

The Tender Mercies of God

by David Wilkerson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and extending God's tender mercies to all people, and highlights the need for the church to overcome its biases and prejudices in order to be effective in the face of adversity.

Duration: 55:00

Scripture: Jonah 1:1

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Divine Providence"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Jonah and the tender mercies of God. He explains that Jonah, who initially had a biased view of God's mercy, was called by God and his prophecy was fulfilled by Jeroboam. The preacher emphasizes that in these troubled times, people need consolation and hope, and they can find it in the testimony of those who have experienced God's mercy in their battles. He highlights that God's works are accomplished through His tender mercies, and encourages the audience to trust in God's mercy amidst the fears and troubles of the world.

Transcript

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Would you go to Psalm 145? Let me start there, Psalm 145. And let's go to verses 8 and 9. Psalm 145, verses... The Lord is what? Gracious and full of compassion, He's slow to anger, of great mercy. The Lord is good to all and His, what? His tender mercies are over all His works.

God does nothing except through His tender mercies. All His works are accomplished through tender mercies. If you want to know what God's doing in these last days, how He's going to combat the forces of wickedness and evil in these troubled times, you can be sure He works through His tender, loving mercies.

How many are ready for a message on mercy? A happy message? Lord, thank You for Your tender mercies. Oh God, we sit here now in this house thanking You, because none of us would be here without Your mercy. If we got what we deserved, we would be in hell.

Oh, thank You, Jesus, for loving us. Thank You for the tenderness of Your heart. Lord, we pray that many that walked here this morning will be encouraged, and many, Lord, who have thought only that You are angry with them, that You have left them and that You are chasing them.

Lord, it's only in love that You would chase anyone. It's only in Your tender mercies, Lord, that You would allow us to go through any difficulty and trouble or despair. And many of those that are going through battles, explain more of that to them and help them to understand the purpose of it now.

Lord, I need a quickening in my physical body, and I need Your help, Holy Spirit. I acknowledge You. In Christ's name I pray.

Amen. I'll ask You a question I've been asking myself. Are You a merciful person? Are You one of those who really care about the hurts and the needs of others? If I ask Your husband or wife, what would they say? If I ask Your co-partners or co-workers on Your job, what would they say? What would You say to Yourself sitting in this congregation now about Your compassion and concern? You say, yes, I think, Pastor Dave, I would say that to the best of my knowledge, the best of my ability, I'm a compassionate person.

I am merciful. I'm forgiving that people hurt me. I easily forgive.

I hold no grudges. I hope that's Your confession right now. And I ask it again in the annex and all over the house.

Are You really a forgiving, merciful person? Are You tender? And which way are You growing right now? Are You growing toward tenderness? Are You growing a little more grouchy? How was it on the way to church this morning in your car or on the subway with your family? How much, what kind of looks did you pass between one another? And more than that, it's a heart issue. What is truly in your heart? Because whatever is in your heart is going to come out. One way or another, you can't hide it, it's going to come out.

And I would hope that every Christian here, especially if Times Square Church is your home, you have a good measure of loving kindness in your heart. But the truth is, the Word of God exposes a bias, a limited concept of mercy, tender mercies. We have a limited concept.

Many of us have a prejudice and a bias in our heart that we don't want to admit to. But the Bible lets nothing stay hidden. If it's not confessed and forsaken, it will find you out.

The truth of the matter is, a lot of people who preach and talk about the tender mercies of God really don't extend it to others. Let's talk about denominations right now. I'm leaving in a few weeks for Uruguay.

And in the past five years, I think we've covered almost 50 nations. And you go to many South American countries, and you'll find five, six, seven brands of assemblies of God. You'll find 15 branches of Baptists, different names of them.

They're all splits from other ministries, and none of them talk to each other. Not even those branches of the assemblies of God. And it's all over the world.

It's in Russia, it's in China, among Christians. Those who talk about the tender mercies of God are not showing it many places, not extending that love and mercy of God to one another. There's one country that wouldn't even allow our advance team to come into their office because they thought I was turning a little worldly.

My preaching wasn't strong enough, and I was cooperating with other denominations. And so they said, we can't do that. If you come exclusively with us, you can come.

But I don't want to come exclusively because I believe the tenderness of Jesus Christ is extended to all mankind. And we see a church around the world divided. It makes me wonder if they don't think they're going to heaven.

