

When Death Seems Like a Better Option

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon addresses the struggles of despair and the hope found in trusting God for deliverance from life's darkest moments.

Duration: 35:18

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:8

Topics: "Death"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power and strength of God in transforming the lives of believers. He highlights the idea that God chooses to work through our weaknesses and frailties, rather than our strengths. The preacher encourages the congregation to praise and worship God, reminding them of the promises and provisions that God has made for His people. He also addresses the lie that God is angry with us and emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and the finished work of Christ on the cross. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the victory and purpose that believers have in Christ.

Transcript

I want to speak from 2 Corinthians chapter 1, an unusual message and something I would not be really inclined to speak on, except that I have the comfort of knowing that God knows what people are struggling with today. The message title is, When Death Seems Like a Better Option. Now, Father, I thank you, Lord, that you are the author and finisher of life.

You give meaning and purpose and strength and freedom and deliverance. And where your word is spoken under the anointing, you open prison doors and give sight to the blind. You heal the bruised in heart.

These are the things that you say accompany the spirit of God and the word of God. And so today, Lord, I'm asking you for the grace to be able to reach into some dark places and to bring the light of Christ and to help people to get out in Jesus' name. When Death Seems Like a Better Option, 2 Corinthians, rather, chapter 1, verses 8 to 10, the words of the apostle Paul, For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life.

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver, in whom we trust that he will

yet deliver us. When Death Seems Like a Better Option. You know, there are secret inner struggles that people go through quite often that nobody but the person who's going through it fully understands it.

And of course, part of the enemy's strategy against the people of God is to keep these battles a secret, to keep those afflicted by it from reaching out and looking for help. I can't help but think I was in the doctor's office recently, and I was reading a story in Sports Illustrated of a football player who was retired and apparently a very happy-go-lucky guy. And even on the day of his death, still texting people saying, I love you, and encouraging everybody.

But he had an inward battle, obviously, that was overcoming him. And either he didn't know how to reach out, or he had created an image of himself that didn't allow him to. Nobody knows for sure.

All we do know is that he suddenly and shockingly took his life. And what a tragedy that is when death seems, in a person's mind, a better option. There are times which come to even people of God where thoughts of death call out to them as a reasonable solution or the only option left to escape their present anguish or pain.

And I know this is true because I've spoken to people who are seemingly happy on the outside, but battling this inner despair. And it seems to be getting deeper and darker every day, and they don't know how they're ever going to get out. And at some point, they begin to entertain the thought that it would be nice to get out of here, be nice to have this end.

It would be nice to be finished with the struggle, the trial, and the pain. Now, we're not talking about just thoughts of suicide, but also the deep inner longing which often precedes these thoughts. You know, suicide and thoughts of suicide can come to even believers in Christ.

But there's despair. There are many factors that come that cause these thoughts to begin to lodge in the minds of people. Now, it can happen when we feel that we've failed to the point where there's no recovery.

Think about Elijah for a moment. In 1 Kings chapter 19, verse 4, the Bible tells us that we know he was a great prophet of God. He was zealous for truth.

He had a view, a self-view. He had a view of what his life was going to accomplish, what God was going to do through him. And in that context, in his mind, he felt like he had failed.

The Scripture says he went a day's journey into the wilderness, into a lonely, dark, alone place. Nobody was there. Nobody could help him.

Nobody could reach out to him. And he sat down under a juniper tree, and he requested for himself that he might die. And he said, it's enough now, O Lord, take away my life.

I'm not better than my father's. Number one, Elijah was spiritually and physically burnt out. And so, folks, remember this one thing.

When you get burnt out, all your molehills become mountains. Things that you could just literally push your way to the side easily when you're in a position of rest and strength suddenly become this incredible mountain that you can't seem to get over, under, or around. And that's the result of burnout.

So you have to be careful. Some of these things are just simply physical factors that get ahold of people's lives in the time when they are burnt out. I knew a pastor one time, a man wonderfully used to the Lord,

who felt a deep, inward sense of failure come upon himself.

And I remember hearing a message he preached one time about walking beside a river, and this overwhelming voice came to him, throw yourself into the river. Just end it now. Your life is a failure.

His life wasn't a failure, but he was burnt out. He was tired. Everything was caving in all around him.

And suddenly, he's facing this. And you know exactly where that thought is coming from, especially to those who are living for the Lord. Elijah had a view of what his life and ministry should have looked like.

And at that particular moment, it seemed to be like sand just falling through his fingers. He felt he had cowered before evil. It was the one thing he hated.

