

A Call To Surrender

by Steve Gallagher

This sermon emphasizes the journey from death to life through true submission and godliness, prophesying a transformation in someone's life. It delves into the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19, highlighting the call to surrender and observations about Jesus' love for sinners. The sermon discusses the spiritual process of conversion, focusing on fear of God, spiritual enlightenment, poverty of spirit, repentance, surrender, and submission.

Scripture: Luke 19:1, Psalms 34:18, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 16:24, James 4:7, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 2:13, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Transformation", "Surrender to God"

Description

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Transcript

And I want to say something. I'm not sure exactly how to say it. I'm speaking this, I could say I'm speaking it in faith, but it's actually stronger than that.

I'm speaking it prophetically, that there are going to be some here, maybe just one, I don't know, who are going to go from death to life today. I know that. From dead religion, from playing the game, from having God on your own terms, from dictating your own life into a life of true submission and godliness.

Someone, someone in here is going to make that transition today. And I also want to say one other thing. It's going to be in large part because two staff members yesterday spent four hours praying for you.

Two staff members got together, took their Saturday, and spent four hours on their faces before God, praying for that very thing to happen. And it is going to happen. All right, I've got to pull myself together.

I was just really affected by God's presence this morning. We're looking at Luke 19, 1 through 10, story of Zacchaeus, the conversion of Zacchaeus. I told you last month that the title of my message was going to be the ultimate taker, did I say becomes the ultimate giver or something? I don't know.

Well, that's not the title. I had to change it because God stepped in and the title now is A Call to Surrender. And that's what this message, that's what this whole service is, a call to surrender.

So what I want to do is I'm not going to read these verses. You've already read them. I'm going to just make a few observations about this story.

And then I want to get into the message I felt like the Lord put on my heart, okay? My first observation has already been made by Pastor Ed, and that is that Luke never seemed to miss an opportunity. Could you get my water, please? Luke never missed an opportunity, thank you, dear, to show the love Jesus had for sinners, for the downcast, the outcast. And I was in my notes here, you really see it in chapter 15.

And right off the bat, as Ed said, all the sinners were coming to him and the Pharisees and their disdain said, he's a friend of sinners. And that is about the only honest thing those men ever said about Jesus. And his response to them was to give the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son.

And, you know, throughout the book of Luke, he's just constantly expressing different things about Jesus' great love for sinners. And then in verse 10, we see the mission statement of Jesus Christ, for the Son of Man has come for this reason, to seek and to save that which was lost. Praise God.

All right, but the second thing I want to point out is that Zacchaeus had a serious spiritual problem. I think Boaz has got a serious spiritual problem back there. The best picture I could think of to describe what Zacchaeus was in was Scrooge.

I was so disappointed to find out, you guys just watched that movie last, oh, it was Jacob was the little sinner, huh? Boaz, forgive me. False accusations coming from the pulpit. They're just having fun back there.

You understand that, right? They're just kind of singing along and they think that's what I'm doing and they're just joining in. But anyway, so yeah, I found out you guys had just seen A Christmas Carol, which was really disappointing because I wanted you to see it last night. Kathy and I watched it last night, about the 300th time.

I never get tired of it, though. Man, it is the most beautiful picture of a conversion ever, you know, ever. It's just such an awesome thing.

And you know how it begins by, you know, you see how disgruntled he is and how miserable he is and the miser, just greedy and tight-fisted, and the spirit of Christmas past shows him how he got there by making all these decisions, giving himself over increasingly, over the years, more and more to his idol, which was money. And you know, it really is a picture of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is the exact same thing.

He was all about, I mean, he gave up everything for this one pursuit to become the most, the richest possible Jew in the country. And he just became a very selfish, ugly man. And you know, really the only difference between these guys and us is what they gave themselves over to.

For them, it was money. For us, it was sex. But it's the same thing.

It takes you down the same path and leaves you in the same pigpen, doesn't it? Maybe ours is worse, actually. The third thing I want to point out is that there's a backstory to this incident. Okay, we, this is the thing about, you know, the Lord can only fit so much in this book, right? So you get this little 10 verses, we

get the whole story of this man.

And this is, he comes into the limelight, he goes out, and that's it. He's forgotten. But that 10 verses describes something that happens.