Because if we're all going to get together in heaven under the tender mercies of Christ, it better get together soon. Time is running out. You see, these tender loving mercies we talk about, you go into many churches today that are primarily white churches, and the tender loving mercies are not extended people of color.

That's not just in the South. That's right here in New York City. There are some churches that are black.

If you go in there as a white group, a group of 10, 15, 20 whites, you're going to get looks and you're going to feel uncomfortable. Whether it's black, whether it's white, whether it's Hispanic. I've been in Hispanic churches visiting where I did not feel comfortable.

Really, it was not fully accepted. I wasn't looking for some kind of acceptance, but the knowledge was there right in your face that this is not your place. We do not extend the loving mercies.

We have these cultural biases. We have these things in our heart that run in deep rivers and borders that have been carved over centuries. And it comes out even among the best and holiest of Christians when it comes to a bias against certain kinds of sinners.

This merciful, loving kindness of the Lord is not extended by some people to homosexuals, for example. And I tell you right off, I believe homosexuality is anti-scriptural. I believe the scripture is clearly against homosexuality, against marriages between gays.

But you see, sometimes we get such wrath. We get so angry at the sin. We mark the sinner himself.

And there are many homosexuals now that when you get one to one with some that are going through the trial of their life and they've had all kinds of heartaches and difficulties and drinking to cover pain. And then you hear a cry. And I can't believe that my Savior, who is full of tender mercies, would turn down the cry of a prostitute, a drug addict, alcoholic, homosexual.

I'm not trying to list homosexuals with all others or anything else. I'm making no statement. But I'm saying I don't believe the church of Jesus Christ or a true believer can cut off anybody.

I don't believe we have that right. And I don't believe the tender mercies of Christ cut off anybody from the cross and from salvation, from faith in Jesus Christ. But there is a bias.

There's a bias against AIDS. I can take you to churches, primarily in deep south. And I say this as kindly as I can.

I could never get up and talk about dying babies, dying of AIDS in Africa. I could not tell what we're doing in helping orphans that have been orphaned, who have no... Their parents have died of AIDS. And this cry against the sin, you know, well, AIDS is tied to certain kinds of sexual behavior.

And so they tie everyone in, including the Assembly of God pastor who died recently in Africa of AIDS. And he picked it up from earlier before he was ever saved. And there's still that bias in many people where they can't break through with the tender mercies of God.

They can't believe God for these people. God forbid that be ever in this church. God forbid it be anything in your heart.

The mercies of God are unlimited. There are unlimited. There is no limit to the mercy of God.

But the truth is there is some of this bias in many hearts. The truth is, folks, the world now has come to the perfect storm. We don't know how to handle the news anymore.

We can't keep up with the sudden fears, the fires, the floods, the hurricanes, the tornadoes, the terrorism, the genocides. Islamic jihad, the wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation. A world and a society who's waiting, just waiting on pins and needles for that one end all scenario.

Some nuclear explosion in the United States or somewhere else. An end all scenario. And people are living in constant fear around the world.

We don't know how to handle the news. Many people say, I don't turn on the news anymore. Can't handle it.

And we're becoming numb. It's just a numbing thing, because every day there's something new breaking out. And finally, we back off.

We back off completely because we don't know how to handle it. And you see, in this perfect storm, we find a tragic situation. We find, for the most part, a powerless church that cannot withstand the tides that are coming.

You can be sure that we're just very close to probably four or five major denominations ordaining or marrying homosexuals in their churches, ordaining priests, ordaining ministers as homosexuals. That is coming. It's a tide that can't seem to be stopped.

There are tides of sin and iniquity that are coming. And I want you to know that the old, dead, prejudiced, disunited church that has turned away from the birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, and now have blessed homosexuality as a not only accepted but often preferred way of life. Folks, we don't rail against homosexuals in this church.

We have numbers in this church that know the power of Christ, the forgiving power, and have come under the tender mercies of Christ and have been delivered from that kind of lifestyle. But you see, where is that church? Folks, let me tell you, God is finished with what he calls the shallow church, that church that lost the anointing, that church upon which he has written Ichabod, the glory of the Lord has departed. That includes many in the Episcopal movement, church now that is being split wide open.

