

A Prophet to the Nations (Jeremiah 1)

by John Dees

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a deep relationship with God and being faithful in serving Him, regardless of age, education, or background.

Duration: 1:09:46

Scripture: Isaiah 55:10-11, Jeremiah 1:5, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 28:19-20, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, 1 Corinthians 3:11, 2 Corinthians 5:20, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God, starting with acknowledging our sinfulness and need for a Savior. It highlights the process of breaking down false foundations, confronting sin, and pointing people to Jesus Christ as the only solution. The message encourages believers to be bold in sharing the Gospel, to not be afraid of opposition, and to focus on building up and planting seeds of faith in others, guiding them to maturity in Christ.

Transcript

Alright, well let's go ahead and pray before we begin. Father in heaven, we come before you Lord to commit this time to you. We come to you in Jesus' name.

We look away from ourselves now. You said, commit your ways to the Lord and if they'll succeed, trust in Him also and He will do it. Father, I pray for those souls that are hungry tonight.

You would encourage them, give them spiritual food to strengthen their souls. Father, we pray for those that have come that don't have a hunger for God, that have merely come. You might help them to wake up, Lord, from the spiritual slumber that lies over the whole world.

We believe, Lord, that you are the one that assembles your people together, that you're able to speak with a word, you're able to impart life and say, let there be light. We pray to you, Father, that tonight you would give light. Grace is found with you, Lord.

You oppose the proud and give grace to the humble. We humble ourselves before you, Lord. We need you.

Even as your people, it's too easy to listen to preaching and miss the Word and miss what you would say to us. Would you give us ears to hear? Would you not let our hearts be hard? Father, I pray that you would

hide me away and let the truths from your Scriptures come forth. Let Jesus Christ be exalted.

Let him receive all the attention and all the praise. Let everything of human pride and trust in self or love for sin or anything in the world and the flesh, would you let it be cast down? And I pray also, Lord, that even now, as we would meet together, you would arise and scatter your enemies from this place. You would drive back forces of darkness that would hover over people to close their ears and blind their eyes and steal the Word away.

We call on you, Lord, you're the one that drives back the enemy. And you said that our enemies would turn back in the day that we call, so we call on you now in Jesus' name. Help us, Lord.

We look to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Let's open our Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 1. Jeremiah chapter 1, we'll read from verses 4 to 10.

This section and the theme of what we'll study tonight is a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah chapter 1 verses 4 to 10. Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

And before you were born, I consecrated you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. Then I said, Alas, Lord God! Behold, I don't know how to speak, because I am a youth.

But the Lord said to me, Do not say, I am a youth. Because everywhere I send you, you shall go. And all that I command you, you shall speak.

Do not be afraid of them. For I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth.

And the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. Amen.

So tonight we're looking at what it means and what God has written here concerning this subject, a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah was a prophet to the nations. And sometimes when we read the Word of God, we read about certain people or certain passages and we think, Oh, that's not for me.

That's about something a little bit more specific. That's about something... But really, all of the Scriptures were written for our instruction, for our encouragement. And all of the Scripture is profitable for us.

And I think even this passage, I'm not totally sure why the Lord led me to this passage for tonight. I hope and I've been praying that there will be different things for different people that have come here. But I know this.

I know that what's written here about Jeremiah's life, what the Lord said to him, is really wonderful and in many ways is true of every Christian, every true child of God. And so before we even get started, I want you to keep that in mind. I want you to think about these things and how they apply to yourself and how they apply to your own life, if you know God, if you're a believer.

So, in another place, one time, a whole bunch of people started prophesying. And you remember what Joshua, what he said. He tried to stop them.

And Moses said to Joshua, he said, are you jealous for my sake? He said, would that all of the Lord's people were prophets and that God would put His Spirit upon them. And that's how I feel. Here God's talking to a prophet and he's telling him, Jeremiah is a very famous prophet, one of the major prophets we say, and he's telling him some amazing things, but would that God would put His Spirit on all of us and that the things he said here would be true and would be realities in all of our lives.

And so, a lot of what I'm saying tonight is really pointed toward believers, those in the faith. For those of you maybe that don't understand fully about Jesus Christ or what it means to follow Christ, I hope that you'll hear the Lord's voice too. Let's look at this first phrase.

He says, we're not going to look at everything, but I just want to pick a few things that I think will help. In verse 5, He says, I knew you. You see that? Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

And so this is my first point, the first thing that I want to say is to talk about the grace of God. Before we ever begin to think about serving the Lord, you first have to have a relationship with the Lord. The Lord has to know you.

You have to be His child and belong to Him. But now I want to ask a question. Somebody answer the question.

When does the grace of God start? When is the grace of God set upon the believer? When does it begin? When does it start? In the womb? Before the womb, even before the foundation of the world. And this is a truth that is so precious. The name of this church, Grace Community Church.

Grace. When you look at grace in the Bible, it's amazing. It says that grace was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

From all eternity, grace has been granted to the people of God. And I hope that all of us could get a hold of this truth. If you have believed in Christ, if you belong to Him, if you followed Him, why did that happen? How did that happen? When did it begin? When does God set His grace on people? 2 Timothy 1.9 From all eternity.

And here in this passage, He says, I knew you before I formed you in the womb. There wasn't any bones. There wasn't an embryo.

There was nothing. But God knew them. What does it mean to know them? Well, in some form or fashion, this word is very intimate.

You could almost say, I favored them. I loved them. I had an affection for them before I ever created them.

Grace is set upon the believer even before we come to exist. Not only before we believe. Grace is what leads to us believing.

Grace is the reason why any of us are saved. But even before we were created. And this kind of deep love and this kind of deep relationship that exists in God is so important and so foundational to the Christian life.

