

The Church That Loses Its Calling

by Carter Conlon

The church that loses its calling is a church that has lost its focus on Christ and has become powerless in the last days.

Duration: 56:56

Scripture: Jonah 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:9

Topics: "Backsliding"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the impact of one man's obedience to God's call. He uses the example of David Wilkerson, who said yes to God's leading and ended up reaching 140 Muslim people who may have never heard the gospel otherwise. The speaker challenges the congregation to have the same courage and willingness to be used by God. He prays for God's mercy and revival in New York City, asking for the glory of the Lord to return to the streets. The sermon ends with an invitation to attend future services and a reminder to proclaim the message of salvation to both friends and enemies.

Transcript

I'm going to begin a series of messages. Now I've only, I think to the best of my knowledge, I've only preached one series ever in this church called the Living the Life of Double Portion. And I don't take on a series because I feel it just makes preaching a little easier.

It's something the Holy Spirit's put on my heart. In the next several weeks, I'm going to open up the books of 1st and 2nd Corinthians. I'm going to deal with a topic which I call the Corinthian Problem.

It's subtitled The Roots and the Resolutions to Powerlessness in the Last Days Church. What is it about Corinth? What is it about this church? What was the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul trying to get very deep into the consciousness of this people? Now folks, some of it's going to dig deep in the next few weeks, but I want to give you a sense of what's in my heart. By the time we get to the end, if you have held through with these messages, if you really want to hear what the Holy Spirit's going to speak, there's going to be something of God come into you.

Something of an understanding of Christ, a depth that perhaps you're only scratching the edge of right now. Now this is a word, I believe, from the Lord for those who are serious about these days and serious about what it means to be part of the church of Jesus Christ. And you say, God, I want to go deeper than I've ever gone before.

And if you do, the Lord's going to take you there. Pray for the pastors of this church and the leaders. If this would be a good time to fast, if you're given to fasting, please fast.

Remember Pastor David and Pastor Gary as they travel throughout the world. Pray for them. This is a serious time that we're living in.

Now, I want to speak this morning about the church that loses its calling. This is an introduction to this whole series called The Corinthian Problem. It's number one.

It's not really the first message. It's an introduction. It's an overview of what I'm going to be speaking about probably for six or seven weeks.

I'm not sure of that, to be honest with you. And obviously the Holy Spirit can interrupt that at any time and bring another word to this pulpit. But as I'm headed in this direction, I feel this is what the Lord is going to be doing.

First Corinthians, Chapter 1, please, if you'll go there. And also find the book of Jonah in the Old Testament. Closer to the end of the Old Testament, you'll find the book of Jonah.

And put a marker in there, if you will. And we're going to begin in First Corinthians, Chapter 1, talking about the church that loses its calling. Now, Father, I stand before you as a servant of you.

I know I have nothing. I know I am nothing. I know that I can't make this live.

I couldn't even preach it. I can't pray. I can't live as a Christian without the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I need this as much as anybody in this sanctuary does. I need you to speak to my heart. Even though I am a vessel that you would use to bring this word, I need my heart spoken to by the Holy Spirit.

God, come and speak to this whole sanctuary. Speak, Lord, to this church age. Speak to us, God, things that are in your mind and on your heart.

Give me the right touch from heaven to convey this in a manner that there's no flesh in it. It's all coming from the heart of God. Oh, Jesus, I pray that you give us the ability to forget about men.

Forget about who's speaking. Forget about everything but you and your word, Lord. May you be preeminent in our minds.

Father, I thank you, God. Oh, Jesus, the time is so short now. The need is so great.

You're the only one that has the power to meet it. And you've determined that the need of this generation be met through your church. Help us now, God, to understand these things.

Move us forward, Holy Spirit. Oh, God, I thank you for your mercy. I thank you for your grace and your power.

I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I give you praise and glory, Lord. Oh, God, thank you, Lord, that we're not called to build this kingdom in our own strength.

I give you praise and honor and glory, Lord, for what you're going to do. For the lives that are going to be touched. For missionaries that are going to be born.

For evangelists that are going to start to preach. God Almighty, I thank you for what's about to happen. I thank you for breaking out on the left and on the right, on every side.

Oh, God, there's something of you coming to this house, Lord. I give you glory for it, oh, God. We stand in our weakness, Lord.

We come before you in our nothingness and we acknowledge that you are everything. You are all in all. Without you, we're nothing.

But in you, we have all things, Lord. We have everything we need because of you, Lord. Oh, Jesus, oh, Jesus, touch these frail lips, oh, God.

Touch these frail hearts this morning, oh, Lord. And bring us into something of your life. I thank you for it with everything in me.

In your mighty name. Amen. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 26.

The church that loses its calling. For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

And God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. Base things of the world and things which are despised as God chosen. Yea, and things which are not.

That means nothing. To bring to nothing or not things that are. That no flesh should glory in his presence.

