

You Don't Have to Be Lukewarm

by Luauna Stines

Luauna Stines emphasizes the importance of unwavering faith and the legacy of perseverance in the face of persecution, as exemplified by the church of Smyrna.

Duration: 50:30

Scripture: Matthew 11:1-2, Hebrews 12:1-2, Revelation 2:8-11

Topics: "Lukewarm"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being rooted in faith and building a strong character through daily prayer, reading, and saying no to sin. He encourages listeners to persevere in their faith, even when they feel empty or discouraged, because there is a crown and a harvest awaiting them. The preacher draws examples from biblical stories such as Noah's Ark, Jonah, and Gideon to illustrate the power of a few faithful individuals to make a significant impact. He urges believers to be warriors in God's kingdom and stand strong against the spirit of the age. The sermon concludes with a personal testimony of the preacher's own salvation experience and the transformative power of a stranger's intervention in his life.

Transcript

Father, I thank you so much for your word. It has power. It has authority.

It has dominion. I pray, Lord God, that you would pour out your spirit and your anointing upon this word. Take it into the hearts of men and women, young and old, everyone here, oh God.

And pour out yourself, oh Lord, in Revelation, understanding wisdom and the mind of Christ. I take authority over every opposition and every strategy of hell that would come to steal God's word. I break every yoke, every stronghold in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you missed out on Revelation, I've been doing a study on Revelation. If you missed out on the first part, chapter one, and the beginning part, please make sure you just ask Pastor Jill for a copy of that CD and just learn it and take it in your heart.

We're reading out of Revelation chapter two. If you will open up your Bible, please. Revelation.

We already went through the first part of Ephesus, so I'm not going to go there. I'm going to the second church, and I want to take you through the entire word of God so you can understand it. Revelation

chapter two, reading in verse eight, we're going to the second church.

And I'm reading in Revelation chapter two. Everybody got it? Verse eight through eleven. And to the angel of the church of Smyrna write, these things says the first and the last, who was dead and came to life, I know your works, tribulation and poverty, but you are rich.

And I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison.

That you may be tested and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. Let me talk to you for a moment about this church that we have to understand. Smyrna, number one, we understand that it is a seaport.

It's a seaport city. It's in Asia Minor, which we now know as Turkey. It's only 40 miles from the first church that we studied at about Ephesus.

And you'll have to pick that CD up if you don't have that. Smyrna was founded by Alexander the Great. He had temples erected to the sun god.

He himself made it the center of emperor worship. He had temples honoring Roman rule. Can I tell you that even on his coins that he had made, he had created idols and put them on the coins.

Sibyl is one of the coins. It was a goddess. He called her the great mother goddess.

She was regarded as the divine being responsible for the well-being of the city, fertility, health and protection were said to be among the benefits that she was supposed to provide. They made her temple located on the eastern side of the city. And Beverly, if you can open this up, if you will please.

Let me share with you some of this. Thank you. Now that, how many of you know, Smyrna is right here.

We just studied about Ephesus, 47 miles. Pergamos, the island of Pergamos is here for those of you that weren't here and learned about the first part. But right here is Smyrna.

These are the seven churches. This is now, we know it's Turkey. Okay, you can shut it off.

But it was bound by idolatry. It was bound, but what is happening here, you and I have to understand that Jesus was foretelling of a great persecution that would come to the church of Smyrna. And so many times we don't even understand that Jesus commends them.

He doesn't rebuke this church. If you find out, there's only two churches and we'll go into that later. There's only two churches that he doesn't rebuke.

All the rest of the churches he rebukes very strongly. But this one he didn't rebuke. I want to share a true story.

In former USSR, Christianity was under such unbelievable, severe persecution that they gathered underground or in warehouses to have their secret church meetings. Several soldiers of the Soviet army armed with machine guns, sub-machine guns, kicked open the door and they raided the place right in the

middle of a church service. All the Christians held up their hands.

How many of you know that that is a scary thing, that here are these armed soldiers breaking down the door, coming in, and in the middle of a church service you and I would be going like this too. And all of a sudden there they were and the soldier said, you will be tried and any of you wanting to disown Jesus Christ, step forward. Now is your chance to avoid persecution.

Some of the people stood up and ran right out the door. The reason some of them were fearful and they knew that it was very dangerous because you know what, they were sent to Siberia, a place of endless suffering and a lot of agony and pain for their faith. Once more the soldiers yelled, we will give you one more chance.