It's hard to move forward without it. But if you have it as a foundation, you can stand on it. It will sustain you.

It will carry you through the darkest times to know about the grace of God. You know, some people, have you ever heard this? Some people say, well, yeah, God knows who's going to believe. And it's kind of like He chooses the winners.

Have you ever heard them say that? I've heard them use that phrase, God chooses the winners and He puts His grace on them. That is so far from the truth. The fact is, God goes to the garbage can and He finds sinful souls, broken souls, and He sets His love upon them.

Grace, what does it mean? Grace is not something you earn. Grace is not something you work up. It's a free gift of God.

You can't do anything to commend yourself to God. If you come to God as you are, you'll be rejected. It's only because of this free gift, the grace of God, that any of us have been saved.

Grace is how we start in the Christian life. Grace is how we continue in the Christian life and how we make it to the end. From start to finish, the Christian life is a life of grace.

It leaves no room for boasting in man. No room for saying, I was better than someone else and therefore I repented and I believed and I made the right choice because somehow I had more wisdom. How can you look at two brothers so close in age? Maybe even twins.

You see that in the Bible. So close in age. They hear the same message.

They hear the same preaching. One believes and one goes on in his sin. The grace of God.

It's a gift. And God's telling this to Jeremiah. Jeremiah has some rough days ahead.

And God doesn't tell him about all those days ahead, but He tells him, I know you. And when you feel that, when you feel God's grace toward you when you're humbled, it's like He says in the Scriptures, there you were, a little baby left to die, squirming in your blood, and God picked you up and said live. And He clothed you and He took care of you.

That's what it is for every believer. That's when the grace of God begins before we're even created. And we need this as the starting place.

Don't try to serve God and don't go around seeking to be a prophet, seeking to be a messenger, seeking to be a preacher or a soul winner if your own relationship with God is not right. How is your relationship with the Lord? I know so many people, I've met so many people, they want to do witnessing, they want to do all these things, they're not even walking with God. They don't even have a relationship with the Lord.

Even the false religions do proselytizing, but they have no walk with the Lord. So first things first, one thing is, we want a deep relationship with God. Second thing, he says, Jeremiah says, I am a youth.

You see that? Verse 6. Then I said, Alas, Lord God, behold, I don't know how to speak because I'm a youth. And I think there's something here for us too. Sometimes when we do begin to walk with the Lord, when we do begin to want to serve the Lord and speak a good word for the Lord, we have different things that we think maybe will disqualify us or we have different reasons to believe that God would not be with us or that God would not use us or that we probably just shouldn't say anything.

We shouldn't open our mouth. And one reason, one excuse, is this one. I'm too young.

There's all kinds of different excuses. But it's amazing, the Lord doesn't accept this. Why? Why? God, He loves to handicap Himself.

He loves to take weak instruments and use them for His glory and speak through them and send His light and truth through them to show His power, to show His beauty, to show His love. Even Jesus Christ Himself humbled Himself and became a man. He became weak.

He emptied Himself. Whatever that means. We can talk about that all night.

But there is a real sense in which God will handicap Himself to show His glory. And you need to know that because you're going to find things in your own life that you feel like maybe would disqualify you from speaking the Word of God, sharing the Word of God. Whatever your situation in life is, whether you're young or old, whether you're male or female, you're a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, whether you're really educated or not really educated, none of those things matter.

God can take the strangest instruments and the weakest servants and make them His spokesmen, make them a mouthpiece, make them a vessel carrying the Gospel, carrying the truth of Jesus Christ. And that's what we want. So this is a good re-encouragement from the Lord.

It's not always the guy with the loud voice or the deep voice that can run his sentences through real fast and that just can preach and preach. That's not always the guy the Lord wants to use. I know some people, I mean, they barely get out a sentence or two.

They speak in simple terms, but the Lord is with them. I remember one time, this is when I was lost, but I was first coming around the Gospel, around Christianity. And it was back in my first church and the pastor's wife, she had a real heart for the youth.

And I remember, I don't know, she was maybe in her 40s or something, kind of a mom kind of personality. But I remember I was in 10th grade. She would say the simplest things, but she said them with such reality.

She would just say something like, Guys, all of life is about the glory of God. And I remember just being struck by that. It was so true.

Maybe she wasn't some great preacher, but the Lord was really speaking through her. And I heard God in that. God convicted me through that woman.

God used, you remember in the Scriptures, God used a little girl, a little Hebrew girl, to tell Naaman about the prophet that could heal him. You remember? This little girl, she says, Well, it's real simple. If you were in Israel, you could go and get healed of your leprosy.

There's nothing God can't do. There's nothing Yahweh can't do. God loves to use little instruments.

He used Samuel. Remember? He calls Samuel when he's just a little boy. At the first time, Samuel didn't even know the Lord.

But God was with him. God gave the message to him. And he rose up to speak the Word of God, not only to Eli, but to all of Israel.

Little Samuel. So don't say I'm a youth. I mean, I don't know.

Everybody in here is kind of younger, except for some people. But even with children, even children, there's no reason why children can't have a relationship with the Lord. There's no reason why you young children can't know the Lord and speak for the Lord.

Jeremiah said, I'm a youth. But that was not a problem to God. In fact, many times, we have to become like children, don't we? Jeremiah thought it was a problem, but actually, in many ways, it's a virtue.

You can't even be saved unless you become like a child. How much less minister the Gospel to other people. If becoming childlike and empty-handed and just nothing in yourself is the way into the Kingdom, probably that's how you're going to have to walk out the Christian life too.

How you began. Usually if you get real confused in the Christian life, just go back to the beginning. The things you learned in the beginning usually are the best things that carry you all the way through.