But there are years and years building up to this little incident here. Zacchaeus gets this impulse to get in the tree so he can see this Jesus of Nazareth. And he gets in that tree, the crowd is heading his way, and he is about to have a kairos moment.

And he doesn't understand this. And some of you don't understand this either. He doesn't understand that his entire eternity is going to rest on what he does in that kairos moment.

He gets one shot at this thing, and then Jesus is gone. And that's the thing about kairos moments. Okay, you're here for nine months, the Lord's going to have a kairos moment for you, I promise you.

He brought you here just the same way as he put Zacchaeus in that tree for that moment. He brought you here for a moment, men. Don't deny or doubt it, because it's the truth.

Now what you do with it is up to you. But make no mistake about it, he brought you here for one purpose, to have an encounter with Jesus Christ, one that would leave you not the same. And it will not leave you the same, I promise you this also.

If you don't make a real decision for Jesus Christ when that moment comes, you're going to go the other way. It's not a matter, you don't just stay the same. You become more hard, more unreachable, and further and further and further, you're drifting out into the sea of darkness.

Now anyway, so Zacchaeus doesn't understand the importance—I don't have a strong enough word for what's going to happen in this encounter. He doesn't understand. You don't understand.

The Holy Spirit has been working in his life for years. One of the ways that's been going on is through a growing dissatisfaction with life. Now for him, he wasn't just a tax collector, he was a chief tax collector.

There were three in the nation. He ruled over a certain realm, a third of the nation. He not ruled over, but I mean the taxation system.

He was over that whole region. So I am not exaggerating to say that he was one of the most hated men in that nation, and he knew it. You know, the Chosen, you guys I'm sure have seen the Chosen, and Matthew, you know, kind of goes through some stuff, and you kind of feel how rejected, but it's pretty weak, really.

The portrayal is pretty pathetic, to be honest with you. They did do some good stuff occasionally, but yeah, it didn't really capture, it didn't capture the utter disdain that people felt for these men when they would walk through the streets. They still have to live, you know, you still got to go down to the grocery store or whatever, you know, you still got to do life, and everyone around you hates you.

How does that affect you year after year after year? You know, eventually he gets rich, because that's the kind of position he was in. He became very wealthy, and you know, I think about this, it's like you want the fast track to doom? Set yourself on the course to be wealthy. How many actors and musicians have we heard that either committed suicide or OD'd on drugs and died? You know, they had everything, and they're so full of joy that they have to depend on drugs to make it from one day to the next.

Having wealth and prosperity is like the fast track into misery. So all this backstory, I don't know how old he was, let's say he's 50. So for all these years, let's say at 20 he sets himself on this course.

He rejects the, you know, rabbinical system and all that. I can't have that and have this wealth also that I want. So he walks away from that, let's say at 20.

So for 30 years, whatever, for 30 years he's been living with the disdain of everyone around him. For all this time, who knows how many people spit when he walked by or said things and, you know, hurtful things. And it was all God was using it and working in the quiet regions of his inner man, bringing it to this one point, and everything hinged on what he was going to do with that Kairos moment.

And as Pastor Ed mentioned, the rich young ruler is, they're two similar, very, very similar stories. Both of them are rich, both of them have a position of importance, and both of them are brought to an encounter with Jesus Christ, a Kairos moment. And you see how both of them responded.

One became like Scrooge where he's dancing around, remember that? I just love that picture. Wow, such an awesome thing. And the other walks away sorrowful, depressed, because he can't have his cake and eat it too.

He finally realizes it's hitting, hits him between the eyes. You mean I can't have God and be in control of my own life? No, it doesn't work that way. The difference was in their response, you know.

Zacchaeus instantly gives away at least half his fortune. The rich young ruler walked away richer than ever, but empty inside, spiritually empty. And you know, guys, I don't know how to say this, but we see the same thing happening in this place.

I've been here for, how many years have been now, 30? Well, for here, the residential program is 34 years old, right? 1990, we started the residential program. Thousands of men have come through here, and we've seen these two responses over and over and over again. There are some, some of you, there are some who you encounter the Lord, and you're just so sick of what your life has brought you to.

When you see the Lord, he's presented to you clearly. Your heart goes out to him. You don't care what the cost is.