A few more stood up, fearful, shaking. The rest closed their eyes and put their hands up. They reached over to grab one another's hands, held their hands, and with tears began to pray and cry because they knew that they were either going to die or be sent off to this prison.

Then all of a sudden the soldiers waited until the last one left. The soldiers turned around and bolted the door, threw the guns down, and said, all right, I'm here for service. We're here for service, we're really Christians, but we had to make sure that all the not real Christians had to be gone so that there's no detection.

So we are safe. So let's continue the service. In our minds we can't even fathom that.

Today we ourselves must be true Christians. We must be ready to stand strong for our faith in the days ahead. We are called to serve God with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, every part of our being.

And let me give you one word of wisdom. There is no shortcuts for godly character, none. Smyrna was a place that went through great tribulation.

I can imagine as it was in the center of emperor worship. And anyone who did not bow to the emperor, anyone who did not bow to the idols, anyone that did not live according to their command were put to death. Jesus, in verse 9 of this portion of Scripture, he said, it was Satan behind this evil, but Smyrna overcame this terrible time of persecution.

That's how come they didn't receive rebuke. They were promised a crown. You and I are promised a crown.

A crown to he that is faithful to the end, and he that overcomes. Jesus knew that this church was going to meet death in verse 11. He said in Revelation 2 verse 11, he says, Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you in prison, that you may be tested, and that you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown. Let me tell you something.

This is a powerful prophecy that Jesus was speaking to them, and he wanted them to know it wasn't ten days. The prophetic prophecy of that was going to be over ten Roman emperors that were going to persecute the church. But Jesus knew, you and I have to understand, he says, the first death, he said, Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown.

You see, the first death is to the body. You and I, every one of us, we can't escape death. We're all going to die the first death.

I know we all think we're going to live forever, but just go to the graveyard of those that have died and have gone on. No one is going to escape death. Every man, every woman, every child, young and old, if Jesus tarries, will meet that first death.

But we have to be careful about the second death, because in Christ, that second death is the soul. And this death comes to the wicked. The second death is identified as everlasting torment of the soul in the lake of fire that burns with brimstone.

Why am I out there on those streets? I don't know why every Christian is not in those streets. I don't know why every church doesn't reach out to the lost. When I think about my life so bound in the web of sin and darkness, do you know if it wasn't for the young lady who interrupted my life? Out of the 7-Eleven store, do you know that I wouldn't be saved today? Do you know that that woman, she didn't have to talk to me.

She didn't have to tell me one thing. When I first saw her, I didn't even recognize her. We were at the 7-Eleven.

I was on one side of the counter. She was on the other. I was all dressed up.

I was going to party. I had already done lines of Coke. I was wired for sound.

I stopped there to get me a pack of cigarettes. But I grabbed me a cigarette and grabbed me a beer, because I was going to go to the club that night and party. And she's across the counter at me.

We catch eye contact for a moment. I didn't even recognize her. I look at her, put my head down.

I'm dressed up. Here's my money. I need another line of Coke.

Let me get to the car. Let me go smoke my cigarette. I'm in my car.

I'm waiting there. I'm lighting a cigarette. And here she comes.

She goes and tells me about Jesus. No, thank you. No, thank you.

What if she would have taken me up on that first rejection? What if she would have just said, forget it. Go to hell then, Luana. But she didn't.

She followed me. And you know the story. If you don't know the story, read my book, A Mother's Story.

She bombarded my life. She interrupted me. My pride was hurt.

My ego was wounded. Leave me alone. I was in darkness.

I was blinded by the depths of darkness. I didn't know that I had to come out of darkness and into the glorious light of his kingdom. But that young lady interrupted.

This is why we have to go. When I think about the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And then I go there.

And on Thursday, I'm there at 12 noon. And I look. And you have to go.

You have to see. It does something to you in here. Two things happen.

You get pride and get angry. And then God convicts you. And then you realize, oh God, give me a compassion for the lost.

Because I have a hard heart. And until you get the compassion of Jesus' heartbeat, you don't care. You'll live your life without notice.

And it doesn't matter who's going to hell. But Jesus calls us. That second death.

The powerful prophecy Jesus wanted them to know in Smyrna. And he wanted us to know as well. It signified ten Roman emperors that would persecute the church.

Nero was the first one. He persecuted the church and he reigned A.D. 37 to A.D. 67. He was on the throne at 16 years old.

Later, he killed his wife Octavia. Later, he killed his mother. Later, he put all of his brothers to death.

History writes that after he committed all of those horrible, terrible crimes, he wanted to write a poem. And when he went to write a poem, he was so angry because there was no inspiration coming. Because he was so full of himself and angry.