But of him are you and Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. Now the Lord and Paul is saying, the Holy Spirit saying through Paul to the Corinthian church.

God has called you to something. He's called you to something that is way beyond yourself. He's not called you to figure it out.

He does not want your strength. He does not need man's reasoning. He does not need anything.

He does not need diplomas. He does not need degrees. He does not need our thoughts.

He does not want our thoughts. He calls us to come to him in foolishness and weakness and nothingness. And in a baseness as it is.

The man that is much farther ahead. The woman that is much farther ahead is the one who comes to the throne of God and says, God, I have nothing. I have no strength and no power.

I can't pray. I can't preach. I can't live as a Christian without your strength.

This is the man. This is the woman that starts to know the touch of God. Praise God.

Christ becomes everything. He becomes our knowledge. He becomes our sense, our ability to walk separate from the thinking of this generation.

He is everything. And the glory that comes into the soul of the man or woman that stands in this generation as they did on the day of Pentecost. Not exalting themselves, but speaking of the things of God.

Speaking of the wonderful works of God. Glorifying as it is as the scripture says in the Lord. My wife and I have recently returned from Spain.

And we had an opportunity to speak to some of the pastors of that country. And the Lord did much good. Very thankful for your prayers for that.

But the highlight of my whole trip was not the conference as nice as it was. It was not Spain as beautiful a country as Spain is. The highlight of my whole trip is after staying up all night and reading the airplane and arriving in Valencia in the morning.

A young man picked me up at the airport. We spent three hours together before Teresa landed. And that was the highlight of my trip.

This young man's name is Cesar Gil. And some of you may remember him. I didn't know where he was.

I didn't even know what he had done. But Cesar was a pharmacist in Colombia who came to New York City about 13 or 14 years ago now. And he took a job as a furniture salesman here in the city.

And he began to translate into Spanish. For seven years he translated the messages in this church. That was his Bible school.

And I remembered him in the airport. And I remembered him coming to me backstage a few times. He said, Pastor, you were preaching.

And he said, the anointing of God came on me. He said, I got out of my chair. My hands were waving.

And he said, I don't know how to explain it. But I was speaking what you were speaking but a line ahead of you. All the way through much of the message.

He said, I knew where the message was going. And before you would speak it, I would speak it. And he got excited.

And then Pastor David put a board in the rotunda one day with countries of the world and said, put a pin in the country. And many of you might remember this and pray for it. It was a season.

And so he put a pin in Spain, the vicinity of Spain, and began to pray. And as he began to pray, he felt that God was calling him to go to Spain. Now he's got no Bible degree.

The only degree he's got, he's been translating for seven years for the pastors of this church. And the Holy Ghost has come upon him. And so he felt, God, are you calling me to Spain? And if you are, how am I going to go? I don't have any support.

I have no savings to speak of. And so he said, well, if you're calling me, you'll make a way. He went to the then missions director, shared his heart, said, I feel the Lord's calling me to Spain, some part of Spain.

And within a week, from different anonymous sources, he had a year's support had come in. In one week, he had the whole year. He said, well, God, obviously you're sending me.

So he got on a plane and headed for Spain. Came to the leader of one of the major Pentecostal denominations in Spain and said, well, here I am. My name is Cesar Gil.

I'm not a Bible school graduate, but God's calling me. And the leader said to him, he said, well, you know, we have we've been looking for and can't find anybody who will go into Morocco into the Islamic part, the northern tip of Africa. And we've been asking through all of our ministers and nobody will go.

And he said, I'll go. I'll go. So he went into Morocco where he after three years, he now pastors, a church of one hundred and forty believers.

They speak three different languages. Most of them are Muslims have converted to Christ and he does what he's always done. He stands up and he remembers what he heard.

The anointing of God comes on him. He said, I've never been happier my whole life. He said, God provides for me.

And he said, just before coming here, he said, I baptized a former Muslim police officer. He said, I baptized a teacher and I forget the construction worker, big muscular guy. So I baptized these people.

And he said, they're coming to Christ. And and I was there, had the privilege of being in the meeting where he was recognized and credentialed. Now, that's nice, but I think God recognized him a long time ago.

Now, this is the calling of God. Here's a man who's never taken a course on reaching the African Muslim. Doesn't know much of the language.

There's no ministry training whatsoever. He's been selling furniture, folks, in New York City. And ends up in northern Africa and is leading as a congregation that speaks three different languages.

And so there's translation that goes on. I'm not sure exactly how he does that. I do know I'm going there.

I'm going to go visit. I want to, with all my heart, I want to preach there. I've got to see this.

But that was the highlight of my trip. To know that somebody who's been sitting under the preaching in this house has finally got it. They got it.

That I'm not called in my strength. I'm called in my weakness. I'm not called where I know what to do.

I'm called where I don't know what to do. I'm not called because I have a certain skill set. I'm called because God has called me.

