

The Temptation to Abandon the Cross

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of finishing the race and living for the redemption of others, rather than focusing on personal gain and comfort.

Duration: 44:10

Scripture: Luke 4:18, 1 Corinthians 9:24

Topics: "Persevering Faith", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of finishing the race set before us with determination and truth, just as the Apostle Paul urged in 1 Corinthians 9:24. It highlights the temptation to abandon the cross, reminding believers to stay focused on God's purpose for their lives despite opposition and challenges. The message encourages standing firm in faith, trusting in God's protection and strength to overcome fear and continue the journey of faith.

Transcript

I'm preaching a series of messages, this is number three, on finishing the race. Where the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 24, do you not know that they which run in a race run all but one receives the prize. So run that you may obtain.

That means Paul says that we need to run this race with determination. In 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 5, he says, and if a man also strived for masteries, yet he is not crowned except he strived lawfully. Not only do we have to run with this race with determination, this Christian life, but with truth.

We have to run it truthfully. We cannot create our own truth, we cannot create our own God, we cannot create our own church. We have to run it with truth or we won't finish it.

If you would turn please to the book of Luke chapter 4, I want to speak to you this morning on the temptation to abandon the cross. The temptation to abandon the cross. Now Father I thank you for the touch of your Holy Spirit.

Lord, you've got to make your word live. I can only deliver it, I can't make it live. You're the only one that can do this.

And so I come to your throne this morning and I'm asking you Father in Jesus' name to quicken this word, quicken my mind and my heart. Let this word find a deep lodging place in each of us who are able to hear

it this day. Give us strength for the coming days.

Guide us into a pathway where there is life and an assured victory when we're finished our course. I thank you for the quickening of the Holy Spirit to speak this word and to hear this word. Above everything, Lord Jesus Christ, let your name be glorified, let your heart be satisfied.

We ask it in your precious name, amen. Luke chapter 4, I'm just going to read verse 1 and part of verse 2. And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. Now in Luke chapter 3 verse 23, Scripture tells us that Jesus at this time was about thirty years of age.

When you consider this, he was about three years away from fulfilling the calling that was given to him by his Father. Three years away. He'd been thirty years on the earth in a physical body.

He's now three years away from the full purpose of his life. Sometimes the temptations that you and I have to endure come at the time of our greatest usefulness to the kingdom of God. Sometimes it's coming around that last bend as we begin to run this race of truth that we will find ourselves violently opposed in our minds and in our hearts.

And some of you understand what I'm talking about today. There's an opposition that's come against you out of hell itself. You don't even know where it's come from.

But suddenly there are thoughts in your mind about everything trying to push you away from that which God has called you to be in Christ. It was at this point in his life that he was led into a wilderness place, a place where he would be tempted to abandon the ultimate purpose for his life. Now similarly, in a season where men's hearts are failing them for fear, you and I are also going to find ourselves in places that are very undesirable to the flesh.

This was a wilderness. This was a looking on the left like David the psalmist said, I looked to the left and to the right and there was no body was willing to help me. There was no refuge for me.

No man cared for my soul. He's in a cave. There's nothing attractive about it.

He's he's right at the threshold of fulfilling the very purpose for his life. But you'll see this all throughout the scriptures, Joseph is right at the stage where he's going to be given the keys to an incredible food supply and wisdom of God and position and authority to make a difference in the earth. But yet he's he's many years in a prison cell in his own wilderness.

Moses is called of God to deliver many people out of captivity. Yet he spends 40 years in the wilderness and you can be sure the temptations would have been fierce and strong that were coming against him, feeling that he had failed and somehow abandoned the cause of God for his life. We're going to be tempted folks to abandon the God-given purpose for our lives on the earth.

I'm I'm speaking to you. I believe from the heart of God. We are living in the last days now.

I know I've been saying this for a long time. Pastor David has been saying it, but we're living in the last days now. You have to be aware of it now.

Everything that can be shaken is about to be shaken. Calamities and distresses. We're probably not too far away from a catastrophic economic downturn, difficulty in our own cities.