And he wanted to write a poem and he couldn't write a poem. And suddenly he got this insane, insane idea. And he said, you know what? I want the city of Rome.

What would it look like if it was on fire? And he commanded all of his officials to go out and start Rome on fire. And as Rome was burning and the agonies of cries of people, weeping and crying as the city is burning, he suddenly gets a revelation to go write. And he writes a poem.

This man who is filled with demonic forces, no control over his mind. And suddenly somebody began to spread the rumor. It was Nero that started this.

He said, no, no, no, no, no. He said, no, no, no, no. It's the Christians that did this.

It's the Christians. He started that false rumor. And right after that, he ordered that all Christians be executed.

And he sent out his men in full force to begin to execute Christian after Christian, after Christian young and old babies. In A.D. 67, the Apostle Peter was arrested and put to death during that time. He was crucified upside down.

In A.D. 68, Paul was martyred. They say that Paul was beheaded. The second emperor that went into persecution, I can never say his name, D-O-M-I-T-I-A-N.

Domitian, that's good enough. He's the 11th emperor of Rome. He ordered and demanded the people to worship him as the god of Jupiter.

Under his persecution, the Apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos. History described him as ruthless. Third persecution, A.D. 98, was the reign of Trajan.

He was the 13th emperor, Roman emperor. He outlawed Christian faith, period. And he said, we're going to persecute the church to no end.

He got a gentleman by the name of Ignatius. He was one of the disciples of Peter. He was thrown into a lion's den, and he was torn apart before thousands of people in a coliseum.

But you know what? A judge told him, he said, why don't you just deny Christ? Why don't you just deny him? Why don't you just betray Christ and live? And Ignatius stood in that crowd, in that arena, with his hands to his side, and he said, I have served him these since I was a child. All these years, they said he was over 80 years old. He said, and never once did Christ betray me.

Shall I now betray him? No, I shall not. And the shock of his stand and his love for God shocked half the people in that arena. And many of them were converted to Christianity that day.

But it cost that man's life in that lion's den as they saw him say, no, I will not betray Christ. And he stood there, and they opened up the gates, and those lions came out in roars of people, rejoicing and laughing and standing up as he was ripped to shreds by those lions. He stood strong.

The fourth persecution was Marcus Aurelius, AD 161 to 180. The emperor martyred, among many others, Polycarp and Justin. Polycarp was a second century Christian bishop of Smyrna.

He died a martyr, bound and burned at the stake, and then stabbed when the fire failed to even touch him because he stood strong for Christ. The fifth persecution was Septimius Severus, AD 202 to 211. He enacted a rigid law against the spread of Christianity.

As a result, many, many hundreds of Christians were beheaded. The sixth persecution was Maximum, AD 235 to 237. He was known as such a rude barbarian who massacred the Christians.

He had their bodies burned into lots of 50 and 60. And he said, make sure you burn them in my garden because I want to see the light. In our minds, we can't imagine that Smyrna would go through so much.

And yet God warned the church. The seventh persecution was Emperor Decius, AD 249 to 253. He also persecuted the church fiercely, and he said, I intend to destroy it.

Unfortunately, God had him die at a very early age. Eighth persecution was Valerian, AD 257 to 260. Another Christian author, Cyprian, was martyred to death and several hundred others.

Ninth persecution, Aurelian, AD 270 to 275. Tenth persecution, Diocletian, AD 303 to 312. He said, I'm going to destroy Christian churches and I'm going to demand that all the copies of the Bible, anything be burned.

His persecution was so intense and so violent throughout the Roman Empire that he put up a monument so excited that he would terminate Christianity Twenty-five years after his death, Christianity became the state religion of Rome. Ten persecutions, ten people tried in vain to destroy Christianity from 100 AD to 312. But you see, Christianity didn't die completely.

Why? This prophecy in Revelation chapter 2 was fulfilled. And the only reason that you and I can hear the gospel today is because somebody stood strong during this time of great persecution. Somebody said, I'm not going to give in.

Tell me how great that persecution was. That church, the church went underground. Many Christians were born in those dark catacombs of Rome.

So many of them were hidden, but yet they never gave up on the hope that they cherished within their heart. They were true spiritual warriors who kept the faith under great persecution. This is why today we must hold on to our faith in Jesus Christ.

