

Living in Union With Christ in Dangerous Times 2 of 3

by Josef Tson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God for who he is, not for what he has to give, and explores the parallels between totalitarian regimes and the battle for the minds between God and Satan.

Duration: 1:08:13

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6, Nehemiah 8:10, Isaiah 62:5, Zephaniah 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:6

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man who wanted to find a girl who would love him for who he was, not for his possessions. The man devised a plan to travel incognito and eventually found the girl he loved. Despite her parents' disapproval, their love grew and the speaker emphasizes the transformative power of love and how it leads to a love for God's commandments. The speaker also shares a personal story of his experience with persecution and how it led to a greater hunger for spiritual things, ultimately resulting in the collapse of communism and the opportunity for missionary work.

Transcript

Living in union with Christ in dangerous times. Last night I mentioned these dangerous times. America after September 11th, a place of danger.

And because I spoke about God the Sovereign and doing his purposes even when his enemies are rushing to destroy his work and he uses them to promote his cause, God's puppets. Let me start tonight, and maybe half of my time tonight I will spend to comment on September 11th and what is God up to today. In order for you to understand what is God up to, I offer you a parallel between the empire of communism and the empire of Islam.

Look at them as two evil empires. It was good old President Reagan who called it the evil empire. And then I said, at last a man who understands it.

The evil empire. Well, there are two evil empires. One was, and is no more, and the other is, and it shall be no more.

To use revelation language. Both these empires have a few common characteristics. First of them is that they were or are totalitarian.

Totalitarian means that the government wants to have total control on every individual. You read only what we want you to read. You hear only what we want you to hear.

You believe only what we want you to believe. And don't you dare say differently. Don't you dare change your faith.

You're finished. You're killed. You're exterminated.

You'll live here only if you toe the line, as they said in Romania. Second, both of these systems promise heaven on earth. If we apply communism totally, that means government has taken control of all property.

And now government administers everything. We create a system of equality and of plenty and heaven on earth. And you hear the same in Iran.

And other places. If we but apply Islam totally, we create the best society in the world. We create heaven on earth.

And here is the third common element. They are both embarrassed by the existence of America. Who challenges all they stand for.

And who rebukes them by its democracy, freedom, and plenty. How they hated America and communism. Six thousand rockets with nuclear warheads on them directly towards America.

And Khrushchev in 61 or 62 at the United Nations telling America, we are going to bury you. And you have the same in Islam. The same hatred against America.

I will explain that in a moment, but that's what they have in common. This total hatred against America and the desire to kill America. Now let me tell you a little bit about the Soviet Empire.

From Prague to the other side of the Soviet Union touching Alaska, 13 time zones. 300 million people speaking 140 languages. Huge mass of continuous land.

And all that under the grip of that idea that we build heaven on earth. And as the government took all the property and as the government started to administer everything. They just proved that the government has no business to run economy because they always ruin it.

Now America didn't yet learn that. Communism killed initiative and practically destroyed the economy. It completely ruined life, created a life that was only a jail and a misery.

And by early 80s everybody agreed it didn't work. Very few people know that in 1985 Gorbachev after he took the power. Took a group of economists and gave them all the facts, the real facts about Soviet economy.

And said you write to me a report, honest one. Where are we going to be at the year 2000 if we continue with this system? They came back with a report in a nutshell. We shall be at the bottom of the scale of the third world countries.

And then Gorbachev released that sort of escaped it to England. And it was published in a newspaper in England. And from there being back to Soviet Union to the people to know this system didn't work.

But he still had hesitations. Should they really smash it? Should they go all the way to market economy? And the impatient Yeltsin threw him out and took him the power. And in 1989 Yeltsin came for the first time to America.

He didn't know how real America was. He visited Washington, then he visited New York, then he went to Dallas, Texas. He had some meetings there.

And they left a few hours free before they went to the plane. And he arranged to be taken to see real America. A Safeway food store.

Now look, you should see even today a food store in Russia. It's an absolutely horrible view. Dirty.