And sometimes we get too proud. Sometimes we begin... You know, some people are naturally gifted in many different ways, and it's actually a big hindrance in their Christian life. And though outwardly, in a very flashy way, it looks good to other people, actually, the works that they're doing, they're doing in the power of their own natural ability, the power of the flesh, it won't stand the test of time.

It's not going to stand judgment day. It has to be through the Spirit of God. The flesh profits nothing.

The Spirit gives life. So being a child is actually a virtue in the Kingdom. And pride is a hindrance.

Have you ever read a book? Up in Kirksville, they give out this little book. It's a little pamphlet called He Was a Stutterer. Did you guys see that? He was a stutterer.

It's about a man. I don't even remember the man's name. It's probably bad, but... It was about a man.

There was an evangelist named James Stewart. Well, James Stewart was a godly man. He was a preacher, miraculous testimony and serving the Lord.

But he needed a co-laborer. He wanted a man with him to pray with him, to travel around with him, maybe to preach or something. And this man, who has this stuttering problem, he can't get his words out, just stuttering.

That's a difficult problem. How could you be a preacher if you're a stutterer? But the thing was, he realized somehow from the Lord God wanted him to be James Stewart's helper and go around with him, pray with him, preach with him. And when he first found that out, if I'm getting the story right, I hope I'm not getting mixed up.

But when Stewart first found that out, he thought, oh no. He thought, Lord, not that guy. Don't make him my partner.

Don't make him my co-laborer. But he soon started to realize God was in this thing. And they began to pray and the power of God began to follow them around and began to save people.

And even one day, Stewart I think was sick or something came up. He couldn't go preaching. And the other man said, well, I'll go.

And Stewart kind of thought, oh no, what's he going to do? So he said, alright, brethren, the Lord be with you. And he went out there and he came back and he asked them how did it go? And he said, well, God saved all these people. And it was amazing.

But the Lord loves to do that. He loves to use the weak and the backward. So here's just one practical thing.

You know, start now. Whatever you want to do serving the Lord, if God gives you desires, just serve the Lord in whatever way you can. You don't have to try and be somebody you're not.

You don't have to pretend to be somebody great or be like somebody else. Even if you're serving the Lord in what looks like a very small way, if you love Christ, doesn't God look at the heart? He doesn't look at the outside. Think of King David.

Again, another young man. Another youth. But God was looking at the heart.

Everybody discounted him, but God was going to be with him to slay Goliath. If you want to serve the Lord, serve Him now. Don't wait until later.

You don't have to wait until... You know, I think about this, a prophet to the nations, and sometimes we read all these missionary biographies and we think, wow, it's real amazing how God calls all these people and does these powerful things. You know, if you read some of those, the first thing is not... I was telling somebody this the other day. Not one of their testimonies is alike.

How God saved them, how God called them, how they ended up over in a different country preaching the Gospel. But what's encouraging is if you look at how they first served the Lord. You know what Hudson Taylor was doing? Sometimes we forget about this.

Him and his little sister were skipping one of the church meetings once a week to go hand out tracts to people. That's pretty humble beginning. Him and his little sister, 13-year-old sister, whatever, going around handing out tracts.

He was a prophet to the nations. And God had consecrated him from the womb, from before the womb. So you can serve the Lord in something small.

We sing a song in India. I think you guys sing it here too. And we say in the middle of the song, it is great if God is in it.

Does your work seem too small, too forgotten, too unknown? Little is much when God is in it. And I think that's something of what the Lord is saying here. He's cutting down this excuse, I'm a youth.

Do what you do for the glory of God. I've heard this before. It's not the size of the work, but it's the love with which you do it.

It's interesting, the one that had the ten talents to give, in return, the one that had the two talents or the five talents to give, you know Jesus? When the Master receives them, He gives them both the same commendation. Well done, good and faithful servant. They were both faithful.

Faithfulness does not have anything to do with size or amount. Faithfulness has to do with faithfulness, with doing it unto the Lord. You don't have to know all the answers.

It's amazing. Some of you maybe have found this out. I didn't realize this until I started going out to share my faith with people, witness to people.

You don't have to have all the answers. It's amazing how much you know. I mean, sometimes you think, oh, I don't really know that much.

And then it turns out they're saying stuff. Wait a minute, that's not right because the Bible says this. Come to find out you do know quite a bit.

And you can help people. But even if you don't know all the answers, that doesn't stop the show. What did the man say? That Jesus, He touched his eyes, He healed him? They start asking him all these questions.

Well, I don't know, but one thing I do know, I was blind and now I can see. Sometimes, I mean, a new convert, all they really have to share is their testimony and Jesus died for me, but that's enough. And God can use that.

So, I hope this is encouraging you all. He told the man, Jesus told the man that was filled with all these demons, cast them out. The man was sitting clothed in his right mind.

And he said, I want to go with You, Lord. Let me go with You. And Jesus somehow, He knew this man, nope, you're ready.

He said, you go back to your town and you tell everybody the great things that God had done for you. He didn't go to Bible school. He hadn't sat under a good church.

He hadn't done all these different things. But the little that he knew, the little light that he had, the little candle, he was going to hold out in the darkness. The Word of God, the Word of God, no matter how small, is powerful.

Because it's His Word, not our own. So, this is what I really want to make a point here. And I hope those of you that have a heart to serve God, I hope this will help you because I didn't always know this.

But when you want to serve the Lord, when you want to tell people the truth, the Bible says, let the redeemed of the Lord say so. And you want to say so. You want to tell people.

I didn't know this, but you know what? To do that, it requires faith. It requires faith. If you want to go out and you want to share with people and you want to walk by sight, you're going to have a real hard time.

