

A Last Day Return to the Power

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of unity with God and with each other, and the dangers of unbelief and self-seeking.

Duration: 1:00:51

Scripture: Psalm 133, Malachi 3:15-18, Matthew 18:20, John 17:21, Acts 4:31, James 5:16

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of returning to the power of unity, focusing on the need for believers to dwell together in unity based on God's Word. It highlights the blessings that come from unity, the need to put away sin, engage in serious Bible reading and prayer, reach out to others in love, and get involved in ministry. The message calls for living for the honor of God and the souls of men, making a commitment to walk in unity with God and others.

Transcript

This morning, if you'd be kind enough to turn to Psalm 133, please, in the Old Testament. I'm going to speak on the last day return to the power of unity. The last day return to the power of unity.

Let's pray together. Father, I just thank you, Lord. With all my heart, God, I praise you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for sovereign and supernatural strength that you give to us as your people. Not only for me to speak this word this morning, but for all of us to be able to hear it. We ask you this morning, Lord, for hearing ears.

For all the way through the book of Revelation, you said to the church, He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit speaks unto the churches. Now, God, I stand here this morning as a vessel. But if you don't animate these words, if you don't animate this physical body, our gathering is in vain.

God Almighty, the hour is late. We need to hear your voice. I'm asking you for an unction from heaven.

I'm asking God for a strength that can't come from anywhere but from you. I'm asking for wisdom that so supersedes everything of the natural mind. The ability to express what's on your heart.

Give us the grace to hear. We ask this in Jesus mighty name. Amen.

I suppose Pastor Neal spoke with you. He told me he did this morning about beginning December 14th. We'll be on the radio 13 times a week.

1010 winds calling the city to prayer. So I would really encourage you to encourage people in your neighborhood, in the workplace. Give them one of those business cards that's been printed.

If you're visiting from another church, encourage your pastor. If he or she doesn't already have one, to start a prayer meeting in your church. If you have a home gathering that's under some authority and recognized as a valid prayer meeting, you can contact NYCPrayer.org and register that prayer meeting.

It's really time to pray, folks. If ever we turn to prayer, it's now. It's time to pray.

Psalm 133. Let's begin there. Verse 1. Psalm of King David.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It's like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down the beard. Even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garments.

As the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore. Now in this particular psalm, you see at the beginning, brethren dwelling together in unity.

When that unity is God-based, when that unity is unity as the Word of God describes it, then the end result of that unity is a command of the blessing of God's life. Now God's life in the home, God's life in our personal lives, God's life everywhere we go. And as a church and as a church age, if we're dwelling together in unity, the Lord says that He commands a blessing.

And that blessing is life. And if ever there was a time in history where the church of Jesus Christ needs to be in a proper focus of unity, then the blessing of life must flow now from the house of God. If this city is going to be touched, folks, it's going to come from the house of God.

It's not just going to sovereignly. Now God can't do that. But not only judgment but blessing starts in the house of the Lord.

If God is going to bless this city, He's going to begin first doing something in this house. I fully believe in my heart that He's doing it right now. Now we're living in a generation where there is a lot of talk about unity and there will be an increasing talk about unity in the coming days.

People will, according to Jesus and Matthew, people will for fear begin to gravitate to familiar. They'll begin to bunch together in groups. It will all be about survival as men see survival.

There'll be a focus on unity. Nations will decide that they need to get together in unity. Governments will get together in unity.

There'll be a talk of unity at every possible level in society. But I remind you today that there's only one unity when everything else is finally shaken and gone that's still going to stand at the end. That which is unified in Jesus Christ.

There's no other unity that's going to get through as wonderful as it may be. Unity's true power is not found in just getting together for a common purpose. Unity that is outside of God can have a display of strength,

but it will still fall short of what God has designed an intended unity to be.

Take for example, in Numbers chapter 13 we have 12 spies. Now there are 12 were sent in to the promised land. They were to search out this land.