Empty shelves. And even what is on shelves is something that you would throw away. And there was Yeltsin with his people going into the vegetable area.

And counting how many kinds of cabbage, how many kinds of carrots. All clean. Now you cannot imagine why the shock there.

And to go to all the meat section and all those kinds of things. And all for you to choose from. That's not imaginable in the communist world.

You take it or leave it. This is what I give you and you go. So they went around and their minds were spinning in disbelief.

They saw that common people came and loaded their carts. And so they were able to buy. They went to the plane from there.

Yeltsin sat down in his chair. Put his head between his fists. Couldn't talk for a long time.

He was left alone there. And somebody overheard him groan at one point. What did they do to my people? They meaning the communists.

And it was there and then that he decided he will go home and smash communism completely. And introduce totally market economy. And I love to tell you that communism died in a Safeway food store in Dallas, Texas.

But you know what was the other thing that killed communism? Besides its own failure to produce what it promised. It was a little thing called radio. Radio Voice of America.

And then another American radio from Munich, Germany. Called Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. Beaming in all the languages of the communist world.

And everybody in our communist empire had a little shortwave radio. To tune in every night to listen to one of these radios. Knowing that what our people, our leaders were telling us were lies.

And listening to the truth. You know my political mind was created by Radio Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and BBC. These were the radios that made my mentality politically speaking.

So it was a battle for our minds. And the battle was won on shortwave radio. So all the way through the 80s as I traveled from church to church.

I told people that communism was going to collapse all of a sudden. And people looked at me in disbelief. Some people in this place remember how I told them this.

A year or two before communism collapsed. And didn't believe me. But I kept saying, you see, you say it is too strong to fall.

Your problem is that you only see to the strength of the enemy. I see above the enemy my heavenly father one day making a sign like that. And communism will collapse all of a sudden.

And in 1989 my father made that sign. And all of a sudden all those countries threw out communism. And you look in this May.

All of a sudden communism was no more. But listen now. This is the miracle.

For so many years of atheist propaganda. What they achieved was to create an extraordinary hunger for spiritual things. And when the evil empire collapsed.

What was it replaced with? Mission field. Overnight the evil empire became the greatest mission field. 13 time zones.

Will you please hurry to fill it? They need missionaries. More than we can give. Isn't this strange? That empire that said we are going to bury you.

Begging you send us all your missionaries. You see what God is up to? Now let's turn to Islam. From North Africa to Indonesia.

I think it's about 16 time zones. 1,200,000,000 people. In total darkness.

Oppressed. God finished with the communist world. Transformed it into a mission field.

And God had a big problem. I mean he had an enormous problem in his hands. You know what was that problem? God raised America as the beacon of light.

And the beacon of the gospel. And the beacon of freedom and of democracy. But America couldn't care less about the Muslim world.

As long as they give us their oil. Why bother that Saudi Arabia is the most oppressive country in the world? Don't touch that. We need their oil.

And if they give us their oil we close our eyes. And it was like that for all that empire. And missionaries were afraid to go there.

Because you see they either kill you or they kill immediately your converts. So no big purpose in going there. My father's problem was how to wake up America.

And make America target the Muslim world as their number one goal. And he invented a man called Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini was in exile in Paris.

He took the power in Iran. And immediately he started to preach every Friday. We are going to make heaven on earth applying total Islam.

But we have one problem. America. It poisons our youth.

It's an attraction for them. And because of that we cannot build that society. We must kill America.

America is the great Satan. Friday after Friday for years he preached that. And America just laughed.

The silly man. What can you do to kill America? But God raised a young man who said I have to take our spiritual father Ayatollah Khomeini seriously. So my job is to kill America.

His name was Osama Bin Laden. And he infiltrated all the Muslim world with his suicidal army with one goal. We have to kill America.

September 11 is the D-Day. The day when they attacked. When they started the war to kill America.

And all of a sudden America woke up in the most deadly danger you could have ever imagined. What is God up to? You don't see. God says in plain language you either open those mines.

You either conquer them for me or they kill you. It's as simple as that. And didn't God succeed? Oh certainly he did with just those two men.