We owe our freedom, and we have the ability to read this word today because of those great men and women that were beheaded, burned to the stake, fed to the lions, crucified, upside down, and beat beyond recognition. Because of those great men and women of God in this church right here that stood the test of time, even all the way through death, they said, you know what, we will stand the test of time. We will stand no matter what.

I am reminded at some of those heroes in Hebrews chapter 12, reading in verses 1 and 2. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness, let us lay aside every weight and sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews chapter 11 tells us again about these heroes of the faith. Hebrews chapter 11, reading in verse 33, it says, Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword.

Out of weakness they were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their debt raised to them. Others, the others, were tortured, not accepting deliverance.

No, I will not deny my Christ. Not accepting deliverance. Why don't you just deny Christ? Why don't you just throw in the towel and give up? It doesn't work anyway.

That they might obtain a better resurrection. You see, it wasn't the first death, but the second death, that they might obtain a better resurrection. The dead in Christ shall rise, and we, the believers, will meet Him in the air.

Verse 36, still others had trials of mockings and scourgings. My mocking downtown is nothing, nothing compared to what these great men and women, and we get scuttled so easily. We need a miracle of God's grace.

May God help us to understand what is the true purpose of Christianity. Still others had trials of mocking and scourging. Yes, of chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were tempted.

They were slain with a sword. Do you know what that means, with a sword? What does that mean? They were killed brutally. They wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins.

It's not the gospel of today, is it? The gospel of today is blab it, grab it, claim it, frame it, and get rich. We forget we're just passing through. This is not our home.

We're not living here forever. And the only thing that we're going to take with us are people. No one else.

We're not going to take one thing with us. We're not going to take our fancy houses or our \$30 million jet. Because I think to myself, have you not been to the third world country? Have you not been to the heart of Africa? Have you not seen the people that are starving in Pakistan? Have you not seen the people in Mindanao that are suffering? They have to run to the jungle in Mindanao.

They have to have places, I am sure, even in some places in China. I am sure that there are people that are being killed all day long around the world today. But in America, we have the wonderful privilege and wonderful opportunity.

Why did Jesus come? I wonder if we have forgotten the very purpose, he said, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent his son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might be saved. And then he says, how would they know without a preacher? How would they know unless somebody tells them, God shakes a man by the name of Jonah.

He says, Jonah, get up. Get up, Jonah, get up. Go into the city of Nivea and tell them, cry out against them for the wickedness has come up before me.

And I'm going to destroy them. Go tell them. Jonah gets up.

He gets angry. He gets mad at God. How many of us are like Jonah? We get mad.

I'm not going. Why? Because I just don't want to. Jonah finds himself in the middle of a great big fish because he tried to go the opposite direction.

How easy it is for us to go the opposite direction of what God wants. I know I've been saved 33 years. And I have to tell you, I have been in a few big fish, pouting and feeling sorry for myself, just like Jonah.

When God begins to build your character, and God begins to change you on the outside, and God begins to say, your heart needs to be rent before me, and it's not the outward, but it's the inward man that I look. For behold, I do not look as a man looks, for a man looks at the outside, the height, the status, and the structure. But I, the Lord, I look at the heart and the intentions thereof.

But God never looks at our outside statue. He could care less how tall, how short, how fat, how skinny, what color. He could care less.

He doesn't look what man looks. He looks at the heart. He goes straight into the chambers of the heart.

He looks with the eyes that are like flames of fire. And he goes down deep inside of the hidden chamber of man's heart. And he says, what is your heart? Are you really loving me? Are you born again? Are you set free? You see, because Jonah found himself in a great big fat fish, rightly deserved.

I wanted to not sit in a fish for three days, thinking of all the junk that fish ate makes my stomach hurt. And all of a sudden, God commands that fish to vomit him out. And God tells him again, Jonah, get up, cry out against the city, go in.

And Jonah goes into the city and he cries out, God is going to destroy the city, repent. And he cries out, he goes up and down the street. Forty more days.

He cries out. And you know what? Somebody in the city hears the word of the Lord. The governor, the top official says, who is this mad man? What is he doing? He's saying that God is going to destroy the city, paraphrase.

He said, well, what are we doing about it? I believe what this crazy man said. Let's rent. Let's get our sackcloth.

Let's put ashes on our head. Let's repent. Call the whole city to repentance.

The entire city of one hundred and twenty thousand people fell to their knees and repent. Why? Because one man, one man finally obeyed God. One, one.

You see, this early church was so persecuted in Jerusalem. Christians. Oh, my goodness.

He says these all these. Look, he says here being destitute, afflicted and tormented of whom the world was not worthy. Can I tell you that? Don't be afraid of being a Christian.