I must have you, Lord. I don't care what it's going to cost. I don't care about anything.

Please, I must have Jesus. We've seen that happen many times in this place. But just as often, I hate to say, the rejection.

It's not an outright rejection. It isn't like, get out of my life sort of thing. No, it's a very subtle, quiet decision deep in the heart.

I don't really want to go that far. Most, I think most guys who reject the Lord in this place don't even realize they did it. They just did it.

That's the frightening part about it. You can reject the Lord and sit there with the most placid look on your face, be praising the Lord and rejecting him at the same time. It should terrify you, man.

It really should terrify you. You know, some of you guys are experts in some field of work, right? Is there any engineers in here, for instance? There's an engineer. How long have you been an engineer? Huh? I'll

call it 30 years.

Well, I've been doing this for 38 years. So as much as you know about engineering, I know more about sexual addicts. How many of you aren't even 38? And you're going to argue with me? Really? The last thing I'll mention about this story is that Jesus is invited—start that over again—is that Jesus inviting himself to eat with Zacchaeus is reminiscent of Revelation 320.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me. That is—see, we don't get that in America.

We do not understand the culture of biblical times. To eat with someone meant a lot more than—you know, you go to the airport, you're sitting in one of those little things, and you have to sit with other people. It doesn't mean anything to us.

We'll sit with anybody and eat. You know, we're just interested in food. But back then, it meant you were entering into a relationship.

You did not eat with someone unless you were in relationship with them. That's why the Jews got so hostile with Jesus about going to eat with the sinner. It was bad enough that he would talk to the man, but to go and eat with him meant he was just really coming into his life.

You know, that there was a real embracing of each other in some sort of emotional or spiritual way, whatever. And the response that Zacchaeus had to that shows that he was saying yes to the Lord. All this is going on deep inside his heart.

See what I mean? He's not thinking this through, like, okay, now Jesus is about to ask me if I will take him into my heart, and if I'll give myself to the Lord. Now he's not thinking all that stuff. None of that's going on in his head.

It's happening deep in his heart. And that's why Jesus said, today salvation has come to this house, because Jesus saw what was happening in his heart. All right, so those are some the main points I wanted to pull out of the story.

But I want to spend the rest of our time talking about conversion. You know, what a—because this is a—it's probably the most clear-cut picture of a conversion in the New Testament. And so I want to spend the rest of our time talking about what is a conversion.

Because we have, like every other spiritual thing, the American church has dumbed it down, watered it down, cheapened it to where it practically means nothing. You can be a prostitute and be a Christian. Now, you can divide humanity in different ways, different nationalities, different racial backgrounds, different financial status, whatever.

There's all kinds of different ways to divide up humanity. But from God's perspective, there's only one way that matters. From God's perspective, there's only two classes, those who have been converted to Christ and those who haven't, those who have entered the kingdom of God and those who are still part of the kingdom of darkness, those who are submitted to his authority and those who aren't.

You know, it kind of reminds me—well, let me say it this way, let me just say this. There is an enormous group of people in this nation, in the western hemisphere, in the world, whatever, who insist that there's a

third class of people. It's not just black and white.

It's not just one or the other. No, there's a third class. They're kind of in-betweeners.

It reminds me of these illegal immigrants that are sneaking across the border. They want all the benefits of living in America, but they don't want to submit themselves to the governing authorities. They don't want to obey the laws.

And that's what this third group is like. You know, they want all the benefits, they want God's blessings, they want to go to heaven, but they don't want to submit themselves to the Lord's authority. Adam Clark said, why is it called a kingdom? Because it has laws, and it's got a king.

Jesus Christ never saved a soul which he did not govern, and that is the truth. And people that are insisting on—that they can have God on their own terms are only deceiving themselves, and one day they will have to face that. Those who don't submit to God's authority are not converted to Christianity.

They're altered to Christianity, meaning they make a few tweaks in their life, and they, you know, shuffle some things around a little bit, and, you know, start going to church, and start doing Christian sorts of activities and stuff. But inside, they're still ungoverned. You're not born again, or, I mean, when you're born again, it's not an alteration of self, it's an obliteration of self, at least the beginning of it.