If you want to go out and you want to sow the seed, and as soon as you put it in the ground you want to see it spring up, you're going to have a hard time. And you know what you're going to assume? You know what you're going to think? You're going to think God's not with me? The Holy Spirit's not in me? Or I'm not anointed? Or I still need this extra thing? What am I doing even wasting my time? I'm not gifted like that person. I'll just go home.

I'll just do something else. Maybe you were exactly where the Lord wanted you. Here's the thing, when God speaks to you and He gives you a burden to share, have faith.

Jesus said it. Have faith in God. Can you put your faith in God? Can you walk by faith and not by sight? Will you give up? Will you grow weary in doing good after a short time? There's exhortation after exhortation in the Bible to believe God, to sow in hope.

This verse came to me the other day while we were at the conference in Romans 8. It says, who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see with perseverance, we eagerly wait for it. You've got to persevere. You've got to hope in God.

You've got to keep your eyes on Him. You've got to say, I know the truth. I know what the Lord has said to me.

I don't care if no one believes me. I don't care if they all reject me. I'm going to go back again.

I'm going to go out again. I'm going to keep sharing the Gospel. I'm going to keep praying for that person.

Don't give up. Don't lose heart. Have faith in God.

You want to serve the Lord. You need faith. You need the shield of faith.

The devil is going to throw every kind of arrow at you. He's going to tell you you're not a worthy servant. He's going to tell you to pack up and go home.

He's going to tell you find some different strategy or method to use. Don't just preach the Word. That's not enough.

He'll tell you everything to get you off course. Have faith in God. Alright, let's look at another phrase.

He says, Do not be afraid. Verse 8, Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. Don't be afraid.

This is big. If you belong to God, you're a child of God, if you're going to be a herald of the truth, an ambassador for Christ, you can't have fear. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, faith, sound mind, power, wisdom, truth.

He brings things to our remembrance, our memory. He gives words to glorify Christ. There's all kinds of peace, there's all kinds of joy, gentleness, kindness, restoring people in the spirit of gentleness.

The Holy Spirit does a lot of things, but you know what the Holy Spirit doesn't do? He doesn't fill you with fear. If you're full of fear, you can know that comes from the enemy. You can know that this is not pleasing to God.

Fear for the Christian is off limits. It's a sin. It's not the will of God.

And it creeps in. Why does the Lord tell Jeremiah, don't be afraid? What do you think? Why did He say that? The Lord is with him. Well, okay, I guess maybe... What's that? He knew he was going to be afraid.

Why was he going to get afraid? He's going to be tested. Because people hate God's messengers. They hate God's people.

It's the amazing thing. When you go out to share the Gospel with somebody, you know, some people say it's like you're throwing the life raft off the boat to rescue the lost soul. That's not really the full picture.

In one way, that's true. But what's happening is you throw them the lifeline, they throw it back in your face. You get in the water to help them, they start pushing you under the water.

They don't want your help. And they'll oppose you tooth and nail. And Jeremiah, they told him, they said, we're going to kill you.

They told him that. A lot of prophets had been threatened. A lot of prophets had been killed.

God knew what was coming for Jeremiah. Maybe Jeremiah knew about it too. If you are a righteous man, if you live for holiness, if you follow God, you're going to be going against the stream in this life.

If you love Christ, the world will hate you. The world hated Christ, the world will hate you. You take a stand for the truth, you carry the torch, the light, the devil is going to shoot at you.

He's going to try and take you out. He doesn't want you to hold the light. So, yeah, there's a temptation for fear because all manner of evil is going to break against your soul.

What does this look like practically? Well, sometimes it means physical violence. You got some big guy and he's in your face, really threatening you, intimidating you. He's going to knock my lights out.

Sometimes it means you lose your friends. Sometimes it means you lose your family. If I take a stand for the truth, I'm not just saying even witnessing to your family.

Sometimes there is a place for staying quiet. But I'm just saying even taking a stand for truth in the midst of your family, they may hate you. They may not give you an inch.

Unless you compromise and go with them, you can't give in to fear. If you lose your family, let it go. God can give them back to you.

He can give you a new family, but whatever you do, don't give in to fear. Don't compromise. You can lose your job.

How many people, they stay quiet in the workplace because they're afraid of what the boss is going to say? You shouldn't be witnessing on the workplace. You're disturbing the other employees. This is a bad testimony.

I'm not talking about not doing your work and being irresponsible, but I'm just saying even at the workplace, when opportunities are there, many people hold back because they're afraid to lose their job. How many people would in fact lose their job if they would overcome the fear of man that's got them like a snare? This is real. We face these different fears.

But God says it's off limits. Think about what it says about the disciples. Actually, Brother James and I were talking about this the other day.

It really encouraged me. Think about what it says about the disciples. It says, as they observed their confidence, Peter and John, as they observed their confidence, they realized something about them.

These are ordinary men, but they've been with Jesus Christ. Where did they get that kind of boldness from? Where did they get that kind of confidence from? They're nobodies. We're the high priests.

We're the elite. We already killed Jesus. We can kill other people.

And they're not afraid of us? Your fearlessness will speak to people. And another verse we mentioned was that verse, yeah, not frightened by anything. Not frightened by anything.

And what is that? It's a sign for your opponents of their destruction, but of your salvation. You don't give in to fear. That speaks to people.

Wait a minute. Maybe God's really with them. Why does He have that kind of faith? Why does He hold His ground like that? Why does He keep going back to the Bible like that? So not giving in to fear is important for the sake of the people we're trying to reach.

If we want to reach them, we have to have boldness. Now, let's think about this. Not only should we not be afraid for ourselves, because God says He'll deliver us.

That doesn't mean we always get off the hook. Sometimes we do fall into persecution. But we need to be afraid for them.