And He will provide for me. He will lead me. He will take me.

You know, Pastor David has always believed that this is going to be ascending church. And I do believe that's yet to come. Ascending church means, it's not times where church is going to say, Hey, you're pretty good looking.

You sing nice. How about going to Africa? It's not going to be that way. It's going to be the Holy Ghost going to put His hand on you.

You're going to become burdened for something. Now, ascending can be your neighborhood. But it can also be the far reaches of the earth.

It's simply a people who are willing to be sent and spent as it is for the cause of Christ. Now, Paul knew this. He knew the Corinthian Christians were called to this incredible inheritance in Christ.

But they were in danger of missing what God had for them. And they were in danger because they were still integrated into the thinking of their society around them. Their society, folks, was very much like ours is today.

They were the New York City, as it is Corinth, of that generation. They considered themselves educated, affluent, wealthy. There was lust for numerous things going on in society at that time.

Very, very much like it is today. The lust for fame, money and power was rampant. And every man in that society was in what he was into for himself.

You see, this is the issue. This is the open door that almost cost Corinth the calling of God. It's where it all began.

Every man in that society was in it for himself. And if you're honest, before you came to Christ, everything you did, largely, probably 99% of the people here, everything you did, you did it for yourself. You did it for your own betterment.

You did it because you wanted some kind of an advantage in society. Perhaps you were one of those who lusts after fame, because the root of that thing is really found in the Garden of Eden. You want to be worshipped as God.

You want people to clap their hands and love you. There's others who want money, not because they want to have it for the betterment of other people. They just want it for themselves.

And such like things, power and advantage or position. And Corinth never laid this down. This thinking that was in the society around them, walked in the door with them into the church.

And it began to manifest itself in certain ways that was going to cause this church, if it wasn't dealt with, to lose its calling. Now, firstly, the church had allowed a man focus to creep into it and divide it. A man focus.

It wasn't a Christ focus. It was a man focus. It started out seemingly as legitimate spiritual preferences.

But unwittingly, it eventually opened the door of their minds to those who would promote themselves and not promote Christ. Now, in 1 Corinthians 1, in verse 11, Paul says, As it's been declared to me, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that everyone of you says, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Cephas, that means Peter, or I'm of Christ.

And then Paul says, incredulously in verse 13, is Christ divided? This man focus, it seemed legitimate. But it was the beginning of something. This focus of, this is my kind of preacher.

No, no, I'm a Paul man. Or I like Peter's preaching. You see, it was the beginning of something.

There was a man focus still. This is a society, folks, that is man focused. You can't even get a news station anymore.

You can't even read the news. The whole of society is so man and celebrity focused now. You can't even get the news.

You can't even find out what's going on in the world anymore. Celebrity focused. Just walk out the doors of this church and what do you find? It's a man focus.

Everything is focused on man. And they brought that focus with them into the church. And that focus is deadly.

In the church of Jesus Christ, there must be a Christ focus and a Christ focus alone. You and I are called to be like Christ. We're not called to be like other men.

Thank God for other people that God uses. But I'm not called to be like another man. I'm called to look beyond men and to be like Christ and so are you.

But the moment you start having a man focus and how it manifests is, Oh, so-and-so is preaching Tuesday night. I'll be sure to be there. So-and-so is preaching.

Oh, my man is in Thursday. Or my woman is in Friday, standing in the pulpit. No, I'm going to be there.

No, that's a man focus. You have to be able to hear from Christ through the most bumbling, stumbling preacher that God will ever put in this pulpit. It doesn't matter about these things.

Man focus has to be put away. And if you're among those that are sitting and talking about, Oh, have you heard so-and-so? Have you seen so-and-so? I prefer this preaching. I prefer that style.

Put that thing out of your thinking once and for all. We're here to be conformed to the image of Christ, not the image of man. And Paul addressed these things.

And we're going to be addressing them in deeper measure in the future. This man focus, according to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, opened them up to the receiving of carnal and exploitive preachers. And that's what we have in much of the Western church today.

I'm sad to have to say it. I say it with no glee in my heart whatsoever. It's a sad thing.

But carnal and exploitive preachers now are standing over what is supposed to be much of the body of Christ. Here's what Paul calls them. He said, For you suffer, verse 19 in 2 Corinthians 11.

He said, You suffer fools gladly, seeing you yourselves are wise. For you suffer, or you open your heart, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devours you, if a man takes of you, if a man exalts himself, if a man smites you on the face. In other words, if he stands before you, and as the captors smote Jesus for his simplicity of obedience to his father, they will also smite this simplicity.

They stand and exalt themselves. They'll take from you. And Paul says, These are fools, and you suffer them gladly.

See, the Corinthians opened their hearts. They didn't realize that man focus of what it will produce. You and I have got to put this away, folks.

Thank God for godly men and women. Thank God for people that the Lord has used. But, folks, our focus is Christ.

