

Leave the Comfort Zone! You'll be glad you did!

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[0 : 00] Let me urge you that we need to move. Move on. Move out of our comfort zone. It's easy to get comfortable, isn't it?

And when we get comfortable, we like to stay there. We feel relaxed and comfy there and we settle there. We can get snug and smug and life can get easy and carefree when we're in the comfort zone.

The comfort zone. But there's a risk that we can get too comfortable. So comfortable that we stop making spiritual progress. And we can shy away from challenge and from stepping out of the crowd and from standing up for Christ.

People want to stay where it's comfortable. It's the human nature, isn't it? To stay where it's comfortable. And they want a church that will pander and pamper their needs. And we can find it easy there.

And we want to stay inside those boundaries where it's comfortable. Where we don't have to take a risk. Inside of the comfort zone. And we miss God's best when we stay in the comfort zone.

[1 : 18] And we can turn a deaf ear to the gospel challenges. And not heed the call of our Lord as he challenges us. So let me urge you today that we need to pull up stakes and move camp.

We have to leave camp comfort. Camp comfort. You know, people might have memories of going camping or you might still go camping. And striking a tent and putting the tent pegs in and the cords out and setting up camp.

And then having to leave the camp to go to another campsite. And that's the picture that was the reality for the children of Israel, wasn't it? As they would camp here and there and then move on and on and on.

In Numbers 9 we see where the children of Israel, they knew now, they knew how that God went before them. As there was that tangible, visible, physical sign of the cloud, of the pillar of fire. And we see that in Numbers 9.17. That they had to be ready to move whenever God moved them. In Numbers 9.17 it says, And when the cloud, this is the fiery cloud, was taken up from the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, that tabernacle, that tent, when the cloud was taken up, then after that the children of Israel journeyed.

[2 : 48] And in the place where the cloud abode, the cloud stopped and it stayed, it settled, it abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.

They pitched their tents and they waited on God. And the people were ready to move on from that place to the next.

To break camp whenever God said and led them on. To move ahead. Now, wouldn't that have been disruptive? Can you imagine that?

If, you know, we've got the comfort of a stationary place of meeting. But if we had some kind of structure that had to be assembled and disassembled and all of our places where our families were living in tents of sorts of shelters, temporary shelters of tents, that we would have to break camp and suddenly uproot the stakes and suddenly travel to who knows where.

Wherever the cloud goes. How disruptive that would have been, wouldn't it? How unsettling. How uncomfortable. Yet they followed on as God led them.

[4 : 03] We see, for example, Exodus 13, verse 21. Exodus 13, verse 21. It says again how the pillar of cloud was there.

It says, And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light to go by day and night.

When the cloud moves, we have to move with it. Of course, the cloud speaks of the very presence of God, the very person of God in this tangible, evident, physical manifestation.

And we don't have such physical manifestations that we can see necessarily these days. But yet the point is that we need to follow the Lord's leading, don't we?

That is what the point is. When the Lord leads, let us follow. And we have to be willing to obey the voice of the Lord, to obey the voice of God, which we have here in his word, to obey his voice and to take action.

[5 : 14] That can mean doing something that is uncomfortable. Uncomfortable. And so my intent tonight is to provoke you to think, to leave camp comfort, all right?

Nehemiah was one. Nehemiah was one who moved out of the comfort zone. Nehemiah. We see that Nehemiah chapter 1 verse 4.

Nehemiah was one who moved out of the comfort zone. Jerusalem's walls had fallen under enemy fire. Its gates were burnt. Jerusalem was in a mess. It was awful.

It was a terrible reproach for the people of God that the defences of the city were broken down. The holy city was in disrepair. And Nehemiah 1 verse 4, report came to Nehemiah.

And it came to pass when I heard these words, says Nehemiah, that I sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

[6 : 18] When Nehemiah heard the news, when he heard that sad report, he was troubled deeply. And he prayed. God moved him to pray. God moved him to fast. God moved him firstly to pray.

And then he stepped up and believed God that he could meet that need. And he left that comfort zone as he was. The king's cup bearer would have been a plush, comfortable lifestyle.

You could imagine living in the royal setting with everything laid on, everything you could wish for. You could imagine that he had at his disposal in the royal household.

He stepped up and he believed God to go to Jerusalem, to believe God that God could meet that need. And Nehemiah made the bold move to approach the king and go and make a difference as God led him to serve and to attend to that essential need of the time.

As he went boldly to the king and told him, as the king noticed him moved and the question came to light, and Nehemiah was bold enough to tell him of this burden that he had for his city.

[7 : 36] I urge you likewise to step out of the comfort zone. And when we step out of the comfort zone, we move into the faith zone.

The faith zone. Nehemiah had to have faith that he would believe God, that he could be used of God to do something about what needed to be done, to repair the walls, the rebuild of the city. Step into the faith zone. Step out and trust God. Here's another example. Abraham. Abraham did just that as well.