So how did Zacchaeus go from being this grasping, greedy scrooge to a man who's giving away half his fortune like that? How does that happen? Well, the Christmas carol really paints the picture beautifully. You see what Scrooge went through. Each of those ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future, each of them are bringing him into reality, making him face reality.

He didn't want to. He's practically begging them to shut this thing down, you know, after the first part. I don't want to see anymore, he says, but it shows the spiritual process involved with a true conversion.

All right, so I want to talk about conversion. I'm going to break it down into four elements, as far as I can tell there's four. Let's just get through this.

The first is fear of God and conviction of sin. Fear of God and conviction of sin. I've said this many times over the years, you won't get to first base spiritually until you understand what it means to fear the Lord.

I mean to fear him, not, you know, like these, I got to be careful how I say things, because I can be a little too sharp-tongued, so I'm going to try to soften my tongue, blow my nose first, that'll help. I guess to call them mealy-mouthed creatures would be a little too sharp, wouldn't it? What's another way of saying it, Steve? Seeker-friendly, that works. Who said that? TJ said that.

Okay, that'll work. We'll say seeker-friendly. Thank you, TJ.

Now I forgot where I was. Fear of God. Literally, I did forget where I was.

Seeker-friendly type preachers would say something like, well, the fear of God, that's just a way of saying that they believe in the Lord, or it means kind of having a reverence for the Lord. No, fear is the word phobos in the Greek. It means terror.

It means fearful. That's what fear of God means. It means you have a fear of what he could do to you, and I understand that fear, because he has done a lot to me, and I thank him for it, because I was, you know,

talking about conversions, I was just a rebel through and through, a sinner, all those things that I was.

I don't mean to go into that list, but what I'm getting at right now is just a smart-alecky, wise-cracking, you know, blow-off-everything sort of California guy. The opposite of reverent. I'm just not that way by nature, but God has made me that way, and I do fear the Lord.

And I'm just telling you, you won't get anywhere until you understand what it means to really fear him. And there's a large segment of the church that has done everything within their power to diminish any kind of fear of God. Psalms and Proverbs both said the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

That's what I'm saying. You just don't get anywhere until you fear the Lord. And one of the ways that fear forms is through conviction.

You know, when you do something wrong, there should be a strong sense of conviction about it. Jesus said one of the functions of the Holy Spirit would be to convict the world concerning sin. And Paul said our gospel didn't come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

I, yeah, I experienced that conviction. I won't go into it. It's, we're running out of time, but I can just say this.

Without conviction, there is no repentance. And without repentance, there is no conversion. All right, the second step in this process, they're not necessarily chronological, okay? I'll say a little bit more about this, but they're just things that happen.

These are things that happen during the conversion process, but I'm, I have to number them. So the second one is spiritual enlightenment. And the Bible tells us that there is a veil of unbelief on unbelievers.

It's a veil that masks, you know, if I put something over my head right now, it would, the light would be diminished, right? It just, it darkens everything. It darkens reality. So when God starts dealing with someone, what happens is, if they start responding a little bit to the Lord, then it's like their eyes become opened, and they start sensing, becoming aware of the unseen realm.

They start realizing what God's kingdom is all about. And you know, we've all heard the concept of seeing the light, and mockers have, yeah, trashed that concept, but it's actually a very, very precious thing, because when you see the light, when you come into the proximity to the kingdom of God, you start to see into that kingdom, and you start to see differently. It doesn't necessarily mean you're in the kingdom.

It means that you're starting to see things more clearly, and you're starting to see things more rightly. I don't know how else to say it. You're becoming awakened, you know, to spiritual things.

But like I say, it doesn't mean that you necessarily have crossed the line. An example of this, remember when one of the scribes asked Jesus, what's the greatest commandment? And Jesus said, well, what do you think it is? And he said that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And Jesus said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God.

You see, he had come close enough to the proximity of the kingdom, you know. Let me put it this way. If I was to go down to Amarillo, Texas, you start getting down by the border, and you start seeing Mexican stuff everywhere, you know.

The closer you get to the Mexican border, the closer you start getting in the atmosphere of Mexico. And it's that way with the kingdom of God. The closer you get to it, so there's millions of people sitting in church

maybe haven't been converted.

Many, I'm convinced, have not been converted, but they've come close enough that they are seeing things as they are. But, you know, it's the same as what I said before. No one enters the kingdom without repenting.