The Lord had given a word about what the land was like, about the fruit in the land, about the milk and honey, about the pasture, about all of the provision, the wonderfulness of the land. So Moses sent 12 spies in to check this land out. Now 10 of those spies returned not in unity with God, but rather in unity with each other.

Every one of these according to Numbers 13.2 had leadership ability. They weren't ordinary men. They were people with skill.

They had been singled out in the ranks of the so many that had come out of captivity and were on this journey into the promised land. And yet they went into this place even with the leadership qualities that set them apart from ordinary men. Now I'm sure that they considered themselves cautious and reasoned men.

They correctly assessed the land and evaluated the strength of their enemies. They looked and said, yes, the land is everything that God said it is. But in that land there are forces that will oppose us that are stronger than we are.

And the land is so vast that it seems to swallow up its inhabitants. And so here they are, reasoned men, cautious men, all of them leaders, going into this land, but they end up coming out in unity with one another, but not in unity with God. They correctly assessed the land.

They evaluate the strength of their enemies. And most likely on the way home they got together to discuss alternate strategies and the severity of the problems that were ahead. And folks, by the time they got back to the camp, they were united in one thing only, unbelief.

United in we choose to embrace what we see with our natural eye and what we reason with our natural mind. We choose to embrace it above what God has spoken. And folks, even in the church, we can get together in this generation or any other.

And we can begin to employ strategies. We can begin to communicate with one another. We can have conferences.

We can talk about how we're going to bless the city or bless a nation. We can get together with strategies. But the moment we've left the word of God and the power of the supernatural, we are united in unbelief.

Now they didn't consider. I know they didn't consider themselves men of unbelief. I know they came back and they said, No, we're just reasoning.

We're just calculating. We have an alternate plan. They would have considered it suicide just to go in.

A ragtag army as it was with probably a little more than just makeshift weaponry going in against what they saw to be the giants of the land. They said, Well, we can't do this this way. There's got to be an alternate strategy to do these things.

We've got to find a way. You see, in our generation, we don't believe the Holy Spirit is strong enough to bring people into the house of God anymore. We don't believe that conviction of sin still will do what

conviction of sin has always done.

We don't fully believe that men and women need an encounter with the Holy God where they confess their sin, confess their need of God, put away an old way of living and call out to God for not only redemption but the power to live a new life in this generation. Now, we don't believe these things anymore, so we become so smart, so full of strategies, and we become united in our generation in unbelief, just like the ten spies did, although they would be very loath to call it that themselves. The end result of this kind of unity is death in the wilderness.

When hard times come, when difficult times come, there's no power to survive there, folks. You've got to have a supernatural walk with God to get through this generation. You've got to be in right relationship with Jesus Christ.

You've got to be walking in unity with God and subsequently with those who are gods in this generation to be able to make it through. Scripture tells us that all of the world one day is going to be united in a downward course, united in its desire to cast away everything that represents God. Verse 1 of Psalm 2, I believe it is, says, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords away from us.

In other words, without their influence, we'll be free to do what we want to do. Now, don't even try to tell me that's not happening in our generation. Where society as a whole is becoming... You notice what's happening in America lately.

Society is fragmented on many levels, but the one thing that everybody seems to be united around is let's get the name of Jesus Christ out of our society. Let's get rid of the word of God and these boundaries that tell us that men can't marry men and women can't marry women and we shouldn't be killing our children in the womb for convenience sake and all the rest of these things. Let's get their bands away from us.

Let's call them extreme. Let's call them radical. Let's call these people unloving.

Let's invent names for them. Let's be unified in this one thing that we're going to get rid of the name of Christ in our generation. Verse 4 says, He that sits in the heavens shall laugh, and the Lord shall have them in derision.

Their end result will be defeat and perplexing confusion. Folks, it's tragic when you see a nation turn from God, that knew God, that became what it became because of God. Then you watch these same people turning away from the very Christ that made the nation a premier nation of all nations perhaps all throughout history.

It's a tragedy in our day, folks. It's not just a variance of opinion. It's a tragedy.