He had taken a stand for what was right and what was godly, and yet when threatened by an evil queen, he ran for his life. And perhaps he had a measure of a self-image of how strong he was, and he was going to resist, and others were going to falter, and he wasn't. As a matter of fact, he actually started believing he was the only righteous man left in the nation of Israel.

That may have been, of course, part of what led to his downfall. Elijah knew the history of what happens when God's people lose faith and courage, and he would rather die than be counted among them. And you know, you can find that in the body of Christ.

People who just feel that they had a certain sense when they came to Christ of what their life was going to look like, and how this was all going to play out, and what kind of strength they were going to have, and the new testimony, and the new song, and the new life, and then suddenly they're overpowered or running from evil. And there's a sense of hopelessness that can come into the heart and say, God, I'm no better. Elijah said, I'm no better than the people who've come before me.

I'm no better than the cowardice that I've stood against, and the backslidenness, and the worshipping at the altars of Baal, and what brought that about in the nation. Now here I am just fleeing from the voice of this evil queen. And so he said, Lord, just take my life now.

I don't see any purpose to it. I don't see a future to it. I know that Elijah feared the anger of God, because he was a man who who walked in a measure of seeing the judgment of God come upon people and nations who disregarded the presence of the Lord.

And there were manifestations, powerful manifestations all around him of fire, and earthquakes, and wind. But the Bible tells us that God wasn't in any of these. And how surprised he must have been when a tender whisper suddenly came to him, a whisper that just simply had the power to overshadow the roaring that was going on inside of his head and in his spirit.

This whisper that came to him, telling him to take heart, for there was still much left for him to do. God was not angry with him. I believe a lot of the display on the mountain was God showing Elijah, if I was angry with you, at your failure, the way that you think I should be, I would have destroyed you by now.

And he saw the power to break mountains and to literally, you know, blow things into into eternity and to burn them with fire. And, but God, the scripture says, wasn't in any of these things. He wasn't angry.

And I want to tell you today, when you get tired, and you've failed, you can get the sense in your heart that God is angry with you, that God himself is fed up with you, when the scripture doesn't bear witness to that.

He says, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

When Jesus Christ went to a cross on Calvary 2000 years ago, he didn't go to the cross because you were strong. He went to the cross because you'd never make it in your own strength, you needed a covering, and you needed a savior. And you have to get away from the lie that somehow God is angry with you.

And because of his angry, anger, your life is finished. Your ministry is finished. Your future is finished.

You've just failed once too often. Well, folks, I can put that all to flight through the scriptures, because remember, Peter came and said, how many times are we to, you know, if somebody wrongs us, are we to forgive them? Seven times? I think he expected a commendation. Oh, Peter, that's the greatest revelation you've had since you knew I was the Christ.

Seven times. These are fishermen. You get on the wrong side of a fisherman, your teeth are lying on the dock.

And Peter thought seven times, that would take the power of God. Obviously, God would be with--obviously, I've become godly because I'm even willing to consider forgiving a man seven times for wronging me. Because ordinarily, he wouldn't forgive him once.

And now he's up to seven. And to him, seven is the number of perfection in the word of God. The seventh day, God rested.

I mean, he had all the sevens all lined up, and I have arrived, I am perfect. I would forgive seven times. Then Jesus looks at him and says, no, 70 times seven.

Now, I can see Peter doing--Peter probably wasn't that--I don't think he went too far in school, but he's doing the math, and he knows that's a lot of times, 70 times seven. And that's why--and right after that, you'll see this verse, Lord, increase our faith. I don't know how we're going to do this.

You see, God was conveying something of his heart that he is willing to do. That when we fail, he picks us up. When we're weak, he gathers us up in our weakness.

When we've fallen short, his arm and mercy is never short. When we won't forgive ourselves, he will forgive us. For my strength, he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 9, is made perfect in weakness.

It's not our strength, it's the strength of God. And you know, part of failure sometimes is just the pride of thinking we can do it on our own. And we can't.

None of us can. If God dealt with us in the manner that we deserve, there would be nobody here that would make it to heaven, folks. It's a kingdom of mercy.

And so don't let the devil condemn you and tell you that you've somehow sinned away your day of grace. That is not true. If you had sinned away your day of grace, according to Romans 1, you wouldn't be here.

You couldn't be here. There'd be nothing in your heart that would make you come here. You wouldn't even have the desire to get right with God.

That's spiritual reprobation. The fact that you're here with considering and longing, don't let the enemy lie to you and tell you that your life is not worth living. Go with me to Luke chapter 7, please, if you will.