It's not just the Episcopalian church, it's creeping into the evangelical circles as well. More and more tolerance, they call it. Tolerance is not the tender mercy of God.

Tolerance can be blindness. Yes, we need to be tolerant, but that's only under the banner of the tender love of Jesus Christ and the limitations of the precious holy word of God, the boundaries of the word of God. But see, where is the church? God has nothing to do with this dead, biased church.

He is moving on. He is not going to work through it. He is not going to resurrect that.

Now, God's mercies, God's tender mercies are extended to the dead, dry, formal church. His mercy is there. And it can be just like God.

It can just be like the Holy Spirit to come down in these last days in one of the deadest churches in the world, whatever that may be, and send a Holy Ghost revival, stir it and shake it and surprise all of us. How many believe He's able to do that? But you see, God has a plan. God has something in His mind in this perfect storm that we're living in now.

You see, I'm really not interested in bringing to you this morning some great news of an incredible move of God that's going to come and sweep thousands and millions into His kingdom. That may be. I hope and I pray that.

I'm not here to tell you about some great army God's raising up now. They're going to take on Islam and they're going to take on the powers of hell and everything's going to change and everything's going to be shaken by a people that rise up as an army. I'm not interested this morning in talking about some great new revival movement.

That's not my purpose this morning. I see something different. I see something entirely different.

I believe the Holy Spirit's going to move in these last days. He is moving now. He's moving in China.

He's moving in South America. He's moving in many countries. And He's not finished with His work here in the United States.

But see, I see something different. I see God preparing a people by breaking them, by breaking their will, by bringing people to a place where they need a miracle to get out, to survive. And this is happening in the church of Jesus Christ.

Never in history has there been such intense testing and trials. Never. All over the world.

Everywhere I go, you hear the same thing. The same thing that's happening in your life, and the suffering and the distress and the afflictions. Not only are they, many are the afflictions of the righteous, but very intense are the afflictions of the righteous.

I'm telling you, I can look you in the face this morning, and I can tell you without maybe even knowing your name, you may be a visitor, but I can look you in the face and say, if you love Jesus, if you've been walking with God with all your heart, you're in a test like you've never been in your life. You're going through things that are overwhelming. You're going through things that only God can do something about.

Only He can bring it through. Is that why you're quiet? Is there anybody here? Is there anybody here that sees nothing but blue skies and everything is A-OK and you don't have any problems? I can't have you

raise your hand. I really don't want you to tell a fib.

We are being tested. We're being tried. Because, you see, God's trying to produce something in His church.

You see, the jihadists now have training camps all over the world. And in these training camps, they're trained into hatred, into bitterness, into terror, the beheading, the chopping of fingers, the absolute unmercifulness, the bitterness, not only in Islam but other major religions. But the jihadists now are planning.

They say this is the final jihad and we're taking over the world for Allah. And even the president of Iran, remember, has built a great ten-lane highway right down the middle of Tehran to bring back the 12th Iman. He's coming down that avenue and they're getting ready.

And he says it's within two years. And, you see, in this time, is the Lord just sitting back letting the devil have his way? Are the flood tides going to rise and the church of Jesus Christ is sticking somewhere in a corner, hiding, without power, without anointing, without unction? That could never be. But, you see, our Lord doesn't fight with the weapons the enemy fights.

Our God is going to combat the hatred and bitterness of these religions. He's going to do it with His love and tender mercy. Our God is a God of love.

The Lord had a plan all along. He would come down and take on the form of man and the condition of humanity. And He would take the abuse.

Our God came in flesh. And this was His plan. He would take all the abuse.

He would get to know our feelings, our infirmities, our sufferings. He would endure the terror and the mockery. He would allow them to take His body and abuse it and destroy it.

He would be cast in the grave. And He would come out as the firstborn of a new kind of church. Another church.

Another people. Out of every race. There would be no Jew in it.

There would be no Gentile. There were Jews, Gentiles, Mohammedans, Islamics, all who came under the knowledge of the saving grace of Jesus Christ and were all by faith brought into one body, into one man. That's what the Bible says in the last day.

God's raising up one man. Every one of us in Jesus Christ. I don't care what your background is.

