

Revival & Repentance Pt2 - Leaving Our Comfort Zone

by Phil Beach Jr.

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the importance of leaving our comfort zones to achieve spiritual growth and obedience to God's will.

Duration: 1:30:32

Scripture: Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the necessity of leaving our comfort zones to experience spiritual growth and maturity, likening God to a shepherd who guides us through discomfort for our benefit. He illustrates how sheep are dependent on their shepherd, just as we are on God, and warns against the selfish tendencies that keep us in our comfort zones. The sermon encourages believers to embrace suffering as a pathway to deeper obedience and connection with Christ, highlighting that true spiritual progress requires vulnerability and a willingness to endure hardship. Ultimately, Beach calls for a radical commitment to follow God's leading, even when it disrupts our sense of security and comfort.

Transcript

Thank you, Lord Jesus. Thank you, Lord. Hallelujah.

Father, we just want to acknowledge this morning that. You are a loving heavenly father and that, you know. Our hearts, you know, our needs, you know, our desires.

Father, I'm asking that this morning you will speak to us through your word by the empowerment and enabling that comes from the Holy Spirit of God, that you will penetrate into the depths of our being, Lord, that you will deposit into us, Lord, something that will last, something that will take with us, Lord, when we leave the gathering this morning, something that will affect our homes and our lives. Lord, we pray in Jesus name, Amen. God calls himself a shepherd.

And as a shepherd, he considers us to be sheep. Now, as many of you know, we have inherited sheep with our house came a bunch of sheep. And I have basically taken the responsibility of becoming their new shepherd.

I usually feed them twice a day and I usually give them water and they have gotten quite familiar with who I am. And they have become comfortable with me. I can now open up the gate and walk in their midst without them running if I walk slowly and don't seek to startle them.

And it's quite an interesting and exciting endeavor to become the shepherd of so many sheep. I've learned many, many insights in becoming a shepherd. Insights that have helped me to understand God's heart as a shepherd.

And also to understand why he calls us sheep. For the most part, what I have learned. Is that sheep are entirely dependent upon the care of their shepherd.

Sheep are entirely dependent upon the watchful eye of their shepherd. Sheep are very, very different in personality. I have found that each one has a particular personality, a very unique personality.

Some of them are very bold and very courageous. Others are very timid and very fearful. They never change.

I can tell you each one of the sheep right now and can give you a detailed analysis of each one of their personalities. I've gotten to know them that well by just spending time with them feeding. I'm picturing the ram that we have, how when we first got him, he was very timid, very afraid.

But now he takes the lead. He's a very, very gentle ram. I'm thinking of a few of the ewes who are very, very bold.

I'm picturing the one who is very timid. Every time I approach the fence and begin to take the hay out of the wheelbarrow to throw it in, she's running as fast as she can in the opposite direction until the hay is thrown down. And then she turns around and waits for others to go to the hay.

And once others are feeding on the hay, she will then begin to work her way toward the hay. Without fail, it is consistent. She does it every single morning, every single morning.

So there's there's different personalities in sheep. But no matter what their personality is, they're all utterly dependent upon the shepherd. They can't govern their own lives.

They can't look out for themselves. They get themselves in trouble sometimes during the summer when the grass begins to grow outside the fence, the grass grows. So they stick their head through the little holes and oftentimes they get their head caught and they can't get out.

And all they do is just for hours, bah, bah, until the shepherd hears. And then when the shepherd hears, he has to go in and pull them out. Totally helpless.

If the shepherd doesn't keep a watchful eye over the sheep, then the sheep get themselves in trouble. The Lord is our shepherd this morning and under his watchful eye. He is shepherding us.

And I'd like to talk this morning about a message the Lord has put into my spirit. And I wanted everyone to gather together and be nice and close like this because this is a message from the shepherd's heart. It's a message of love.

It's a message of tenderness, but it's a message of warning, warning in that we don't misunderstand the actions of our shepherd. Because as he endeavors to shepherd us in the capacity that I'm going to share

with you this morning, we can be susceptible to misunderstanding him. And if we misunderstand him, then it can become very, very difficult for us to accept his loving shepherding in our lives.

I'd like to, if I could, entitle this message. And if you have notebooks and paper and pencils, please take the scriptures down, study them through. I'd like to entitle this leaving the comfort zone, leaving the comfort zone.

Something that each and every one of us have inherent within our human natures is the tendency to avoid anything and everything that disrupts our sense of well-being, our sense of joy, our sense of comfort, our sense of security. We have tendencies as sheep to find our own little niche in our own little world and build fences around that little niche and there just survive. We have tendencies to want to try and create our own little comfort zones and stay within the boundaries of those zones.

The reason why is because we don't like to suffer. We don't like the pain, the inconvenience, the difficulties, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual pain that comes when we are forced to go outside of our comfort zone. So we try to prevent, we try and keep ourself within a comfort zone.

This morning, the Lord Jesus, as our shepherd, is going to shepherd us in a fashion, listen closely, remember these words, they will surely come to pass. The shepherd is going to shepherd us in a way that is going to necessitate our leaving our comfort zone. To leave our comfort zone is to follow the Lord into fellowship with his sufferings.

And we don't like to hear about suffering. We don't like to hear about pain. We don't like to hear about sorrow.

But I want to show you from the word this morning and from the heart of the Lord himself, that as our shepherd, he knows that there is no spiritual maturity in our life at all. There is no spiritual progress in our life at all. There is no growing in likeness to his character at all.