Everything that we've ever known starting to change in a moment of time. It's a wilderness time. And you're going to be tempted like you've never been tempted before to abandon the call of God on your life.

To abandon. I'm going to show you how this temptation is going to play out. But first, if you'll turn to the Matthew chapter 24, please with me.

Beginning at verse 4. And Jesus, they're asking Jesus the question in verse 3. What shall be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world? What will society look like? What can we look for? What can we expect? What is the world going to be like? And Jesus answered and said to them, take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many. So in other words, they're going to be devil inspired, there's going to be an increase of devil inspired voices claiming to speak for God that will lead many people astray.

It's actually quite a great military strategy. Satan himself is the author of much of the chaos in the world. And when the chaos begins to happen, then put false signposts everywhere throughout the world claiming that this is the way to Christ.

This is the way to life. This is the way to safety. Confuse the people of God.

Confuse those that are getting up, the prodigals and trying to come home to the safety of the presence of God. Verse 6 says, you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not troubled for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There shall be famines and diseases, pestilences or diseases and earthquakes in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you and you shall be hated of all nations for my namesake. And then many shall be offended and shall betray one another and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Now some will be led astray by false voices and verse 12 tells us that others will give up the race simply because they're overcome by the magnitude of what they're up against. There will be such an outbreak of lawlessness and folks were living there now.

We are on, we're not on a downward trajectory, we're on a slide, we're on a moral slide right now in the Western world and it's appalling, it's shocking what's beginning to happen, how people are beginning to live, how they're beginning to speak, what's coming across in the media. We're going to see this, it's going to shock people, what's about to happen, especially those of course that are godly, it's going to be a shock. An absolute outbreak of lawlessness.

The only thing restraining it from becoming Sodom and Gomorrah is the church of Jesus Christ. That's the only restraint left in the world. And then one day soon the church is going to be taken by Christ himself.

In a moment when we don't expect it, the Bible says in it, he shall descend, the angel will descend from heaven with a shout and the dead in Christ are going to be raised and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them. So no matter how hard it gets in the future, remember, it's not going to be forever, it's only for a short time and in the midst of your struggle and trial and living for God and living for others, there is a time coming when that trumpet of God is going to sound and you and I are going to

leave this world and we're going to be forever with our Christ. Iniquity will abound and many people will just simply give up, it will seem to be too hard, society will seem to be pushing too, with too much force in the opposite direction, it will seem to be an impossibility, there will be so few that apparently at some point will be willing to listen to the gospel.

But verses 13 and 14 tell us another story, it also tells us that there will be those of us who finish the race, our message in our lives will be a witness of the reality and the victory of the cross of Jesus Christ. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved and this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, then shall the end come. This gospel will be preached, this gospel of Jesus Christ, the real gospel, the gospel of Calvary, the gospel of God becoming a man and going to a cross, the gospel of God the Father laying upon him the iniquity of us all, the gospel of the one who came, the sin less lamb of God, beaten, nailed to a cross, bruised, wounded, with his stripes we are healed, this gospel will be preached in all the world and then the end shall come.

Thanks be to God, we see even in this church, I don't know how the Lord is going to do all of this, but even in this church we see that suddenly there are places wanting to broadcast these services all over the world now, and thank God for that because this gospel will be preached, this gospel will be preached in all the world for a witness and then the end shall come. Now Paul says there's no temptation taking you but such as is common to man. God is faithful, he will not allow you to be tested or tempted above that you're able, but with the temptation will make a way to escape that you might be able to bear it.

Now you will be tested and some of you are being tested right now, you're being tempted to give up the race, what's the use in all of this? What is it going to amount to? Is my life counting for anything? If I stay on this course, what will happen to me? What will happen to my family? What good does it hold for my future? You're going to be tempted in these last days to abandon the cross just like Jesus Christ was in Luke chapter 4. Now Satan knew that the mission of Jesus was redemptive, he knew it. He didn't know how it was going to play out for the scripture says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 8, none of the princes of this world knew if they had known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. They didn't know it but he had stolen humanity in the Garden of Eden, Satan knew this.