I don't care if you're Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Catholic, whatever you may be. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you've been born again through His blood, and you're walking in the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus alone is Lord in your life, then you're a part of this body. You're a part of what God is doing in the last day.

It has always been. Jesus would come as an expression of the mercy and the love of God. He was love manifested, the Bible says.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. You see, God's taking a people through hard times that they may learn the consoling power of the Holy Spirit. They're going to be brought to places where only a miracle can bring them out, where they become totally dependent on God, all their resources.

And they cry out, God, if you don't come, if you don't do it, it can't be done. So live or die, I am yours, I'm going to trust you. And these are attested people, because the darker the times get, the more intense the battle becomes, the more people are going to need consolation.

They're going to need hope. They're going to need to look at somebody who's been through the hell and the battle. They're going to have to know somebody.

And that's the testimony of the last day. He said, our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God in pulling down strongholds. Not with bombs, not with swords, but by the love of Jesus Christ and the tender mercies of the cross and the blood of Jesus.

No other battle, no other battle plan. One body, one man against all the forces of hell. One man.

Let them gather their armies, let them build their nuclear arsenals. All it takes from God is one word. Now, he could end it at any time.

The Lord could call a legion of angels right now, move into Iran, save people, touch people, destroy the leadership that wants to bring chaos to the world. He's got a legion of angels. In fact, by the way, he's got an angel standing by, still on call, who killed 185 foreign troops at one time in Israel.

He's still on call. He didn't die. If the Lord wants to deal with Sodom nations, all he has to do is call those two angels that did a job overnight on Sodom, that destroyed Sodom.

He could call down fire from heaven. God could end it. Just one word from heaven could end it all.

But you see, that's not the spirit and nature of our loving God. He's not like the apostles who, when those in Samaria rejected the Lord, they saw that and the disciples turned and said, Lord, can we call fire down out of heaven and consume them? Folks, that's not the battle cry of the church of Jesus Christ. That may be the jihadist, but not the church of Jesus Christ.

No, the Lord said you don't know what spirit you're of. Folks, I'm going to ask you, do you know what spirit you are of? What are the headlines doing to you? What are the news reports doing to your heart? Do you listen on radio to these, they call them talking heads? I don't know what that means. These are men that can't stop talking.

I mean, for hours and hours. And they get into your system, they get into your hearing, and it gets into your heart and plants a seed. Oh, church of Jesus Christ, turn it off.

Don't get down into some political mud bath. Don't get into stuff that's going to end up nothing but race. That has no place in the church of Jesus Christ.

I want no part of it because Jesus is coming, and I don't want any mud on my hands or on my feet. You can clap, that's all right. I want to take you into the Word.

Do I have time? Yes. There's a book in the Bible that explains everything I'm trying to talk to you about this morning. It's called the Book of Jonah.

The Book of Jonah. Can you turn to Jonah? I'm going to talk about Jonah for the next 15 minutes. I'm not going to preach long, but I want you to see something about the tender mercies of our God.

Now, while you're finding that, let me tell you about the Book of Jonah. It is accepted by Bible scholars, most Bible scholars, that Jonah wrote this book. Now, this is an unvarnished confession of a man who admits that he is biased concerning the mercy of God.

Now, he's called by God. Now, he first comes up in the Scripture in a prophecy in Kings, and it was fulfilled. The prophecy of Jonah was fulfilled by Jeroboam years after his prophecy.

He followed, not Isaiah, but who followed Isaiah? He was a contemporary of that time, and he made a loving prophecy, a healing prophecy. God was going to take away the bitterness of the enemies of Israel formed against it. So, we know that he was a revered prophet in Israel, and God calls him to go against the wicked city of Nineveh.

Now, Nineveh was the Iran of his time. That's like saying to me or someone, a pastor of this church, to go to Iran and prophesy. Forty days from now, this is all over.

It's coming down. Because Nineveh was a bitter enemy against Israel, wanting the destruction of Israel. It was a wicked, vile city.

Now, Jonah grows up with this in his heart and in his mind. He's trained that way. Nineveh, if anything, should be destroyed.

God, why would I go and preach deliverance to them or preach this to them? Because they are our enemy. And Jonah, you remember, takes a boat. He turns from the presence of God and gets on a boat going in the opposite direction.

Now, remember, this is his own confession. It's unvarnished. He reveals his heart as having a bias, a prejudice concerning the mercy of God.