Do not be ashamed of being a follower of Jesus Christ. We are watching that even today as they are coming in saying no prayer in school, no Bibles in school. Take out the Ten Commandments in our White House and in Washington, D.C. and in our government and in our buildings.

Sandblast those things off of there. They can take it out of the sandblasted walls, but they cannot take it out of the true Christian's heart. You can chop me up in a million pieces and every single piece will say praise God.

Praise the Lord. Praise Him. Praise Him.

Praise Him for His mighty words. Praise Him for His goodness. Praise Him for His greatness.

Praise Him. Our God is faithful. He said in whom the world was not worthy.

They wandered in the deserts and the mountains and dens and caves of the earth and all these having obtained a good testimony through faith. Did not receive the promise. What promise? They received the other promise.

Eternal life. They received the promise. God having provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

You see as the early Christians, why were they persecuted? Because the early church was doing something. The early church was doing something. You see, they tried... How many of you have ever... How many of you like to get a fire going? You get a fire going, you sit around the fire.

I like to do that. You get a fire going, but you know what? Have you ever taken a log and everybody's sitting around the fire? You don't mean to, but you accidentally throw in a log and all those sparks go. Boom! And you go, oh sorry! Like this, those sparks are flying everywhere.

You see those ten Roman emperors were like taking a stick, hitting a fire. When they were hitting against those Christians, it was like hitting a bonfire. Those sparks just went everywhere.

They forgot that they started fires of revivals everywhere. God is calling you and I to be setting fires everywhere we go. Everything we do, may we spark for Christ.

You see, our Heavenly Father knows what every church went through. Our Heavenly Father knows what we go through. Nothing, nothing is hidden.

He knew what this church of Smyrna... He knew that they were going to go through great persecution. Crushed myrrh is what Smyrna means. Do you know that myrrh is bitter? It has a bitter tasting.

How much more... He calls this church Smyrna, which means crushed myrrh. How much more bitter does myrrh taste when it's crushed? Much more bitter. Well, that's because Jesus told them it would be a terrible, bitter persecution.

Myrrh. Do you know what myrrh was used for? It was used raw. It was used crushed.

It was mixed with oil. Some of it was made for perfumes. And some of it was used to medically reduce swelling and stop pain.

Can I tell you that only Jesus can stop our pain? And only Jesus can be with us through every trial? You know, Bible references Jesus to the balm of Gilead. Jesus is our crushed myrrh. He knew.

Jesus spoke again in the New Testament a word for you and I. He told us to hold on. He tells you and I, the church, the New Testament church, in Matthew chapter 10 verse 28, He says, Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. You see, we have to fight against this lukewarm stage and age right now.

These are the last days and we are watching that. This last days of lukewarmness of the church age today. You see, the cross equals Jesus and Jesus was crushed myrrh.

John chapter 19, I think about how great our God is. How this Bible is all weaved and tied together. John chapter 19 reading in verse 38 to 40 says, After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave him permission. So he came and he took the body of Jesus and Nicodemus, who at Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, bound it in stripes of linen with spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

Why did they take that myrrh? They prepared that body. But yet at the same time, why did these amazing, powerful men come? And why did they give baby Jesus? From the cradle to the cross, to the grave, he rose. Why? For our freedom.

Look what he said here in Matthew chapter 2 verse 11. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him. And when they had opened up their treasures, they presented gifts to him, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Do you know why? Because they knew the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world. They knew the baby Jesus, frankincense, and myrrh. A bitter ending for him.

No, not really. The psalmist writes and tells us in Psalms chapter 42, 11. Yes, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him, for he will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper.

He will spare the poor and the needy and will save souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence, and precious shall be their blood in his sight. The psalmist writes, you and I. He writes here, how great is our God.

What is he going to do? Mark chapter 15, verse 23, it says, And they gave him, Jesus, wine mingled with myrrh to drink. But he did not take it. When did he not take it? At the cross.

Why? Because he chose to be the crushed myrrh for you and I. He chose to be the balm of Gilead. He chose to give us our all and all. He chose us, you and I. In our minds, we can't even fathom.

You ever feel like sometimes you get discouraged? You ever feel like, well, gee, God, Lord, it's not supposed to be like this. The Holy Spirit took me to the Word of God in Matthew chapter 11. Let me paint this picture for you really quick.

John has about a public ministry of a total of about one year. Kings and governors and masses of people are coming to see this wild man, John, who has camel's hair as his clothes and a belt with locusts. He obviously is a very earth man, eating locusts, and knows how to get bees' honey out of the beehive and fills his pouch with honey and locusts.