A spiritual and a physical tragedy that you and I are living through at this moment. Isaiah warns about the day when people are united in self-seeking. In chapter 5 and verse 8 he says, Woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.

Isaiah warned about this kind of unity. A unity based on my gain and your loss. My advancement at your expense.

And he says in verse 9, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair and without inhabitant. A self-seeking society is going to end up empty. That's what Isaiah said.

And he said the finest homes in that country. Of course that was Israel at that time. He said, I see the finest homes in the country empty and without inhabitant.

Nobody can afford to live in them anymore. Nobody has the income to maintain them. I see fine, fine homes that have been built by a society that turned inward and began to focus on itself.

And Isaiah said, I see them empty in the days ahead. In the church of Jesus Christ, Paul also warns. He warned the Corinthians.

He warned them about self-seeking. He warned this church age of that generation about getting together in unity. But the unity was short of the glory of God.

It was short of Psalm 133. They were coming together in church and they were grouping around the familiar. I can just see it now in that temple.

The rich are in one corner and the politically active are in another corner. And certain cultures are in this corner. Other cultures are in that corner.

They're all feasting. They're bringing together their food. They're having a wonderful time.

But the poor, the homeless, the single mothers, the disaffected in society have no fellowship. They're being pushed to the sides of the temple as it is. And Paul said, because of this, because you fail to discern what it means to be part of the body of Jesus Christ.

Paul was saying there's a unity that is found in the body that's not found anywhere else in the world. Do you realize that today? That we are in a place where God says, I want to unleash a power that's not known anywhere in the world. It cannot be found in the world.

It is only found in my church. It's the power of the life and the virtue and the anointing of almighty God through the Holy Spirit. And the people who are walking together in unity as the scripture says, unity is to be.

And Paul says, no, you fragmented even in the house of God. And you have preferences. And you are marginalizing certain people in the church.

And because of this, he said, many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep. Remember Isaiah said, a self-seeking nation ends up with empty houses. A self-seeking church ends up with empty houses, folks.

That's what's happening in our generation. Churches on every second corner throughout America and most are half empty in our generation. There's a reason for this.

Think of Rehoboam. In 1 Kings chapter 12, the son of Solomon who inherited the kingdom of God as it was in that generation. And instead of embracing history, he had men and women who walked with Solomon, his father, before him.

Trying to give him advice and trying to give him counsel, but he was not willing to listen. And folks, we're living in a generation of young ministry that have just cast off history. Taken the book of Acts and literally thrown it out the window.

No, we know better. We know how to get people in the house of God. We know how to do this.

And they branched together as it is. They banded together in a unity that was impulsive. They thought they knew better in their time than what history was willing to teach.

And they counseled this young man, Rehoboam, to speak a certain way to the people. A way that history was telling him you shouldn't speak. This is not where God's focus and power is.

They told Rehoboam to become firm with the people. But the older were counseling him. Listen, the power of God is found in servanthood.

If you will serve these people, if you will speak kind words to these people. The older people told this Rehoboam that these people will come and they'll be in the house of God. And they will serve this kingdom forever.

But he rejected that testimony. And folks, when we reject the testimony of history and think we're smarter than God, we're in trouble. When we reject the way the church has always known the glory of God and the power of God.

I'd say with all my heart today it's time to turn away from the boardrooms and go back to the prayer room again. It's time to just eradicate the ideas of men and go back to what God had to say about things. I'd rather die on this side of faith than sit around a table of human reasoning trying to figure out how to advance a kingdom we can't even see with our natural eye.

Let alone understand with our natural mind. Rehoboam with all of the reasoning and those around him with their human reasonings ended up dividing the kingdom of God. He brought a weak testimony into the nation and among the nations.

In fighting came into the family of God and they began to worship the works of men's hands. You remember Jeroboam who took ten of the tribes of Israel set up calves in the northern kingdom at both ends in Bethel and Dan. And the people began to worship cows instead of the living God.