I want to talk about thoughts of death can come to people and become an option when the sorrow of loss in our lives has reached the point where the thought of living has lost all meaning, even to the point of being unbearable. Luke chapter 7 verse 12 says, Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother. And she was a widow, and much people of the city was with her.

And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the casket, and they that bear him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead sat up and began to speak, and he delivered him to his mother. And there came a great fear on all, and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet has risen up among us, and that God has visited his people. Now, you look at this lady coming out of the city, and she's a widow.

So she's already lost her husband. And there's been the sorrow of that covering is lost. Obviously, she's still a widow.

So that ache in her heart has never been replaced or mended by another relationship. And now she's lost. She's lost the one closest to her heart that should cover her and love her.

And now she's lost her son, her only son. And so that means she's lost her future. She's lost her heart.

She's lost her hope. And folks, that can happen. It can happen when we've lost something or somebody that it can become so sorrowful in the heart.

And loss can reach a point where the thought of living has lost meaning. That if I can't share life with this person, I'd rather share death with them. And I know I'm speaking to somebody today.

And it's to the point of being unbearable. And Jesus comes into this situation, and he says to this woman, weep not. And he speaks to the young man and says, I say to thee, arise.

Now, this is a miracle. This is a situation where the dead is brought back to life again. Now, that's not the way God is going to do it in every situation.

But Jesus is able to stop this procession of pain, even if everyone around, it's as much of the city were with her. They were grieving, they were mourning, they were overwhelmed, perhaps at the sense of loss that had come into her heart. But Jesus is able to stop the procession of endless pain and sorrow.

And the young man, it says, he got up and he began to speak. And it was a voice of hope rising again. And that's what I feel the Lord's given me to say to you, that in spite of the pain or the sorrow or the heartache that you have gone through and are going through today, God is able to cause a voice of hope to come into your heart again.

You're simply going to have to believe that he will. He's able to do it. The young man sat up and began to speak.

You'll see even the reason for things that you thought were insurmountable, inescapable. You had no power to overcome it. But the Bible does say that all things work together for good to those who love God

and are called according to his purpose.

You might not be able to see it. It's so sorrowful. It's so overwhelming.

It's so filled with hopelessness at the moment. But God is able to speak eventually through the sorrow and through the pain and through the difficulty. God can speak.

And suddenly the voice of hope comes again. Suddenly out of death comes life. As in Samson's case, out of the eater comes forth sweetness.

Out of that which should overpower ordinary people, it has no power to overpower those that are governed and guided and enabled by the spirit of almighty God. Even Jesus said about John the Baptist when he fell into despair, what did you come out to see? A reed shaken with the wind. And I can feel Jesus speaking about your life.

Even this day, no matter what you have had to go through, Satan stands at the throne and says, have you looked down? Have you seen the sorrow? Have you seen Christ, the secret hopelessness and the lack of confidence in you? And Jesus looks and says, listen, what you're looking at is not a reed shaken by the wind. For I have redeemed that person with my blood. I have given them my Holy Spirit.

And I have made a covenant promise to keep him, to keep, I've made a covenant covenant promise to keep you. No weapon formed against you shall prosper. And every tongue that rises against you in judgment, you shall condemn it.

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. You have a right to speak to that hopelessness and speak to that darkness and speak to that parade of sorrow and say in the name of Jesus, the son of God, my Lord, my savior, you are not going to take away my future. You're not taking away my hope.

You're not stealing my song. And so it was with Paul and even some of his companions, they were fighting a good fight of faith. And they suddenly found that their own strength had reached its limits and hopelessness came knocking on the door.

The new living Testament says it this way. Paul's words say we were crushed and completely overwhelmed. And we thought we would never live through it.

In fact, we expected to die. And the King James says in verse nine, so, but we had the sense of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raises the dead. Now folks, this is the only reasonable death that we as people of God should ever consider that you and I are willing to die to our strength.

We die to our plans. We die even to our sense of hopelessness. And we put our trust in the one who raises the dead, yielding everything we have into his hands and calling out to him to take over and manifest his life in us.

That's the only death. That's an option for the child of God. Hear me clearly on this.

That's the only death is God. I die. I die even to the sorrow.

I die to giving into the thoughts of despair. I die to my plans, to my strength, to anything I have to get out of this situation. I'll never get out of it in my own strength.

I die to it. But oh God, I'm trusting you because you are the God who said that you could raise the dead. You are the God who said you give power to those that have no power.

You give might to those that are fate. You give new wings to those who can't fly any longer. And you cause us to mount up with wings as eagles.

You are the God who said we will walk and not grow weary. We will run and not faint. You are the God who said you gave us power over serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy and nothing should by any means hurt us.