Unless he, as a wise, loving, shrewd shepherd, is able to shepherd us and lead us out of our comfort zone into the world of vulnerability. Into the world of being subject to pain. Being subject to pressure.

Being subject to emotional and mental and physical and spiritual discomfort. You will not grow as a Christian. Nor will you or I be able to participate in the coming harvest that the Lord is going to bring to us and Christians all over, unless we are prepared to surrender our lives, surrender our will, surrender the totality of our being to Christ, acknowledging that he is the chief shepherd and that he may take us out of our comfort zone and lead us into a world of uncertainty, unpredictability, a world where there is no securities that we generally trust in.

Into a world where we are cast upon naked obedience and faith in the word of God alone. We have nothing to lean upon but God and his word. We have nothing to comfort us but the knowing that God is with us and he'll never leave us nor forsake us.

The comfort zone. You know the program, the twilight zone. Well, the church is living in the comfort zone.

I would like for you to walk with me as I walk in the scriptures this morning. And I'd like to show you how the Holy Spirit will lead you out of your comfort zone into a life of obedience to the word of God. You see, beloved, the comfort zone basically is that which we create.

Listen closely. That which we create that keeps us from fully obeying the Lord. Now let me just explain something to you.

As a Christian, we become partakers of the divine nature. Is that not true? Listen. As Christians, we are called to pronounce death upon all that we are in our sinful selves.

Now all that we are in our sinful selves can be gathered up in one statement. Selfishness. Selfishness.

We are in the flesh selfish. We want a comfort zone. You see, the basis of our comfort zone is the inherent selfishness in us.

Selfishness doesn't want to suffer. Doesn't want to be inconvenienced. Doesn't want to feel pain.

Selfishness wants everything hunky-dory. Selfishness likes to be pampered, likes to be comforted, and wants to avoid any kind of a situation that will make it vulnerable. But beloved, the essential characteristic of the new creation, the church, is a life through the new birth and the Spirit of God working in the Spirit that is constantly, constantly moving us toward and bidding us toward a life of selflessness.

Selflessness. Now listen closely. The feature characteristic of a life of obedience to Christ is a life of selflessness.

One cannot say, I am obeying the Lord, or I am a spiritual Christian, or I am pleasing God, if in fact there is a general lifestyle of selfishness. It is impossible. The two are incompatible.

When one supposes that they, or if we suppose that we are pleasing God, but yet there is a general characteristic of selfishness in our life, we are self-deceived. Now our acceptance before God does not hang upon our performance. And God's love for us does not hang upon what we do.

This is not an issue of God loving you more or less. This is not an issue of God accepting you any more or any less. This is purely an issue of bringing pleasure to God's heart as a result of Him seeing a life of obedience in your life.

Now listen closely, beloved, as we look into the Word today. Philippians chapter 3. It is imperative that we understand the movement of the shepherd right now in the church in America. The movement of the shepherd right now in your life, in my life, is a movement toward delivering us from our comfort zone, delivering us from a lifestyle that is reinforcing our selfishness, or rather enabling us to live in our selfishness, and delivering us out of that into a life where we are not cognizant, or not seeking to do those things that please our own selves, or rather to do those things that make our own selves happy, but we are being taken out of the comfort zone into a life where we are in obedience to the Word of God, and we are living a selfless life, pouring our lives out unto the Lord and unto others.

The only hope for the Lord to get what He is after in the church today is if we as sheep will let the shepherd lead us out of our comfort zones, lead us out of those lifestyles and those mindsets that are keeping us from truly, truly discovering the joy of having a life spent for God and spent for others. That's the only hope. And there will be no lasting revival, there will be no lasting glory that will come to any people if in fact a revival does not result in a people being liberated from their comfort zones.

God will not send a revival, God will not send an outpouring of the Spirit in order to strengthen the selfishness of the Christian. But God will send a move of the Spirit in order to empower the Christian to

willfully leave the comfort zone and live a life of reckless obedience and faith in the Word of God. That is why God sends His Holy Spirit.

Philippians chapter 3. Let's look for a few moments here at Paul's life before Jesus Christ was his Lord. And let us begin to glean some thoughts regarding the comfort zone. Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse number 1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

To write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you is safe. Beware of dogs. Beware of evil workers.

Beware of the circumcision. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. For though I might have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.

Now Paul is about to list, listen, he is about to list some of the items, some of the building stones that made up his comfort zone. And unless you and I can relate to these and be prepared and be willing for the Lord to deliver us from these building stones that are in our lives, we are only going to know spiritual limitation. We are only going to know spiritual infancy.

We will never be reckoned by the Lord as nothing more than babes in Christ. Loved of God, dear to God, but very, very, very unprofitable in relation to His kingdom. God is looking for sons and daughters, mature children of God, who are able to take the responsibility of living a selfless life before a holy God being poured out.

Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews as touching the law of Pharisee. Now here is one of the building stones or building blocks of the comfort zone. Having confidence in our religion.

Having confidence in our Bible doctrine. Having confidence in what we stand for. All of these things in and of themselves may be good.

That is, having knowledge of the Bible, having understanding of the Word of God. But when it is something that we are putting our hope in, something that we are putting our trust in, something that we are proud of, then it becomes a comfort zone. We are living in it.

We are deriving a sense of security from it, and that ought not to be. Next, concerning zeal. Persecuting the church.

So not only do we live in the comfort zone of what we know, and the information that we have, but we also live in the comfort zone of what we do. Our zeal for God. Our commitment to God.