We're not afraid, but we fear for them. Think about this. Jesus said, don't fear those that can kill the body.

I'll tell you who to fear. Fear the One who after He kills the body has authority, has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell. Now, what was He saying? In one sense, yes, He's saying don't be afraid of men.

They'll kill you. I could put you in hell. In one sense, that's kind of true.

There are some strong warnings in the Bible about not denying the Lord. If we deny Him, He'll deny us. The Bible says that.

Forget that passage. Don't forget it. If we deny Him, He'll deny us.

If we're ashamed of Him, you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. Before I was saved, I was so ashamed of Jesus Christ. In school, I said I was a Christian.

I said I was going to heaven. I was so full of shame. If religious conversation came up, I would just shrivel.

I just wanted to disappear. Nobody knows that I'm a Christian. I don't want to say anything about the Lord because I had no love for Him.

And that's a mark of the unbeliever. They're ashamed of Jesus Christ. They're ashamed of God.

When they get around their lost friends, when they get around the work world, they have shame in their heart. They're ashamed of the Gospel. They're ashamed of the Son of God.

And we should have a healthy fear. If someone lives that way, we've got to warn them, look, God could put you in hell. All liars, all immoral people, all homosexuals, all these different things, but He also says all cowards will be put into hell.

But let me tell you this, I think there's something more that Jesus is saying. When in Matthew 10, when He says, don't fear the one that can kill the body, but fear the one that can destroy body and soul in hell. I think He's also saying, don't be afraid of them.

Fear God for these other people. These other people are under the wrath of God. These other people, they've never been washed from their sins.

Don't be afraid of them. They're going to be put in hell if they go on like that. Fear that they might go to hell.

Intercede for them. Stand in the gap for them. Why do I say that? There are several scriptural examples about this.

Daniel in the lion's den. What happened? Did he get eaten by the lions? No. What happened? Somebody tell me.

They put him in the den. They closed the lid. Then what? An angel came.

And then what? Closed the mouths of the lion. End of story? No, not end of story. Later, they took those men that accused Daniel and they threw them in the den.

And the lions crushed their bones before they even hit the ground. Here's the thing. When people are standing against the gospel, when people are just spewing out venom and blasphemies, isn't that amazing? Some of the worst blasphemies come out when you're trying to witness to a person.

At the very moment, you're trying to save their life, it just starts pouring forth. But when you see people like that, fear for them. Jesus says, if they don't listen to you, they don't listen to Me.

They reject you, they reject Me. They reject Me, they reject My Father. When we go out as ambassadors for Christ, God gives us authority.

If people reject the ambassador, they reject the king. We have to fear for them. Don't be afraid of them.

Fear for them. Okay, another example. Mordecai.

Book of Esther. Righteous man, Mordecai. Another man, Haman.

Wicked man, Haman wanted to kill Mordecai. Remember that? What was he going to do? How was he going to do it? He was going to hang him. Made of gallows, I can't remember, 50 feet high or something.

His friends and his counselors said, yeah, make this gallows, you'll get rid of that man. What happened? Did Mordecai die? The Lord delivered him. Remember? The king had the dream in the night, he couldn't sleep, so he got up and he said, it just so happened the night before Mordecai was going to be killed.

God can deliver anybody. Just so happened, the night before, the king couldn't sleep. And he called, bring in those annals and read me stuff that's been going on in my kingdom.

And he says, wait, who's that guy Mordecai? Has anything been done for him? Nope. So they reward him. But you know what they did to Haman? They hung him on the gallows.

We ought to fear for people. When they oppose us, they don't realize. I mean, they're digging their own grave.

The Psalm says, they laid a snare for My feet, they dug a pit, they themselves have fallen into it. We have to fear for people. Don't fear man, fear for them.

Moses and the rebellion, rose up against Moses, rose up against the purpose of God. The earth swallowed them alive. They didn't kill Moses.

They didn't depose Moses. In fact, they ended up being destroyed themselves. Amalek came against Israel.

They were obliterated. Now, God is able to deliver people and we need to remember this, like I saw sitting on one of the guys' desks or maybe it was on the table in the grace house. They had the J.G. Payton missionary book.

How many of you have read that? Anybody? Everybody's too afraid to raise their hand. Brother Tim's read it. Nobody else.

No, I know you've read it. Okay, J.G. Payton, he's a missionary. He goes to the Hebrides.

You know how many times they tried to kill him? It's incredible. It's like page after page after page. It's one miracle story after another.

It's like the Lord kept him alive for four years and all the people wanted to do was kill him. They'd put a rifle to his head. He never got shot.

They threw these stones. They had these stones, these tomahawk type things they would throw. One time he's running from them.

They're chasing him. They throw it. He trips over a root.

As he falls to the ground, one goes whizzing right by his head. Sticks in the ground in front of him. I mean, it was like just miracle after miracle.

The witch doctors, they were infamous for cursing people. They would take a piece of fruit and I believe this is real. I don't think this is just cooked up in some book.

They would take a piece of fruit. If they had found scraps of food left over, you never did that because if the witch doctor got a hold of it, they could put a curse on the person that ate it from the scraps. You know what J.G. Payton did? In the sight of everybody, they're blaming him for all the storms.

They're blaming him for everything that happens. All the witch doctors are there, these three men, and he says, all right, fine. He picks three pieces of fruit.

He takes a bite from each one. Here, here, here. He says, just do your worst.

My God is greater than your God. And nothing happened. And they came back three days later and they said, we tried everything we could.

We don't know why, but we can't touch this man. God is able to deliver His people. And if we would not be afraid, many times, in those situations, the Lord would come through.