Ayatollah Khomeini and Osama Bin Laden. What a wonderful God we have. How simple are things for him.

But now listen. Two or three things. I admire President Bush for his clear mind about the necessity to build showcases.

Afghanistan and Iraq. You see democracy is incompatible with Islam. And he's trying the impossible.

And he may succeed. If you re-elect him. I'm so sorry.

But you see. If he can show to the Muslim world that it is better to live in democracy than in total oppression. He has very much won the battle.

But that's not enough. Let me tell you another thing which is fantastic news but you don't know it. A year ago about this time.

American government announced that they will close Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. And all the efforts of America will be directed now to create a radio for all the Muslim world. And maybe even TV.

Because the main thing is to conquer those minds. Let me give you a subject of prayer here. President Reagan in 1981 made a decision that Radio Free Europe should not only criticize communism.

But also offer alternatives including the religious one. Based on that the director of the Romanian section at the Radio Free Europe called me. And said Mr. Zon I can give you 50 minutes every Sunday to preach the gospel to Romania.

And for 9 years until communism collapsed or so I preached the gospel to the entire Romania by American tax payers money. Well spent money. But you see now my desire is to see that that happens with this new radio.

I don't know how to get the context but let me tell you one of the great miracles of my life. In 1993 a general in Saddam Hussein's army was converted. Somebody took him out.

No other country would receive him. But I was able to take him to Romania with his family. For 2 years he was my disciple.

And then Saddam took his trace and eventually he was taken. I don't know. I don't tell you how.

He was taken to Holland with his family. He's got training in Christian work. He can hardly wait maybe to be on that radio to preach the gospel to Iraq.

Okay. You see how God is working. I only want to open your eyes to see what is God up to.

So it's a battle for the minds. Now here is the thing that rejoices me tremendously. There was almost no book on Islam written by Christian writers before September 11.

There were a few. Nobody bothered about them. Now most of the great American preachers write books on Islam.

To understand it and to understand their mindset and to preach the gospel to them. And you should hurry up and buy those books and start working. Let me just make another comment.

And I finish with this and come back to my main subject. The biggest failure of missions to the Muslim world was in the attitude. We should tell our converts to keep it secret.

Because otherwise they are killed. In the Muslim world dying for your faith is the greatest pride. You think you can conquer there with people who are afraid of dying? It's ridiculous.

For the first 300 years of Christianity. You were called before the authorities when somebody betrayed you that you are a Christian. And they would just say, make a sign that you are not a Christian.

Say, Caesar is Lord. And pour a drop of wine at the feet of the statue of Caesar. And you go free.

And people would say, sir, Caesar is not my Lord. Jesus is my Lord. And they would put him for a whole day on terrible torture.

And if they didn't make him betray the Lord. Then they would sentence him to die in the arena as a martyr. And you know, persecution was only once in 20, 30 years or even 50 years.

There were only 10 persecutions in 200 years or 250 years. And you know, even people in baptismal class were yearning for a new persecution. Because they were wanting with all their life to be martyrs.

And if they were chosen to be martyrs, they were marching to the arena singing with joy. We are going to be thrown to the lions. Praise the Lord.

What sort of teaching did they get? Take my book and read it because I deal with that and I ask that question there. What teaching did they give them so that they desired so much to be martyrs? So much so that they brought a rule. If you provoke your martyrdom, you are not a martyr.

Because some are going to the authorities and say, I am a Christian, take me too. Now if you did that, you are disqualified as a martyr. So they had to stop you from seeking martyrdom.

Let the Lord decide if he wants you a martyr or not. But that was the mentality that conquered the Roman Empire. And if we had enough Christians with that mentality today, we would conquer Saudi Arabia for the Lord.

Now it's rather strange to jump like this from this subject back to my own subject, living in Christ. And in order to sort of build a background for what I will say tomorrow morning, Lord willing. Besides the picture of God as sovereign ruler, I want to give you the picture which is very, very rarely given.