How committed we are to God. Paul says concerning zeal, persecuting the church. Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

So here we find another comfort zone. And that's living in confidence and in the security of our zeal for God. Or our commitment to God.

How holy we are. How committed we are. And how spiritual we might suppose ourselves to be.

But the things that were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ. The things that I counted gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Paul came to the conclusion that whatever was gained to him, whatever constituted his comfort zone, he counted loss for Christ.

Let's read on. Yea, doubtless, verse 8, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. What are some other comfort zones that we have in our lives? Listen closely.

We get hurt. We feel pain. Emotional, physical, spiritual, mental.

We despair. So we fence ourselves into our comfort zone and protect ourselves from that which we naturally do not like. In such a state, we will not grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What have you sought to avoid? What have you sought to avoid by creating some kind of comfort zone in your life? What kind of pain, what kind of suffering, what kind of anguish, what kind of discomfort are you seeking to avoid by creating a comfort zone in your life? The pain of being inconvenienced? The pain of being called upon? The pain of being without? I'm not going to obey the Lord. I'm not going to give this or that. I'm not going to suffer.

I'm not going to be without. The comfort zone. Ask the Lord right now to show you what you are seeking to avoid by creating a comfort zone.

Seeking to protect yourself from uncomfortable, undesirous pain. And now ask yourself this question. Is it not true that as you live in this comfort zone, you are in fact cutting yourself off of an opportunity to follow the Lord more fully into a life of obedience? Yes, it is.

That is what is behind the comfort zone. The root behind the comfort zone is we are protecting ourselves from the need to suffer more by obeying the Lord more. You see, the more we come into a life of joyful obedience to the Lord, the more we suffer after the flesh.

Because the more the flesh can't have what it wants. The more the flesh has to submit to the way of the Spirit. You see, the Spirit, my Spirit, your Spirit, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and impregnated with the divine nature, has a natural inclination toward selflessness.

But my flesh, wherein the law of sin and death is operating, has a natural proclivity, a natural propensity, an inclination toward selfishness. So therefore, if I give way to the desires of my flesh and build a comfort zone around my life, I make myself happy, but I grieve the living God who lives inside of me, who longs to express himself in a selfless lifestyle. Whereas, or moreover, if I, by the power of the Spirit of God and the Word of God, choose to obey the Word of God, I bring pleasure to God, hallelujah, and grieve my flesh, and suffer in the flesh.

It's suffering to subject yourself to obedience to God's Word, listen, and think not of yourself, but others. It's suffering, isn't it, to think of others. It's suffering to obey God's Word and become vulnerable to other people, transparent to other people.

It's suffering to begin to pray that God will give you a burden to open up your homes for people to come into so that you can fellowship with them and meet their need and pray with them. Because our natural inclination is that, no, I want a comfort zone. I don't want to become vulnerable.

I don't want my life to be out of control. I don't want my life to make me feel like I don't have the goods, that I don't feel like I can make it. I don't want to put myself in a position where I feel vulnerable to need, where I feel those emotions.

How many have felt the emotion of despair? How many have felt the emotion of bitterness? How many have felt the emotion of anguish and pain? How many have felt the emotion of, oh, God, I can't take this anymore. Okay. We have a choice when those emotions come.

We either get on our knees and let God give us the grace that He promises is available, or we begin to move into a realm where we start creating comfort zones and slowly cut ourselves off of those things that are causing pain in order to, what we think, restore our sense of well-being. But what is our sense of well-being? Is it really found in having our life in control? Or is it found in being offered before the Lord and finding that in myself I cannot do it, but by God's grace, I am doing it. Paul had a passion in verse number 10 of Philippians chapter 3, that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death.

Listen, beloved. Paul had an insatiable desire to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Let's not look at the fellowship of Christ's sufferings as some mystical, spiritual experience.

I would like to make the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ very super practical this morning for each and every one of us. Listen closely to what I believe the Word of God teaches regarding the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Turn your Bibles to John chapter 14.

John chapter 14, verse 21. You write somewhere on your Bible or somewhere in a piece of paper John chapter 14, verse 21 and next to it write this. This is fellowshiping in Christ's sufferings.

Now it is 5 after 11. If any of the workers have to leave, you're welcome to go. Whatever you'd like to do.

John chapter 14, verse number 21. Listen closely. He that hath my commandments and keeps them he it is that loveth me.

And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. Do you see it, beloved? Fellowshiping in the sufferings of Christ is nothing more or nothing less than having God's commandments and keeping them. Now listen.

To keep God's commandments means that by the power of the Spirit of God working in our life, we renounce all selfishness. We renounce all comfort zones. We renounce all those things that we would want to do in our natural selves that would keep us in a life of comfort, but also it will keep us in a life of disobedience to God.

So therefore, may I say this morning that to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ and to desire that is simply a heart that is set on obeying the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit at the expense of suffering with Christ. Suffering with Him as a result of saying no to our own desires. No to our own natural tendencies that would lead us into a life of a comfort zone.

Saying no to those movements in our life that would cut ourselves off of that which will result in undue suffering after the flesh. Now, let me share with you several verses in the Bible that support this essential truth. Suffering is vital if we are to come into spiritual maturity.

Suffering is vital if we are to come into a life of obedience to the Word of God. Suffering is vital if we are to know the heart of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Listen to what Paul says here.

2 Corinthians chapter 1 beginning in verse number 3. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. Now, we're going to see as we read some of the comfort zones that the Apostle Paul had to abandon in order to obey God. Now, listen.