A good picture of it really is Old Testament Israel. You know, they had the oracles of God. They understood in their heads, had knowledge.

They understood what was going on. They had a history of witnessing miraculous things from God. They had all the outward trappings of religion.

But there was one problem. When it came right down to it, they would not submit to him. Now, if this was a, you know, let's paint it in terms of the Christmas carol.

And, you know, when the ghost of Christmas past comes and starts showing him stuff, and he's telling him, I don't want to see anymore. I don't want to see him. You guys remember that? And had they, had he been able to control the thing, that would have been the end of it.

But in this story, because, you know, you got to have a happy ending in the story, right? So he doesn't have any control. He's got to go through the whole thing. But in our case, we have a free will.

So we can pull the plug anytime we want. And so if he would have been able to pull the plug during that first visit, okay, it shook him up some. He would have made some resolutions to change his behavior.

And he probably would have been different for a while. But how long would it have lasted? How many of you went through experiences like that? Every one of you. I promise you, every single one of you went through experiences like that.

You made the resolutions. I'm going to be different. This time I mean it, right? Me too.

So being enlightened to spiritual things is not necessarily the same as being converted to Jesus Christ. The third element is poverty of spirit and repentance. This is actually a response to the conviction.

So it could have been the second step, but I had to get spiritual enlightenment in there, you know, so whatever with that. All I can tell you is, when a person has that response, that reaction in his heart, a sincere earnest desire to humble himself before the Lord, something changes. It's the poverty of spirit my wife was talking about.

You know, you start to see instead of this attitude that I am there with God, you know, I've got a little bit of a problem here that needs to be cleaned up, but I'm right there with God. We're walking together. Instead of that arrogant attitude, you just start to see your terrible lost condition, and that if God doesn't do something for you, you are in deep trouble.

You see it in the prodigal son story, you know, where everything started going bad, which is what happens when you give your self over to a life of sin. You rebel against the Lord, things go wrong, things go bad, and pretty soon you're starting to face the consequences. But just because the consequences for sin are coming into your life doesn't mean that you're going to bend the knee.

It doesn't mean that you're going to humble yourself. It doesn't mean that you have crossed that line. It just means that you're suffering the consequences of your sin.

But in his case, he did. He had a response in that pig pen, and that's where his life was changed. Just like Pastor Ed had it out there, my wife had it at her sister's house.

It says in Luke 15, but when he came to his senses, and that is a description of enlightenment, you know, when you come to your senses and you start seeing things right. When he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I'm dying here with hunger. I'll get up and go to my father, and I'll say to him, father, I've sinned against heaven and in your sight.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired men. It really is a beautiful picture of what a conversion, a true conversion looks like.

You know, he came into enlightenment, but it's so much more than that. You sense the remorse in the things he said. I have sinned, and I am not worthy.

People don't make those kinds of statements unless there's something real going on inside. You know, mostly what people do is do everything within their power not to have to make those statements. I don't want to admit sin to anybody.

I don't want to admit being wrong about anything ever and unworthy. Are you kidding me? I am worthy of everything. I'm entitled to go to heaven.

Man, getting up and going to church for 30 years. Okay, you take that on end of judgment. See how far that gets you.

The things this young man expressed, I'm talking about the prodigal, are rarely heard today. We're not told we must deny ourselves. We're told we should love ourselves.

We're not told that we're sinners who must repent. We're told that we've been emotionally traumatized, and we need inner healing. We're not told to consider ourselves as unworthy to be saved.

We're told that we're entitled to heaven's benefits. Yeah, that's the way it is. Number four, surrender and submission.

One more aspect of this prodigal story I need to bring out is what he said here. Make me as one of your hired men. That plays a crucial part in this conversion story because it involves his will.

You know, he is making the statement, I am going to do whatever you tell me to do for the rest of my life. That's what employees do, right? Whereas before, he was a spoiled, entitled son. Now he's willing to do anything his father said.

He was full of self-confidence. Now he's learning to trust his father more than he trusts himself. He was bent on going after what he wanted.

Now he's asking to be led. You know, it takes time, usually, to get to the place of where you really are fully submitted to the Lord's will. It usually doesn't happen in an instant, in even a powerful conversion.

