Never Leave at Half-Time
Ron Hafer

[Musical Introduction: Not to Us - Chris Tomlin 00:00:00 - 3:56:00]

- Ryan - Music Lead

(Music playing softly in background) How you guys doing this morning? Alright? [Scream, laughs] Its good to see ya. Psalm one fifteen says "Not to us, oh Lord, not to us but to Your Name be the glory," and that's what we want to be about this morning, this year. All glory and honor and praise, sing that.

[Music: 00:04:17 - 00:06:03]

All right. Giving a-, a better way to start our morning than just to give Him all of our praise and just declare who He is. This next line. This next song was kind of an anthem for the people of Israel. They would get together, they would sing, Lord, you are good and your love endures forever Lord, Your loving kindness is everlasting. We're gonna sing that together this morning. Here we go.

[Music: Forever - Chris Tomlin - 00:06:26-00:13:11]

(Music playing softly in background, praying) Not to us, oh Lord, um, but to Your Name be the glory. May You receive all the glory of our lives, of this university, of all that we are. Thank you, God, that Your mercies are new every morning and that Your love endures forever, that You are
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the same, yesterday, today, and until the end of time. And that Your love never changes, You are the same every day. We thank You and praise You for that. Wanna pray that You’d open our hearts, open our minds this morning to hear what You have and teach us through Ron. Thank You for his years and years of faithful service to Your kingdom and to Your people, God. Thank You for this community of worshipers that we can just come and lift up Your name, um, every day of the week if we choose. What a great blessing that is. So we love You. We give you all the praise, all the glory to You alone. It's Your name we pray, amen.

Go ahead and have a seat guys, guys.

- Christopher

Thanks, Ryan, and company for your worship this morning. This morning, I have a privilege to introduce a man who really needs no introduction. The fiery, small, little funny guy that walks around campus all of us know. Um, we have the privilege of hearing from our own university chaplain who's been here for, well, I can't say how many years, but he's been here a long time. So this morning, our university chaplain, Ron Hafer.

- Ron Hafer

[Cheering] Thank you Christopher, thank you. I always tell people when they're introducing that, like if a guy is particularly intelligent or a lady, that the kiss of death is to say, "This is an incredibly intelligent person" because then the bar is up here, right? And, uh, for those of us who like to use a little humor, I always say, "Please don't say this guy is really funny" because you, you never make. I am incredibly funny,-
-but I just don't want them. I want you, uh, to join with me in welcoming Irene Neller and you'll get to know her later. And guests from (mimicking British accent) the British Broadcasting Company. Will you please stand? Welcome.

We're delighted to have you. Thank you. Thanks. I asked if they wanted to say something. But they said, do you have a translator? So, oh, never mind. Never mind. If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to Acts, chapter nine. Acts, chapter nine, if you don't, look on with your neighbor.

I preached this in a series this summer, and I'll tell you right now that I, that I actually skipped this part because it's one of those passages, you wouldn't do this, but on occasion when I'm reading through, like I try to read through the scripture every year, at least once through for the last number of years. By the way, this is my thirty eighth year, I am in fact, one hundred years old.
And as I, as I read and I get to numbers and I, and I get to the blessed part where it says, "Uz begot Fuz, Fuz begot Nuru," I have a tendency to skim and to skip a little bit. But, uh, with this particular passage, gentle Bar-, Barney, Bartimaeus the son of comfort, tucks Saul of Tarsus under his wing. We get Saul, the apostle Paul, saved earlier. And that's kind of seems to be like the major feature of the chapter and then the end of the chapter, it isn't filling, but it looked a little like it because verse thirty one starts, "This is a time of peace for the Church." And then it, it tells kind of just a little snippet of what Peter did in the Joppa and Lydda. And, uh, so I just kind of in my series, 'cause I was so eager to get to Acts chapter 10 and get Cornelius and his pagan household saved, that I kinda, I skimmed this part and God convicted me. So ta-da we're, we're going to have the opportunity to, uh, touch on this part now.

Never leave at half-time. The score isn't complete and the game isn't done. I cruised down here yesterday, four-ish four-thirty-ish. Pulled into the parking lot, was full, parked illegally, got a ticket.