Not everyone is going to have to do exactly the same thing, but the fact is we're all going to have to abandon our own particular comfort zones if we're going to come into maturity. Now, we're going to see here that the very reason why Paul was able, listen closely, why he was able to be able to write these verses is because he was willing to leave the comfort zone of what? The comfort zone of being in a nice controlled atmosphere. Like, he could have remained the teacher at the Antioch Church.

You know, he went to Antioch after Barnabas went and fetched him from, I believe he was at that time in Damascus. And Barnabas went and fetched him because he had gone to Antioch and discovered the great move of God that was occurring. Now, you know, Paul could have went to Antioch and he could have said, hey, praise the Lord.

I got me a nice place here. These are nice Christians. They respect me as an apostle.

Hallelujah to God. This is good. I'm just going to preach every Sunday.

And I'm just going to fellowship. And I'm just going to enjoy the love feasts. And I'm just going to have a good time with these Christians.

But God said to Paul through the Holy Ghost, separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work that I've called them to do. And the moment God spoke to Paul and Barnabas, they had to make a decision. They had to say goodbye comfort zone.

Goodbye home. Goodbye house. Goodbye comfortable feelings.

Goodbye schedule. Goodbye this is my time and it's not your time. Goodbye to all that.

When Paul said yes to the Holy Ghost, he was saying goodbye comfort zone. I'm going to live a life now where I'm cast upon God. I'm not going to have a schedule.

I'm not going to have a nice shower. I'm not going to have time for myself. I'm not going to be able to get my composure.

I've got to be a love slave to Jesus Christ. I have no rights. I have no way.

I have no comfort other than God. Goodbye comfort zone. Hallelujah to God.

Hallelujah. You can say amen. Hallelujah.

Do you see? The comfort zone. If Paul would have said no, I want my life. I want my comfort zone.

I need my time. I need my privacy. God would have had to find him another apostle.

Huh? God would have had to find himself another man. Are we prepared this morning to let the Holy Ghost put his finger on that comfort zone that we are holding on to that is preventing us from obeying the Lord fully? Come on, when Paul said yes to the Holy Ghost, he lost it all. He lost all of his comfort.

Just think, Paul must have had a nice little schedule. Now please, you have to understand that when God speaks something, it appears like it's out of balance. Don't get out of balance with this.

Just let God speak to you. But Paul had a nice schedule. You know, many times our schedules become the very thing that keeps us from growing in God because we create our schedule to keep us from getting involved in a life that causes pain.

Schedules protect us many times from what's uncomfortable to us. Schedules protect us from being vulnerable. Paul had to give up his schedule.

Paul had to give up his quiet time. He had quiet time, but he had it on the sea. He had it in the prison.

He didn't give up worship. He sang while his feet were in fetters. How intensely the shepherd wants us to understand this message, beloved.

Think it not strange when the heavenly shepherd begins to come into your life and puts his finger on your comfort zones. Let me tell you your first reaction, unless you're so full of the Holy Ghost and you're so full of the Word of God, and you could be, but let me tell you what your first reaction will be if you're not. You're going to get angry.

You're going to get angry at God and you're going to get angry at the person or circumstance that God's using in order to disrupt your comfort zone. That's your first reaction. Unless, of course, you're a spiritual person, and if you are, then when God puts his finger on your comfort zone, you're going to start singing a song.

And you're going to say, Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus! Praise God! An opportunity to suffer more for you. Now, how many would fall into that category? Don't raise your hands. Do you love Jesus? Do you love him this morning? You do, don't you? He knows you do.

Remember, the shepherd loves his sheep. Now, I can't say I love those sheep out there. I really don't.

But they do grow on you. They do, especially the little lambs. Oh, they're so cute, but you know they're getting so big now? They can barely fit inside that little special place that Chick built so that they can be separate from the big ones, because the big ones are obnoxious.

When it's time to feed the big ones, buck away the little ones and eat all the food. So, Chick built a little separate thing there so the little ones can go in between little holes that big ones can't fit, and we feed them separately. And they're so cute.

So, the reason Paul can write this whole epistle is because he dared to believe God. Here's what the Holy Ghost is saying right now. Listen closely.

This is what the Holy Ghost is saying to everyone here. He's saying to you and to me, be attentive and listen. Because I'm going to call you out from your comfort zone.

Not to punish you, but to bless you and to bring increase in your life spiritually. And to make you a greater blessing to other people. But here's what the Holy Ghost will say.

Will you walk with me? You know, sometimes when a sheep is obstinate, I mean obstinate, and it refuses to go, and always gets into trouble, and always, always is finding itself out from the flock, doing its own thing. You know what the shepherd does? Breaks its leg. Takes it and puts it on its shoulders.

Do you know what the shepherd will do with those that he loves very much, who refuse to hear his voice, and who refuse to tear down the comfort zones, and who continuously, continuously, continuously say no to God, because no, he doesn't do that because he hates it, or because he wants to be mean, but he's doing it because he loves us so much, he doesn't want us to be caught for the rest of our life in that realm of living in our comfort zone. So it's an act of love. But I tell you God would prefer rather to break our leg than to walk with us and then we follow him.

Verse number six, chapter one, Corinthians. What are you preaching on next Sunday night, Gary? Suffering. Huh? Yeah.

And when we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation. You see, when you, listen, when you allow the Holy Spirit to lead you out of your comfort zone and you experience affliction as the result, and suffering, what does the Bible say? It is for your consolation and suffering. You see, when you obey God and you let God take you out of your comfort zone, then you end up blessing other people.