It doesn't just, you don't just instantly, perfectly submit. That's a process. But if there's been a conversion, a dramatic thing has happened in the heart, a dramatic change in the attitude about your life.

And so you may not be perfect at it, but you've got a trajectory of going more and more into obeying the will of God. This is the process that Zacchaeus went through. All right, now I'm going to shift gears as I wrap this up.

You guys look like you can't take much more anyway. So I don't know how much you guys hear the news. Do you guys get any news at all? Nothing? You know about what's going on in Israel? No? October 7th, I think you know basically the basics of what happened, right? Hamas unleashed a massacre of hundreds of Jewish people.

And Netanyahu's response, like a good president or prime minister, is, we are going to root out Hamas. That is it. We are done.

You know, since 1948, this has been going on. We're done. I don't care what the world says.

Because, you know, what would happen is, time after time, the Arabs would attack them, they would respond, defeat them, and the world would step in and say, oh, stop that, stop that, leave them alone. Just like that. And so what happened out of that is this horrible stalemate between the Palestinians and the Jews.

Now, look at World War II. We went into Germany and Japan, and we bombed the living daylights out of those countries. I mean, every city in those countries was devastated.

I mean, in Japan, we dropped the nuclear bomb twice, atomic bomb twice, to bring them to their knees. But then what did we do after that? The Marshall Plan. We've destroyed the nation.

It's destroyed. But then we went in with the Marshall Plan to restore these nations. It was the goodness of the American people that was driving this.

And at great expense to America, China. We sent millions and millions of dollars of food and stuff, and to rebuild their economies, rebuild their infrastructure, and all of that. And they became allies.

Right? See, what had happened in Germany and Japan is the same thing that's happened in Palestine. Something evil gets into the culture, and it has to be eradicated. You can't live with that thing.

That's what the Jews have been forced to do for 70 years, is to live with it. And Netanyahu has said, that is it. We are not living with this anymore.

You pushed us too far. It's kind of like, it's kind of like a story in the Old Testament, where the Syrians surrounded the Jewish people, and the king of Israel, well, the king of Syria said to the king of Israel, your silver and your gold are mine. Your best wives and children also are mine.

And the king of Israel answered and said, as you say, my lord, oh king, I am yours, and all that I have. That is submission. And that is where the lord is trying to bring you men to.

To where you have that attitude through and through. I am yours, lord, and all that I have. Listen to what Matthew Henry said, when disease sinners come to this, that they are content to do anything, to submit to anything, to part with anything for a cure, then, and not till then, there begins to be some hope for them.

Then they will take Christ on his own terms, when they're made willing to have Christ upon any terms. That's what happened to Zacchaeus. Let me put it to you guys this way.

You came here because your life was out of control. You wanted a fix for this little problem. I'm going to put it to you this way, as clearly as I know how to say it.

Until you humble yourself, and really surrender to the lord, you will never have the power to overcome your addictions. You'll always be in this stalemate with God. You know, he's been trying to deliver a knockout punch with you for years, and you've learned how to slip punches.

You know how a good boxer can slip punches, so he never really, the other guy never really lands a good one on him. And that's what you guys have become adept at, slipping God's punches, staying in control. You know, when God wants to knock you out and restore you, that's not what you want.

That's not what you have wanted anyway. You wanted to have God on your own terms. I'm going to read one more quote, and then we're going to do something.

This is from A. W. Tozer. I just happened to cross this yesterday. I was doing a bible study, and I thought I got to read this.

The idea that God will pardon a rebel who has not given up his rebellion is contrary both to the scriptures and to common sense. How horrible to contemplate a church full of persons who have been pardoned, but who still love sin and hate the ways of righteousness. And how much more horrible to think of heaven as filled with sinners who had not repented nor changed their way of living.

Man, you've got a decision in front of you, whether it's today or whatever, at some point during your time here. You've got to make a decision, and it's probably going to just be a quiet decision in your heart. It's not emotion.

No one's looking for emotion here, because if that's all it is, it's gone in 10 minutes. Doesn't mean anything. It's a decision of your will.

That's what God brought you here for, a decision of your will. Josh, why don't you come on up and get on the keyboard. Why don't you guys go to the back.