God said to move out of the comfort zone for Abraham, if you like, as well in Genesis 12. Genesis 12 verse 1. Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee.

It was Abraham. Abraham, as he was known without the H. Abraham was there and he was in his country. He was in his kindred. He had his family there. He had everything.

[8 : 42] Pretty, you could say, perhaps it was what he was accustomed to. It was his homeland. It was his father's house. And God says, I'm going to take you and get you out to a land that I will show thee.

So he didn't give him a GPS or a UBD. He didn't mark it out. He just said, I will show you. You'll get there. You'll get there. God said, go. And that's what Abraham did, isn't it?

He was called to go into the unknown, out of the home setting, out of the father's house, out of the country. To a land that God would show him.

Hebrews 11 verse 8, it says, By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should, after a sea for an inheritance, obeyed.

And he went out, not knowing whither he went. He didn't know where he was going. God said, go and I'll show you where. And Abraham didn't know where that was, but he went.

[9 : 44] He had to leave the comfort zone. By faith. Step out and trust God. It's the faith zone we need to step into. Like Peter did. Here's another example.

Peter, he stepped out of the comfort of the boat. You know, the setting on the sea of Galilee as the stormy times came and the waves lashed. And then he sees the Lord Jesus walking towards him on the water.

And Peter stepped out of the boat upon the water. He left the comfort zone and he entered the realm of faith. Peter did what was beyond belief.

And it became a reality. What is it that you trust in? I touched on it this morning. Some would trust in themselves. Some would trust in riches.

Some would trust in the world. In some other philosophy. In anti-philosophies. What is it that we trust in? Will we be like Peter? He didn't trust his weight to the waves.

[10:46] He trusted his weight to the Lord. He trusted his weight into the hands of God. By faith, Abraham. By faith, Peter. Now the world wants comfort these days.

We all, look, it's the human nature. I like to have a bit of comfort. Now I was thinking today something that was very difficult I was doing. I sure would like to be something a bit more comfortable than what I'm doing right now.

It's to do with the bees. You think the world wants comfort. The world wants to just go have something that's comfortable and easy and relaxed and just put their feet up and just sit back and enjoy the ride.

And the world would consider that the ultimate place to be is to reach in life this place of being free of all care. You know, there's that illusion. Maybe when you retire, you might think, oh, then it's going to be easier.

You know, somehow it's going to reach this utopia of life where everything's going to be easy. And the world would present to us such an idea that ultimately we'll be free of all that is difficult.

[11:55] And everything's going to be easy. We're going to have plenty to live on. We're going to be very comfortable. And the world would paint such a picture to us that the world would not care about faith in God and about truth.

The world is all about tolerance and inclusion. And the world is really, it's the comfort zone is the world, isn't it? Where it's all about pampering and comforting and ease and lack of care.

But what is God saying? He says, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. That's Luke 1 John 2.15.

The comfort zone is the worldly zone. It's easy to stay in the worldly zone. You know, we can get settled there. Our friends are there. You know, there's a lot of enjoyment there in the worldly zone, if you like.

You know, vanity fair, as it were, where we can get settled and we can get distracted by all the things that the world would present to us to enjoy.

[13:00] All the pleasure and vanity. And when we're in the worldly zone, we can get dull of hearing and hard of heart. We can get to a place where our conscience doesn't get provoked anymore.

You know, we start to watch the world's programming and, Oh, it's just got a bit of swearing in it. Oh, I can kind of just filter that out. Oh, it's just got a bit of crudity. It's just got a bit of blasphemy. It's just got a bit of nudity. You know, they kind of switch off. We get numb to it in the worldly zone such that we start to accept that's normal. That we start to accept that's fitting for the Christian to stay in the worldly zone.

Such that we don't get provoked anymore. Actually, that's wrong. That's against God. It's ungodly. And we get used to switching off to the conviction, to the call, to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Let's not stay there in the worldly zone. Let's go to the faith zone. Let's trust God. Let's step out in faith like Abraham, like Peter. In the faith zone, we learn to pray.

[14:04] We learn to trust God more. We lose some ties. We make some tough choices of separation when we leave the worldly zone and we step out and say, I'm going to stand for Christ.

I'm going to be an out-and-out Christian. I'm going to be standing fast on my convictions for the Savior, no matter what. And we'll be prepared to leave the old crowd and join with the faithful, even the faithful few.

We'll take on new fellowship, new relationships. There'll be a breaking off. And that can be uncomfortable, can't it? A breaking off. You know, when I first became a Christian and I started to, I pretty much blabbed it straight away to some of my old schoolmates, my closest friends, and they didn't want anything to do with me pretty quickly.