It has to be Christ and Christ alone. The Corinthian church was receiving these carnal and exploitive preachers. They were drawing to themselves God's man of the hour, God's woman of the hour, God's

miracle working person of the hour.

And they were exploitive. Paul said, They draw to themselves, and then they move around the back to your pocketbook. It never changes, folks.

That's how it works. That's how the enemy works in the church. That's how he masquerades as an angel of light.

1 Corinthians 3, verses 1 and 2, tells us that the Corinthian church had an inability to hear and receive challenging and deepening truth. He says, I, brethren, I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto you were not able to bear it, and neither yet are you now able.

You see, they had opened their hearts, and because they had opened their hearts to exploitive preaching, they had an inability to hear and receive truth that would deepen them. The church had become a smorgasbord, where you go and you just pick and choose what you want. People, even sitting here this morning, may be right at this very moment saying, well, hey, this is not doing much for me, I'm not getting anything here.

And that's the attitude that got into Corinth. Even when God would come and speak, they could not receive. All they wanted now was just tell me how loved I am.

Every week now, just tell me how blessed I am. Just tell me I'm going to be powerful and popular, and going to have no trouble in my life. Just tell me these things.

And you have my utmost of devotion, you've got my open wallet, you've got everything you want. Just tell me what I want to hear about myself. And Paul said, I wanted to give you meat, I wanted to give you that which will take you through the storm.

But this focus in your heart, this inability to turn away as it is from the self-seeking of the society around us, shuts your ears. Because ultimately it leads you and I to the pathway of Christ, which is a giving of ourselves for the needs of others. It's what leads a translator to Morocco.

If I can say it that simply, it's something way beyond ourselves. It's something of God that he wants to speak into the heart. The true provision, the true calling.

1 Corinthians 4, verse 8. Now this is the worst of it all. The people had taken on a false spiritual identity in Corinth. Listen to what Paul says, he says, Now you're full, now you're rich.

And you've reigned as kings without us. I would to God you did reign. Paul says that we may also reign with you.

Here's the theology they were receiving now from exploitive preachers. That they're full, just like Laodicea. You've got no more need, no, you have everything you need.

Now you're rich. And everyone is reigning. Everyone today is an apostle and a prophet now.

Everyone, everyone is ruling and reigning. It's like the king's parade in his long johns going down the street. Everyone thinks that they just have made it.

Everyone's reigning. Everywhere I go now, everyone is reigning. And Paul said, Oh, I wish to God you were.

He said, I'd join you. I'd reign with you. But Paul says, we're appointed last.

We're appointed to death. We're made a spectacle. We're fools, he said for Christ.

But you're wise. We're weak, but you're strong. You are honorable, but we are despised.

You see, the enemy had come in and was feeding the people something that was keeping them from the calling of Christ. The power of God comes not to those who are strong. It comes to those who are weak.

Not to the honorable, those who are nothing and know they are nothing. This is where the power of God comes. It's to the man who stands and says, God, be merciful to me.

1 Corinthians chapter 5. The next thing in Corinth was a tolerance of sinful practices in their midst. Paul says, it's reported commonly that there's fornication among you. And such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles that one should have his father's wife.

And you're puffed up and not rather mourned that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. You see, false spiritual identity and inability to receive truth. Allowing carnal and exploitive preachers to stand in pulpits.

Division along the lines of flesh will produce a tolerance of sin. Sin is no longer challenged. Your carnal preachers are not going to challenge sin because God forbid you may leave and they may not get your money.

They're not going to challenge your sin. They're going to tell the adulterers how much God loves them. And all the fornicators and all the thieves and all the tax thieves and everybody else.

You're just fine. God loves you. Everything's under the blood.

Oh, yes, you're going to be powerful and prosperous. And, oh, you have this incredible miracle ministry ahead of you. Calm, just come down to the altar and I'll give you a word that will tell you how great and wonderful you are.

A tolerance of sinful practice was in the Corinthian church. A tolerance of things that separate from God, not just in time, but for eternity, folks. For eternity, sin is deadly.

You can't play with sin and still walk with a holy God. 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 6 to 8. He says, brother goes to law with brother and that before unbelievers. Now, therefore, there's utterly a fault among you because you go to law one with another.

Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? But no, you do wrong and defraud and that your brethren. Do you not know, he says in verse 9, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The Corinthian church somehow got it in their heads that it was okay to harbor grudges.

It was all right to hold grievances against one another. To the point where brother was taking brother to law before the unbelievers, to court. And they thought, well, this is fine.

You see, this is right. This is justice, but this is not God's standard of justice. Now, folks, I know there are times when there may be some legal issues that have to be untangled.

But Paul, this has become a practice now. Paul is saying to the Corinthian church, where's the forgiveness? Where's the man who, like Christ, is willing to take the spoiling of his goods? So for the sake of someone else who needs to know what it means to walk righteously with God. First Corinthians chapter 11 is where we were at this morning in our communion time.