God as lover. God as a person who loves and who yearns for you to love him. This is the most intimate thing that we should know about God.

There were three persons in the Trinity in loving relations. Each one loving the others and giving totally to the others. And these three persons said, let's make more persons like ourselves.

Teach them to love as we love. And bring them in our communion of love. Agape love.

Sacrificial love. You know when the Lord was asked, what is the biggest commandment God ever gave? I imagine that the Lord in himself said, I'll tell you what is the biggest commandment. It's actually my father's biggest desire and yearning.

Love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your power. God wants to love you and he loves you. And he loves you so much that he even gave his son to die for you.

But his desire is that you reciprocate. He wants to love you and let me put it in his words. In Isaiah 62.5, God says, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so I shall rejoice over you.

That's the kind of love relationship I want with you. Now there is a very obscure prophet, I don't think you ever studied him. His name is Zephaniah.

But in Zephaniah 3.17 is the other amazing love declaration of God to his own. Let me paraphrase it. You know how I love you? Sometimes I spellbound.

I don't find words. That's how much I love you. But some other times I shout with joy over you, because of you.

And of course, the song of Solomon, the song of the love of God to his people and his people's love to his God, their God. The song of Solomon 7.10 puts it in a nutshell. I belong to my beloved.

I am his. And his desire is for me. The desire of God is for me.

Do you ever go to your devotions just to have a session of love with God? Did you ever imagine that that should be the most important kind of your relationship with him? To go there, not because he has goodies for you. Not because he's a bellboy for you to do your errands. Not for anything else that he might give you and you need it.

Go there for his own person. Go there only to love him and to tell him, my beloved, embrace me and kiss me. I just want to be loved.

Embrace me in that love and it's enough for me. With no words. I just want to feel your love.

It's the most wonderful kind of devotion you could ever imagine. Sir Enkirke Gord was a Danish pastor, about 850. He was also a great philosopher.

And he discussed this issue. That God wants to be loved for who he is. For what he is.

For his own person. Not for what he has to give. And in order to illustrate that, he told a Danish story.

Let me tell you the story. The king died. His son, who was 18, 19 or so, was immediately made king.

And this young man, a wise man, had a problem. He wasn't married. And the problem he had was this.

Whatever girl in my realm I would ask to marry me, will marry me. I don't think there is one who would tear me down because they want the palaces. They want to be the queen.

They want the pomp and the glory. But will they love me? Will that girl love me if I didn't have the palaces? I want to find a girl that will love me without my palaces. Only for what I am.

So he made a plan. Double stage plan. First one, he traveled incognito.

Different places. And find the girl he loved. He would love.

Eventually he spotted the girl he really liked. His CIA made investigation and everything was good. So one day in that little town, a young stranger came with a stick on his shoulder and with a bag with tools of carpenter in his bag.

That's how they were walking in past centuries. And he started to shout, carpenter work, carpenter work. And he went straight on the street of that girl.

He even got work with her family. And he started to talk to her. And she was caught.

She got interested in this strange boy. And she sensed this is special. And the more she talked with him, the more her heart was leaping.

It was jumping up. And when her parents realized, they started to rebuke her. He's a nobody.

He's a stranger. Nobody knows where he comes from. Obviously he has nothing.

And you talk with him? Mom and Dad, this boy is special. I saw something in him you don't see. But I tell you, my heart tells me he's special.

Well, they started to cut it off, to interdict her, to talk with him. But they started to meet without the parents knowing. And eventually they just said, look, we disinherit you.

We throw you out if you continue. And then she stood tall and said, Mom and Dad, I love this boy. If I lose everything, I go with him.

He overheard. And that was all he needed. The following day, big news in the town.

The royal chariot and horses were coming in the little town. And all the people ran there. And the young man was there.

And the girl was there. And as the royal chariot came, it stopped before this poor man. And the man from the palace, in proper royal apparel, came and bowed before this poor boy.

Your Majesty, we came to take you to the palace. Will you come up? But he went to the girl. And he said, my beloved, I am the king.

And you showed me that you loved me for what I am. Now you will be my queen. Will you come with me? And she went.

