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# CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES

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FEBRUARY 23, 2025  
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH  
3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC 28741

# I. SERMON RECAP

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In his sermon, Pastor Gary invites listeners to delve deep into scripture with the same appreciation as revisiting timeless musical performances, such as the 1965 rendition of Unchained Melody by the Righteous Brothers. He stresses the importance of immersing oneself in Biblical passages, much like savoring every bite of a Thanksgiving feast rather than just passing by. This approach, he shares, allows one to fully grasp the lessons of the Bible, enabling believers to experience a closer connection to the context and trials faced during the times these scriptures were written.

Pastor Gary draws a powerful parallel with the stories of early Christian martyrs, emphasizing their steadfast faith in the face of persecution as described in Hebrews 11. Through his exploration of Revelation 6, he addresses the cry for justice, pain, and suffering of those under the altar, urging the congregation to comprehend the true cost of discipleship. By reflecting on their sacrifices, Christians today can gain a deeper understanding of their spiritual heritage and the profound trust in God required during times of adversity. He encourages believers to seek a deeper relational reality with Christ that these martyrs possessed, pointing out that their unwavering commitment serves as a foundational example for today's faith journey.

Throughout the message, Pastor Gary poses a challenge to modern believers to view their relationship with God as a journey into the depths of faith, much like stepping into a vast Narnia beyond the wardrobe. He reminds them that life's trials should propel them toward greater trust in God, helping them to move beyond the superficial aspects of faith. By understanding the sacrifices of early Christians, Pastor Gary concludes, believers can reaffirm their commitments to God and foster a profound spiritual connection that is both resilient and transformative in their lives.

## Chapters

### Chapter 1: The Power of God's Word in Suffering

We explore the importance of hearing God's voice in times of suffering and the transformative power of His word.

### Chapter 2: The Early Church's Spiritual DNA

We examine the spiritual legacy of the early church and its relevance to our faith today.

### Chapter 3: Martyrs Under the Altar

We study the martyrs described in Revelation and Hebrews, examining their unwavering faith in the face of persecution.

### Chapter 4: Living Out Radical Faith Today

We reflect on how to apply the lessons of the early martyrs to our modern Christian Walk.

# II. STUDY GUIDE

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## Key Points:

- The importance of "parking" oneself in scripture to gain a deeper understanding
- God speaks to us in our suffering, as He did with Job
- The early church and martyrs demonstrate an extraordinary level of faith and commitment
- There's a spiritual DNA link between modern Christians and the early church
- True faith can lead to a willingness to suffer for Christ
- The world was not worthy of these faithful martyrs
- Modern Christians should seek the same depth of relationship with Christ

## Mentioned Scripture

**Revelation 6:9-11** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

**Hebrews 11:35-38** Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated--of whom the world was not worthy--wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

**Job 38:1** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

## Scripture References

### Alluded To

**Luke 23:34** And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

**Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Revelation 12:11** And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

## Other Relevant Scripture

### Suffering and perseverance:

- **James 1:2-4** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

### Trust in God:

- **Proverbs 3:5-6** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

- **Psalms 56:3-4** When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

- **Isaiah 26:3-4** You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

### Martyrdom and faithfulness:

- **2 Timothy 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

- **1 Peter 4:12-14** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

### God's sovereignty in difficult times:

- **Isaiah 41:10** fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

- **Psalms 46:1-3** To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamoth. A Song. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

- **Deuteronomy 31:6** Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

### The early church and spiritual heritage:

- **Acts 2:42-47** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they

received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- **1 Corinthians 12:12-13** For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

- **Ephesians 2:19-22** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

#### Deeper relationship with Christ:

- **Philippians 3:7-11** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

- **John 15:4-5** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- **Colossians 3:1-4** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

# III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

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## Day 1: Encountering God in the Storm

Question: How does one cultivate the ability to receive and recognize a personal word from God in the midst of suffering or life's storms?

Reading: Job 38:1-18

Devotional: Just as God spoke to Job out of the storm, He desires to speak to us in our darkest moments. Today's passage reminds us that God is not distant in our suffering, but intimately present and aware. Reflect on a time when you felt overwhelmed by life's challenges. How did God reveal Himself to you in that "storm"?

Consider how God's questions to Job about creation highlight His sovereignty and wisdom. How might recognizing God's infinite knowledge and power change your perspective on your current struggles? Take time to quiet your heart and listen for God's voice, trusting that He is with you in your storm and has a greater purpose beyond what you can see.

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## Day 2: Hearing Of God's Word

Question: How does one cultivate the ability to receive and recognize a personal word from God in the midst of suffering or life's storms?

Reading: Hebrews 4:12-13

Devotional: The sermon emphasized the transformative power of hearing directly from God. His word is "living and active," able to penetrate our deepest thoughts and attitudes. As you read today's passage, consider how God's word has impacted your life. Has there been a time when a Scripture or message from God brought profound healing comfort?