It is for the sake of the body. You end up becoming very much like Jesus because all of what Jesus did was for whose sake? Your sake and my sake. Listen, the real true useful Christians in the world today are the ones who have allowed the Holy Spirit to lead them out of their comfort zones, out of their little lives where it is just them and their desires into a life of reckless abandonment to the Word of God.

They are suffering. They are suffering in the flesh, but God, they are blessing people. They are blessing people in secret ways.

They are not necessarily on TBN or the 700 Club, but secretly, they're blessing people, and I can assure you, and I speak from the Lord to every person here or who might hear this on the tape, if you've said yes to God and you're in that realm where you have left your comfort zone, don't worry about who sees you. Don't worry about it if people don't know or whether they do know. Don't look for men to commend you.

You will not lose your reward. You will not lose the blessing. God will have a special place in His heart for you, and He sees every blessing that you are imparting to other people because you have chosen to allow God to take you from your comfort zone.

He sees it right now. He sees everything that you are able to do because you are living recklessly for Him, and He sees it, and He's pleased, and you are going to be rewarded. Great will be your reward.

The Bible says great will be your reward. Don't be discouraged, and don't look for man's approval when you get out into this life. Just look for the pleasure of God.

Look for the smile of God, and if you've got the smile of God, you've got everything you need. Hallelujah to God. Thank you, Jesus.

Verse number 7, And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation. So see, in number 7, Paul was saying, we've suffered, and we're being comforted as a result. And not only are we being comforted, but we're able to be useful to bless other people, and then Paul says, and our hope is that you Corinthians will also suffer by allowing God to take you out of your comfort zones, and if you do, then you'll both know the comfort that comes to those who step out of their comfort zones, the comfort that comes from God, and you'll also know, ha, ha, ha, hallelujah, the blessing of being a blessing to other people.

You know, I've been on this journey now for 20 years, this May, May 28th. I will be 20 years as a sojourner and a pilgrim and a love slave of Jesus Christ. And I have made an observation over the past 20 years that I feel is noteworthy at this time, and that is this.

The lives that I have seen that were most useful to God and most blessed to other people are only those Christians who, by the dealing of God, have stepped out of their comfort zone into a life of reckless obedience to the Word of God and have found their comfort and their consolation in God alone. Those vessels, everywhere I met them, whether it was in Europe or whether it was somewhere in the continental United States, anywhere I met a soul that I sensed had something of a significant contribution to give to the body, after talking with them for a little while, I'd say, yup, same thing. They've left their comfort zone.

They don't care about their life. They don't care about their selfish desires. They're just recklessly serving God with blind obedience to the Word of God.

There's suffering, though. There's pain to it. You have to suffer emotionally and mentally.

Your body suffers, but oh, hallelujah, that God with the suffering comes the special comfort from God and also with the comfort comes an unveiling of the glory of God and with the unveiling of the glory comes the ability to reign in this life. Not reign as a king would in Saudi Arabia or as the queen in England, but you reign in this life by living a life of power over the devil, the flesh, the sin, the world and you reign in righteousness through Jesus Christ. Hallelujah to God.

That's the fruit of living selflessly for God. You reign. Now watch what Paul says.

Verse number 8. Hallelujah to God. This is exciting. Oh God, please, give us ears to hear.

Can I ask a question? Is everybody getting this? Good. Good. Good.

Hallelujah. I prayed. I prayed God and I didn't pray God.

Listen. Listen. Look up here.

I didn't pray God. You get them to see this. I prayed God.

Get us to see this. Remember the greatest person that a preacher impacts is himself. Sometimes I might come across like I'm preaching at you.

Forgive me. If I do, I'm just getting excited, but it's because I'm preaching at me. I need this more than you.

I need to hear the words. That's why I talk loud so I can hear it. What I'm trying to say is this isn't Lord get them to see it.

It's Lord get us to see it. Get us to see it. For we would not brethren have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia.

Stop right there. The trouble that came to Paul in Asia all happened because of one decision that he made. I'm leaving my comfort zone and I'm going to say yes to God.

Even if it means leaving that beautiful position in Antioch. Those love feasts. I'm leaving.

So everything happening in Paul's life now started when he said yes to God's way. Now what kind of suffering did Paul get involved in as a result of saying yes to God? Watch this. I would not have you ignorant of the trouble which came to us in Asia that we were pressed out of measure above strength insomuch that we despaired even life.

Beloved, do you hear what Paul is saying right now? Do you know the kinds of emotions that Paul had to deal with while he was being pressed out of measure above strength insomuch that he despaired even life? These are the most uncomfortable emotions that the human nature wants to avoid. There is nobody that wants to find themselves in this situation. There is nothing in this situation that's palatable, that tastes good to human nature.

Is there? Does anybody want to suffer unless they're a sick sadomasochist or something where they get off on suffering but a normal human being doesn't want to suffer? We want comfort, don't we? How many of you, when it's zero degrees like to sleep out on your front porch naked in a pile of snow? Do you hear what I'm saying? No. What do you do? You go to Box Drugstore and buy a heating blanket. At least that's what I did.

After I had my heart attack, I was susceptible to I think it was nerves more than cold. I used to shake at night. So, Colette, I think we bought it.

We bought a nice warm blanket and I've been wanting that. We need to find that because I've been cold at night. But, you know, you put that thing on 10 and in 30 minutes you slip in there and oh, it's almost like heaven.

It's comfortable, you see. We don't want the pain of cold or the pain of of unpredictability. We don't like that.