We can be united in an ungoverned religious zeal. Think of David the king when he decided again to bring the ark which is prayer. It's a complete type of prayer.

The ark represented the history of God. The faithfulness of God. The word of God.

The life of God. The commandments of God were in that ark. Manna which is supernatural bread from heaven had been in that ark.

Aaron's rod that budded which was an evidence that God says I'll take what is dead and bring it back to life was in that ark. The whole testimony of God was in that ark. And in the days of Saul it had been a kingdom that was governed by the natural mind of man.

And the fear of men's hearts. They were united but their unity produced nothing but failure. And so in the day of David, David said we've got to bring the ark back into Jerusalem again.

In other words we've got to seek God again. We've got to bring God back in to the center of everything. That was what was in David's heart.

And so he got the people together and he counseled with those around him and they said good idea. Let's make a new cart. And let's do it this way.

Let's bring the ark even though the word of God clearly described how God comes back into the midst of his people. They were still stuck in unity in the reasonings of men's minds. And so they got this parade together.

And the scripture says they played with all their might. I mean they were hitting those instruments. They were clanging those cymbals.

They were playing their harps. They were dancing before God. They were doing it with all their might.

They were singing. They had psalteries and timbrels and cymbals and trumpets. And in the midst of it all God kills a young man who has the audacity to reach out his hand and try to stabilize what represented the presence of God.

God help us in our generation if we think we have to stabilize the presence of God. Or somehow make excuses for God. Or somehow present him to society as so weak that we have to figure out how to prop him up and make him more palatable to people in this generation.

God help us. God in his mercy has to kill this whole parade. He has to put an end to it.

And let me tell you he is going to put an end to it in this generation. By grace we experience the death of all that has no possibility of producing life. It's by grace he stopped the parade.

It's not by anger it's by grace. God knew that it was an honest thought in the hearts of David and those around him. But they were not doing it.

David later said according to the order of God. God had given instruction. This is how I am to be honored as I come in among my people.

And you've got to get back David to the word of God. That's what he was telling him. You've got to do this the way it's been prescribed in scripture.

Thank God that by grace again we're going to discover the power of walking in unity with God. God wants to walk among us. Did you know that? He wants to display his power.

There's a longing in the heart of God in this generation to come back into his church. Your life and mine. Into the assemblies that gather in his name in this city and in other places.

There's a longing in the heart of God to come back into his house with power. He longs for it more than you and I can understand. If I feel one yearning in his heart in this generation.

It's that he might come and walk among the candlesticks again. That he might walk together with us as we make the choice to walk with him in unity. Unity is a gathering together in agreement with the word and the will of God.

Believers walking in unity with the purposes of Christ. Find Jesus himself and all that this represents drawing close to them. Matthew 18 20 says, Where two or three are gathered together in my name.

There I am in the midst of them. I remember my wife Teresa and I in the early years of ministry. We had no training.

We had no budget. We had nothing. We're living in an area that was roughly 40 square miles.

Without a visible testimony of Christ that we were aware of. And perhaps there hadn't been a testimony for as many as 100 years. In that area.

And we began to get together with another man who's a bus driver. And the three of us got together on Tuesday night. Each of us took a quarter of our living room and we began to pray.

That's all we knew how to do. No money, no budget, no training, no nothing. But a great, great, great big God.

And every Tuesday night we gathered together and we prayed. And folks we prayed because we couldn't do anything else but pray. We read the scriptures.

We knew that God's kingdom moves by the power of prayer. And we began to say, oh God make a way in the darkness. Oh God push back the religious darkness.

Oh God don't let these people go to hell without a testimony of Christ in this area. Oh God for the glory of your name and for the souls of man. God begin to do what only you can do.

And I remember one night God came into that room. I don't know how to explain it. Other than to say that the three of us.

A joy overtook us. I don't know how to explain the joy that overtook us. You wanted to dance.

You wanted to cry. You wanted to laugh. You wanted to shout.