And they were happy ever after. But did you get the point? That boy wanted somebody to love him, not for his palaces, to love him for what he was. And that's exactly the heart of God.

When will you see the beauty of my character? When will you see my wisdom, my justice combined with my love, my righteousness combined with my self-sacrifice? Will you see how I keep them in harmony in the most beautiful character that there is? Will you see the beauty of my own person? I am a lovable, the most lovable person. Will you open your eyes to see my beauty? As David says, I would love to stay in his house to contemplate his beauty all my life. Psalm 27.

Let me put it in a different way. Still in the fairy tale realm. You know what is the greatest desire of every human heart? At least the 13, 14 to 16.

You know what is the greatest desire of every human heart? Without words, but it's deep there. If I would meet the most beautiful girl or the most beautiful boy in the world. If I would fall in love with him or her, he or she should fall in love with me.

Get married and live together in happiness forever. That's the basic stuff of every fairy tale. But you know we are told that the fairy tales express the human heart in the best way possible.

Because the person who made the human heart put in every human heart that desire. That I meet the most beautiful person in the cosmos. That person should love me and I should love that person and be united and live together ever after.

That most beautiful person is God. And he put that desire in every human right because he wants to fulfill it. Will you understand I am that most beautiful being in the world and I want to enter a love relationship with you? The purpose of God with me tonight here is to open your eyes to see the beauty of God.

And to start to love him for who he is. And to make this purpose. I should have devotions where I only go to meet the most beautiful person who is there and he wants to love me.

Spellbound about me telling me that he doesn't have words or that he is ready to shout with joy. And that he rejoices over me as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride. And to go there and say will you my Lord love me like that? Will you teach me how to feel it and how to swim in your love? Lord here am I to have a love meeting with you.

That's his supreme desire. Now when you make your relationship with God like that. First of all don't look at how miserable you are.

Don't look at anything that you say I am unworthy. The most unworthy person on this planet is still the object of that kind of love of God. If you but wake up and say I accept it.

I want it. And Lord because now I see your beauty. And Lord I learned to see your beauty most of all in the torture of your son on the cross.

Jesus said that on that cross God will be glorified. On that cruelest execution where is the glory of God? The glory of God is in the fact that it is there that he sort of tears his shirt. And empties his breast and tears his breast and shows you his heart.

This is how much I love you. It is on that cross that the glory of God expressed in the love of God shines as nowhere else in the cosmos. And if you understand that.

If you understand how far he went to wash all your dirt. To cancel all your failures. To destroy all your unworthiness.

And to make you lovable and the worthiest person for love in the universe. Of course then you empty your breast the same way and say my God and Lord come in. I am yours.

Come in and fill me with your presence and with your love. Because my biggest desire from now on is to be full of you. That's the kind of relationship that you have to develop from now on with your God.

Now a few other things here. What is sin? Sin is adultery. Adultery.

That's what the Old Testament tells us. What is sin? You have this most beautiful person in the universe who married you. Jeremiah says I had the rights of husband over you.

So I talk God language here. And one day you say a lie. You know what a lie is? It's an adultery.

To put it bluntly it is sleeping with the devil. That is sin. Any sin.

It's the betrayal of the most beautiful being in the universe who loves you as nobody else loves you. And you betray that beautiful being for the most ugly being in the universe. Isn't sin horrible? You know what repentance is? Repentance is waking up in the horror of your adultery.

Waking up in what you did with Satan. And turning back to that unspeakably beautiful person. And there ask after all this.

Will you still accept me back? And he would say read the book of Hosea. Hosea was told by God. And go there where the bad girls are.

The prostitutes. Marry Gomer the prostitute. This was unheard of.

Prophets, priests, kings had to marry virgins. It was the law in Israel. But he obeyed God to the dismay of the entire city.

And he gave that woman status. They had two children. She was a happy woman in the family.

And all of a sudden the unspeakable happened. She left her house, her home, children, husband. And went back to prostitution.