So, you know, what kind of emotions come when you're subject to this kind of suffering? Anger, despair, despondency, hopelessness, pain. Oh, my, when you don't like a situation you're in, what kind of feelings do you get? You know all those feelings. You've experienced them.

That's suffering with Christ. That's the sufferings of Christ. Because, see, Christ suffered in that He refused to do what would comfort Him as a man, but rather He chose to do the will of God which brought grief and sorrow to His humanity.

Jesus was no different than you and I excepting one thing. He was without sin and we are with sin in our flesh. But apart from that, He was man, man, man, man, as man as you can get.

That is, when Jesus fasted, He didn't like it. It was hard. He felt uncomfortable.

He didn't say, Hallelujah, this is one. No. He suffered.

He didn't like the feeling. When Jesus got up before the sun shined. By the way, the night before, He was up until late at night.

And then before the sun came up, the Bible says, He went out to pray. Do you think He liked that? Do you think He shot up out of bed? Hallelujah! I can't wait to go pray. I'm so glad I only got two hours of sleep.

No! He probably woke Himself up and went like this and said, Oh God, give me strength. And He got up and went to pray. He was a man.

He wasn't a superhuman. The Bible says He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities. That means He shared in our weakness.

When He was hungry, He felt hungry. What did He say on the cross? I am the Son of God. I have need of nothing.

I don't need water. No. He said what? I thirst.

I'm thirsty. What else did He say? My God! My God! Where are You? What have You done? I've lived a righteous life before You. I've showed the multitudes Your way.

Why have You forsaken me? Why have You left me at my hour of greatest need, O God? Where are You? Lord, look at me! Look! I'm hurting! I'm bleeding! I can't breathe! They're mocking me! Where are You? Melodramatic? I think not. I think not. It's true.

It's true, isn't it? It's the Lord. He was a man just like us. He felt the pain just like we do.

But hallelujah! He said my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and finish it. And even though it hurt, and even though everything in Him, in His humanity, wanted to run from the cross, He said I will lay my life down! What did He do in the garden? Take the cup and say, hallelujah! I can't wait to be crucified, Father! I can't wait to be made a sin offering! How much time we got? Lord, can we move this up a little bit? Come on, let's go! For I'm gonna show them how strong I am! He'd make Rocky look like nothing. Come on, Lord, I'm ready to take him on.

No, He went out there and He sweat, He sweat drops of blood. Why? Why do you think He sweat drops of blood? Huh? Why do you think? Because He was suffering! It hurt! It hurt! He was in pain, Gary! His humanity, listen, His humanity was breaking up! He couldn't take it! You ever feel like that? No, you never felt like Jesus did. But did you ever feel like in your own little world where God's testing you, you couldn't take it? You think Jesus knows what you're going through? Yeah, He does.

He sweat drops of blood. He didn't do it to put on a show. He did it because His humanity was breaking.

Some doctors tell us sweating drops of blood was an indication of, you know what it was? Cerebral hemorrhage. Blood had gotten into His pores. That's because somewhere a blood vessel probably broke.

That's why He was sweating blood. Why do you think a blood vessel broke? Stress. Pain.

Suffering. Grief. Despair.

You think Jesus ever despaired? Yes, He did despair. What was He doing in the garden? He was despairing His life. Hallelujah.

He suffered. Verse number 9. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves. You see, the sentence of death is in ourselves.

The sentence of death in ourselves means this. As Christians, we are to die to our own desires. As Christians, when we are confronted with God's will, which might make us suffer, or my will, which will prevent me from doing God's will and keep me from suffering, then we have to say the sentence of death is upon me.

I can't choose my own way. But I have to choose the way of God. And if I suffer, I am comforted in this way.

Jesus suffered too. Isn't that wonderful to know? When God calls you out of your comfort zone, beloved, and you feel the feelings of those emotions and the pain, and you feel that feeling of discomfort, you remember Gethsemane. You remember Calvary.

And you say, thank you, Jesus, that you know what I'm going through. And Lord, help me because no matter what I go through, I'll never go through what you did. And you did it so that you can be a high priest in heaven.

Oh, Jesus right now is fully a man right now. He's not some mystical spirit. He was raised from the dead.

And what did he say to his disciples? Touch me. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bone as you see I have. Why is Jesus a man in heaven now? Because he made the way perfect so that now he's in heaven.

And as we suffer because we obey him, he can say, I understand. I'm going to comfort you. I'm with you.

You can do it by my strength. You can say, if it was just God who'd never been a man. Oh, God, I know you're God.

But you never were a man. You don't know how I feel, God. I know you're God and you probably do know how I feel.

But even so, did you ever have to deal with this? Jesus could say, excuse me, Father, let me talk. Yes, I know exactly how you feel. And what would we have to do then? We'd have to become speechless.

Glory to God. Jesus knows how we feel. That's why he's a human in heaven.

That's why he is ever living to make intercession for us. That's why he's able to comfort us. He's gone through it.

We have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raises the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver us in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. Second Corinthians chapter four verse number seven.

A little bit more of the things that happen to the earthen vessel when Jesus Christ is able to get us to the place where we say, Lord, I'm going to let you take me from my comfort zone. I'm going to commit myself to prayer and to the word of God. I'm going to pray that I'm filled with the spirit of God so that I can live a life of obedience.

Here's where it'll bring you. Second Corinthians chapter four verse number seven. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

We are troubled on every side yet not distressed. We are perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted but not forsaken.

Cast down but not destroyed. Notice these words. Write them down somewhere.

