever imagine. At the end of the book that we're gone through, the people are hard hearted, a lot of them.

And he says, well, now you won't see, now you won't hear, but I'm going to turn to the Gentiles and some of them are going to believe. Now, how that works out with unbelievers, we'd leave that with God, but you can see some people get hard, can't you? I got relatives now that are harder than this pulpit. They heard about Jesus since they were little.

Now they're like this, look, just like this, like a rock. No, wait, this is plexiglass. That's just wood.

You'd have to get something iron or steel. That's how hard they get. Come on.

Do you ever talk to someone? They're just hard. How many understand what I'm talking about? Just lift your hand. They're just hard, but they weren't always hard.

You see the danger here? You can start tender and get hard. Now, let me close. Notice the people who were hard.

It was religious people who were hard. What he was saying this to were not crack dealers, people selling crystal meth, people prostituting and robbing people blind, extorting money. No, he was saying this to religious people who had memorized the Old Testament law.

He said, your hearts are hard, which gives us a warning that every time we come into church, every time we open the Bible, oh God, have mercy and help us. Every time we come near the things of God, you're either going to become more tender or gradually you're going to get used to it and become hard. So to have a childlike spirit, to be tender to the touch, to hear his voice and respond.

You know, if you're here today and you're not a believer and you feel the love of God talking to you, don't say tomorrow. Today is the day of salvation. You don't know about tomorrow.

Not only do you not know if you're going to be alive, you're not sure you're going to hear it tomorrow because you don't hear it the same every day. You don't hear it the same every day. It can get fainter or fainter, or it can become more real.

But because they were religious people, I want to leave you with this thought. If you're here today and you are a believer, remember, Satan has a plan for your life, just like God has one. Paul says, we're not ignorant of his devices.

And one of his main devices is to get you hard. So the way you sang the song two years ago in the choir, you don't sing it like that anymore. Now you just perform it because you're in the choir.

Now you're down his track. Now you're going down his trail. He just wants you to go through the motions.

And now it doesn't mean anymore. You don't weep anymore. You're not tender anymore.

And now that little callous begins to form, even on a Christian. Well, of course, there's ministers that started on fire for God and ended up as derelict drunks. I've known some, ended up on the ash heap of humanity.

And they started out tender and sensitive, reading their word every day. Don't tell me ministers and Christians can't get hard. Of course we can get hard.

Haven't you ever had periods of hardness in your life? In your walk with the Lord, haven't you ever gotten hard at times? And then thank God by his grace, he breaks through. That's what revival is, when he breaks up the hardness that's starting to form. We still know Jesus.

We still love Jesus. We still believe in Jesus, but you get insensitive. You don't weep over people.

And the littlest things can do it. I'm so sad when I see couples. They have nothing.

They're both involved in the church. They have nothing. They're just dating.

They're working. They're in the prayer meeting. They're in this.

They're in that. Everything is so alive and sensitive. The Bible is well-worn.

And then they get married, and now they have to have their life together. That's good. You get married, have a life together.

But now it's about what's the furniture? And where are we going to go on vacation? And Jesus suddenly, he was everything before. And now what happened to him? Did he change? He's the one who put you two together. No, we're busy living.

We got to save up now. The next thing you know, a little callus has come. Let's close our eyes.

I got to preach it as I find it. Spirit of God, you're here, working in the choir, working among the pastors, the deacons. We want to be tender.

We don't want to become professional Christians. We want to be baby Christians. Baby as in sensitive and tender.

We want to grow up and be mature, but maturity is not getting hard and callous. Maturity is getting more and more sensitive, more and more tender to your probings, your proddings, your leadings. We so thank you that we're in your house today.

I so thank you that you helped me to believe in you. I give you all the praise and honor and glory. Thank you for forgiveness of sin and for pardon.

And thank you for when we've drifted away from you, you didn't throw us away, but you kept, oh, so patiently you kept waiting for us, speaking, keeping us awake at night, probing, reminding, loving. If you're here today and you have had God speak to you about something, either something you should stop doing or something you should be doing, and you haven't acted on it yet, I'm not going to go into any more detail, either something that God said, don't go there, don't do that, don't go with them. Just remember, if you don't say amen, that voice is going to become little dimmer as the weeks and months go by.

I don't know how it works. I don't purport to understand this mystery. I'm just telling you what scripture says.

Or maybe God's called you to do something, go somewhere, give yourself to prayer like you used to do. Give yourself to the word like you used to do. And he's told you.

It's been plain to you. And now he's bringing it back to your mind because I'm speaking to you on the authority of Jesus Christ. And you want God to know that you say yes to him today.

Yes in whatever way, yes means yes to you. I don't want to know the details. I'm not a priest.

You have a high priest. You only talk to Jesus about these things. Pastor, that was for me.

I don't want to drift. I don't want to get hard. I don't want to get callous.

I want to be more tender every day, every week, every month. You can just stand behind me, in front of me, up in the balcony, across the street. Just stand and say pray for me.

I want God to do a new work in my life. I need a fresh work of the Holy Spirit in my life. Just stand wherever you are.

That's right. Thank you. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

We release all bitterness, all hate, all prejudice, all dishonesty, all insincerity. We release it into your hands, Jesus Christ. And we thank you that your love endures forever.

That even when we wander, and who of us has not wandered, you come after us. You tap our shoulders. You whisper in our ears, I love you.

I love you. Don't do that. Or follow me.

Or do what I told you to do. We thank you for that. We pray now that you will grant us tender hearts, and that each of us will grow in grace, but every day we'll be more sensitive to your word, to your spirit, to people's needs, to your love working in our heart through the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for all our visitors and all our guests. Crown this meeting with love and fellowship, we pray in Jesus' name. And everyone said, we shook hands before.

Let's turn around and hug a bunch of people. Everyone hug three or four people. Oh, come on.

Hug somebody. Give them a hug.

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