[Laughter]

Came to-, ask me if I have joy over that, yeah, right. Ask me what I did, no no. And I came and I watched 'til half-time, had an appointment so I had to get home. Half time, we were down ladies soccer, go Big Red! Down one zip to the Whittier Poets. Well, you can't lose to a team called the Poets, for heaven's sake anyway. I asked this morning, "What was the final score?" The ladies said, "When did you leave?" I said, "Half-time." They said, "We won three to one!" I thought, "WOO! You do not leave at half-time 'cause that isn't the end of the story." (clap) You don't stop
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halfway through a chapter because that isn't the end of the story. Up where USMC is sitting, just
wave, so that the - okay, good, that's it. He, uh, that's where I sit during home basketball games.
I'll never forget February 18 of this year.

[Scattered Cheers]

By the way, years ago I played here. I didn't play well, but I actually played. And Dr. Cook was
my coach. And he used to say of me, "Ron is small, but he makes up for it by being incredibly
slow and clumsy." But-

[Laughter]

But I, but I was sincere. He denies that, but I heard it many times. We were sincere and, and we
had some rather amazing games, but nothing like February 18. I came. We had guests from out
of town. I'm sitting right up there. I had invited four off-campus guests because we were playing
Azusa Pacific, ranked number one, at that time, in the nation, to which a number of those who
can be disrespectful were chanting (sing-songy) "Ov-er-rate-ted," but nonetheless-

[Laughter]

-the game st-, nonetheless, give them credit where credit is due. The game started, at half-time,
two minutes before half we were down twenty-three points. At the buzzer somebody had a shot
so we were only down 20. I was tempted to leave. I did not. My friends, left and I said to them later that night, I'll give you an exact quote, (sing songy) "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah."

[Laughter]

And then this team came back! Q to turnover down here or stolen pa-, down at that end. They missed a shot. We got the rebound. I couldn't tell you play by play, but we have several verses that I want to refer to. I just want to let you know that at the end of the-, with two minutes to go, I'm standing there and my friend Dennis Gaines is saying, "Why are you crying?!: I said, "'Cause I'm so moved with the spirit of this team!" I said, "Even if we don't move." But I'd already said to God, "You better do it. You don't bring us this close. We don't do it." We got to. We won the pick and game, of course, I wouldn't tell a story otherwise. We won it by three points, running away, huh! I'm so excited about that.

[Laughter]

I love, I love, I love to win. Uh, I haven't been on a number of winning teams. You say, "Well, we can understand that." And I love and I love stories with an ending like that where spirit and fervor and hanging in and not quitting and stayin' with it were part of it.

At Talbot, which is my school of theology, my alma mater, they said when I graduated (groaning) years ago, admit that you went there, but don't go on and on 'cause I'm not one of their fave-. I'm that one of their favorite preachers, but, but they like me over there. All right. At
Talbot, they said, "After you tell an exciting story or illustration, for heaven's sake, make the transition." For heaven's sake, Acts chapter nine IS the transition. The story seems to be,

[Laughter]

The story seems to be almost, almost an afterthought, (clapping with each word) but it is not. It's such a beautiful, beautiful story. It looks like a parenthesis, but it is not. It's God's underscore what He does with people who are open and, uh, willing to be used of God that are sensitive to God's Holy Spirit. Just regular folks who are moving. These are. This is my outline. I'm never going to get to it. Moving and available and flexible and willing to change. Last word of introduction, then.

We're actually in the official message. Peter, who is being greatly used of God and how, how many of us we love to identify with Simon, Peter. Open mouth, insert foot. Do something even if it's wrong. 'Cause he's a screw up. And, and God used him. And that's and that's us. And for those that don't have the freedom in Christ yet to nod and admit it, we know you and we are. We're just, we're just sinners saved by the wonderful grace of God. And there are two areas that, Paul, that the Spirit of God is moving Simon Peter toward. One, is he has prejudice for (speaking angrily) the goyim, the Gentiles! That's any one that isn't a Jew. And I've been in synagogues where, I'm not a Hebrew scholar. You say, "Well you didn't have to tell us that." Where when they absolutely use, and in Jesus day, when they use the phrase goyim it isn't, it isn't one of those guttural statements. But they would make it that. They would be talking and they would say, "When the Hebrews had contact with a (hisses, speaking angrily) goyim." I mean, just there was,
there was a prejudice there. Peter had a prejudice for the ga-goyim. He, he was reaching out to the Jews. But it's six years since Jesus is raised from the dead by the Spirit of God's power. The Church went out, got out of Jerusalem simply because of the pressure. No, actually, thanks to God's people.

So he had a little bit of prejudice. I, it isn't in the text and I'm not going to stomp on this, but we're going to invite other people who will. I'm just gonna say this. There is prejudice here. I hear it all the time. God, the Spirit is the only one who can change that and break that. And it's my prayer, from the depths of my heart that (clapping with each word) God, the Spirit will do it.