You know, sometimes there's a breaking, isn't there? When you stand for Christ, when you step out into the faith zone, when you leave the worldly zone, when you leave that which is comfortable, the comforting of the worldliness of those who know not the Savior, and you start to say, I'm on the Savior's side, I'm on the Lord's side now, then the world starts to drop you off anyway.

It'll happen. Let that faith transform you. And you walk its faith in God. And we leave the worldly zone and we step out into the faith zone, as it were. We believe God.

[15 : 25] We believe Him. We trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. And He does a work. He starts to do a work deep down in our soul, in us and through us. And we believe God for His working.

We believe God for revival. Even when it seems there's not much sign of it. We believe God for revival. And we'll still keep believing God for revival. You know, I've been in some churches where it was just a little prayer meeting, but they made a point of praying for revival.

And people would look at that prayer meeting and think, oh, that's a bit kind of ambitious. But we should believe God for revival, shouldn't we? We should believe God. He's still the same God today as He always has been.

Let's believe Him. Let's step into the faith zone. And when we step out of the comfort zone, we step into the spiritual zone. We know the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome.

We see that, for example, in Joshua and Caleb. Joshua and Caleb in Numbers 13 and 14. The context, of course, we know Moses sent a spy to spy out the land from every tribe, to go into Canaan, which was also known as the Promised Land, to check out the land and see and report back what they found.

[16 : 40] Of course, we know the majority report was that the 10 of the 12 came back and they reported about how there was much danger there. This was dangerous.

This is going to be too hard. Much, much, much too hard. It's going to be very uncomfortable.

There's going to be giants there. It's going to be scary. This is going to be hopeless.

There's no way we can do it. Yet Joshua and Caleb brought a different report, as they reported on the fruitfulness of the land and of the prospect that lay ahead.

In Numbers 13 from verse 30, And Caleb stilled the people before Moses. He said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.

Verse 31, But the man that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. Joshua and Caleb, they entered the promised land.

[17 : 47] They saw the wonders and the blessings that were in store. And they believed God. But the others did not believe.

They wanted the comfort zone. They wanted to die there, and they did. They died in the comfort zone. They never saw the promised land. They never entered in. They did not receive the promises of God, and they missed out.

Now, notice that the blessings are outside of the comfort zone. That's where the blessings are on the other side, when we respond in the obedience of faith. Let's be like Joshua and Caleb.

Amen? Let's be like them. Let's see God can do something, and we want to be a part of it. We believe him. We're going to be spiritual about this. Elijah was another example you could cite, as someone who showed such courage, such bold endeavours for God.

Elijah could have stayed back in the comfort zone, but instead he marched right up to King Ahab. You know, the context, of course, is the wickedness of Ahab, and he had to be stood up to.

[18 : 47] He was an ungodly king. And 1 Kings 17, verse 1, Elijah the Tishbite, he just comes out of nowhere. The Tishbite, we don't even know who the Tishbites are, but Elijah was one of them.

And Elijah was of the inhabitants of Gilead, and he said unto Ahab, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

Elijah acted on the spiritual. Here he was. Just came out of nowhere, and he believed God. He says, at my word, in other words, at God's word, the rain's going to stop.

There's not even going to be any dew. For years. For years. He spoke that which God had ordained him to say.

He acted on the spiritual. And he believed the word that God had given him. He believed in prayer. Elijah, a man of like passions as we are.

[19 : 46] So we're all just as inadequate. Elijah's just as inadequate as any of us can be. Elijah prayed. He believed in prayer. Elijah could have stayed home.

He didn't have to go and affront King Ahab. But he didn't. He didn't stay there. He didn't stay in the comfort zone. Amen? He didn't. In the comfort zone, it's all carnal and careless.

There's no concern for souls there in the comfort zone. There's no concern for righteousness. You know, if we've got an ungodly king, just let him get on with it, you know? But Elijah said, no, we're going to confront the king.

We're going to confront sin. Face to face. Head to head. Esther is another example. She was concerned for the souls of her own people when she heard of the looming attack. You know, there was great danger for the people of God as the king made this law that effectively they would be slaughtered.

[20 : 47] And Esther was here, the queen, Esther. And this was dangerous for her to even contemplate what she did. She dared to appear before the king to address him.

She wasn't called. He hadn't called for her. And it was against the custom. It was, you know, inappropriate, you could say, for her to come to the king without an invitation. She risked her own life in her concern for souls. She could have kept quiet. Esther could have kept quiet about it. She was comfortable. She could have kept quiet and not risked her own life. But God gave her the grace, the faith, the courage, the boldness to step out and confront the king, to, you know, to plead, to intercede with the king. And God blessed Esther for that. Can you see the pattern here? There's many examples. These are just some that can, I pray, encourage us to see, leave camp comfort. I would urge you to enter the spiritual zone, the worship zone, like the unnamed woman of Luke 7.

[21 : 55] Here's another example, and I'm giving you many here. But the woman of Luke 7, we don't know her name. Luke 7, verse 37. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner.