He believed in the mercy of God for Israel. And you will find all through that prophetic time that it said, Oh God, let your mercy come to me. The prophets cried that.

David cried that. Let your mercies come to me. They believed in the mercies of God upon the individual.

They believed in the mercy of God for Israel, for people like us. They say, come, oh God, and bless our land. Send your tender mercies upon Israel.

But see, they could not extend the loving mercy of God against their enemies. And this was the bias that was in Jonah. He runs from God's presence, gets on the boat and heads in the opposite direction.

Of course, God raises up a great storm, a great fury in the sea. Jonah is fast asleep in the lower deck. Of course, you know the story.

He's awakened and they find out that he's the cause of the storm. They ask, what can we do under his own direction? Jonah said, throw me in the sea and your problems will be over. I don't know why he just

didn't jump.

I've never figured the theology of it. But the Bible says God prepared a great fish. Now, I was amused when I was doing some background study on this.

And a modern commentator who doesn't believe in miracles said that that's not the way it happened. They threw him overboard and a passing fishing trawler picked him up. And the name of the trawler was Sea Monster.

They said, that's where the monster comes from. That's where the big fish, it was a boat. He never did explain how that boat vomited Jonah onto dry land.

But you see, God had prepared a fish. And he said, out of the belly of hell, I cried. Out of the belly of hell.

You see, Jonah really wasn't ready to go to Nineveh. Now, this was not God's divine plan. God never intended that he run.

Because I believe God, before he ever got to Nineveh, would have dealt with Jonah. There would have been a trial. There would have been something come to try to expose what was in the heart of this man.

So God takes him down into an experience. Jonah himself said, this is God's doing. God has brought these waves over my head.

God has done this in my life. The suffering that I'm going through now, I know is God at work in me. Now, you may be sitting here now and you say, well, Brother Wilkinson, I'm going through a great trial.

I'm going through a test of my life. And I'm not running from God. I'm not a Jonah.

And I can't say that I believe that God is doing this to me or in me or putting me through this. But the Bible still says, many are the afflictions of the righteous. And even if we call it the chastening of the Lord, you can be assured that it's in love because he said whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

So any way you look at it, God is at work somewhere trying to accomplish something. And the older I get and the longer I walk with God, the more I see something clear and clear about what God is trying to do in Jonah's life before he gets to Nineveh. And what he's trying to do in my life when I go through trials that are overwhelming.

I begin to see more and more that God has a purpose. There's something God is trying to do. And I say this with all love and consideration for everybody in this congregation.

Whatever you're going through, there is a divine purpose. And I see more and more one single divine purpose upon which all other works depend. And it's done through the tender mercies of the Lord.

Jonah comes out of this having not learned his lesson. And I'll tell you what it is right off. God's trying to soften him.

He's trying to bring forth a tender spirit. He doesn't want him to go in anger because what Jonah did before he left and fled, he argued with the Lord. He said, I know you.

You're gracious. You're tenderhearted. You're forgiving.

And I know that at the first impulse of repentance in Nineveh, you're going to lift your hand and I'm going to be the biggest fool in the land. They're going to laugh me out of Nineveh. I won't be able to go back to that city.

It'll spread all through the Mediterranean and every sailor will know. Nobody in Israel is going to listen to another prophecy I make. Nobody.

Because I'm going to be reproached now. Now, folks, I believe more than ever. And this this has put a fear God in my heart.

I've made a number of prophetic utterances in my lifetime. But you see, God saying to Jonah, you just do what I told you to do and walk away. And don't worry about the results and be willing to be made a reproach.

I have been talking about a thousand fires coming to New York City for a number of years. If that prophecy is truly from God, then something has to happen in my heart. I have to be willing to pray and believe and hope it never happens.

I have and I believe God's brought that work that in my heart. I don't want to see it because of all of those who now I love and appreciate and other churches and all the great work of God here at this city. I don't want to see it.

Because, you see, I'm seeing something of his tender mercies, because God never does bring his servants into reproach. He would not reproach me. He would not reproach anybody.

But right now, prophecies are going all over the land. There are coming by the hundreds prophecies. And this little town over here, watch out.

They have just passed a law that you can get married there. I don't want to be in that town. Judgment is coming on you.