Make us sensitive if we are, if we're blind, make us sensitive to our blindness so that as this year goes along, students won't sit and administrators offices and with admissions counselors with tears in their eyes and say, "Why does my colour matter and why is there prejudice?" But by the grace of God, by the grace of God, we'll start to address this issue. God did with Peter. That's just my way of just touching on it, quickly.

And then Peter, resisted change. Don't we all? And God tells us in His word how He affected that in Peter's life. So with the three minutes that-no, no. I'm going to read a passage. We are not going to exegete the whole thing. But we're going to take time to settle on it. And we're talking about what happens when God, the Holy Spirit? I use the term "when He shows up," but He's always here. This is talking about the Church. But this is not the Church. This is a wooden box, a hot wooden box, an uncomfortable-. But we praise God for it! This is the building. We are the
Church. What happens when God, the Holy Spirit shows up in a very real keen, special way? Eighteen hundred of you were not here when that happened in (deepens voice) this very room two years ago. I'll make reference to that in a minute. What happens when God, the Holy Spirit works and moves?

Well, we'll start in verse 31, move our way toward the end of the chapter. I'll give you a hint about my preaching. Don't figure five verses, five minutes, five verses, just relax, let it be a time of peace and let God, the Holy Spirit, apply things in your life that need to be applied. It's the word of God. That's what He does with His word.

"Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee," people in the north, backwoods people, boonies people, hicks from the sticks, they had an accent so that when people from Galilee spoke to people down south, it was reverse. People would say, boy, you're, you're a country bumpkin because their accent betrayed them. "And Samaria," the, remember the area of Samaria? These are, these are Jews? No. These are Arabs? No, they're, they're half breeds. So we're talking about an area where there is a great deal of prejudice and a little bit, they, they hadn't hit the area of racial reconciliation yet. But it's interesting. "They enjoy a time of peace." Now, I skimmed over that when I was teaching it earlier this summer. God forgive me. The reason they enjoyed a time of peace. And if you and I are enjoying a time of relative peace at this time of the year, it's because you can read through all of the assignments, you haven't begun to attack the books, et cetera, et cetera.
If there's a time of relative peace, it's because God, the Spirit is preparing you when the speed bumps come along. That's probably a Freudian slip. Going back to my ticket from yesterday. Never mind. Here's what was happening with the Church, the body of Christ. "It was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers." It, the Church, the body of Christ. Let's read ahead and, uh, get the flow of Peter's ministry down in Joppa and Lydda near Tel Aviv. I looked it up in the map at the back of my Bible.

"As Peter traveled about the country in this time of peace, he went to visit the Saints in Lydda." That would be near Tel Aviv, right in Tel Aviv. "There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years." Walked right in. It sounds like John five, by the way, it's almost, it's almost a deja vu. "'Aeneas," Peter said to him, "'Jesus Christ heals you. Get up. Take care of your mat.'" Take care of your bed. In the words of Chuck Swindoll, "The only thing more blessed than the healing to a parent is that the kid would get up and actually make the bed." But we'll keep moving on. "Immediately, Aeneas got up and all of those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord." So that's, that's miracle number one.

"In Joppa," 10 miles away, measured in my Bible, "there was a disciple named Tabitha." And you have it in your alternate reading Dorkus. I used to skip this passage when I spoke to (Shrieks) junior highers because they said that a dorkus was the wife of a dork. Never mind. "This is Tabitha Dorkus, who was always doing good and helping the poor." Praise God. Well, sadly, "About that time she became sick and died and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room."
You say, "Bury the sister?" Well, no. The word is out that Peter is in the area and no thanks to him, God used him to heal. And so playing the odds, they thought, well, let's send our fasteners jogger have a muscle over there 10 miles away and get Peter here. So they they they have. She's my my kids used to say "D-E-D, dead," but there she is in the upper room and it's in the upper room, so it's even warmer. And as the time goes along, you know, you can just imagine. So there she is. "Lydda was near Joppa. So when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, 'Please come at once.'" Peters sensitive, went with them. "When he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room. Then he got on his knees and prayed his prayer."

By the way, is one letter different than Jesus' prayer with Jairus 'daughter and only Peter, James and John got to go with him.