What a glory to the Lord when He protects us when He comes through in special ways. And you can give testimony to other people and say, I trusted the Lord in a hard time and He was with me. But sometimes because of fear, because of a lack of faith, we get just bound up with fear and we turn tail and run.

We close our mouth. We don't say what the Holy Spirit is prompting us to say inside. You know, I find this.

I find that many times, it's not so much that I don't know what to say. Sometimes I have the sentence in my mind that I need to say to that person. And if I can just get the courage to speak it to them, they respond and then boom, another sentence right there in my mind.

I know exactly what the Lord wants me to say. But we need courage. Not be afraid.

Please, pray for us. We're over in India right now and I do want to say that fear is a real tactic of the enemy and we feel it. I'm not ashamed to confess that.

But we really need your prayers. There is opposition. There are people that threaten and that make you afraid and that make you feel like maybe I should back off.

At one point, we got this report that we were on the news and I thought, oh man. And we were all thinking, what are we going to do? Are we supposed to go out again? If we go out again next week, I bet this time, you know, there's going to be cameras there and stuff. And these things will come in, these fears.

But we can't be ashamed of the Gospel. Please pray for us that we not get locked up with fear out in India. Alright, next subject.

And these two kind of go together. Look in verse 10. He says, pluck up, break down, destroy, and overthrow.

That's the negative. And then he says, build and plant. That's the positive.

So first, let's talk about the negative. This is for the person that has been given the Word of God that in one way or another, whether they're a preacher or not, whether they're an adult or not, whether they have any kind of official ministry or not, they've got the Word of God. Now, what do you do with it? You've got a Bible in your hands.

You've been reading it. You've been studying it. What do you say? Well, the first thing is, you've got to break some things.

You've got to pluck some things up. You've got to plow up some ground. You've got to come with a negative message.

You've got to warn people about the wrath of God. You've got to tell the truth about sin. You cannot skip the broken law of God, the curse of God, bondage to sin.

You cannot skip this. You want to share with your family? Don't just give them some Max Lucado book that will try to encourage them. They're lost.

You have got to tell them about the problem. I'm not saying you have to be a jerk. I'm not saying you have to get in their face.

You can do it quietly. You can do it patiently. You can do it little by little.

However you're going to do it, but you've got to share the truth with them. If you skip this, if you just go to the nice things that you know men are prone to receive, they're not going to get help. And if they do come to the Lord, they're coming for the wrong reason.

And you're going to create a false convert. This was something when I began to realize how much the Bible talked about this. It put fear in me.

You're going to end up being a false prophet to your family, to your friends. Don't do it. Don't be a false prophet to people.

Speak the truth. It's easy to say, thus says the Lord, and then share something nice. I have plans for you, for your good, for your future, for your welfare.

Well, Jeremiah also said, I have plans for your destruction. Look at what he says. See, I have appointed you this day over the nations, over the kingdoms to pluck up, to break down, to destroy and to overthrow.

Jeremiah, I want you to go in there, whatever nation I send you to, and I just want you to tear everything down. Tear it down. Pluck it up.

Root it out of the ground. There are false foundations there. That's got to be removed.

There are thorns. Don't sow among thorns, Jeremiah. That's not going to be good.

That's not going to produce fruit. Get the weeds out. Get the thorns out.

Get the plow. Go through the field. Plow up the fallow ground.

Break it up. So there's a negative aspect. And sometimes the Word of God is sharp and sometimes the Word of God cuts and the Word of God hurts.

But you cannot build a house on top of a faulty foundation. If there's a faulty foundation in someone's mind about a false gospel, you've got to get that out of there. You can't just think, well, I'll just tell them about Jesus and I hope all that bad stuff will just go away.

At some point, probably, you're going to have to specifically talk about these things. Get out the false foundation. A lot of times that's what they do out here.

I've heard there's some junk house. They don't even want the house, but they buy the property. They totally demolish everything.

They rip everything out of the ground because they've got a new idea. They've got a plan. They're going to put a new good house there.

But you've got to tear out the old. So that's part of our job. And even children, in your own way, God can help you with this to understand about sin and to tell other people about sin, about judgment to come, about hell.

Let me say this, this is the reason I think why a great many people are unsaved that sit in church, that have Bibles, even that have Bible memory verses. This is a great reason, a large reason why there are so many false converts because no one's ever talked to them about their sin. No one's ever confronted them that they have broken the law of God.

Listen, what do you do? You go out to the street. You go to witness to somebody. I used to do this.

And it used to just bug me. I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but I thought something's not right. Because I would ask people.

I would say, well, are you a sinner? And they would say, well, yeah. Everybody's a sinner. They'd say it just like that.

Almost everybody, if you ask them, are you a sinner? They'll say, well, yeah. Kind of like that. And then they'll follow it up with this sentence.

Everybody's a sinner. You know what they're saying? Translation. I'm just as good as everybody else.

That's what that means. That's not going to cut it. In the Bible, when someone confesses I'm a sinner, they're beating their chest.

They're calling out to the Lord. Have mercy on me, Lord. I'm a sinner.

Seeing yourself as a sinner means woe is me, I'm undone. It doesn't mean, yeah, I'm a sinner, we all sin. It doesn't mean sin is not a mistake.

Sin is not an accident. Sin is evil. Sin is an offense to God.

And people have to see it that way. And maybe that's why some of you that have come here, maybe that's why some of you aren't saved. Why is it there's no power in my life? There's no joy in my life? Why is it I can go to church, I can look at the Bible, I can sit in a Bible study, but my life has never changed? I feel like I'm on the outside.

I feel like everybody's got something I don't got. I feel like I don't really fit in. Why is that? Well, let me ask you.