Basically, the Corinthian church ended up pushing the poor and disadvantaged out of their collective consciousness. The church that loses its calling loses a heart for the poor. It's as simple as that.

You see, because you can't have a heart for the poor and be focused and motivated by self at the same time. And the Corinthian church had lost this heart. And Paul, I see him as broken hearted with this pen of God in his hand.

And saying, this is not what you received from Christ. Remember the night he was betrayed. He took bread and broke it and said, here, take this, my body, which is broken for you.

He said, this is the Christ that you're gathering around. But they were marginalizing. They were pushing the poor, the disadvantaged, those who didn't have as it is to the sides of the temple.

And this self-gratification was the leading factor in the lives of many of these people. As they gathered around what they thought was the table of God. Folks, how do we gather at the communion table and not have at least a heart for those that are dying? In this world, going to a Christless eternity, starving spiritually, living in darkness and ignorance.

How do we come to the table and say, I am of Christ and Christ is of me. If we are pushing the very work of God through Christ out of our consciousness. And this is what was happening to the Corinthian church.

It grew in stages. But ended up with no heart for the poor. And folks, we've got theology today abounding in the western world that says, Christ is just here for our own personal gain.

Christ is here to make us all rich. Christ is here to make us all healthy. Christ is here to make us all happy.

We just use him for our own advantage. That's what was in the Corinthian church. That's what caused them to almost lose their calling.

That's why God had to pen such strong words to the apostle Paul. That's why they couldn't hear sound doctrine. That's why they were being exploited by ungodly preachers who were challenging the apostolic authority of Paul.

And many were giving ear to it. Because they were so moving away from God, they were pushing the poor right out of their consciousness, folks. If you don't care about the poor, something is wrong.

If you can think about people who are disadvantaged, if you're not moved by the cry even of this generation of young people all around our streets, who are looking for hope and help. As the prophet said, the children die. The children are dying in the streets for lack of provision and nobody is giving it to them.

Now I'm not talking just physical provision, but spiritual provision. A word from God, life and hope for tomorrow. There has to be something that moves us outside of ourselves.

I fight this self-preservation as much as you do. We all fight it. There's something in us.

We have an inherent sin nature that wants to live for itself. Wants to be comfortable. Does not want to be spent and be spent for the things of God.

We're all the same. But folks, we've got to come to the throne of God in bankruptcy, in weakness, knowing we don't have the answers, we don't have the strength. God, you have the resources of life that I need.

Now Jonah is a textbook case of what happens when someone knows what God is saying, but doesn't want to follow where his voice is leading. The Lord called Jonah to go to a certain place and in his heart he said, I don't want to go there. I don't want to go there.

And nobody in the natural wants to go to a place where we're given as it is for the needs of others. Nobody does. It has to be a work of the spirit.

Now there's a few in society that deny themselves as it is naturally. Jonah, in chapter 1, verses 1 to 3, it says, The word of the Lord came to him saying, Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it for their wickedness has come up before me. Now Jonah knew at the basis of this commission was mercy.

He knew it. He knew that God was merciful. And then he says, He rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord and went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish.

He paid the fare and went down into it with them to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So Jonah doesn't want to follow. So he joins the church of another opinion.

It says he paid the fare. You'll always pay a price. It'll always cost you financially.

Always. To join the church of another opinion. Get your wallet out because that's exactly what it's all going to be about.

He's a type of a man who doctrinally shops until he finds a voice that doesn't confront his error. And even confirms and praises his wayward focus. And there's so many people today doctrinally shopping now all over America.

Looking now for somebody who doesn't... You say, I want to go to the beach. If I'm from the South, I want to go to the beach on Sunday. And I don't want some preacher telling me it's wrong.

I want to enjoy myself. If it's raining, I'll come to church. But if it's snowing, of course, only a fool will go to church in a snowstorm.

So I'll stay home. That's the very thinking, folks. I'm telling you.

Doctrinal shoppers. And if some preacher dare stand up like the Apostle Paul and challenge this waywardness of heart. Well, hey, he's not got my vote.

I'm going somewhere else. I'm joining. I'm going to pay the fare.

And I'm going to doctrinally shop until somebody tells me I'm wonderful. Chapter 1, verse 17. Says the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Now, I have a prophetic word for you this morning. As the Lord delivered Jonah, he's going to deliver the true believer from the error of this generation.

How? He's got a great trial coming. There's a great trial coming, folks, for everyone. Praise God.

He's going to deliver the true believer. The true believer. The false believer will not be delivered.

But the true believer is going to be delivered from the error by a coming great trial. There's a great collective trial coming. And perhaps you're already in a trial because God's moving you to something He has prepared for you.

Now, God was going to turn this man. I've always believed that the book of Jonah shows us God's pattern of dealing with the wayward church. Or wayward Christian people.

He prepares a trial that you can't figure out. You can't get out of it. You don't know what to do.