Back up just a little bit. "Lord," says Jairus, "My kid is dying and uh." Jesus starts His way to the house, gets there, the mourners are mourning because that's what they do in that custom and making a lot of noise. And, and Jesus walked in the room and He said, "She isn't dead. She's sleeping." Mark says that they almost laughed him to scorn. Jesus said, and I know the Greek on this, "Shut up and get out of here." So they empty-

[Laughter]

They empty the pickin room. Peter, James and John are there. And Peter, remember, I'm positive he remembers this because he walks over to, to Tabitha, or Dorkus take your, take your alternate reading and and and. In Jairus' case, it would be "'[Talathia koum], Little girl, get up!'" Here it's "'[Tabathia koum],' just one letter difference. But the concept is that he, he remembered who
who Jesus was. He did what Jesus did and he simply prayed for her. And, uh, "'Tabitha get up.' She opened her eyes." Can you imagine? Popped open those baby browns and people in the room. Wow. I don't know of their baby browns, cut me a little slack "and-"

[Laughter]

"seeing Peter, she sat up. He took her by the hand," being a gentleman 'cause, she didn't need any help, but he's a gracious guy, "helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa." And what happened?
"Many people believed."

What happens in a relative time of peace? You say, "Look, you haven't you ever read my journal? It isn't a relative time of peace." But compared to the rest of the year, take my word. What happens in a relative time of peace when things are fairly well settled, when the first of the year, a joyes are still quite a bit greater than the first of the year sorrows? What happens when God the Spirit is invited to show up and work and move among us? It isn't by accident that God says, "The Church, the body of Christ, was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. It grew in numbers." Remember what Jesus said? In Acts one, eight. "You shall receive power, [dunamai, dunamenos], when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem," and that's where they stayed for years and years and years. But He said, "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth."
What happens when you start taking God, the Holy Spirit, seriously and you just simply watch Him move? My prayer again for this year, is that God, the Holy Spirit, and I'm not using it irreverently, will show up, He's here. We'll just recognize that and He will choose because of His grace and who we are and where we are. And for many of us, in spite of us, He'll just choose to come and work and move in amazing way.

I'll tell you two illustrations of that that took place in this very room. Erik Thoennes, three years ago has finished Spiritual Renewal Week, telling first hand stories of revivals that took place at Wheaton, at Taylor University, at Northwestern, and actually one other school that slips my mind, but it doesn't slip his mind. And maybe on Monday he'll remind you of that. And in his telling of the stories he had been preaching on what happens in lives and hearts when we actually dare to step out of our comfort zone, invite the Holy Spirit of God to take all of us, my life, my wife, my dreams, my goals, my desires. We just say, "Lord, I'm going to go for it." He had five minutes to go. It was Friday. And I was sitting over there and he came and sat by me with all my heart. I wanted to say, "Get back up there, you know, we'll get Ryan Waltman is the worship team. We'll sing Just as I am. And we're, I mean, we're talking about revival. Let's see what God the Spirit's going to do." But I figured the ball was in his court. He came and sat down. I still haven't talked with him about that. But God knew what He was doing. The message was done, but the (hitting) message had been (hitting) given and the Spirit of God was so thick in this place, you can almost slice it.

And I sat there and I thought, "Lord, what do we do?" And no one moved. And that was one of those moments I had this little move where I'd get up. And if people don't leave, I've, I've fine
tune this. You know, I just, by the authority given me, I, I dismiss the crowd, you know. And then I didn't feel nice. So I walked slowly the podium kind of fumbled and bumbled. "Maybe we should wait on the spirit of God?" With Toby's permission, I'd tell it. I don't have it verbatim. He's sitting back way up there. No one has been said told, "Come to the platform, stand and preach or pray." Toby stood and under the power of the Spirit of God, he said, "Why couldn't this happen here? Why couldn't God the Spirit send a revival on this place now?" And actually, Toby was overcome. I, I believe he, he was in tears even as he spoke. He sat down and for two hours in this place two years ago. Three years ago. One by one, people came. No, I know, but I certainly didn't say. Come on up, be it. Let's be orderly about this. You speak then people people confess sin. Sometimes it was two individuals. The individual came up and hugged. Sometimes it was their dorm or the roommates. They came up and they prayed while they were praying and forgiving, others spoke. Some read scripture, some it was, some it was like choreographed of the Spirit of God. Some were a little long winded. Some got a little bit preachy. But it isn't, revival isn't slick. It's a, it's of the Lord. And I'm telling you, for two hours there were e-, well, pictures were taken. So there were easily during that time three or four hundred students up here.