That's as much as we know about her. Exactly. When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house. Okay, it was mealtime. The Pharisees invited people to his home. And she kind of crashes the party here. She's brought an alabaster box of ointment. This precious ointment, this valued ointment, this vessel with ointment. And verse 38 of Luke 7. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. This woman who was a sinner, she could have stayed home. She could have stayed out of the spotlight. This woman, which was a sinner, surely it would have been much more comfortable, wouldn't it?

[23 : 02] She had a reputation, and it was going to be embarrassing for her. She was weeping. It was going to get messy. But she wanted to worship, didn't she?

She wanted to worship. Pour yourself at the feet of Jesus. Pour yourself at his feet. Enter the worship zone. She could have stayed home, but she entered the very presence of her saviour, and wept and worshipped.

In the comfort zone, we can make decisions based upon purely selfish and willful considerations. We can just pander for ourselves, and be entirely self-seeking, to decide what we want to do based on pleasing ourselves, what's comfortable.

That is the ultimate aim. For some people, it is, isn't it? The ultimate aim is look after number one, and that means me, me, me. Me, myself, and I. There's no thought for eternal consequences, for the eternal realities of life.

As with the rich fool, he stayed in the comfort zone. Luke 12. Luke 12, we see how this man, he amassed this wealth, and he had everything stored up.

[24 : 18] He had it all categorised and compartmentalised, and everything was just so perfectly set up.

We can imagine that life will get like that one day, that everything will be sorted out, everything will be tidy, all the jobs will be done, there won't be anything left on the to-do list.

This is the perfect state of mind that you could hope for. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then what shall those things be which thou hast provided?

Here's this rich fool, he's got everything that he could hope for, that he'd worked for, that he'd laboured his life for, that he had everything stored and set up, so he had a plain easy coasting for the next few times where everything was harvested, and he could just sit back and maybe just relax.

But we can stay in the comfort zone such that we never get saved. Wouldn't that be something? That would cost us everything, wouldn't it?

[25 : 24] To be like the rich fool, I know this story's got a lot of meaning for Julie because she heard a preacher preach about the rich fool, thou fool, and it really spoke to Julie.

Not that she's a fool. She's not a fool now. She's not like the rich fool who didn't realise his foolishness. She realised she had need of Christ. And to stay in the comfort zone such that we'd be

so foolish, to ignore God, to ignore the callings of the Spirit of God, to ignore the Gospel, to ignore the realities that life is not about amassing wealth and material goods, but it's stepping into the faith zone.

It's putting our trust in Jesus. It's living for Christ. It's knowing his saving. And this rich fool, he died in the comfort zone and went to a devil's hell. Let's not make that mistake.

Now here in the carnal zone, we can be like the rich fool. People who act only on their own self-interest, their own gratification, their own self-satisfaction.

There's no self-denial there in the comfort zone. No cross there. There's no interest in the glory of God there. It's all about self, isn't it? And God calls us out of that into the spiritual zone.

[26 : 39] What does that mean? When we step over, that means a cross. It means a loss, but ultimately a crown. In Luke 9.23, the Lord says, He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

These were bold words from our Lord's lips. And God calls us to a cross, to a loss, but a crown. And what things would gain to me, I counted as dung.

Can't imagine what a worse description you could call that which is gain. It's loss. It's dung. It's rubbish. It's garbage. That I might win Christ.

That I might be found of him. To live is Christ. To die is gain. There's nothing greater, no greater gain than to know him. God calls us out of the comfort zone. As it were, we can't, we could choose to stay as the lost rich fool and miss heaven.

And that would be the most terrible loss we could ever suffer. Rather, let us be on the, on God's, on God's side of things, as it were.

[27 : 59] To be counted amongst God's people. To be counted a Christ one, a Christian. And God calls us to that, to be a spirit-filled people.

We believe God for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is counter-cultural, isn't it? So we've seen it's the comfort zone or it's the faith zone, it's the spiritual zone.

You could say it's the work zone. You know, you see this sign, men at work, they've got to say persons at work now, I suppose. I mean, these signs that say it's the work zone, you've entered the work zone.

When you become a Christian, you enter the work zone. Not saying you're saved by works, make that clear, but when you're a Christian, you've got work to do. And the comfort zone makes no demands, there's no labour there.

No demands, no sacrifices there, just comfort and beds of ease. And I kind of reflect how, it could be the, the enemy of our soul sings us lullabies and rocks the cradle on this side.

[29 : 04] He just likes people to be comfortable on those beds of ease. In Luke 10, we see when a man got hurt, some people stayed in the comfort zone.

You know the story, a certain Samaritan, you know, the story goes, Luke 10, from verse 30, Jesus answering said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves.

He stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departing, left him half dead. That's Luke 10, 30. And it goes on.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise, a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side.