Listen to what Jonah said in chapter 2. He prayed to God out of the fish's belly. And he said, I cried by reason of my affliction. And He heard me out of the belly of hell, cried I. And you heard my voice.

For thou hast cast me, verse 3, into the deep, in the midst of the seas. And the floods compassed me about, and thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I'm cast out of thy sight.

Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. The depth closed me round about.

The weeds were wrapped around my head. It's interesting, you know, that word weeds is translated weeds in the Hebrew. But it's also the word that's used for the Red Sea.

It's amazing. Jonah is saying, in effect, Oh God, the things I thought were going to make me happy. The things I thought were going to bring me into freedom.

It's as if they're wrapped around my head and they're laughing at me now. But I've been brought into a trial. And without your strength I'm not going to get out.

Who does God choose to represent Him in the earth? The weak, those who know they need Him. Those who don't have any natural strength. And that's exactly where God took Jonah.

To a place where he could not pay the fare. He could not figure out how to get out. There was no way to get out of this one.

He said, I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. And the earth with her bars was around me. In other words, the thinking of the world has so captivated me.

I don't know how to get out of it. But you've brought up my life from corruption, oh Lord, my God. There's the key.

He said, Lord, you are the one who brought my life up from this corruption. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. And my prayer came unto thee into thy holy temple.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I vowed.

Salvation is unto the Lord. Here's what Jonah is saying. I said I would follow you, God.

Now I will follow you. Praise God. I will follow you.

I sang it where He leads me. I will follow. I went to altar calls.

I made all these commitments. But when it came down to where the rubber meets the road, I would not obey you. You were speaking to me.

I would not hear you. I would not listen to you. Because my focus was on myself.

It was not on others. See, that's really the key. And when he came to the point where he said, I will obey you.

And that's where this whole series is going to go to. When he came to the point of saying, God, I will obey you. What you call me to do, I will do it.

Lord, I'll obey you. And when he said that, the fish vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. Praise be to God.

Your trial, this distress, a lot of what you're going through in your mind, folks, is just simply because there's something in you that doesn't want to obey God. You just simply don't want to go there. And so you're searching and paying and going into places and saying, no, no, no.

This was about me, God. This I came to in my bondage. I came to in my struggle.

And you were going to make me into all these great things. And now you're calling me to be poured out for others? I don't want to go there. I don't want to go.

I know you're merciful. Thank you for your mercy. But I don't want to go.

I don't want to be part of this. And finally, through the trial, through these circumstances that I know, I know, I know many of you are in it now. You're in this dark hole as it is right now.

You're in a place where you can't get out. You don't know what's wrong. Darkness is on every side.

Hell seems to be laughing at you. All your ideas are failing you. You're going through the motions.

You're coming to church. You're singing the songs. But there's just something so wrong inside.

And the issue is simply as God is calling you to something. You're not your own. We are bought with a price.

That precious blood that was shed on Calvary purchased you and purchased me. We don't come to God with a shopping list of what we want to be. We come to Him for what the calling is of Him on our lives.

And how we're going to glorify Him in the earth. And the moment Jonah agreed, the fish vomited him out again on dry land. And the word of the Lord came to him the second time and said, Rise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the preaching that I give you.

Now here's what I believe that's going to happen in New York City in the days ahead. Suddenly, Nineveh is carrying on. It's a wicked central city.

Hundreds of thousands of people live there. God indifferent. No different than our situation, our generation we're living in right now.

But suddenly, I can see this man walking down the road, coming to the city limits. Welcome to Nineveh, New York City of its time. He walks through past seemingly a weakened man, a dependent man.

Everyone who looks at him, he looks a bit foolish. He's probably somewhat bleached from being inside the belly of a whale. He seems to be everything that a godless society doesn't want to be.

Oh God, help us to understand this truth. He's everything that a godless society doesn't want to be. He's not powerful.

He's not wise. He's not noble. Nobody takes any notice of him.

He looks like a vagabond coming into the city limits. But something is different. This man shows up in the city just like the apostle Paul coming to Corinth.

The carnal preachers were saying of Paul, his bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible. They were saying, don't you see us? Don't you see how well dressed we are? Don't you notice our purple shoes and our Armani suits and our white scarves? Don't you want to look like us? Why would you want to look like Paul? He's not a good preacher. His bodily presence is weak.

He's skinny and small and apparently historically had a big nose. And his speech is contemptible. Do you want to be like Paul? That's what the carnal preachers were saying to the Corinthian church.

But there's something different about this man. His words have weight and power behind them. Paul says, I'll not know the wisdom of those who say they are called of God.

I'll know them by their power. I'll know them because when they speak, the demonic has to bend its knee. Praise be to God.

You see this man Jonah coming into town. He says, turn from your sin. For all this society is about to come under the justice of God.

And as he begins to speak, I see demons bending their knee. I see hell with all its false reasoning having to give way. I see prison doors opening.