And he's this wild man who had been in the desert for many, many years. And he was studying the books of Isaiah. He hears, because how do I know that? Because when all these top officials and all these mighty men come to Jesus, they say to him, they said, Are you the Messiah? And he says, No, I am.

I am like Isaiah said. I am he who comes crying in the wilderness. I am he who comes prepare you the way of the Lord.

I have come to prepare. No, I am not the Messiah. So it tells me that he was in that place in the desert.

They even say that there's even a cave, that John separated himself and groomed in God and read the word of Isaiah's books. The prophets reading and taking all that God had. And suddenly here's John, who after one year of an amazing public ministry, is now in prison.

I am sure that he hears all the people around him saying, Yeah, the king's about to give his time and we're going to chop John's head off. And I'm sure that John sat there in that prison. And then the disciples come and say, John, John, John, you ought to see all the things that are happening.

John, John in his mind, I'm sure. Let me read to you. Now it came to pass, verse 11, Matthew chapter 11, verse 1. Now it came to pass when Jesus finished commanding his 12 disciples that he departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, let me stop there for a moment. John had heard in prison. Can you imagine everybody running to John? John, John, you'll never believe what happened.

You know, Jesus was sitting over there and this man was blind and all of a sudden his eyes opened. John, John, this woman, you know her, you probably saw her. She was bowed over 18 years, oh 16 years, she couldn't even stand.

Jesus healed her. Another one will come. John, John, you wouldn't believe it.

Ten lepers were healed, ten lepers. They weren't even allowed in the city. Suddenly Jesus came and healed two lepers.

I saw another two came and all of a sudden there he is. Oh, remember Mary Magdalene? Oh, she was healed, delivered, set free. Jesus touched her.

Remember that crazy woman at the well that ran around from one man to another? Jesus touched her. All these reports came to John. But see, John was reading the books.

I don't know if you've ever read Isaiah. Isaiah says, And he shall come and the government shall be upon his head. His sword he shall take.

And in my mind, if I was John, the disciples are going, This Jesus just multiplied fish, fish, fish. Where's his sword? He just turned the water to wine, turned the water to wine. Where's the government? When's he going to take charge of the government? I am sure that John's mind was very confused.

And how do I know that? Verse 2, And when John had heard in prison about the works of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples and he said to him, And he said to him, Are you the coming one or do we look for another? What does that tell you about John sitting in that prison? And he says, You know what? This ain't quite what I expected. I thought you were going to bring out the sword and take the government by storm. What are you doing multiplying fish and feeding the multitude? Are you the one? Are you the one I'm going to die for? Are you the one that I was groomed in that desert for? Are you the one? Are you the one? I'm going to get my head cut off.

Are you the one? Are you? Because if you're not, I need to know. Are you the one? You see, those disciples went back to Jesus. Oh, how Jesus loved John.

Or do we look for another? Do I need to go back to the books? Did I read it wrong? Did I interpret it wrong? Let me tell you something in your Christian walk. Look at me. If all you look for is a flare, then you'll not make it in your Christian walk.

If all you look for is goosebumps, you know, happy bumps, you're not going to make it. Because I'm going to tell you something. There'll be times where it'll be so hard.

There'll be times where people will say things. If I quit every time somebody told me something, I'll tell you what, I would have quit 32 and a half years ago. I was the mocking of the church I was saved in.

You know why? Because I got gloriously saved. I got so delivered and so set free, I kept saying, why don't we go tell people? Come on, guys, we've got to go tell people. They would look at me.

Well, we'll order tracks for you. I said, what's a track? Well, it's a little gospel book. I said, well, then order me a what? Gospel track.

All right, give me a gospel track. They didn't understand that I got gloriously saved and healed of cancer in that meeting. Jesus had turned my life so around.

I had people come up to me. They would look at me, and I know they meant well, but they were sent from hell. They would look at me right in the eye, and they would say, you know what? You need to chill down.

Don't be so radical for God. Excuse me? Why don't you just chill down? You don't need to be so radical. I said, how could you not be radical? I said, are you what they call lukewarm? They just look at me like, what? I said, please don't tell me I'm going to be like you.

I don't want to be like you. I said, you never tell anybody about Jesus. You never do anything for God.

Please, please tell me that after three years, I'm not going to be like you. I don't want to be like you. You know what I did? I separated myself, and I got into a place of prayer, and I began to cry out to God.