You know, you can imagine how they might have looked on him. You know, maybe just a quick, you know, oh, I'm going to pretend I didn't see that. That man lying there in the gutter, bleeding and dying. I just, you know, maybe these ones, this priest, this Levite, they saw him and they passed by on the other side.

[30 : 24] Now, maybe they might have been late for church. They might have got their clothes dirty. It might have cost them some money, some time, you know, they had better things to do.

That's the comfort zone, isn't it? We can stay there, can't we? When someone gets hurt, when there's some obvious need, they're staring us in the face. It might have meant some inconvenience, some disruption for them to stop and help.

Maybe their schedule might get disrupted. You know, we've got it all regimented, what we're laid out to do. And friends, we can be just like the priest or the Levite, can't we?

It's the comfort zone. And then it goes on, of course, we read how there was a certain Samaritan when he journeyed and he came where he was and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

And he went to him, he burned up his wounds, he poured him the oil and wine, he set him on his own beast, he brought him to an inn and took care of him. Of course, we know he actually paid money for further accommodation.

[31 : 30] You know, he put himself out. That's the point. The comfort zone, he wasn't there. He stepped out of the comfort zone. He said, I'm going to discomfort myself to minister.

And the work zone means the ministry zone. It means, and it means we're going to put ourselves out. What? What is ministry? I think it can mean the school of hard knocks, can't it?

When you try to help someone and they, they may not even appreciate it. You may not get thanks, you might actually get the opposite of thanks.

That can be the reality. As a Christian, you might say, I can identify with that. I can.

It can happen. You give and you give. It's ministry and sometimes it just takes it out of you. There's a testing, there's a trial, there's an exertion of spirit.

[32 : 34] But it's where we must be, not in the comfort zone. We must do that. You know, anything we do that's serving, that's ministering, that's giving, that's extending ourselves, there's an expenditure of energy, of life, of time.

You're giving of your person when you give of your time. And we think, what's my hourly rate? You could think, you could have that mindset, is it worth the expenditure of my time if I was to contemplate what my hourly rate would be if I was in a secular job?

But it's not about that, is it? We don't, we don't put a value on it in earthly terms. It's about eternal values. And friends, people today, we exist for mission.

That's what we're here for. Not for comfort. And our Lord's command has not changed, it's still the same as it ever has been. It's not been revised. It still is. Go ye.

Matthew 28, verse 18 through 20, you know the one that Jesus came, he spake to them, he said, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

[33 : 59] And lo, I am with you always, even soon. The end of the world. Amen. Now it'd be easier to stay back in the comfort zone and keep quiet and to ignore responsibility.

After all, we might try and witness and get rejected. Now witnessing is probably, it's a good example, isn't it? It's a classic when you go witnessing and the people who most need to hear what you're trying to tell them slam the door in your face.

But that is the most precious truth you can impart. It's the most love you can show to these ones who reject his love. It's the most vital message we can impart to a soul that will die and face him that we've done our part.

It'd be easier to stay in the comfort zone and ignore our responsibility. We might get rejected. We might get hurt. Someone might say something hurtful.

We might get treated harshly and we might see little for it. And you hear stories of missionaries laboring for a lifetime and not much to see, not much to show.

[35 : 17] They couldn't put much in their prayer letters of crowds, of counting numbers. But the fruit of their labours sometimes is not evident until after their deaths when we see a whole continent reached through one faithful missionary that laboured till their dying day and saw very little to count.

Wouldn't it be easy to stay in the comfort zone you may ask? After all, witnessing is hard. It means we identify with Jesus. It means we're seen to be different.

We might lose face, lose friends, lose jobs. Trouble is when we should have warned and we should have taken responsibility and we did not. There's blood on the hands.

It's not a pretty picture, is it? We did not warn the wicked. We don't want to be there, do we? We need to get over this side.

Amen? We need to get over the, out of the comfort zone. We need to say, I'm not going to, I'm not going to be a quiet Christian anymore. I'm going to be a witness no matter what the cost.

[36 : 36] I'm going to warn the wicked because I don't want blood on my hands. God moved Philip out of revival. It seemed like everything was perfect where Philip was.

Where did God send him? To the desert to meet a man, the Ethiopian eunuch. It would have seemed more comfortable to stay where he was.

Philip, there was revival there. Everything was happening. It's just, it didn't seem logical. Acts 8, 26, the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go towards the south unto the way that

goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

The angel sent Philip to the desert, a desert place. There's nobody there. Then comes this chariot with the Ethiopian eunuch greeting, Isaiah the prophet.

God moved Philip to a desert place where he needed him to be. God transfers us sometimes to places where we can serve, where he can use us for his glory, where there's a harvest ripe for the reaping.

[37 : 44] It's ready. The only problem, need for labourers. And you might ask, who, me?

Yes, you. Everyone in this room. We're all called to engagement. We're all called to minister in some fashion to enter into his service, to get out of the comfort zone, to leave that and to step out by faith in the spirit into the work zone.