You are the God who took David through the valley of the shadow of death. And when he got to the other side and looked behind him, he said, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

You are the God who said through one of the prophets in the old testament, I shall not die, but live and my mouth will declare the glories of God. My life will be a testimony, not of myself, but of him who's able to raise us from the dead. Romans 8, 11, Paul said, but if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwells in you.

He will quicken you by the power of Christ within you. You never have to give up. You never have to quit.

You never have to go down in despair as a child of God. For Jesus Christ has interwoven the very glory of his own name in keeping you and sustaining you and empowering you. Hallelujah.

In first Corinthians 15, 22, the second half of the verse, Paul says in Christ shall all be made alive. A-L-L, all in Christ shall all be made alive. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God.

We had this sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raises the dead. Paul said who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver and in whom we trust, he will yet deliver us. Three tenses.

He delivered us. He does deliver us. He will deliver us.

Hallelujah. Those secret struggles are powerful and they come for a lot of reasons, but one of the ways that you defeat it is you just get up and say no, no. You stop giving in to the reasonings.

Stop listening. Stop now on those who this morning who are on the spiral of despair, if I can call it, or the downward slide of despair. You have been given of Christ the power to stop this downward journey now.

You can stop it before it gets to the point of thinking about leaving this world. You don't have to succumb to it. You don't have to give in to it.

There's life and healing and hope and freedom from all of the captivity and the thoughts and despair. It could be also that God actually has something significant for your life and the devil has come against you with a fury. Remember, we are in a spiritual battle.

I've had people sometimes say, I don't know what's wrong with me. I never struggled in my mind like this before. When I was lost and out in bars and drunk and doing drugs, everything seemed to be fine.

And now I'm fighting hell in my mind. The reality is you are fighting hell in your mind. You've actually said something that's true.

It's not that you're deficient. It's not that somehow you've entered into an arena that nobody before you has ever been in or familiar with. This is a warfare.

You are fighting spiritual wickedness in high places. You are fighting the prince of the power of the air of this world who hates the children of righteousness. You are targeted by darkness.

You're hated by darkness. You're going to be flooded in your mind with thoughts, but you've been given in Christ the power to stand up and resist these things. You do not have to give in.

You have the power to stop it. You have the power to say this far and no far. This is it.

No, as of today, no farther. No more of these thoughts. I'm going to do what the Bible says.

I'm going to get into the word of God and whatsoever is pure, whatsoever has virtue, whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is of good report. These things I'm going to thank God. I'm not going to sit there and continue to mull my depressing situation.

I'm going to go into the Bible and I'm going to read the stories about those that out of weakness were made strong. Those who went through impossible situations and somehow found the strength of God to fight against odds that could not have been won in any amount of natural strength. I'm going to strengthen my faith.

I'm going to strengthen my heart and I'm going to, not only am I going to get out of this, but I'm going to do damage to the kingdom of darkness along the way. I'm going to trust God for the power to recognize everyone who's ever struggled like I do. And I'm going to, by God's grace, I'm going to be used to the Lord to pull them out, as a key to unlock these prison doors, as an eye salve to give them an understanding of the fact that you and I have a hope and a future, the vision of God, the strength of God, the purpose of God, the power of God.

Even if it's a whisper on a park bench, that's all it took of God, just a whisper into Elijah. And he got up and started going on, anointed kings and did great good in the earth. Hallelujah to the lamb of God.

Hallelujah. Remember this one thing, Jesus Christ created the world by the word of his mouth. Jesus Christ created you by the word of his mouth.

Jesus Christ is able to keep you and sustain you and hold you in the palm of his hand. Jesus Christ said, I place you in my father's hand and nobody can take you out of the hand of my father. Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there, you may be also.

Jesus said, fear not little flock. It is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom of God. Hallelujah.

I could go on and on about the promises of God. Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Jesus said, no tongue formed against you is ever going to prosper.

No power ever standing against you is ever going to bring you down. Jesus said, you're my church. You're my body.

You're my bride. You're the testimony of my heart on the earth. Hallelujah to the lamb of God.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Glory to God. Glory to God. Glory to God.

Glory to God. Glory to God. Glory, glory, glory.

You're not going down. You're going up. Glory to the lamb of God.

Glory to the lamb of God. I take authority in the name of Jesus over every lie of the devil, every power of evil, every weapon of evil formed against any righteous child of God. In the name of Jesus, we tread upon these things.

We bring them under the soles of our feet. We appropriate the victory of the cross. My God, Jesus, you said it is finished.