Who knows what happened but the pimp had her in slavery. The price tag was \$10,000. Hosea like in the Middle East.

Heaven and earth what a horror just think. And God said shut up Hosea. The real thing comes now Hosea.

Go and borrow \$10,000. And go and buy Gomer. And bring her back.

Make her again your wife. What? Hosea do it. Yes sir.

And he went and did it. Now the whole town was absolutely horrified. Horrified.

And God said now Hosea you are ready to preach. I just made the best illustration for a sermon. Tell this city.

I took you from Egypt where you are like harlots. Like prostitutes. I gave you the best country in the world.

I made you mine. And you went with foreign gods. And read the descriptions in Jeremiah and especially in Ezekiel.

About the harlotry, the adultery of Israel. They are so horrible descriptions, vivid descriptions. That Ezekiel I think 16 and 17 are not allowed to be read in the synagogue.

That's what you did. Now listen. Just as Hosea took it back.

I am ready to take you back too. Even after that. And that's the illustration for you tonight.

Will you receive me back? Read the book of Hosea. That's what sort of God I am. Come back to my love.

What is the purpose of this relationship? Love relationship. Don't forget that point. Because if we don't see that we miss the entire thing.

All that love relationship is offered to you because God has another passion. He wants to make you just like himself. In mind, in heart, in character, in behavior.

Let's make man like ourselves. You be perfect as your father is perfect. Now please don't let Satan come and say, but nobody can be like that.

That is one of the biggest deceptions of Satan. The moment I understand the love of God. The moment I understand his greatest goal to make me like himself.

Because I love him, because I see how beautiful he is. I say, of course, that's what I want. Fill me.

Fill me with Jesus. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. Give me everything that he takes.

Because I want to be closer and closer in resemblance to your character. Now I don't know how far I can go. But that's my passion from now on.

Because that's your passion. Let me tell you, there in Deuteronomy 6, 6. Love God with all your soul, your heart and power. The very next thing is, my commandments be in your heart.

When Jesus says, I love you. Then he says, if you love me, you obey my commandments. In God's mind, loving him and obeying his commandments is the same thing.

And let me tell you why. I had a problem with Psalm 119. You know, I never loved commandments and laws.

I felt they restricted me, they burdened me, they hindered me to be what I wanted. And here is this man who says again and again, I love your commandments. I delight in your commandments.

Give me more commandments. I open my mouth, fill it with more commandments. What sort of creature are you? Who loves commandments? Now wait a minute.

It means he discovered something that I don't see. I must discover his secret. How come that he loves the commandments? That he delights in them? What does he find in them? Well, listen.

It was only, first of all, God's commandments are not arbitrary. You know what arbitrary means? If you tell your little boy of six, we don't do this, we don't do that, and at that age he only asks always, why? Because I am your mom. Your commandments are arbitrary.

They have no rationale for him. Because you say so. Convince that boy or girl that all your commandments are the expression of your love.

That they are given to him or her to shield them for their good. And you want them. Now, I looked how God gives commandments.

Take care of the widow and the orphan. Because I am a merciful God. I hear their cry.

Love the stranger. Stranger? Egyptian? Syrian? Love them because you are strangers too. And I loved you.

I love strangers. I am good. Be good.

I am a forgiving God. Be forgiving. And you go to Jesus.

Learn from me. I am meek. I am humble.

Look how I am. All my commandments are a description of myself. And I made the discovery.

Whenever God gives a commandment, he looks in the mirror. And what he sees there, he puts in the form of a commandment. I am just.

You be just. I am honest. You be honest.

I am faithful. You be faithful. And every commandment of God is a little description of the beauty of God.

And I discovered that when he gives me the commandments, he only describes himself and says, If you obey these commandments, you are just like me. So the commandments are not there to hinder me or to restrict me or to burden me. They are there to put wings on my being and make me just like my Creator and beloved Father.

And like my Lord Jesus Christ. Because the commandments are a description of God's beauty and of Christ's beauty. If you love me, you obey my commandments.

Because my commandments tell you how I am. If you love me, you want to be like me. So, a love relationship, which is a transforming relationship.