If you're willing to throw up the white flag and complete unconditional surrender, if you're willing to submit your will to God and do what He tells you to do with your life, if you're willing to take Him on His terms and not your own, if you're willing to renounce self-trust and commit yourself to trusting God, if you want to make that consecration this morning, just come on up right now, and I'm going to pray for you. I'm glad to see that not everyone's coming up, because that means that either it's already happened for you, or you just know that today's not your time. Praise God.

I want you to be honest, and you guys that came down here, you've got to be honest through and through with the Lord. Lord, first of all, I want to pray for these men. They don't know what they're doing, Lord.

They're just... I understand. I was there myself. I remember what it was like, Lord, to be so just lost, knowing that I was in trouble, but not knowing how to get myself where I needed to be.

I remember the hopelessness, Lord. I was willing to try whatever, but I just didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have a Pure Life Ministries, but Lord, you found me.

You saw what was in my heart, and you came to me. You met me in that tree. You met me in that pig pen, and you said, today I must eat with you, Steve.

I must, because I see what's in your heart. Lord, I pray for these men. God, help them.

Help them, Lord. It's got to be real. It can't just be some emotional thing, some head thing, head trip thing, or just some dry mechanical decision.

Well, this is probably the right thing to do. I can't see in people's hearts, Lord, but you do. You see in these men's hearts, and I know, I know that right now, there's at least one.

I know there's at least one. Maybe every one of these guys. I don't know, Lord, but I know there's at least one.

He's crossing over right now, just as if we were in a hospital room with an aged person. They're just in their final moments, and then you hear that breath go out of them, and they're in that transition into the hereafter. There are men that are in that transition right now from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Take it by faith, men. Tell the Lord. Tell him, Lord, I've got to have that.

I've got to have you, and I don't care what you ask of me. I am going to obey you. Take my heart over.

Take my mind over. Take my will, Lord. I am yours, Lord.

I am yours. I am committed for the rest of my days, Lord, to obeying you. Draw them over, Lord.

Just draw them over that line right into the kingdom, just like going from Mexico into the U.S. Just step into a whole new life. Do that, Lord. Do that, Lord.

May this be the day, January 7th, 2024. This is the day I died and was risen again into a new life in Jesus Christ. Maybe some of these men have already crossed that line, but just want to make a deeper consecration to you, a deeper surrender.

Help them to do that, Lord. Help them to do that. Take them deeper into the kingdom of God.

Get them as far away from that border as possible, further and further and further into the kingdom of God, never to retreat, never to go back. And I know reality, Lord, because I know what I experienced. We'll be done with this meeting an hour later, two hours later, six hours later.

Those old lustful thoughts will come. Doubts will come. The enemy will be there to meet them and to start whispering into their ear, nothing's different.

You're the same. You know the truth, Lord. You know the truth of those who have given themselves to you, given their hearts to you.

You know reality, Lord. And yeah, they probably will struggle with lust and fantasy and temptations, of course. They still have a fallen nature.

But that's not what we're looking at, Lord. We're looking at their spiritual life. We're looking to see a love for God growing in their hearts, a deeper surrender, a deeper submission, a deeper consecration.

Do that, Lord. Do that inside them. Do that inside them.

Off in the future, maybe their graduation speech, I don't know, but they would be able to look back because that was the day that I became a new man in Christ. I've been playing church for years. I've been playing the game, half in, half out, just feeling overwhelmed by my addictions.

But that was the day I crossed the line. Do that for them, I pray, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's just keep it quiet in here. You guys can feel free to stay here with the Lord at the altar or in your chairs or go out on the ridge or whatever you want. God loves you.

Just like Pastor Ed said, He loves you. He brought you here. He brought you here.

It took a lot of divine work in the background. You have no idea how much God had to do to get you into this place. For this moment, you have no idea all the effort that went into getting you here.

But He got you here. He did it. He got you here.

And here you are. At an altar call at Pure Life Ministries, giving your hearts to the Lord. This is what you wanted.

This is what you cried out for when you were by yourself in all your despair. No one else around, just crying out to the Lord, God, please set me free. He's answering that right now.

He's answering that prayer right now. And you're becoming a new man in Christ. God bless you all.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/yC8PdDRymiA.mp4>

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