And when I think of ministry, I reflect on a little lad on a hillside among 5,000 men, not counting the women and children. One little lad.

I don't know how tall he was. He was small. A boy. A lad. A little lad amongst 5,000 men. An insignificant lad sitting, standing on the hillside with his pocket full with some few loaves and fishes. John 6, 9, they said, there's a lad here. It was time to eat. And the disciples, you know the story, they said, look, we're going to have to send them off. There's no way we can feed this lot.

[39 : 03] You know, there's no way. We don't have anything to feed this number. And John 6, verse 9, there is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes.

But what are they amongst so many? You know, I was thinking how some liberal scholar might think, well, maybe these fish were like whales or something. You know, they were two small fishes. It's quite clear what they were. He had very little. This little boy had very little. Now, he could have been selfish, couldn't he? I was thinking if I was that little boy and I had this packed lunch and my tummy was grumbling and I started to get a bit hungry, well, why should I share my five loaves and my two small fishes?

I've got quite an appetite. I'm a little lad but I'm pretty hungry. I've got a big stomach to feed here.

He had very little but he gave what little he had, didn't he? He gave what little he had into the hands of Jesus, the creator.

John 6, 11 and Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were set down and likewise to the fishes as much as they would.

[40 : 25] Now, you might think of yourself, look, I know what you're saying. I've heard this before. I'm just a small cog, just a little somebody quite unqualified, I've not been trained much, I'm nothing to speak of, there's people much better qualified than I am.

You might consider yourself insignificant, unqualified. you might think of yourself as this little lad and you might be a bit selfish like the little lad could have been and not given what you could have given.

Sometimes we have more than we realise and when your income suddenly drops you realise what you used to have. Use what you have while you have it. Use what you have while you've got it.

Some people think they have little to offer humanly speaking in their skill set. They might think, oh, look, I'm not that well versed, I'm not that, you know, there's others who know more about the Bible than I do but it's not about them, is it?

It's about you. It's about you, are you, the little lad? Offer what little you have and you'll be surprised about what God can do. Isn't that surprising what God did with the little lad's lunch?

[41 : 46] You know, praise the Lord. God can do that still today with the little old you and me and so step out of the comfort zone. It's the faith zone, it's the spiritual zone, it's the worship zone, it's the work zone, it's the combat zone as well, just lastly.

Now, when we're caught out of the comfort zone, we're caught into battle. It's the opposite of comfort, isn't it? Battle. Into suffering, maybe.

Hardship. Into the war zone. I think one of the biggest deceptions of our enemy is to fool us that there's not a war going on. You know, isn't it?

There is a war going on and it's true today. You could think, you might watch the newscast and there is actually wars going on that we kind of scarcely even know about.

There's actually people killing each other in different lands. We don't even know there's a war going on and it's the same that's going on in this land. There's a war going on. Yes, there is.

[42 : 51] And the master deceiver, he twists and he manipulates people's thinking so they're not even aware of the battle. And they're happily entertained and diverted from the fight.

There's so much to distract us from the war. And he uses cunning propaganda means. You know, Joseph Goebbels in World War II, you know, they're master propaganda merchandisers and the devil's like that too.

He twists everything so he disguises the fact that there is a war going on. There's this big smoke screen. But people of God today, we are soldiers.

We have to wage a warfare. Another example, David. David could have stayed back in the comfort zone. He's just another little lad, another insignificant player in the scheme of things.

Who would even reckon on David making any difference at all? David could have stayed back in the comfort zone. And he ran his errand to the front line. He brought his brothers some food to nourish them.

[44 : 04] He ran this little errand. He'd done his job and now he could go back to the sheep, back to the comfort zone, back to watching his sheep. But then he heard giant Goliath mouthing off, mouthing off against the army of God.

And David held his ground. David saw Goliath for what he was. 1 Samuel 17, 26. And David spake to the man that stood by him saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine and taketh away the reproach from Israel?

For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? Who is this man? Who is this joker?

Who does he think he is? This uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? David was angry. This little boy was angry.

Who is this? King Saul should have manned up then. He was the tall man. He was the king. He was the boss. He was the one. He called the shots.

[45 : 10] He carried the can. King Saul doing. He was keeping as low a profile as the tall man as he was. He was quaking in his sandals in unbelief and fear.

King Saul. And here comes little David. David's brothers then accused David of being an upstart. In 1 Samuel 17, 28, Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men.

And Eliab's anger was kindled against David and he said, why camest thou down here? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? What are you going to do with the sheep? You're failing in your responsibility.

You should be looking after those few sheep you left in the wilderness, he says. And Eliab says to David, I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart. For thou have come down that thou mightest see the battle.

You just come to watch the war games going on. And David said, what have I now done? Is there not a cause? When you step out of the comfort zone, expect to get shot at.