And he knew that Jesus was the Son of God and he had come to take back that which he had stolen. He didn't know how he was going to do it but somehow he knew he had to test him and tempt him and divert him from this pathway that was before his life. He knew he could overthrow him if he could succeed in changing the singular focus of Jesus that he had to finish the race according to the will of his Father.

He had a focus and the devil knew I've got to turn that focus, I've got to shift that focus, I've got to take that focus away and if I succeed in doing this I'm going to secure in a sense this humanity that Satan had in his grasp forever, for all of eternity. Now the wilderness temptations came in a specific sequence. Now Hebrews 4.15 tells us that he being Christ was in all points tempted just like as we are yet without sin, that's Hebrews 4.15. Now here's the sequence, Luke chapter 4 if you're back there again in your Bible.

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, the scripture says, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing and when they were ended he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, verse 3, if thou be the Son of God, command that this stone that it be made bread.

In other words, use your personal relationship with God for your own needs. Focus on yourself, this was the temptation. Now he had a singleness of eye, he was going to fulfill something that God the Father had

called his life to be.

Just like you and I, from the moment you receive Christ, there's a purpose appointed to you. There's a purpose appointed to me. You have a ministry that God's given you and of course above and beyond it all, it's to be a living witness of the reality that Jesus Christ is alive from the dead.

It's to be God gripped, it's to be a person who's changing constantly in your inner man. This new creation that we are promised to be in Christ Jesus. The strength of God comes from being focused on others.

The strength of God comes from entering into the redemptive mission of God through Jesus Christ. Jesus did not come to live for himself, he came to live for the will of his Father. He knew from the time he was a youth that the will of his Father was sending him to a cross.

He fully understood. Let this saying sink down into your ears, he said to his disciples, the son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. He'll be betrayed into the hands of the Gentiles, into the hands of men.

He tried to tell them, he was headed for a cross. He knew what the purpose of his life was. It was for you, it was for me.

Thank God that Satan didn't succeed in diverting him. And in his moment of need in the wilderness, the devil came to him and said, now focus on yourself. Command that these, you're hungry, command that this stone be made into bread.

Just do things a little bit differently. Think of it now. You could leave this place telling others that you have the power to escape every hard situation by turning it to your own advantage.

Folks there are churches that preach this today. That you don't have to live in hardship. Use the power of God.

Turn every struggle into an opportunity. Turn everything into your own advantage. I read that's the temptation that Jesus had to endure in the wilderness.

Use the power of God for yourself. Use it for your own advancement. Use the power of God for the betterment of your own life.

Use it all for yourself. Now if Jesus had done this, if he had succumbed to this, what do you think would have happened three years later? If Satan would have succeeded in taking him away from the hard things that he was called to do and the hard places he was called to live and succeeded in turning him to using the power of God to his own advantage, what do you think he would have done in the garden of Gethsemane? Don't think the devil didn't know it. I think it would have sounded something like this, Father, thank you that you have shown me another way that humanity can be redeemed.

I don't think he would have prayed, Father, if it would be possible, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. Philippians 3, 18-19, Paul says, I've told you before and now I tell you even weeping that there are certain people who are enemies of the cross whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame because their minds are focused on the things of the earth.

They're enemies of the cross. Now, Paul's not saying they're outside of the church, they're inside the church, but they're enemies of what the cross really means in the Christian life. Enemies of the gospel, the

true redemption that God offers mankind through Jesus Christ and enemies of what that cross calls you and I to be.

Their whole reason for being in the kingdom of God is to fill their bellies with bread. It's to take every hard situation and make it soft, take everything difficult and make it easy to focus on having one's satisfaction from the things of this world. Now, I'm not suggesting that we don't have food or don't have material things or are not blessed of God.

We're substantially blessed of God and thank God for these things. But the focus of the Christian life is still to be given for other people, fully given for other people in whatever measure God calls us to be given. Jesus answered and said to him, it is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

In other words, I live by what God has called my life to be. I live by what my father has spoken. My father told me I'm going to go to a cross.