I see captivity having to release its captives. Because God found a man who needs the power of the Holy Ghost on him again. Paul says to the Corinthians, they could only see with their natural eyes.

And only as far as their own understanding allowed them to. In contrast to this, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10 verses 12 and 13. We saw beyond ourselves.

We saw beyond our own abilities or our own inabilities. And Paul says, and it brought us to you. This is the key.

Paul said we weren't called because we were strong. We weren't called because we had it all together. Paul acknowledged himself as the chiefest of sinners who once persecuted the church.

He said, no, but we look beyond these things. We look beyond the degrees. We look beyond all of these things that can be gotten in the natural.

And in our inability, we turn to God. And the leading and power of God brought us to you. Paul is, in essence, offering his life as a contrast to that spirit that was working in that church age.

Paul is saying, no, it brought us to you. And he's trying to wake them up and saying, if we had not come, where would you be? What would you be had we not come to you? And we didn't come in great wisdom. I came to you in fear and trembling.

I came to you not taking from you, Paul says. I came to you giving to you. And even though the more I give, the less I seem to be loved.

He said, I never took advantage of you. I never sent a single preacher to you that took advantage of you. We worked with our own hands, and other churches supplied our need.

I never took a thing from you. He said, they claim to have revelation that I don't have. He said, you're forcing me to boast.

I was taken to the third heaven. I know things of God that are not lawful to honor. And he said, all the revelation and all that God has done in my life, has done one thing, it brought me to you.

It brought me to you, Carnes, in your need, in your spiritual poverty, in your blindness, in your arrogance, it brought me to you. As God became a man and came to the earth, and came to us in our rebellion, and came to us in our stupidity, and our spiritual poverty, and our foolishness, as God came to us, and as God came to us, Paul said, the Christ in me has brought me to you. In 2 Corinthians 13, verse 4, Paul says, we will live with him by the power of God towards you.

That's what Paul is saying. Oh, this is our source of our life, that God in us is leading us to you, and causing us to be given for you. And this is how we shall live.

I rode with translator, now pastor, Cesar. He said, I've never been happier in my whole life. God, I've seen the miracle provision of God.

This man just dove off a cliff at hearing the voice of God, and the Lord is prospering him on every side. A genuinely humble man of God. Very, very much challenged my heart.

Living completely for others in a very dangerous part of the world. Knowing that doing what he's doing could ultimately cost him. The Islamists don't take it lightly when the gospel is spreading.

But he doesn't care. He's found something of God. I cried in the airport, I laughed.

I said, oh God, this is what it's all about. This is what it's always been about. Give me the power to live my life for others.

That's the cry of my heart. I don't want to do this anymore than you do. It's only the heart of Christ that can cause us to do it.

Give me the power to live my life for others. Take me in my weakness deeper into your compassion, your calling, the singleness of your focus. The focus of Christ is people.

It's not making us into what our own heart thinks we should be. Let my heart be willingly drawn out to the needs of others. And let it begin today.

Folks, I've got to tell you, I've been in the battle. I can't describe it. All I know that is God is drawing me into something.

Let it be, let it start today with those closest to me and end with those farthest from me. I think the Holy Spirit is calling me to somewhere I don't want to go. It's not that I haven't gone to an altar.

It's not that I haven't said, Lord, take me. I've said everything that you've said. But there's just something in us that does not want to go that final mile.

And the Lord just used this man to so speak to my heart. A man who translated for me until God translated him. Today's brand of Christianity will not touch this generation, folks.

It hasn't and it won't. God doesn't need 100,000 Corinthians. He needs one Jonah, one Paul.

And the greatest thing that you can do today and I can do is say, by God's grace, I will be that person. I'll be the one that makes a difference in someone else's life. And it will just start maybe in your own marriage.

It'll start with your own children. It'll start with your own friends. It'll start with your own enemies.

It'll start in your own workplace. It'll start in your own apartment building and apartment block. It'll start in your own street.

It'll start in your own community. It'll start in your own borough. It'll start in your own city.

It'll start in your own state. It'll start in your own country. But it's the man, it's the woman that just says, God Almighty, to the death, to the death, I'm yours.

If I have to go to jail, if I have to die, I'm yours. If I have to forfeit everything that I thought would make me happy, if I have to give up my future, future that I have in my mind that will fulfill me, I give it to you, Lord. And I would rather join Cesar in Morocco and doing what God's called us to do than to be self-focused and die spiritually.

This is the word of the Lord. If God's speaking to your heart today, I'd like us to sing that song, Where He Leads Me I Will Follow. But please don't come to this altar if you don't mean it.

Like with the communion cup, if you're not sure that you want to be given, then at least have the courage to admit it. That's a good start. But if you're willing, if you're willing today to say, Lord, where you lead me, I will follow.

I'll follow you, Lord. He will lead you. He'll speak to you.