I was faithful every Sunday. I didn't care. I was there every Wednesday, every Sunday.

You thousand horses couldn't keep me away. I went for one reason. I want to hear from you, God.

I've got to hear from you today. And the word of God would jump out of the pages at me. Oh, Jesus.

Then I'd put my Bible away, and I'd hurry up, get on my motorcycle. Come on, Kaweah, let's go. Put Kaweah right here.

Put Sam right here. Hop on. Hold on.

Here, Kaweah. Here, put your legs back here. Sam, hold on to her legs.

Hold on. Let's go. I'd go home.

I'd say, all right, you kids, go on and play. And I'd go up in my attic, and I'd get my Bible. Oh, God, that was such a good message today.

How can you change me, Lord? I want to be all that you want me to be. Oh, God, change me. Oh, Jesus, can you use me, oh, Lord God? Help me, God, help me.

And I would cry out to God. Every service that touched me, I'd separated myself. Every service that touched me, oh, I cried out to God.

Why? I know what John went through in that prison. I know what John was saying. Jesus said to him, Jesus answered and said, Go tell John the things which you hear and see.

The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear the death, are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of me. And blessed is he who is not offended.

Somebody say offended. Offenses come to you and I. I was offended yesterday. I was offended last week.

Two weeks ago, they tried to run me over. Tried to push me over with a dog. My sidekick over there, junior preacher, I know she's quiet, but she really is amazing on fire.

She has been slapped twice. She has been thrown a dead fish about this big on her chest. She's been spit on, I think, twice or three times.

Do you know how come? Because I didn't know they were coming after me. I didn't see them. I was busy preaching.

And she saw them coming after me. I didn't see it. And when I turned like this, she was coming.

And she got in the way. Bam! And they hit her instead. I said, whoa, whoa, what's going on here? What are you doing? She goes, it's all right.

Big old welt here. What are you going to do when it really gets rough? What are you going to do when it really gets hard? What are you going to do when they come into your house and they take your Bibles and then you're going to say, I wish I would have read it. That's why he tells us to take this Bible.

Where are we going to write it? Got to write it on the tablet of your heart. Why? Because there's a day coming where they'll take it away from you. Because this world is not our home.

We are just passing through. That's it. And John, Jesus loved John.

He said, John whom I love, there is no one greater than John. There's no one like John. John had one year of ministry, one year of public ministry, and it cost him his head.

You see, you have to know who you're serving. And I tell you, don't think God is passive. God watches everything we go through.

You know, the devil's plan is to get you so caught up. You know, sometimes you feel like John in that prison. But my kids aren't saved, God.

What about my kids? Hang in there. God hears our prayers. God, but the government, they're tearing down the crosses.

Hang in there. God is faithful. Lord, they're making the schools.

They're taking the Bible out of school. You can't even mention Jesus. Hang in there.

It may not be computing all the time in your mind, and you may feel like John sitting in a prison. Are you the one? Are you the one? And you may ask yourself that a thousand times, because I'm telling you what, listen to me, saints. There are no shortcuts to character.

None. Character is built. Those people in Smyrna, their character was built in those catacombs.

Their character was built when they tied them 50 people to 60 at a time so the wicked emperor could have light and be burned to death. Can you imagine a mother holding her baby in the flames coming and the husband holding, saying, honey, honey? And they would hold on to each other's hands, tied by ropes in lots of 50 to 60 Christians at a time. It's like every one of us in this room all tied up in lots of 50 and put in the garden of a wicked emperor and put on fire so he could have light, so he could get inspiration.

God, help us not to forget the very purpose of Jesus. Oh, how am I going to make it, Dr. Luana? I'm going to tell you how you're going to make it. You become rooted.

You become rooted in Him. What makes great men and women of God? I'll tell you what makes great women of God. Each week you get up when your flesh tells you no.

You say, what? Get up. And you say, flesh, you're going to get yourself. You're going to get your rumpus bumpus into the car.

And when everything comes against you, and I love to tell you, but families with children, let me tell you, it is probably the hardest thing every Sunday morning, especially when your kids get a little bit older and

everything is chaos and you're trying to get to church. Finally, you just go, ah, forget it. I ain't going.

It's already late. That's the devil's plan. You see, because if he can uproot you, if he can cut your roots, he can kill your growth.

If he can spoil the roots, he can kill the branch. Because it's when you're rooted, it's when you become strong. Each day you get up.

Each day you come. Each day you pray. Each day you read.