Have you ever been humbled in the sight of God because of your sin? Not humbled because of your circumstances? Not humbled because you're in jail or because you got caught doing something? Not humbled because you failed your test or lost your job or because one of your family members died? That may not necessarily have anything to do with sin. Sometimes, it's the hardest thing in the world, but you have to look past people's false tears for whatever they're weeping about and you have to lead them. You have to lead them to the truth and the Word of God that really there's only one reason ultimately to weep.

Don't weep over those things. That's not the big problem. Really, you need to be broken over the fact that you've sinned against God, that you're estranged from God, that He won't accept you as you are, that you need to be washed, you need to be forgiven.

You're not righteous. Our job, by and large, a brother went with me when we went to Bangladesh, and over there, because of Islam, it is so self-righteous and so proud. Not everybody, but the religious people, yes.

And it's like your job is to convince men that they are not righteous. Your job, your first duty is to get someone to see that they are dirty in the eyes of God, that they are a criminal in God's court. Have you ever been a criminal before with God? A lot of people have never been broken, that's why they've never been healed.

If you've just kind of coasted, if you've just kind of somehow snuck in to the Christian life, you didn't go through the narrow gate. And I just would warn you, you don't need to figure it out, you need to go all the way back to the beginning. You need to go and humble yourself before God and say, Lord, everything I've got up to this point has been worthless.

It's not saved me, it's not helped me. I realize I need You, I am lost, I am sinful, I am dirty, I am unworthy. That's the beginning.

We have to help people in this way. God will not save a person with their pride intact. He comes to destroy pride.

He comes to destroy false thoughts. Every lofty thought raised up against the knowledge of Christ destroyed. And that's what we're about, that's what we're doing.

That was Paul's job, that's your job. Tear down every lofty thought raised up against Christ. In your family, with your friends, try and observe, try and see.

What is it they're trusting in? Are they trusting in baptism? You have to tear that down. You cannot say one good word about it to that person. You have to show them that that is actually their idol, their God, their salvation.

Are they trusting in going to a church? Are they trusting in some experience they had? Are they trusting in some tears that they cried? Are they trusting in a family member or a pastor or some other religion or some other person or anything? Whatever you see is that person's trust and that person's hope. That's what God wants to slay. It's called an idol.

It doesn't matter what it is, but it has to be rooted out. You can't come to God and keep your idols. You can't serve two masters.

God has to bring the storm in your life. Now let's look at the next phrase. Build and plant.

This is the positive side. When a heart has been broken over sin, and I'm not saying we always know the degree over which it's broken over sin. I'm not saying that.

But when someone has a genuine sensitivity, when someone has been brought to a place where they don't have any other options, where they're no longer boasting in themselves, they no longer speak well of themselves or the world around them, that's the time when God can do a miracle, when their hands are empty, when they're weary and heavy laden. And we need to be sensitive to that. Jesus said, come to Me.

All you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. When someone is broken over sin, you don't need to keep beating them up about their sin. Point them to the Savior.

Point them to Jesus Christ who can give them rest. Look, there is nothing spiritual about being miserable and about being lost and about going to hell. There's nothing spiritual about that.

When someone has brokenness, when someone has even what looks like the seed of repentance, that's an encouraging sign. Point them to the Savior. Point them to the balm of Gilead.

Introduce them to the doctor. He can heal their soul. He can fill them with peace.

He can fill them with joy unspeakable. That's what we want. We want people to come into a place of rest.

And that's what He says here, build and plant. So when you find a broken heart, you preach Christ. It was mentioned at the conference.

What a beautiful verse. Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. That's your responsibility to point people to the Lamb of God.

Point away from yourself. Get their eyes on Jesus Christ. Don't talk about yourself.

Don't talk about your church. Don't talk about the Christian life and growth and grace and all this other stuff. Point them to Jesus Christ.

Point them to the promises of God. Have these things that you can give to them as a treasure. Sometimes we feel like it's a rare thing to find a person who's brokenhearted, but when we find one, oh, we better be just longing and bursting at the seams to give them the good news.

To take them by the hand and bring them into the Kingdom. Some of us have experienced that. What it's like to be next to a broken soul and just to do all that you can to point them to Him.

Sowing the Gospel seed. That's what He means when He says plant. He means you're taking the seed, the Word of God, the Gospel, and you're planting it in their life.

Now the thorns are out. Now they're broken. Now they know they deserve to go to hell, but you can sow the seed of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

And He says build. Now you can build. That false foundation is out.

They don't have any hope. They're homeless. They're without a place.

They need a shelter. They need a city of refuge. Point them to Jesus Christ.

Don't point them to themselves. Don't point them to something they have to do. Point them to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The time has come. Tell them about God's Son. Did you know God has a Son? He was born of a virgin into this world.

He came to save sinners of whom I am chief. He befriended sinners. He spent time with sinners.

Yet He Himself lived a perfect life. He healed people. He cared for people.

He laid His hands on people and prayed for people and blessed people. He fed the hungry. Who is this man? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth? Who is He? It's like love is pouring out of Him.

He calms the storm. He binds up the brokenhearted. He goes to places where people don't want to go.

He preaches to people that people don't want to preach to. He lived a righteous life. He despised all hypocrisy.

He threw away everything of false religion. He loved men. They betrayed Him.

He didn't do anything wrong, but He was the Son of God. They betrayed Him. They spit on Him.

They crucified Him. He was dying on a cross. The sky grew dark.

The ground was shaking. The veil tore in two. What is going on? Point them to Jesus Christ.

They say, I don't understand. Explain this to me. What does it mean? He died on the cross.

The sky grew dark. The ground was shaking. The veil was torn in two.

What does it mean? Jesus tells us the night before He went to the cross, He said, it's like He gave them the secret. Up until then, by and large, they were in the dark. But that time He made it so clear.