And it was all three of us at the same time. From different areas of the room. The Lord had come.

And in our hearts we knew he had said done. I'm going to do what you've asked me to do. I'm going to do the thing you've spoken to me about.

To make a long story short. Within seven years. There were two churches established.

A Christian school. A food bank feeding 237 families. A missions program whose budget outstripped our operating budgets of our church.

When you're sending motorcycles and bicycles and instruments for pastors and books into South America. This little church put the gospel of Mark in the entire Russian school system. Grades six and seven.

Took up an offering. Folks, God did so far beyond what we could even think or ask. We left seven years later for New York City.

Leaving behind over \$700,000. And that's a lot of money in a little country community. In real estate.

All paid for. No debt. We had no budget.

We had no money when we were praying. We're sitting people outside of the church on mild days to be able to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. People were driving from 100 miles to hear the gospel of Christ.

And it all came because of prayer. There was no boardroom. There was no strategy.

There was no how are we going to do this. We simply prayed. And when God said do this, we did it.

We walked in the way that God said to walk in. I remember we prayed and said, Lord, how do we reach this community? How do we break in to these years of religious stronghold? And we prayed. You know, God sends answers that you don't anticipate.

I remember a pastor who had come to help with the French. French speaking people began to sit in an English church and cry. There were 17 people that were sitting in the congregation.

They didn't speak English. And I wasn't being translated into French. But the presence of God was so powerful.

They would sit and just cry. And one man told me, he said, I don't know how it happened, but we knew what you were saying. We just knew what you were speaking.

A pastor came to help with this work. And we were praying, God, help us to reach the community. How do we reach the community? One day we had bought a school bus for our kids.

And one day he came back to the house with the school bus, and it was full of grapefruit. The whole bus from beginning to end. And I remember looking and saying, what are we going to do with this? First of all, why did you come home with a busload of grapefruit? And he said, well, I was at a food bank in a major city.

And they had this huge shipment of grapefruit come in. And they didn't know what to do with it. They had so much it was going to spoil.

So they said, do you need something? And he said, sure. So they filled the bus. So we got a short bus, but it's full of grapefruit.

And I said, well, we got to do something with this grapefruit. I guess let's find people who need it. And so we found a poor family.

And you know one thing, the poor know the poor. And so we went to the first door. We knocked.

He said, look, we got a busload of grapefruit. Do you need some? And they said, sure. So we bring a box in.

And do you know anybody else? And they would send us to another house and another house. We had no idea that this is how God was answering our prayer. We were just getting rid of the grapefruit, but it was actually the road in to the community.

It finally dawned on us, oh, feed the poor. Help families that don't have. All of a sudden we're in contact with all these poor families in the area that needed help.

And that was God answering our prayer. I thank God for it. His ways are not our ways, folks.

Like you tell me what committee is going to come up with that. I'm just so thankful I wasn't sitting at a table of our modern day strategists. Well, if we go to a, what would it take for you to come to church? A box of grapefruit? Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am.

And when Christ comes into a situation, the supernatural comes with him. I want to challenge you with everything in my heart. Just break out of the box in this generation.

Begin to pray, Lord, help me. Guide me. Lead me.

Let my life make a difference. Walk with me. And if you can find somebody to pray with.

Where two or more. Now I know Christ in me is two. So that's good enough.

It's a majority. But if you can find somebody to pray with you that has a heart of faith. You begin to walk together.

Jesus said, when you pray, I'm going to come, I'm going to be right there with you. I'm going to speak to your heart. And you just begin to obey me.

And the supernatural begins to happen in your life. Joshua and Caleb, just think for a moment. The other two spies that came back and said, no, let's go.

We can't take this land. Their defenses departed from them. Joshua and Caleb said, they're bread for us.

But you see, these were spiritual men. And they were seen with spiritual eyes. Natural men couldn't see this.

As a matter of fact, they were so angered, they wanted to kill these two men. For wanting to walk in faith. But Joshua and Caleb, although they suffered because of this decision the people made.