My father told me I'm going to die. My father told me on the third day, he's going to raise me again from the dead. My father told me I'm going to sit at the right hand of all authority and all power for all time and all eternity.

My father told me that those who trust in the redemption I'm about to purchase for them are going to sit with me in heavenly places where I am. They're going to rule and reign with me for all of eternity. I don't live by bread alone.

I live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God. Everything that God speaks to me. His life was not to be lived for himself, it was to be given for others.

And look at the wonderful redemption that procured. And think of how insidious this temptation was of the enemy to turn the focus of the gospel inward instead of outward. Secondly, it says in verse 5, the devil took him up to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

And the devil said to him, all this power will I give thee and the glory of them. For this is delivered into me and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore will worship me, all shall be thine.

Now he took him to a high mountain. That's a place of pride. It's a place where men stand looking at something that falls far short of the purpose for which he was created and set apart for in the kingdom of God and calls it good.

See, this is exactly what he had done to Adam and Eve. He said, if you will partake of what I'm telling you, your eyes will be open and you will be as gods and you will have the power to determine what is good and what is evil. It won't be just God that creates the rules.

You'll be able to create your own and you'll be able to look at something and you'll be able to tell in yourself whether it's good or whether it's evil and you don't really need the word of God to direct you. And so Satan said to Jesus, all you have to do, you've come to take back. You've come to rule and reign, haven't you? I know that.

That's what he was saying. I know you've come to reclaim that which has been lost to God. And so if that's the reason you've come, then you don't, you don't need to finish the journey.

You don't need to finish the race, whatever that would have meant because the devil couldn't have known what it was going to be. But if this is what you've come for here, I'll give it to you now. All you have to do is bend your knee to me and agree that God's way is not the only way to get things done.

There are other ways to get things done. You see what Satan was offering him was an illusion of victory. He was offering him kingdoms of this world.

He was offering him a throne over the kingdoms of this world, but he would be ruling over an unredeemed humanity because redemption could only come through the cross of Jesus Christ. Folks, it would just be an illusion of victory. And when we abandon the cross, when we abandon what that requires of us, when we abandon the bending of our knee to God and acknowledging that we have sinned against a holy God and that we need a savior.

When we abandon the scripture that says that we're to take up our cross daily and follow him as he followed his father and we're to be given for lost humanity. When we abandon this, we're ending up with an illusion of victory. That's all it is.

It's just an illusion. If you're here today and you're living in willful sin, you're not under any conviction of the Holy Spirit for the way you live. There's nothing in your heart to want to change.

You've come in and somehow convinced yourself that there's another way to eternity. And because there's a crowd and you can sing the songs, you somehow feel like you're part of it. But I'm telling you with a loving heart, it's an illusion.

If you've never bent your knee to God, if you've never confessed your need of a savior, if you've never turned from your sin, you're just simply living in an illusion today. That's all it is. It's a religious illusion.

It's the fallen nature coming into the house of God and saying, this is good. The way I live is good in spite of the fact that God's word may say it's evil or short to the glory of God, or it's not what your life is intended to be. Yet man has this inherent tendency to call evil good.

That's how people can sit in the house of the Lord for years and sit under a word like this and other churches that are preaching the gospel and never change. Never. Just continue to go out, live the same way, do the same things.

Folks, I had somebody come here behind the platform one time and said to me, I love this church. I love the worship in this church. I've been here, I think it was two or three years and oh, this is revolutionizing my life.

But God knows, you know, the things I need to do. And then suddenly this little voice in the back of my head said, God knows what things you need to do. And he said, well, you know, God understands.

I said, well, what is it that God understands that you need to do if your life is so transformed? He said, well, I'm a homosexual prostitute and, you know, I got to pay the bills and I got to pay the rent. And yet isn't God good? Isn't God wonderful? Aren't the songs great? Isn't it just awesome to be in the kingdom of God? And yet this young man was living far outside of the kingdom of God, far, far, far. But somehow had created an illusion in his own mind that this was good and he was living in victory and one day he was going to rule and reign with Christ.