Challenge yourself to approach Scripture with fresh expectancy, believing that God can speak personally to you powerfully through His word. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Bible as you read, making it come alive in new ways. How might a renewed commitment to engaging with God's word deepen your faith and transform your daily life?

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## Day 3: Unshakeable Faith in Suffering

Question: In what ways might suffering and enduring trials lead to a deeper understanding and trust in God, as exemplified by the story of Job?

Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Devotional: The account of early Christian martyrs refusing release demonstrates a faith that transcends earthly comfort, or words remind us that our faith, tested by fire, is more precious than gold. How does your faith respond when tested by trials or opposition?

Reflect on the "living hope" we have through Christ's resurrection. How might this eternal perspective change the way you view current hardships? Ask God to strengthen your faith, making it as unshakeable as those early believers who considered it an honor to suffer for Christ. Consider how you can demonstrate unwavering faith in your daily life, even in small challenges.

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#### **Day 4: The Church Triumphant**

Question: How do we reconcile the intense expressions of faith and sacrifice in scripture with our modern-day experiences and expectations in the church?

Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

Devotional: The sermon touched on the faithful witnesses throughout church history, including those martyred for their faith. Today's reading gives us a glimpse of the ultimate victory of God's people. Meditate on this vision of diverse believers from every nation worshipping before God's throne. How does this eternal perspective impact your view of the church and struggles or persecution faced by believers worldwide?

Take time in prayer for the persecuted church, asking God to strengthen and encourage His people. Consider how you can live today in light of this future hope, demonstrating the love and unity of Christ's body to those around you.

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#### **Day 5: Christ in You, the Hope of Glory**

Question: What role does the 'spiritual DNA' of the early church play in shaping our understanding of faith and resilience today?

Reading: Colossians 1:24-29

Devotional: Pastor Gary highlighted how early Christians displayed Christ-like character even in extreme suffering. Paul speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" - the indwelling presence of Jesus that transforms us from the inside out. Reflect on how Christ's presence in your life has changed you over time.

Consider areas where you long to see more of Christ's character formed in you. Are there situations where you struggle to respond as Jesus would? Paul speaks the hope within us because of Christ who lives in us, empowering us to live beyond our natural abilities. Pray for a greater awareness of Christ's presence and power in your daily life, trusting Him to work through you in ways that bring glory to God.

# IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

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## Small Group Guide: At And Under the Altar

### Opening Prayer:

### Key Takeaways:

1. The importance of "parking" ourselves in Scripture to deeply understand God's word
2. The power of a personal word from God during times of suffering
3. The spiritual DNA we share with the early church and martyrs
4. The radical faith of those who refused to be released from persecution
5. The challenge to develop a deeper relationship with Christ that transcends worldly comfort

### Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Gary talks about "parking" himself in a book or passage of Scripture. Have you ever tried this approach? What was your experience?
2. How do you typically seek God's voice during times of suffering? How does this compare to Job's experience?
3. The sermon mentions people under the altar in Revelation 6 who were martyred for their faith. How does their example challenge or inspire your faith?
4. Discuss the concept of "refusing to be released" from Hebrews 11:35-38. What do you think motivated these early believers to endure such hardship?
5. How does our modern Western understanding of Christianity compare to the faith described in Hebrews 11? What can we learn from these examples?



6. Pastor Gary suggests that these early believers had a unique “relational reality” with God. What do you think this means, and how might we cultivate something similar?

7. How does the example of the persecuted church challenge your own priorities and perspective on following Christ?

### **Practical Applications:**

1. Choose a book or passage of Scripture to “park” yourself in for the next week. Commit to reading it daily and sharing insights with the group.

2. Research and pray for persecuted Christians in a specific country this week.

3. Identify an area of comfort in your life that might be hindering a deeper relationship with Christ. Challenge yourself to step out of that comfort zone this week.

4. Write a letter to God expressing your desire for a deeper, more transformative relationship with Him.

5. As a group, consider supporting or partnering with an organization that works with the persecuted church.

### **Closing Prayer:**

# V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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CBC Youth go on mission to Asheville July 28<sup>th</sup> - July 30<sup>th</sup> to assist with hurricane Helene relief efforts. Be sure to get with Pastor David to get signed up.

August 6<sup>th</sup>, there is a parent meeting for youth parents to go over what next year will look like here on the mountain.

Girls Craft Camp is August 4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>. This is a day camp for girls ages 10-17.

August 24<sup>th</sup>, the Lee singers will be blessing us with worship again. If you're interested in being a host family for that, get signed up now.

For more information on anything or to register, email [Info@cbchighlands.com](mailto:Info@cbchighlands.com) or call the church office!