The more I love him, the more I love his commandments. Because the more I like to be like him. And then I understand that his commandments are not burdensome.

They are not heavy. My innermost being responds and says, That's exactly what God made me for. I made a note here.

To conclude with the word joy. Joy unspeakable and full of glory. On September, I'll go a few minutes beyond.

On September 4th, 1974, seven policemen came at my door. They pushed into the house. They showed me a warrant to search the house.

They turned the house upside down. The trauma in that is very big, heavy. By nine o'clock, it started at six in the morning.

By nine o'clock, they decided to confiscate all my library. And the policeman was putting books on this side. I had to sit there, write on each book, Founded my place on the 4th of September, 1974.

They hoped to find some anti-communist books and to have proof that they were founded my place. So I had to sign every book, put it on this side, and the policeman was putting them in a bag, take them to the van to take them away. Now, for a preacher to take all his books like that was like tearing his heart.

So I would take a book, look at its title, groan, and sign it away. And after a few books, this book came with this title. Joy, Unspeakable, and Full of Glory.

Under title, little smaller letters. Is it yours now? Seven policemen turning their house upside down. Is it yours now? Lord, if it's not mine now, it will never be.

Will you make it true now? And all of a sudden, there was sunshine in me. And I sort of straightened up, and I looked to my dear wife, Elizabeth, and said, Elizabeth, these gentlemen, I'm sure, are thirsty for a cup of coffee. Will you please make some coffee for them? She said, of course.

And from that moment, we were the hosts. And I didn't let them go without a little sermon at the end. Because I was full of joy.

And then I made, after they left, you see, I told you they put me on house arrest, but I was allowed to preach every Sunday. Now, our apartment was on top of the church, so I just came down and preached in the church, and I didn't go back home. And I made a study on joy.

The joy of the Lord is your strength, Nehemiah 8, 10. I tell you these things, that I am the branch and you are the vine, so that my joy remains in you, and your joy may be full. 1 Thessalonians 1, 6. In the midst of those persecutions, you received the gospel with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

The joy of God, the joy of Christ, and the joy of the Holy Spirit in me. And that Sunday morning, I preached on joy. The joy of God, the joy of Jesus, and the joy of the Holy Spirit in me.

People from all over the country were coming every Sunday to hear me preach, because they knew where I was all the week in interrogation. And that evening, I did what no preacher ever does and they shouldn't do. I saw a friend from another city and they said, glad to see you here, did you like my sermons? I said, Joseph, to tell you the truth, I don't know what you preached today.

They said, what do you mean? Joseph, I came here to see a man who was all the week where you were. He was afraid to say where. I was expecting to see at least a very tired man, if not a wreck.

But you came this morning thundering about joy and I saw it on your face. And it blinded me. I didn't see anything else.

I didn't hear anything else. I only know if one in your situation can preach about joy, it's real. In any circumstance.

Why? Why? Because I am in God. And I am in Christ. And I am in the Spirit.

And God is in me and Christ is in me and the Spirit is in me. And I am safe there. And so, as Romans 5, 10 puts it, 10 I think puts it, or 11, and so we rejoice in God.

Our joy is in this relationship of love with the most beautiful creature in the world who has a plan to make me no more and no less than how he is. Will you bow your heads, please? How can I express my gratitude for so much love for an unworthy man like me? How can I express my joy that the most beautiful being in the universe loves me? Thank you for letting me see your beauty and revel in it. Stay in awe of so much beauty.

Continue, Lord, to teach me to love you for who you are, to come to meet the most beautiful being in the universe for love sessions. Fill me with yourself and teach every one of us never, never commit adultery. And if we did, Lord, receive us back.

Right now. We come, covered with shame. Thank you for telling us the story of Hosea.

But Lord, as you fill us with your love, fill us with the passion to be like yourself. Our drive for holiness should be the drive to be like our beloved. And then it's no difficulty.

Teach us that this aspiration for holiness is the response to the most unspeakable love of the most beautiful being in the universe. Amen.

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