[46 : 19] Expect to get attacked even by your own family. Expect to get attacked even relentlessly. That's normal. When you stand for God, you can expect some opposition.

Amen? You can expect it. When you enter the fight for souls, expect to get shot at even from your own side. They call it friendly fire, don't they? Friendly fire.

But it's far from friendly when you're getting shot at. Sometimes the worst critics are the ones who profess to be Christians. It happens.

It happens to me lots. You reach out to people and you get shot at. Stop sending me messages. It hurts.

Believe me. When you get people that well-meaning as you're trying to be to try to encourage and build up and bless. When people deter you and they fight you.

[47 : 24] We're meant to be fighting the enemy but they fight fellow Christian. I had one insulting text message today. But we must not stop.

We must not stop. I will stop sending that person a text message because they said please disfellowship me. So I said yes I will disfellowship you. It says that David would not be deterred.

And we must not stop. We have left the comfort zone. Amen. We've left the comfort zone. And we're there at the front line and we're seeing Goliath mocking the people of God.

Israel faced this man who mocked them. What did they do? 1 Samuel 17 24. They fled from him. They fled back to the comfort zone. 1 Samuel 17 24.

And all the men of Israel when they saw the man, they saw Goliath. It says they fled from him and were sore afraid. the armies of God, these trained warriors, the people of God, Israel's army.

[48 : 29] Here is Goliath, this mountain of a man, the champion of the Philistines, the veteran warrior. Saul wouldn't budge from staying back with the cowards in the comfort zone.

King Saul, he's cowering with the cowards in the comfort zone. And he's happy to sit back while a boy represents Israel in the face-off with Goliath.

What a reproach on King Saul. Like David, we've got a fight on our hands. Will we be like Saul or will we be like David?

We enter into close combat in 1 Samuel 17 32. And David said to Saul, let no man's heart fail because of him. Thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

Thy servant, King Saul, will go and fight with this Philistine. Will we have the heart of David? To be like David. The enemy's forces are pitted against us.

[49 : 29] It's relentless. It's unceasing. This warfare is constant. This one who wants to steal, to kill and destroy, he's diametrically opposed to you.

And this enemy is cunning and crafty such that he wants to put these smoke screens and trick you and trap you and detour you. But we must have the courage to resist temptation.

1 Samuel 17, 48, and it came to pass when the Philistine arose and came and drew nigh to meet David. Here's the Philistine, starts to walk towards David, and then David hasted and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

David didn't run from the giant, he ran towards the giant. David well and truly left the comfort zone. Can we have the heart of David? to leave the comfort zone and enter into enemy territory and take back ground.

It says neither give place to the devil in the word. you know sometimes sadly we know it appears some give ground.

[50 : 42] Don't give him an inch because the door ajar will just get wider and wider. Don't give the devil an inch. Take the battle to him.

Now the devil works by the occult. The word occult means covert, secret. he works undercover, covertly. And you see stories, I've seen some things lately where it seems evident to me that the devil is taking on the church by stealth.

Taking over the church by stealth. And this is dangerous stuff. Dangerous. See these crazy things. You see these stories of just wacko things and Christians are swallowing all kinds of rubbish. I saw some article that said we need a warning sign, a warning sticker on the front of Christian book shops these days.

Some of the content in this shop may not be authorised by the Lord Jesus Christ. It's actually contrary to him. It's actually against him. You see these false teachers, these faith wealth, health prosperity preachers and all the rubbish that goes on, the wacko things that are going out there.

[52 : 06] And Christians are just jumping on the bandwagon and there's no discernment. It's the devil's work. It's been said that a man is better off cutting off his right arm than suffering the poisoning of the bloodstream.

When there's some kind of cancer or whatever it be, you're better off cutting off your arm than that disease should invade your bloodstream and kill you.

And there's a sifting going on today. The church is under attack. And sometimes it's subtle, so subtle that it's imperceptible. Just a creeping compromise.

And we must stand against it and not sit back. And that might mean, well, you're being legalistic. just being discerning.

Judge righteous judgment. Christians, we've got too comfortable, haven't we? Where anything goes, that's the comfort zone. No, we don't want to be there. When error is spreading like a wildfire, I know we've had occasion to do some burning off piles of leaves and such, and Julie says, watch out, watch that fire, because the little grass near the fire just starts to spread.

[53 : 26] And Julie makes sure I'm watching that fire because a little bit of spreading in that little dry grass and before you know it, the whole paddock's ablaze.

You know that's happening. It has happened and is happening. It will happen. And error is spreading like a wildfire these days. It's a wildfire. Oh, it's just a little bit of error. No, we don't want even a little bit.

We don't want even a teensy weensy bit. A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump. One thing leads to another. It's like there's an old parable story of the tar baby.