I think of all the churches in our generation that have abandoned the cross of Jesus Christ. There is no cross in the theology that they preach. Everything that they preach is to be used for men to feel better about themselves.

There is no cross. There is no repentance. There is no turning from sin.

There is no hunger for the word of God. There is very little evangelism that is based in truth. And yet they can have thousands and thousands and thousands of people in their churches.

And I want to suggest to you, they've just bought a lie of the enemy. They've built a kingdom that's just an illusion. It's not the church of Jesus Christ.

Folks, I know this is a hard truth, but the Bible says that the fire of God is going to try it. That every man's work is going to be tried by fire to prove what it's made of. And we're about to go into a fire.

We're about to go into seasons in this world that are almost unthinkable to the natural mind. And these men, they can have 30, 40, 50,000 people in their churches, but it's just an illusion. There's no truth in it.

There's no weight in it. There's no substance. And when the trials come and the difficulties come, just like the scripture says, they'll be offended.

I thought Jesus was going to make my life wonderful. I thought Jesus was going to give me a better personality. I thought Jesus was going to give me a promotion in my job.

And here I am in the wilderness. I've just lost my job. How does that fit into your theology? They'll be saying to some of their preachers, Hey, wait a minute.

I've just lost my job. My family's in trouble. The situations in my life are not going well.

I'm suffering from depression. What is it that you've been telling me? What kind of a thing is it? Is this really Jesus? And many will be offended because they've been sitting in a place that's simply an illusion of victory. And then it gets even more insidious.

In Luke 4, 9, he says, He brought him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down from hence. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Now here's what he's actually saying to the Son of God.

If you persist on this course, I'm going to kill you. And do you think that God is going to protect you? Do you think he's going to raise you up? If I throw you off a cliff, do you think he's going to catch you before you hit the bottom? And if you do hit the bottom, do you think he's going to raise you up? If you really think this, then put him to the test. Test him.

Jump off now. Jump off the pinnacle of this temple and let's see if God's word is true. In verse 12 he said, And Jesus answering unto him said, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Now I've heard my wife preach this and I agree, that there is a point the devil has just, there's a line. And he was talking to the Lion of Judah now. He was not just talking to Jesus the man, he was talking to Jesus the Son of God.

And when he looked up at the devil with those eyes of fire and said, It is written, You will not tempt the Lord your God. You will not put God to a foolish test. I don't have to test my father because my father cannot lie.

My father's word is the truth. And then the devil ended the temptation and departed him for a season. Now folks, we're going into some difficult days.

And the question is who's going to stand in these days? Who's going to know the power of God? Who's going to have something to say to this generation? Who's going to have the gospel? You see, everything will be shifted now and everything will be tested and that which is not God will have no weight. It will be just simply blown away by the adversity that we're all about to experience. But it was after this temptation that Jesus went into the temple.

He stood up. He opened the book of the prophet Isaiah. And then He began to speak.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. And this is going to be your testimony and it's going to be mine. The Holy Spirit is upon me.

The power of God is upon me for this reason. Because He's anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent me to heal the broken hearted.

To preach deliverance to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind and to set free those that have been bruised. You see folks, it's all about other people. He didn't say the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to turn stones into bread.

He has anointed me to be able to establish a kingdom on this earth that has an appearance of glory. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to do signs and wonders like jumping off a cliff and you'll see angels begin to hold me up. No, that's not why the Spirit of God was upon Him.

This is the church that will stand in these last days. It is a people like you and I who have the anointing of God to preach to the poor of this world. To tell them that they have a Redeemer.

To tell them that there is a cross. To tell them there's a way out of everything that we're experiencing in this life and a way into eternity with God. To tell them that the treasure of God's power is open to all men.

Every man, every woman, every young person, every child that opens their heart to the living Savior has a promise of the power of God coming upon them. We're sent to heal the brokenhearted. We're sent to preach deliverance to those that are captivated by sin and darkness and to give back spiritual sight to those that are blind and to see those that have been wounded and bruised and hurt in this world set free and brought into the healing of Jesus Christ.