God came and walked with them through the wilderness. Through 40 years of wilderness. Through defeat, despair, death.

And brought them to victory. Hallelujah. Praise be to God.

Think of those in the upper room. Taken from fear and inadequacy. And brought into a place by God's presence alone of love and empowerment.

A place where they could not do what God was calling them to do. So they just went and did what they were told to do. They went into an upper room.

Now that upper room could be anywhere in your house. But they went into that upper room and said, oh God. You promised to give us power.

You said that when your power came upon us. You would make us living witnesses in our generation. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The scripture says, as they were praying, the Holy Spirit came. And God began to walk with these people. And out of inadequacy and out of fear and out of failure.

Came people into the marketplace. Folks that changed the whole known world that we live in today. 120 people.

Just think what could happen with 8,000 people in this church. Began to seek God in New York City. Acts chapter 4. Peter and John taken in and threatened for walking in the power of God.

They prayed and they said, why do the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things. Why do they feel they can cast off the restraining hand of God. As long as there are people who are willing to walk in unity with Christ.

I really don't care what the newspapers say. I don't care what anti-God radicals say in this generation. As long as there are people walking in unity with Christ.

The presence of God cannot be pushed out of any society or out of any borders. When they prayed, the scripture says the place was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit again.

And they spoke the word of God with boldness. And I want to suggest that we need to pray like that again. I want to suggest that we come into the prayer closet and say, Oh God, consider the threatenings Lord of this generation against the testimony of Christ.

And for the sake of the children, for the sake of our families. For the sake of those who in their ignorance are fighting against their own salvation. God Almighty, for the sake of your holy name.

For the sake of the cross, for the sake of the heart of God. Shake this place where I am Lord. Shake me God if I'm complacent.

Shake me if I'm embracing something that's eroding your strength. But shake me my God. Give me the power to speak your word with boldness in this and every other generation.

Acts chapter 16, Paul and Silas in prison for the testimony of Christ. The scripture says they prayed and they sang praises. Thanks be to God.

They walked in unity with God. They were in agreement with God and with each other. That fighting for the souls of men may not be easy, but it is always worth it.

Hallelujah. Blessed be God. It may not be easy, but it's always worth it to fight for the souls of men.

Because when you're fighting for the souls of men, you and I are walking on the side of God. When we're about the Lord's business, the Lord is with us in that business. Praise be to God.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. Paul the apostle is living proof that unity with God is mightier than the most powerful army on earth.

Paul was seemingly captivated, chained to Roman soldiers, in the midst of a system that was bent on conquering the known world with all of its strategies of world conquest and control and all of its armies and all of its methodology and all of its supposed learning and all of its weaponry. And I want to remind you that it's gone today. And what was more powerful is one man walking in unity with God.

One man with a pen in his hand in a prison was more powerful than the whole Roman Empire. There's power in walking in unity with God. The Roman army, the Roman system is gone.

The Caesars who thought they were God, gone. The conquering sword of Rome, gone. The magnificent buildings, ruins today that people go to visit, nothing left.

The arenas where they supposedly thought they were making sport and conquering Christians, gone. Everything gone. But that which was written from the hand of a man in unity with Christ still stands.

If you can see this, if you can understand this, if you can get this. A man who is simply walking in unity with Christ. He's living for the purpose of Christ, for the honor of God and for the souls of men.

He's walking through this world and casting off its accolades, not afraid of its threatenings, not afraid to suffer. Walking in the footsteps of his master. God puts a pen in that man's hand.

And what he wrote still stands. We still read it today. And it will still stand when every kingdom, every dictator, every potentate, everything is gone.

It will still stand. It will have endured the test of time. There's such power in walking with unity, in unity with God.

I want you to turn to the last book of the Old Testament please now with me. We're going to conclude here in the book of Malachi chapter 3. I want to talk about what it really means to be one in heart with Christ. What does the Bible say about this? Malachi chapter 3 beginning at verse 15.

Now Malachi is writing about our day. And he says, Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name.

This shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him. And then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not. Now the scripture says, They that feared the Lord in verse 16 spoke often one to another.

Now we're talking about unity. And Malachi is talking about a last day regathering of unity again. And it was a people who feared the Lord and thought upon his name.

And it's just not all of a sudden they're just thinking about the name of Jesus. But they're thinking about what does the name of Jesus mean? What was the ministry of Jesus? Why did Jesus leave a church in the earth? What does the Bible say about that church? And if I am part of that church, what does the Bible say about my life? How am I supposed to be representing Jesus Christ among the people of the nations in my generation? I don't care what men say. I don't care what anybody says.

What does the Bible say about the church of Jesus Christ? I'm going back to the book again. Like David went back to the book to bring the ark back into Jerusalem. I want to walk with God.

I want the power of Christ on my life. Folks, I'm not personally willing to settle for any religiousness in my heart. I want the power of God in my life.

And the power of God is evidenced by the compassion of Christ that is placed there for my fellow man. By the ability that God gives to lead people out of darkness and into the marvelous light of Christ. The ability to represent Him in my generation.

To stand out among the self-seeking, those that are unified but for the wrong reasons. Even in the name of God. I want to know what it means to honor the name of Jesus Christ.

Folks, if ever there was an hour where the church needs to get back to the Bible, it's now. Folks, there's been too many opinions about too many things for too long. It's time to get back in the word of God.

Read it. Read it simply. Start in Matthew and read it through to Revelation and go back to Matthew and read it through again.

And then go back to Matthew and read it again. And open it up and say, Holy Spirit, speak to me. I want to know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

I want to understand what I'm called to do. How my life is to be an evidence of Christ in my generation. Now here's the promise of God.

Chapter 4, verse 1. Behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven. All the proud, all that do wickedly shall be stubble. The day comes that shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, and it shall leave them neither root or branch.

There's a day coming, folks. And it's coming really soon. It's coming quickly in our generation.

It's a day which will expose the powerlessness of all that is not in unity with God will be exposed to be bankrupt. It will have no root. It will have no branch.

It will have nothing. There'll be no fruit in it, no ability to stand. It will flee as quickly as those without God will flee.

But to you that fear my name, verse 2, shall the son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. In other words, as they grow weaker, you will grow stronger. This is a promise of God in this generation.

God says, I will give you strength, and as everything around you is collapsing, you'll be getting stronger. As the self-seeking are getting weaker, you'll be getting stronger. As they are running in fear, you'll be standing in faith.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah, Lamb of God. Verse 3 says, and you shall tread down the wicked.

There'll be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. And what that says to me is that their ruin will not be yours. You will be given the power to overcome all that would take away the strength and hope of ordinary people, because you choose to walk in unity with God and with one another.

Now, the title of my message was about coming back, or last day returning to the power of unity. So the question is, how do I get to this place? Well, I'm going to just give it to you the way I know, I believe the way God has guided me from the point where I gave my life to Christ to this day. Number one, get into right relationship with God.

Put away known sin and practices which His word tells you to stop doing. Forget about the power of God if you're a thief, a liar, arrogant, fornicator, forget about the power of God. It's not for you.

The Lord is not going to come, you'll be religious, and you'll have a pretense of unity, but you won't stand in the day of adversity. If you want the strength that God speaks about that comes from unity, this unity in Psalm 133 that blesses not only you but your home, and puts a covering, it speaks of a covering that comes on your house, and blesses everything, everywhere you walk, the blessing of God travels with you. Put away known sin, put away practices which His word tells you to stop doing.

It's that simple. When I first got saved, nobody told me that you couldn't drink anymore alcohol. I never heard a sermon on it, so I didn't know.

But I loved God with all my heart. I remember, now I'm a brand new Christian, I don't want you to think I was 20 years in the Lord doing this, I was a brand new Christian, and I was coming home from a night shift, and I would always stop at this restaurant and have bacon and eggs in the morning. Actually ham and eggs, it was really, really good.