When you say yes to the shepherd and let him put his finger on any kind of a comfort zone that you've created in your life to keep you from suffering, to keep you from obeying the Lord, when you say yes, here's what you're going to experience in some way or fashion. Trouble. You're going to be troubled.

Emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Perplexed. Did you ever feel perplexed? Perplexity will be a part of it.

Persecuted. Afflicted. Pressed out of measure.

Persecuted. Afflicted. Pressed out of measure.

Now be careful. Cast down. Now, let's go over this list.

I'm just going to mention them. I might miss a few because some I mentioned that weren't here. Cast down.

Persecuted. Afflicted. Pressed out of measure.

Troubled. Perplexed. Now, I want you to ask yourself this question.

Do you in your natural self want to be surrounded with these kinds of emotions? Absolutely not. Let me show you something real quick. Isaiah chapter 53.

You don't have to turn to it. Just make a reference to it. May I say to you that Jesus Christ was constantly in the presence of His Father.

He was constantly being filled with the comfort that came from His Father. He was constantly in perfect union with His Father. So in spirit, and I say that with a very clear statement, in spirit He was constantly in the presence of God's joy.

But as a man in His humanity, this is what the Bible says about Jesus Christ. Isaiah chapter 53. Verse number two.

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness. And when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

He is despised and rejected of men. What kind of feelings come to you when you're despised and rejected of men? Listen, I don't care how spiritual you are. I know you might have all your security in God, all your acceptance in God, and you don't need the approval of any man.

And that's really the way we should be. We should be so secure in God's love that we don't need anyone's love. We should be so secure in the fact that God accepts us perfectly that it doesn't matter who accepts us.

And if we have that, that's good. But even if we have that, in our humanity, we are still gonna battle emotions. Now when you are despised and rejected, what kind of feelings do you have in your emotions? Insecurities arise, right? Sure they do.

All kinds of insecurities. You feel like you're not worth anything. You feel like you're a terrible, miserable, rotten person.

You feel like you might have done something, or you might get angry and have it reversed and say, bless God if they don't like me. Tough. See, you get all kinds of emotions.

This is suffering. All this is because Jesus left His comfort zone. What was His comfort zone? Heaven.

You got that right. Jesus was the King. He was the Word.

He was God. He was always with the Father. He reigned in omnipotence.

Hallelujah to God. He said, Father, I'll leave it. I'll leave it all.

I'll make myself vulnerable. And I'll walk as a man among men and bear the sin of the world. Father said, Son, that will bring unspeakable grief and sorrow upon you.

I know it will Father, but I'm willing to suffer for their sake because I know how much I love them. I know how much I love them and I'm willing to suffer for them. He is despised and rejected.

Listen, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. You know what that word acquainted means? A constant familiar companion. A constant familiar companion.

What was the companion of Christ? What was He constantly confronted with during His whole earthly ministry? His Father. But what does it say here? Grief. Grief.

Christ was constantly acquainted with grief. Now, how many of us would choose to take grief and sorrow and suffering? So long, Joe. Bless you, brother.

How many of us would naturally want grief and sorrow and suffering and despair to be our companions that walk with us all the days of our life? Who wrote the book? Hannah Hernard. And isn't it true in one of her books she describes these characters, grief and sorrow, as becoming companions of the pilgrim and after a while the pilgrim sort of liked it, didn't he? So, see, the spirit of revelation is working all the time, giving saints of God in the ages this truth. Christ's companion was sorrow.

Why? It's because He was suffering after the flesh. But along with suffering after the flesh and having grief and sorrow as companions, hallelujah, He had an open heaven. He had an open heaven.

The Father was always before Him. And not only that, He always had something to give someone, didn't He? The Bible says in Isaiah, hallelujah to God, Isaiah chapter 50. The Lord God wakeneth me morning by morning.

Where's that? 50? 50. Listen to what it says about Jesus. Listen to this.

Isaiah chapter 50 verse 4. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth me morning by morning. He wakeneth my ear to hear as the learned.

So here, although Jesus had suffering and grief and sorrow as His companion, yet on the other hand, He was constantly, constantly able to give a word of encouragement and a word of life to those who needed it. I don't know about you brothers and sisters, but in my spirit, I would rather choose suffering and obedience to Christ and accept the fact that my earthly pilgrimage is going to be filled with outward sorrows and grief, knowing that along with that, I'm going to be a man full of spiritual wealth and treasure able to impart life to whoever I come to. Just a passing note here, I went to a two-day conference on Friday and Saturday.

Friday night, after the conference, the speaker and I went to the Marriott Hotel and there we stayed. And he was so exhausted. We walked in and he said, Phil, I gotta go.

I'll see you in the morning. And I said, go ahead brother because he spent several hours teaching. I walked up to the check-in area and there were several people there and one of the men next to me said, Mr. Beets, we were expecting you.

And I looked at him and I said, how did you know who I was? You make me feel so important. And he smiled and said, your name tag is on. I forgot to take my name tag off.

And I started laughing and then he looked at me and another person looked at me and almost simultaneously, listen, they said, how come you've got so much joy all over your face? There's light in your face. What is it? Well, I said, you really want to know? And I had 45 minute opportunity to talk to them about Jesus Christ, the reason for the joy and the light that was in my countenance. I say that to say this, God will give you something from himself in exchange for you giving him a life of obedience.

You say yes to God when it means you might suffer. You might feel uncomfortable, but God will give you heaven. To make a long story short, that night, this man from Dominican Republic gave me his card and said, sir, now listen, this is where it's at beloved.