And to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book and gave it to the minister and sat down and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him and He began to say to them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. Praise God when you and I determine in our hearts that we're going all the way in this race.

I'm going to finish this course according to the will of God for my life. Not how I think this life should be lived out but how God has called it to be lived out. I'm going to finish it that way.

Though He blessed me along the way. Though He turned some hard places into some good things. That's God's choice if He chooses to do that.

And I will thank Him for that. But you and I have to be willing to walk away even from the blessing of God. Where He leads me I will follow the scripture tells us.

This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And verse 28 says everyone in the synagogue when they heard these things were filled with wrath and they rose up and thrust Him out of the city. You can see the devil is behind it now.

He's enraging this religious crowd. He thinks that God will protect him. He thinks that God will lift him up.

Kill him now. I can't divert him. I can't change his focus to selflessness.

I can't get him to bend his knee and agree that the reasoning of darkness and humanity is equal to the reasoning of God. I can't get him to agree with it. He believes that God will protect him.

You can see the devil himself saying now throw him off a cliff. And that's the very temptation he'll bring to you and I. If you follow this path it's going to mean harm. It's going to mean hurt to you.

It's going to be difficult to you. If you stand up and be a witness in this generation when everything is beginning to move against the testimony of Jesus Christ every institution, organization is starting to cast out the name of Jesus and the people of God as somehow deficient, somehow bigoted, somehow narrow, somehow unworthy of even the slightest bit of consideration. And they rose up it says verse 29 and thrust him out of the city and led him to the brow of the hill whereupon their city was built that they might cast him down headlong.

Verse 30 says but he passing through the midst of them went his way. Now folks tell me how did that happen? You've got two, three hundred people perhaps and they were known for the vehemence. When you enrage a religious crowd there's hardly a deeper wrath than that when you've offended their sensibility of who they think God is.

And they're pushing him to the edge of the cliff and they're actually going to throw him off. That's exactly what Satan tried to get him to do on the pinnacle of the temple. Then suddenly the crowd parts.

And it doesn't say he ran away. It doesn't say anybody came and helped him. It just said he walked through the middle of them and just went his way.

How did that happen? It happened because it is written he shall give his angels charge over thee and they will bear thee up in their hands lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone. And this is what it means to me. My life is not over until God says it's over.

My life is in the hands of God. Your life is in the hands of God. And don't you for a second believe that if you stand up for Jesus Christ in this generation that somehow it's going to prematurely end your health or your safety or your life or any of these things.

We're in the hands of God folks until God says we're not. Hallelujah. As I read the scriptures it says my days are in his hand.

He numbered my days from the time he knows the moment, the day, the month, the week, the hour, the year that I'm going to die. It's all in his hand. And Satan could not kill the Son of God before the time, before God allowed it to happen.

Hallelujah. To the Lamb of God. Praise be to God.

You and I don't fully and never will know the full power of God until we are living for the purposes of God in the earth. When you and I determine that we're going to live for God, we're going to walk with God, we're going to be given for the purposes of God and for people in the earth, that's where the power of God begins to be known. Hallelujah.

Thank God for his power. Thank God. My altar call this morning is very simple.

It's for people who have been afraid to take the step of faith that is necessary to be abandoned to the kingdom of God. Now it doesn't mean you have to do anything. Now hear me on this.

It means there's a willingness in the heart that says, Lord, where you lead me, I will follow you. Now the leading of your life, the ultimate fulfillment of your life may not be for years from now. But the intent to run this race with determination and truth is what God will allow to be formed in you now.

So that when times get tough, when the wilderness seasons come, you'll not quit this race. You'll not give up. You'll keep the end goal in sight.

Jesus was only three years away. He was only three years away from the greatest event ever recorded in the world. Where the son of God died for the sins of the world.

He was only three years away and it was at that three year before the finish line point, that's where the devil came and tempted him the hardest. And many of us, who knows how long we have now. I can't help but wonder if some of the folks in Japan hadn't heard a word like this somewhere.