So it's finished. We believe that. We believe in God.

It's finished. It's finished. The power of hell is finished.

Finished. Satan's ability to lie to your mind and to convince you that there's no reason to live is finished. It's over.

Or that you'll always be dragging yourself through sorrow after sorrow and there'll never be meaning nor purpose in your life. That's the beginning of the argument. That too is finished.

The glory of God is in your soul. I'd like us to worship for a little while. And I'd like the people in this sanctuary today and at home in Roxbury and the annex that this message is for.

Now, here in the main sanctuary, if you would just join with me at the front of this auditorium, and we're going to rejoice. Now, coming to this altar, you're not saying that you're on the verge of committing suicide. Don't misunderstand me.

But there's a lot of stages to that. You just say, pastor, I'm afraid because I'm feeling a despair and it's got a pull and I can't seem to resist it. And I don't know how to get out of it.

Then you need to come. And we're going to praise God. And we're going to pray.

And we're going to see this thing broken off of your life today. Broken. I believe that with all my heart.

In the annex, you can step between the screens, if you will, please. And at home, those that are listening on the internet, if you could just go to your knees in your living room or join hands together. And let's truly believe God because his kingdom is a kingdom of victory.

It's a kingdom of strength. It's a kingdom of hope and a future. And that is so conclusive in the Bible.

You must never give in to these lies. Never, ever, ever think that your life is not worth living. Praise God.

Praise God. Praise God. Praise God.

Thank you, Lord. Let's stand together, please. And those that this message is for slip out, please, and come to the front and we'll pray together in a moment.

I want those of you who are at the altar here and in your homes as well. I want you to understand something. You are a great threat to the kingdom of darkness.

And you don't really realize how much because you have, you know what people are feeling. The majority of society is feeling what you've had to go through. But you know something that unsaved people don't know.

You know that God is going to keep you and God is going to use you. And even a soft word can make a difference from a vessel that is anointed by the spirit of God. It doesn't have to be a wagon load of scripture.

It can be just something soft spoken to a heart that is losing hope. God spoke softly to Elijah and lifted him up and carried him on the journey and gave him a friend. And it's so important you don't try to make this journey alone.

You have to have a friend. Everybody needs a friend. Got to be somebody you can talk to.

And you have a great opportunity in a church this size to find a friend. And you have to show, you have to make the effort but to find a friend, somebody that you can just share your heart with and you can pray together and you can talk together. It doesn't mean you burden that person, but that you just have somebody you can talk to.

And that's one of the greatest ways of exposing the works of darkness is just have somebody you can share with who just says, no, that's the devil. You know, and sometimes that's the end of it. That's all it's necessary.

You know, to stop listening to that, that's the devil in your life and open the scriptures and begin to pray together. And so in his weakness, God gave Elijah a friend called Elisha. And that's very important to have a friend.

So praise God for that. The Lord's going to use you. And if you would have the courage to just say that my life is worth living, my life is worth living.

And God has a marvelous plan for me. You have to say it. You have to say it out loud.

Speak it. There's power in my life is worth living. God has a marvelous plan for my life.

Hallelujah. And when the devil tries to come against you, as you're going down the street and going into your apartment and going home and on the subway, and he starts reminding you of all of his woes, you just say, my life is worth living. God has a marvelous plan for my life.

My life is worth living. Just keep saying it. My life is worth living.

My life is worth living. My life is worth living. My life is worth living.

Just keep saying it. Just keep saying it. Just keeps saying it.

God has a marvelous plan for my life. Christ will sustain me. Christ will keep me.

Christ will be my, all the resource that I need, not just to get through life, but devil, I'm going to do harm to you. And I'm going to do harm to your kingdom. Father, I thank you, Lord, for truth always unmasks evil, always puts to flight secret things that the enemy is trying to build underground into people's lives, but it's dissipated by just a moment in the presence of God and the light of God's Word and God's truth.

Father, I pray you take these that have gathered at this altar today and, Lord God, let there be a new song like David. The Lord took me out of the miry clay and set me on a rock and he put a new song in me and many will see it and fear and will turn to God. And Father, I thank you, Lord.

Your Word tells us you don't take us because we're strong, you take us in our weakness, in our frailty, in our nothingness. You put your Spirit upon us and your Word in our minds and you make us into people who make a difference. Lord Jesus Christ, we want to thank you for the victory in this house today.

We want to thank you, Lord God, we praise you, we bless you. Shake off, you know that song, shake off those heavy bands, shake off those heavy bands and lift up those holy hands. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Let's give him praise today, let's give him praise.

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