This is where it's at. He said, sir, would you please go to your room tonight and pray for me that Jesus Christ will open up my heart and that I might be able to receive this salvation. Is that unheard of? The Holy Ghost was so much upon him and so convicting him, he basically begged me to pray for him.

So I went and prayed all night, not all night, but half the night until two o'clock in the morning that God would touch this man. And the next morning I went down there and he looked at me and said, you prayed, didn't you? I said, I did. And we chatted a little bit and he basically accepted the Lord.

So God willing, this week, I'm going to travel back to Hillsdale and I'm going to connect with him and I'm going to make sure he gets into a church. Because if you birth a baby and let it go, what will happen to it? It might get real messed up. It might die.

So I say all that to say this. What are you going to get if you obey God and leave your comfort zone? What are you going to get in return? You're going to get wealth from heaven that is able to penetrate the hearts of men. Now I don't know what you want, but that's what I want.

I don't want to live some fleshly, earthly life for the next fifty years and be outwardly successful and die and God stand before me and say, son, I love you. But very few people discovered who I was through you. Why? Well Lord, I'll tell you why my son.

It's because you basically way back yonder fifty years ago when I said I want you to leave your comfort zone and I want you to follow me in obedience and I want you to count all joy the sufferings that you go through. You said, no I don't think so God. He said, now you're here son because I love you and it's because of my son.

But not many lives were touched through you. What are you going to say? Yeah. Maybe if we can do it again.

I'm sorry. You can't do it again. There's no second chance.

Second Timothy chapter two. I'm going to close in a few moments. Think the message has been communicated.

Has it? It has. A few more scriptures just to get the word in us. Second Timothy chapter two.

I hope that what will be accomplished through this message this morning is this. Among whatever the Lord might want to do. I hope you see now that it is absolutely imperative that you suffer not self induced suffering but suffering that comes from obedience to the word of God if you expect to know the Lord in a deep way and expect to be a blessing to other people and have something to give other people.

Don't fight against suffering and against the feelings you experience when you suffer. Simply fall down before the Lord and thank him that he understands what you're going through and his grace is sufficient. Amen? Thou therefore my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things which thou has heard of me among many witnesses the same commit that of faithful men who shall be able to teach others.

Thou therefore endure hardness Did you hear that? Endure hardness. Endure suffering. Endure affliction.

Listen. Endure anything that happens to you because you have decided to leave your comfort zone. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ no man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.

Chapter 3 verse 10 But thou has fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions which came to me at Antioch, in Iconium, at Lystra, which persecutions I what? Endured. Are you glad that Paul endured? If he didn't, we wouldn't have these books to read. Listen to this.

Verse 12. Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. You know what that word will means? To choose.

2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 10, 11, and now 12. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus. Do you know what it means to live godly in Christ Jesus? It doesn't mean just to profess Christ.

It doesn't mean just to say I'm a Christian. To live godly in Christ Jesus is to will. To make a decision that you will obey God at the cost of leaving your comfort zone.

And if you do that, you will suffer persecution. That's what the Bible says. Let's close by turning to 1 Peter chapter 5. One of my favorite scriptures.

1 Peter chapter 5. Beginning in verse number 10. But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus after that ye have suffered a while make you perfect establish you,

strengthen you, and settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen and amen. I'm going to ask if Colette would come up to the piano now. And let's spend time before the Lord.

I believe that the practical application to this message this morning could be understood by asking the Lord to personalize this message into your own lives right now. Personalize it. Where have you found refuge in a comfort zone? And would you be willing for the shepherd as the title of this message says, leave your comfort zone, make yourself vulnerable to what you know will happen, the suffering, the pain, the pressure, but in light of this message and the word of God, isn't this a fresh perspective this morning? Sure it is.

That's why it's from the shepherd because he encourages us. He knows we're weary. He knows that he himself had to deal with it.

He knows we're weary. He knows we're going to find our own little comfort zone if he doesn't come and prod us. Isn't he prodding us with his stick? Lovingly though.

He's not beating us. He's prodding us nice and gently because he knows we're going to run from this. But listen, he's saying, listen, he's saying, in light of this message now, you become willing to leave your comfort zone.

Yes, yes, yes. You might come back to the old familiar friends, anxiety, frustration, anger, but don't despair. The shepherd says, I'll be with you.

I'll comfort you. I'll teach you to be an overcomer. I'll teach you how to overcome all of those feelings and emotions through my resurrection life that lives in you.

I'll make you a champion for me, but not only will I do that for you, when you get around people, you will have life to give. Your smile will be living. Your words will be something special.

People will say, I don't know what it is about that girl or about that guy. I don't know what it is, but whenever I get with them and talk with them, I always get something in my spirit. Why? Because you've accepted the call.

You're suffering with Christ. But in suffering, you're also sharing in his life. Oh, may I bid you by the heart of God's love this morning as we sing this song, may I bid you to say yes to the shepherd, to whatever he shows you.

Because the sufferings of this present time cannot be worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us and through us. Father, I pray in Jesus' name that you'll honor your word, honor the Spirit of God, honor your own heart today by sending the power of the Spirit to make effectual in the hearer of this message the truth of your heart. Liberate everyone from the fear of the devil and from the fear of their own inadequacy that they might venture into a life of reckless obedience to the word of God and discover the treasure of Jesus Christ.

I pray, Lord, in Jesus' name. Now let's just spend quiet time before the Lord. Let God search your heart.

Amen.

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