And be careful, folks. There has to be something behind the prophetic voice. There has to be something there, brokenness and tears.

There has to be something that says, I would rather be made the fool of the world than for this to happen. You see, Jonah knew the word. He's a good man.

He's a righteous man. He walks in prayer. He knows how to pray.

He knows how to touch God. But there's a problem in his life. So God takes him down into the pit.

And he says, I'm going to strip this man of all hope. There's not going to be any human person that can touch his heart. No one, no counselor, no prophet.

I'm going to strip him of all hope. I'm going to bring him down to the end of himself where he can only say, Thy will be done. And then I'm going to pour personal mercy, all my tender mercy upon him.

I'm going to deliver him. And I'm going to recall him. And I'm going to anoint him again.

Because I love this man. I love my church. So he brings him out, hoping that he's tender.

Hoping that when he stands there and tells the Ninevites, 40 days and it's all over. And I think it should have been something like this. And this is just my own thought.

That the closer it got, that Jonah could be up on a hillside after he's made his prophetic word known. And go up on a hillside and fall before God's face and say, Oh God, you showed me tender mercy. You showed me love when I was rebellious.

I was running from you. I've had an expression, I've had a manifestation of your personal, tender, loving mercy. God, can't you do it for the city? Especially the children.

Won't you have mercy on them like you had on me? But that's not what happened. He went through this without learning the lesson. Folks, don't go through it.

That's what Jonah is confessing. Jonah is saying right out, I'm telling you, I failed the test. Because the 40th day came and the sun was shining.

Day 41 comes and nothing happens. A total wave of repentance had swept through the city. The animals are covered with cloth.

Repentance. Children are crying. They're weeping on the streets.

The king is sitting on an assheep. And the Bible says, Jonah was exceedingly angry and displeased and said to the Lord, kill me. Take my life.

What kind of spirit is that? And it's as if Jonah writes his confession. See, it's not written just for the Old Testament. It's written for every Christian, every believer in all ages.

It's recorded here. It's as if Jonah is saying, can you believe what I was like? Can you believe I did such a thing? Can you believe that after God showed me all this mercy and the tender kindness, I want God to kill these people. I got angry at God.

Because those who stood against me are not being judged. They're getting away with it. Has that ever been in your heart? Someone hurt you and grieved you.

You were divorced. Your husband mistreated you. Your wife or people in some family turned against you.

And you don't see them paying a price. Is there something in your heart that wants to see God get them? Oh, folks, I tremble in my heart to think over my past. Oh, God, have there been times, and I'm sure there were, nobody on this earth has been shown more tender, loving mercy than I have.

How many tender mercies have you had extended to you? How many sins has the Lord covered? How many times could you have been destroyed? What kind of awful thoughts has He forgiven? What kind of tender mercy has He shown? And how hard has your heart become? How do you take it out on others? And this is the story of Jonah. Jonah says, look at me. There's no whitewash, no varnishing.

He said, that's me. You know what God did for me. You know how I should have been in hell and cut off.

And I've had more pity for a little green plant. I have more pity for the ecology. I'd rather save plants.

I'd rather save the ecology than a soul. That's where the world is. Now, don't go out here saying I'm against global warming or whatever it is.

Not at all. But this is what the message is all about. The tender mercies of God that have been shown to you and me should break us down.

You see, he despised the mercy that God showed him. He didn't allow it to register in his heart. He didn't take it seriously.

I have to move on because this has been breaking my spirit, my heart. And any kind of unforgiveness, if there is an ounce of unforgiveness in you, if your trial isn't softening you and making you more patient toward the sufferings of others, if you can't look at sinners now without that, well, but for the grace of God, there's me. No, no, no, no.

God, forgive us. You see, God loved Jonah. And Jonah doesn't whitewash it.

He doesn't concoct or invent a nice story to cover everything up and give us a victory report. No, he leaves us with himself under a loving rebuke of God. And so what he's trying to say, look, I didn't learn my lesson then, but I'm a work under progress.

That's what he's saying. He closes his chapter. I'm a work under progress.

Folks, that's what we all are. God hasn't been. God's not done with you.

He's not done with me. So many things he's done. But I have a confidence right now.

Whatever he's doing in my heart, it has to do with God's eternal purpose. Bringing me into the oneness and the union with Jesus Christ. And bringing me hope and consolation so that I can give it to others.