But that wasn't the story because people who hadn't come to chapel. Boy did they miss it? Sweet momma! Did they miss it? But they. I don't know how they heard, because people were pouring in at the end of that two hours. There were nearly more, maybe more in here than at the start of that two hour period. And the Spirit of God showed up and moved in and moved powerfully in our lives. I will never forget it! It wasn't ordered. Nobody said "This is the way it's going to happen." It's the fact that (clapping)God, the Holy Spirit at a time that he was ready to do it. Does your heart start to get stirred when you when you read stuff and hear stuff? I am so excited
with God. What. God the Spirit can do when the Church, the body of Christ, us when we're open and ready for what He wants to do. I'll tell you another revival.

Most people don't know it, but I know it. Took place here seven and a half years ago. Doug Hayward was introducing SMU. I'd been through cancer. Uh, they carved out my thyroid. They said "We're going to do a thyroidectomy." I said, "You're going to do. What the heck to me?"

[Laughter]

So they carved out half half of my thyroid. I was a tenor in those days. This is my new I'd say. I say to my wife, "This is my new low sexy voice," to which she responds, "Well, it's low, honey. It's low."

[Laughter]

They carved that out. Then they found that I had Hodgkin's. So they radiated me, uh, my upper and lower and they roasted everything, including the four precious hair that had taken me 50 years to grow. And they've never,

[Laughter]

I have, I have a contract against Kaiser I'm going to sue 'em for-.
After the after the radiation, there was a ninety six percent chance that the Spirit of God, by His grace, that I, that I'd be healed. And I, and I felt very confident about that. But what I hadn't realized in reading material, you know, I'm. I don't. I'm no great shakes. I'll tell you this, though. Like the apostle Paul. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel. Not all of my life when I realize that God would allow me to open my mouth, whatever came out, if He could be for His honor and glory." And when I came through that radiation and I had no voice, none. None. And was going to speech therapy to make this sound, "Mm hmm." And I wasn't making it. During that time and I, I came to campus because I missed what was going on. I actually look good. I'd lost weight. I was kind of a little chubber before that. Not my presence smelt (stutter). And and I. And I'd sit wherever, I kinda hide out in the background.

And Doug Hayworth was introducing a speaker. The speaker didn't get his turn very much that time. He called. He saw me and he had me come up. And I actually I thought he was going to say something. And as I walked up, I said, (Whispers) "I can't speak." And he said, "I know." So he put his hand on me, and, and uh by the way, don't go to his office, he doesn't have the gift, this is the Spirit of God. He put his hand on me and he prayed, "If it be the will of God, get my voice back."

And I'll tell you, it's like the Spirit of God surged through my life and there was this encouragement of the Holy Spirit of God that said, "I'm gonna give you your pipes back." I want to tell you something. I'm sixty five years of age. If God takes me today, would that be dramatic?
Whoa. We get this. So I'm ready to go. God takes me the day I would go a happy man, but I'm just getting the hang of this.

I want to preach. I want to teach the word of God. I had some other thoughts in my mind for this morning and the Spirit of God said, "You know, I mean, you may not get a bunch more time. You'd better stand and you'd better deliver and you better teach truth and stretch people beyond their comfort zones." And I'm on, I'm on the grace of God time. I'm off. I'm a frog. You none of you have ever heard a tape of Sam Sutherland.

He was the president, uh, hundreds years ago when I was a student here and he had a voice like a foghorn and I could imitate him. Now, I sound just like him. I am Sam Sutherland. I don't give a rip if I if I croak or I peep or I squeak, I want to do it by the grace of God and by His power. And the message from Acts(clap), which is basically one verse. That's right. So no big deal, I, I'm the chaplain, I can book myself, whenever I want is-

[Laughter]

when the Spirit of God works and moves among you, there is encouragement and strength and power. Final statement, which is good for three more minutes. Whatever your gift, whatever your calling. Whatever God has given you to do, the message from the rest of the chapter isn't go out there and heal because that that isn't what we're probably gifted to do. The message is be moving, be available, be touching lives. And for heaven's sake, be changing and stretching. May God, the
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Holy Spirit, make us so uncomfortable with the status quo that we will long to be a school that's the flagship where the Spirit of God, where one day revival would almost be commonplace.

A place where forty five hundred students, men and women and faculty and staff and administrators. Now, never mind if they don't come to chapel. God can do it wherever He wants. We're open to Him. For Him to do what He wants, when He wants. Is that your desire? It's mine (hitting pulpit) with all my heart.

Oh, God. Stir us and move us way beyond where we are to where we're just in all of You. Oh, Spirit of God, work and move as only You can do. And may Jesus Christ, the resurrected Savior of the world get all the honor and glory in Jesus name, I pray.

By the power invested in me as a chaplain of Biola University, you are dismissed.

[Applause]