He'll guide you. And it will always be to people. Always.

Disadvantaged, hurting, poverty-stricken people. That's always where you will be led to. Praise be to God.

Let's stand. If the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, please come and just join. In the annex, you can stand between the screens, if you will.

Where He leads me, I will follow. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord.

You know, because one man said yes to God in his weakness, 140 Muslim people are going to be around the throne of Christ for all of eternity. People who otherwise may never have heard. I think of even this church.

One man, David Wilkerson, just in his own nothingness, his own powerlessness to make a difference, to even understand inner city gangs, just said yes. Be willing to be made a fool, he just said yes. And the Lord came and blessed him.

And we stand here today as fruit of that obedience. Do we have the courage to follow in those footsteps? Do we have the courage? Do we have the courage? Praise God. Bless the Lord.

See, what's happening in this man is very deep right now. This is the call. That's the call, folks.

That's how it comes. That's how the call came to me. Call of God comes.

Something of God comes into your life. God plants something in you that only He can do. Would you open your heart to it now? Just take a moment.

Open your heart. Let the calling of God come on you. Calling.

And it's an impossibility for you to fulfill it. And you can be thankful for that. Praise God.

Lord, I ask for this to be an ordaining service today, oh God. Ordination comes from heaven, not from men, Lord. We can recognize the call, but the call comes from You, Lord.

You're the only one that can call. I pray, God, You open all of our hearts today to hear what it is that You would have us to be in this last generation. Where You'd have us to go, what You'd have us to do.

Lord, thank You, God, that You don't choose us in our strength but in our weakness. You don't choose us in our wisdom but in our frailty of mind. God, You don't choose us because we're mighty or noble.

You don't choose us because men regard us as something special. You choose us in our nothingness, oh God. And it's in that nothingness that Your strength is made perfect.

God, thank You, Lord, for opening our minds to this incredible truth. Give us the courage to lay hold of it today, God. Help us all to lay hold of it and to walk in this anointing of the Holy Spirit.

God, almighty New York City needs this kind of a ministry in this last hour of time. I pray for the anointing of God to come on those who have come to this altar and those who are here in their hearts today. I pray for the anointing of God.

I pray for the power of God. I pray for the authority of our Christ. I pray, God, for spiritual wisdom and insight.

I ask for the ability, oh God, to pray. The ability to understand Your Word. The ability, oh God, to move in Your compassion.

I ask, oh God, for faith that will never take no for an answer. I pray, God, for boldness to stand before hell itself and say, let the people go. I ask, oh God, for spiritual authority to come upon this entire church, Lord.

Not just a few but spiritual authority to be given to this church. Give us a real authority for the real purposes of God. I pray, Lord, give us the eyes of Christ.

Help us to see, Lord, the way You see. Help us, God, to know what You know. Help us to walk the way You walk, Lord.

May we truly be an extension of Your hands and Your life, oh God, in this city. Father, I thank You for this. God, may hell have to bend its knee.

May the demonic have to release their captives. My God, my God, my God. Thank You, Lord, for our weakness.

Thank You for our nothingness, Lord. Thank You, God. Thank You, Lord, that we need You.

You'll never fail nor forsake the honest cry. Oh, show Yourself mighty now. Show Yourself mighty, Holy Spirit.

Show Yourself glorious, oh God. Have a bride, have a body in this city, in this generation, that truly stand in the power of Christ. Oh God, thank You, Lord.

Thank You, Father. I pray 100,000, 200,000, 300,000, 400,000, 500,000 people. Be one to Christ through those who are in this sanctuary today.

My God, my God, my God. We cry out to You, do more. Exceedingly above all we can even think or ask, oh Lord.

Glorify Your name, oh God. Be known as a God of mercy and a God of power. A God of grace and glory.

The one who fills all in all. Be known, be known in this generation, oh God. We give You praise and glory.

We thank You, Lord. We thank You, God. Thank You, Jesus.

Thank You, Lord. Give Him thanks, give Him praise. Hallelujah, hallelujah.

Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Jesus. Praise God, praise God, praise God, praise God.

Praise God. Oh Lord, be merciful to New York City. Oh God, oh God, oh God.

Be merciful to this city. Send a revival. Let the glory of the Lord come into our streets again.

God, let our sons and daughters find You in grace and glory and power. Be merciful, God. Hear every cry.

Answer every winner, oh God. Answer every child, oh God. Oh Jesus, oh Jesus, oh Jesus.

Speak to this city through Your church, oh God. We thank You, God. We give You praise.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Thank You, Lord. This afternoon and this evening, Pastor Clendenin is with us.

You'll see here on the platform and others. There's going to be a wonderful day in the house of the Lord. We meet at 3 o'clock, again at 6 o'clock this evening.

I'd like you to say something as you leave. Say, hell be on notice. Say it, hell be on notice.

Here comes Jonah. God bless you. This recording is provided by Times Square Church in New York City.

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