Whole towns swept away in just a moment of time. We won't know for weeks what the actual toll is and we need to pray for Japan and for these families and we'll be sending teams there without any doubt in the future. But who knows how many people were putting that day away, waiting maybe for another time, something in the future, not knowing that they were coming close to the end and we don't know what our future is folks.

I only can tell you that I know it's going to be hard. And I know the only one that will get us through is Jesus Christ. The only power that will last is the spirit of God.

The only thing that will cast out fear is the love of God being manifested in us for people. For people. For other people.

Let your theological focus be for other people. Enter into the redemptive work of Christ in the world. God promises to give you the strength to finish your course, to finish your race.

You will not be triumphed over. You will not be overcome until the day that God decides and it's His choice to take you home. You will be a living, vibrant, breathing witness for Christ in the earth.

Thank God. Determine it now. Determine it now and it will become evident.

If you are living in sin, get out now, get out quickly. Don't call evil good in the sight of God. Put away known sin.

Put it away now. Put it away now. Put it away.

Understand today that the calling of Christ in the Christian church is to be an extension of the Christ, a witness of the Christ who went to a cross. And the only the word witness means martyr actually in the Greek. It's that we're willing as He was unto death to tell other people what God has done for them through Jesus Christ.

Living witnesses of God in our generation. Father, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus, for what you're going to do today.

For the freedom from fear in many people's hearts. Lord, you're going to touch all of us and give us the grace and the strength to understand, to obey, to love the word of God, to move forward in our generations, to not back up, to not quit the race. Lord, we want to finish this race with a shout.

We want to get over the finish line with our hands in the air and shouting victory. God, give us that grace. We thank you for it in Jesus' name.

Now, my other call is so simple. It's for people who are afraid. You're just afraid.

And God understands that. And if you have the courage to admit it, He'll give you strength. If you need to get out of some lifestyle, some practice that you shouldn't be in, may I encourage you today to make that decision now.

You have to get oil now, folks. You've got to get strength now. You're going to need it.

This world is unraveling very quickly. You're going to need strength to get through the coming days. I would like to give another call for people who are just saying, God, you've got to help me get through the fear.

The fear of being abandoned to the will of God, you have to help me to get through that fear. And He will. He promises you that whatever you ask believing, you shall receive it.

Let's stand. We're going to worship for a few minutes. And if the Lord's speaking to you, just slip out of your seat, please, and meet me here at the front of the sanctuary.

In the annex, you can step between the screens, if you will, please. We'd appreciate that very much. Just come.

Just come if you're afraid. Just come. If you need to get out of sin, just come.

For those that have come to the altar, I love this, the way it's written. It said when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written. And there's much of Christianity today that needs to find this place again.

He found the place even though he wrote it himself. But here's what it said. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

Because, that means for this reason, he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty or free those that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. In other words, this is the time.

It's now that these things can happen. I want you to find the place in the book tonight and read it. But today I'd like you just to speak it with me.

We want to make a declaration to Heaven itself. Say these words. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And it says in verse 20, he closed the book. In other words, there's a point where you just close the book and say, this is the way it's going to be.

This is, I'm closing the book. I'm not open to any other opinion on my life. I'm closing the book.

And I don't want any lies. I don't want anybody telling me any different. This is what my life is for.

This is the purpose of my life. And then he began to say to them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. Now Satan was in that crowd too, you can be sure of it, because he was most likely the one who incited them to throw him off a cliff.

And you can tell the devil today. You can tell him, this day, this scripture is fulfilled in your ears. This day.

Hallelujah. Now, what I'm going to give you to do, is it's Luke 4. Let's bring the babies in. It's Luke chapter 4, verses 18 to 21.

And I want you to meditate on it when you get home. Study it. Chew on it.

Memorize it. Think about it. Go over it word by word, because this is your calling.

Remember Jesus said, it was the Father who sent me, now I send you. The same reason. You have the Holy Spirit for the same reason that Jesus had the Holy Spirit.

Now you and I can't die for people's sins, but we can lead them to the one who died for their sins. Hallelujah. Praise be to God.

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

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