And showing me mercy and tender kindness so that that can flow out of me to Islamics, to sinners of all kinds. And that I can have a tender, gentle spirit. I don't want to close up my ministry with a hardness.

I don't want to close up my years without my wife knowing a tender heart. And my children. God, make this church, make everyone in this house, give us a soft heart.

Soften my heart, oh God. Would you stand? Did you get this? I said, I'm not trying to work this out. Did you really get it in the heart? Jesus, we thank you this morning for the word that changes our lives.

Lord, how you convict us in such tenderness. You point out things in your word to us. Lord, we thank you for the lessons you're teaching us.

Some of us are learning them late in life. But Lord, thank you nevertheless that we have open hearts to receive from you. I pray for those going through a trial or an affliction they don't understand.

Or some distress in their life or home or family. And Lord, it's just almost too much to bear. Lord, help them to realize right now that you're going to bring them out.

Lord, with a sweetness. Lord, it's so important how we respond to your work in our lives. It's so important how we respond.

We either become bitter or we become sweeter. Oh God, bring out the sweetness of Christ. Bring out the tender loving mercy of your own heart in all of us.

Could you lead in a chorus while I find out what God wants us to do? I was asking the Holy Spirit what I was to say in the close of the service. And it's this. It's a word that the Holy Spirit planted in my heart.

Burdened. I'm going to give an invitation to those that are in the sound of my voice. You're here, you came perhaps with a burdened heart.

Weighted down. It's a heavy weight and you're carrying a very heavy burden. I believe the Lord wants to lift that burden and invite you to come.

This is called the altar area. It's just where we come to bring our needs and our hurts and desires to the Lord. If you don't know Christ, if you've never taken that stand, maybe you're visiting here for the first time and this is new to you, I invite you to follow those that are coming and come and stand here and give your life to Christ.

Let him lift this heavy burden. He wants to extend his loving, tender mercy to you. If you have backslidden or turned your back on the Lord, you've drifted away.

You just drifted away. That's part of your burden or maybe be the whole of your burden. Upstairs in the balcony, go to the stairs on either side, steps, and you can come down here in the Manatorium.

We'll wait even for those in the overflow. If you want to just stand between the screens, or if you feel you want to come down here for prayer, the ushers will show you how to get down here in the Manatorium and walk down the aisle. Please move in close, make room for those who will be coming.

Those who carry a heavy burden, you want to leave with the Spirit of God lifting and changing. If the message dealt with something in your life, follow these that are coming here and lay it before the Lord as we sing. You can still come while I'm talking and praying.

Heavenly Father, send the Holy Spirit now in grace and mercy, and do a work in the hearts of those who have come burdened and weighted down, either by an affliction or something of the word that has wrought something in their heart. Lord, a battle they're going through, a test, a temptation, whatever it may be. Lord, we all are standing before you, open-faced, open-hearted.

You're always ready to meet the need of those who come humbly before your throne. You said, come boldly now to the throne of grace. You may obtain mercy and grace to help in your time of need.

This is that time of need. We need mercy, we need grace. We need your tender, loving touch and your embrace.

Now, I want everyone that's come forward right now to pray this prayer with me quickly. Lord Jesus, my heart is burdened, and I am weighted down, and I can't get out, and I can't deliver myself by my own strength. I come to you now, and I've walked down this aisle, and I've come to you believing and trusting that you hear my cry.

O Lord, by your Spirit and by your love, forgive me, cleanse me, and help me. O God, deliver me according to your promise. Now, I want to pray for you again.

Lord, Father, in Jesus' name, we come against every principality and power of darkness. We come against the enemy that would plot lies and implant lies into the heart and into the mind. Lord, we will not repeat these lies.

We will not listen to them. We deny them. We cuss them out of our minds in Jesus' name.

Lord, bring your people through the fire, bring them through the flood, and bring victory in the lives of everyone in this house. Lord, we stand victorious. The church of Jesus Christ is a victorious church.

It's a triumphant church, and we are not going down, Lord. We're going up. We thank you, Lord, for your presence.

Raise your hands and give them thanks right now. Just say, thank you, Lord. We give you praise.

We give you thanks. Hallelujah. This is the conclusion of the message.

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