Who's heard that one? Where there's some dummy made of tar and one of the characters in the story got annoyed and hit and kicked this tar baby, this kind of doll made of tar or greased with tar and they ended up hopelessly stuck to it.

It's like that with sin, isn't it? With error, with falsehood, you get stuck to it and you just can't extricate yourself from it. You get covered in it yourself. Friends, just to wrap up here, talking about the comfort zone.

[54 : 38] One example of someone who moved from the comfort zone into the God zone is, you could say Nicodemus, John 3. John 3 verse 2, it says, he appears at first as he came to Jesus by night, it says.

John 3 verse 2, he said unto him, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God. For no man could do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. He came secretly though. It was under cover of darkness. It's almost like I could reflect on it that Nicodemus just wanted to be a little bit secret here, a bit secretive.

It's like he was in the comfort zone. He was not willing to be publicly identified with Jesus. And of course we know the story, the Lord Jesus says you must be born again.

Then we see Nicodemus again in John 7 verse 50 where Nicodemus is addressing the Pharisees, the council of the Pharisees and he says unto them, he challenges them in John 7 verse 50 how they were treating the Lord Jesus and how it seemed unjust about how Jesus was being treated by them.

[55 : 53] It's all like he's starting to come out of the comfort zone. He's starting to question. Then we see at the end of John, John 19, where Nicodemus came and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pound weight.

He took the body of Jesus and wound it in linen cloth with spices as the manner of the Jews is to bury. So here we see Nicodemus he's hauling this large weight. So a hundred pounds some have equated that to 33 kilos.

Imagine that. This is quite a 33 kilos. That's quite a big amount of burial spices. It's not like he could kind of tuck it in his pocket. There was some big container some big sack you could imagine of these burial spices 33 kilos.

There was no hiding of this. It's like he stepped out of the comfort zone. Amen. He says I want to be identified with Jesus such that I'm going to take this precious beaten body of my Lord as he takes it down from the cross and prepares it for its burying and he stepped out of the shadows to publicly identify with Jesus.

Now I don't know when it was and I'm presuming that he was that Nicodemus was born again. At some point it would seem since that secret night since he stood up in the council and spoke out and then as he comes to the very cross and he takes the burial spices and he helps with the transferring of the body of our Lord to the tomb.

[57 : 23] I don't know when it was that Nicodemus was born again but surely he came out of the comfort zone. What about you? Are you still a bit like Nicodemus maybe under cover of darkness, a quiet Christian or on the fence kind of person?

Are you standing up for him in the public space? Are you publicly identified with him such that you're one of them?

You're a Christian. We can think of these things that we've talked about. I suppose the essential message is challenge tonight. Challenge to challenge you.

That we all be challenged to think comfort is quite comfortable. Why would I want to move from that comfort zone to faith like Abraham?

How would it be that I could be like Peter stepping out of the boat to enter that spiritual zone like Joshua and Caleb to see God can help us win this land?

[58 : 27] God is with us and he's bigger than any giant. Can we be like Elijah that saw that he could confront even the king Ahab at the penalty of his own life?

Can we be like Esther who would take that risk, that danger to stand up for what is right? Can we be like the woman of Luke 7 that worshipped him?

And didn't care about the embarrassment and didn't care about her eye shadow dripping down her cheeks or you can imagine. I'm just the embarrassment factor of worshipping Jesus.

She didn't care what other people thought about her. Can we enter the work zone and be like the man that cared about the man beaten and bleeding to put ourselves out?

Or will we be like the Levite and the priest who looked and went their merry way, didn't care? Or will we be like Philip that sees the desert is where he's calling me.

[59 : 33] It's much more comfortable where I am but I'm going to the desert. Could it be, can we be like the boy with the lunch and we can think oh look I'm hungry, why should I share what little I have, what little I am?

But yet when he shared what he had, who he was, God multiplied and wonders happen. Will we enter the combat zone to be like David or that cowardly soul and stay back where it was easy, where he was safe or will we go and run towards the giant?

Will we be like Nicodemus that we can say yes I used to come to him by night but now I'm coming to him by day. I'm going to come and be an outright full on identified with Christ Christian born again.

That I've left the old Nicodemus is dead and the new one is born, born again. We can be such a people by faith. Friends it's trusting in Christ and let me leave this one closing remark.

Of course a lot of this sounds like works. We're not saying we're born again or that our saving is by our works but that as a Christian we should be functioning, we should be active, we should be such that our Christianity works.

[60 : 53] It's not that that saves us but that which is as a result of his saving us there's something happening and yet many Christians will stay where it's comfortable.

We've just got to challenge ourselves and think how can I move, how can I transfer out of camp comfort and follow the cloud, go with God, bless the Lord. Let's pray. Lord we thank you that you are our great God and saviour, Lord for the blessings you give us day by day.

Lord help us to be Christians who are not settled but moving, moving with the cloud. We pray in Jesus name, amen. Amen.