The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many. I'm going to go to the cross. I'm going to give my life as a ransom.

What does a ransom mean? A price paid for somebody else to set them free. I'm going to give my life in exchange for them. I'm going to become a substitute on their behalf.

Rehearse the Gospel to them. Do you understand the Gospel? Have you heard the Gospel? It's not about you saving yourself. You can't save yourself.

That's the point. Man is so sinful, even when he tries to save himself, he digs the hole deeper. Every attempt you make to try to come to God, you're making yourself more offensive to God.

When a criminal stands before the judge, if he begins to plead, I'm not really that bad, I'll try and do good things from now on, the judge gets more offended. It would be better for him to close his mouth and confess, I'm guilty. Jesus Christ, God's answer.

What is the problem? Sin is the problem. Man has offended God. Man has lost his purpose to worship God, to know God, to love God.

What is the answer? God became a man. God came in Jesus Christ, the fullness of Deity in bodily form, to give His life in exchange for a people, to redeem them, to pay for their sins. That's the only way you can be saved.

That's the only hope for anyone. Point them to Jesus Christ. Is the job finished when someone is saved? That's the question.

Who could give an answer to that? Is the job finished when someone gets saved? No. What's that? Those who persevere to the end will be saved? He said no. The brother said no.

That's right. Because he says to build and to plant. Now, I'm going to reveal a little bit of my ignorance about farming and agriculture, but I always just kind of assumed you put the seed in the ground, job's done.

But when I got over to Bangladesh, I started to realize, wow, they do a lot of work all year round to get ready for that harvest. I didn't understand what they were doing. There'd be a guy.

He'd be walking through the rice paddy field. He has a bowl, a metal bowl. These are these poor farmers.

They don't have the machinery and stuff. He's got a metal bowl. He's reaching his hand in and he's just flinging out water on the rice like this.

I thought, boy, there's got to be a better way to water your crops. I don't know. But I saw other guys.

They had a little backpack on with a sprayer. I've seen movies where they come in with a crop duster and they dust the crop. I don't know what it takes, but I know this.

You've got to tend to God's field. Yes, some are sowing, but some are watering. And that's what he says here, to build and to plant.

That foundation is Jesus Christ, but you've got to build up the house. The reason why I'm saying this is because it's something that's very, very close to my heart. And I've heard another brother say this the other day, and it was absolutely right on the mark.

He said sometimes, you know, out of zeal, it's real easy just to go out and do evangelism and just want to bring more people into the Lord and bring them into the church or get them involved with stuff. But sometimes, it's not so easy to keep ministering the Word of God to that person week after week, dealing with their problems, dealing with their cares, their concerns, praying with them, counseling them, giving them advice. But that's what we need to do.

As ministers of the Word of God, we're not just giving somebody a little message and then just, boom, dropping it on them and we're out of there. We're doing what? Like Paul, his ambition was to present every man complete in Christ. And for the Great Commission, if you want to be a prophet to the nations, this has tremendous implications.

You're not just going around seeking to start works. When you go around, what did Jesus say in Matthew 28? Make disciples of all the nations? Well, that's the first part. Baptize them and? Teach them what? All that I've commanded you.

And I'm with you to the end of the age. Everything. You've got to teach them everything.

Don't leave one subject untaught. Everything that God's taught you, pass that on to them. Teach them.

So that they would have the same reality, the same strength. It would be a shame if you've got a church that's strong and mature and they're sending people out to spread the Gospel and they just start these little works, but nobody ever comes to maturity. What's the point in that? The whole point in this is that men would be not just saved from hell, but that they would learn to love God and worship God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

So, as God's ambassadors and messengers, we don't quit when the work has just been begun. We're with it to the end that they would know everything. All that the Lord has commanded us.

We're passing it on to them. Amen. Well, those are my thoughts for tonight.

Let's pray. Father, we've heard from Your Word. I pray, Lord, help us to receive it.

Don't let them forget what was spoken. Lord, that which was of You, I pray You would seal to Your people. Father, I pray that You would give Your people faith.

I pray, Lord, would that all the Lord's people would be prophets and that Your Spirit would be upon us all. I pray, Father, would You take these here that know You and are beloved of You, would You make them Your ambassadors, that wherever You would send them, wherever they would find themselves, they would speak Your words, not their own, but Yours, and with authority, with faith, with confidence, without fear. Lord, I pray You would end the excuses for the young and the old, for the men and the women.

Lord, please, I pray You would give new desires for good works. Help us. Help us not to be ashamed of the truth we've received.

Help us not to keep quiet in a day of blessing, in a day of salvation. Lord, help us, please, I pray. Open our mouths.

Touch our mouths like You touched Jeremiah's. Like You said to Jeremiah, what do you see? I pray, Father, You would bring things before our mind. A fountain open for sin and uncleanness.

A lake of fire. A great white throne. A narrow gate.

Bring these things before our mind, Lord. Don't let us walk as mere men. Don't let us minister in the power of the flesh.

Help us, Father. I pray wherever there needs to be repentance, please, Lord, cause there to be a repentance and healing in these things. Lord, whoever's lost and maybe doesn't even understand a word I'm saying, would You get a hold of them? Would You just destroy their life until they'd be broken on You and come to You bankrupt, come to You empty? Father, we pray You would do that.

It would be such a mercy from You. Those of us that know You, we thank You, Lord, for how You destroyed our life, how You broke our heart. Praise be to Your name, Lord.

Thank You for not letting us go on in our sins and live for the world and live for vanity and pierce our own souls. You have been so merciful to us, so good to us. Thank You, Father.

Help us now. Strengthen us now. Encourage us now.

Even as we would have this time to fellowship together. Thank You in Jesus' name, our great and wonderful Savior. Amen.

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