Each day you witness. Each day you say no to sin. Each day you say, Jesus, build my character.

Every day, no, no, it doesn't matter what you feel like. Like, John, are you the one? Jesus, are you the one? Why am I feeling so empty? Yes, he's the one. Look at all the things that he's doing.

It's easy just to throw in the towel. It's easy to just say, what does it matter? They don't care. Why should I? Because there's a crowd that awaits me, and there's a harvest that awaits Jesus.

And I know that if this seed can just root, if it can just root into someone, that one person is all it takes to turn the world upside down. Get up, Jonah. Get up.

It was eight people in Noah's Ark. Eight. Sometimes we think of great big Noah.

It was eight. It was one man named Jonah. It was eight in Noah's Ark.

When Gideon, how many was it? How many? 300. There was 20 that lined up, 20,000 that lined up with him first. And Jesus said, no, no.

There's too many. Why? Why did he downsize? Because their heart wasn't loyal. Their heart was too fearful.

Their heart was too frightened. He said, all those that are chickens, send them home. They said, if you're scared, go home.

They said, we're going home. Let me tell you something. You got to be a warrior in God's kingdom.

You got to stand strong in the days ahead. Because I'm telling you right now, what you are fighting is the spirit of the age right now that's called lukewarm stage. You will fight it until Jesus comes.

And we'll get to that church real soon so you can understand it. My call to you today is to be strong in the Lord. Seek him while he's yet to be found.

Don't chase things of this world. They're fleeting. They slip away.

Chase Jesus. Because Jesus makes our life complete. Amen? Jesus makes our life complete.

Jesus can change your home. And yes, it may be crazy right now. But that's okay.

Jesus can change your home. He's just waiting. He knows the timing.

You see, John didn't understand God's timing. John didn't understand God's timing. This is why we have the gospel today.

Why? Because John didn't understand God's timing. We have Jesus today. Because one man stood the test of time, John the Baptist.

Because one man stood. Because those people stood in Smyrna. We have the gospel today.

Let me tell you something. God is looking for men and women that will have the true gospel today. Because it is so watered down.

It's so... It's so... Sorry, not all of it. But it's so compromised today. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's so compromised.

Jesus, help us. You know, David told his wife one time. His wife said, Why do you dance for joy before God and all the people? Are you just trying to show off? What are you doing, David? You know what David said? David stripped off his garment.

And he danced in front of all the people. Like a foolish naked man almost. He danced before the streets of everyone to see him.

This king, this warrior that was so powerful. Why? Because God's presence came in. And he turned to his wife whose name was Michael.

And he said, I will be yet more vile for God. What he meant was, I will be more on fire for Jesus. I will be more crazy.

I will be more wild for God. I will be more on fire for Jesus. Because she said, Why do you do that? That's crazy.

Wish to God that he would take hold of all of our... Can you imagine if God got every one of our hearts right here? To be more vile for him. To be on fire for him. Do you realize that we could actually take San Diego? Do you realize that we could actually take San Diego for Jesus? If God could take hold of our hearts.

In prayer and going. Prayer and going. One thing is to pray.

The next thing is to go. What do I mean by that? Everywhere you go, you make impact for Jesus. Everywhere you go, you become the salt.

Everywhere you... It doesn't matter if they don't want to listen. The man yesterday was cussing. Calling me every name in the book.

Cussing. He wasn't shaking his fist. He was shaking something else.

Another man hollered down the street. Shut up. You blank blank.

Somebody hollered fool at me. Somebody else hollered. What does it matter? This man came out.

It was a Thursday. He goes, What are you doing? I'm just like this. And Jill didn't see him.

She was witnessing to somebody. Because I knew he was just a distraction. And then some other businessman comes and goes, Why are you doing this? Do you really think that this is making any kind of impact? I said, obviously it is.

You're here. Yes. I am making impact.

You see, everywhere we go, we are called to be the salt of the earth. We're called to make impact. Amen?
Let's make impact.

Let's do something for Jesus. Don't live this life and just live it for yourself. Let go to let God.

Seek him while he's yet to be found. Get rid of all those things that so easily beset us. Run the race that is set before us.

Run, run with endurance. Hold on to eternal life. Because just like that, this life will be over and we will stand on the other side.

Two things he will say, Well done thou good and faithful servant. Or he'll say, Depart from me. I don't know you.

You are a worker of iniquity. Let go of all that junk and serve him. Let God rent your heart.

Let your heart be searched. Let your heart be broken for the loss. And if you don't have a burden for the loss, that only comes through prayer.

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