That's why I would stop at this restaurant. And so I was sitting there, ordered ham and eggs, it's about 7 o'clock in the morning, I'm still in uniform, I drive home in uniform, ordered a pint of beer, and I'm sitting at my table, please don't collectively gasp, I mean, I was not born in a manger, I'm singing, so I'm sitting there reading my Bible. I've got my Bible open, bacon, eggs, toast, ham, and beer.

And I love God with all my heart. I'm a brand new Christian, I've been saved maybe a couple of months, a month or two, never heard a sermon on this, and I was reading the New Testament, I was reading about where the angel came to Zacharias and to Elizabeth and said, you're going to have a son, and he's going to be a mighty man of God, I'm paraphrasing, but this is essentially what it said, and it said that wine will never touch his lips. And I remember looking at it, and I said, oh my goodness, I want to be a man that God can use.

And if that is the evidence of a man of God, if you made that a condition for John the Baptist, then that's good enough for me. So I just took my hand, I pushed it away, and that's 33 years ago. Never touched any of that.

Now today in the church we have people that just, they have conferences on alcohol. They try to prove that the wine in John 3, or whatever chapter it was, is wine. But they're missing the whole point.

If you and I want the righteousness, if we want our lives to be of some effect, we have to put away practices which the Holy Spirit speaks to our heart, that we need to stop. There are certain things that, when you get into the word, God will speak to you from the word, and he'll tell you, put this away. Stop doing that.

You might be going to a certain website, and you are just on the edge of being trapped into something, and the Holy Spirit says, now put that away. Don't go there. I had an opportunity when I came to New York City.

Somebody told me, they said, if you have any savings, and I did because I just sold a house in Canada, they said, put it in a certain stock. And they said, this stock is, and the person had the knowledge that was telling me this, this stock is going to explode in value. It was at the beginning of the high-tech boom, and it did.

I think it went, it was phenomenal. And I went home, and the Lord said, don't do it. He said, you'll be looking at the stock every day.

It'll begin to grip your mind, and it will take the word out of your mouth that I want to give to you. Don't do it. Don't put your trust there.

And so my friend made a lot of money that did this, and I didn't make anything, but I thank God. I'm a richer man today for just obeying God in this. There are certain things that God will tell you to do that he will not tell somebody else to do.

You just have to be sensitive. If your heart is for Christ, I'm trying to make this as practical as I can today so that everyone can understand it. If you want to walk and return to the power of unity with God, get into serious Bible reading and prayer.

Now folks, if you're not serious about the word, first of all, if you're not in the Bible, you don't know how to pray. You don't know what to pray, because your mind is really not focused on the things of God. Would you want to fly in an airplane with a captain who said, you know, I've taken a bluffer's guide to flying an airplane course.

I think you and I might just get off. If he said, well, I want you to sit back, enjoy the flight. Over the course of the last 12 years, I've spent five minutes a day studying how to work this thing and get it off the ground.

And yet we think we can live the Christian life like that and wonder why nothing's happening, why our prayers seem to, whatever little they are, seem to hit the ceiling. We have no influence in our society. If you are in unity with Christ, you have to be serious about Bible reading and prayer.

There's no getting around that. When God reveals his heart for others, embrace it. It was hard for me in the beginning.

I know I'm preaching a little longer this morning. Can you bear with it today? It's hard for me. Many of you know the story.

I really desperately wanted to serve God, ended up traveling to a halfway house for the spiritual birthday of a man who used to be an affiliate of the equivalent in Canada of the Hell's Angels here in the United States. I hated these guys. I really did.

I'm not even overstating. I hated them because of some experiences I'd had and the things I had seen. I couldn't believe that God could save one of these men.

To me, I couldn't fathom it. Just the vileness and the evil that goes on to become a chapter member of one of these organizations. I just could not believe that forgiveness could be offered or if even it was, there could be anything come out of this life.

I remember going there and meeting face-to-face with a man that I could have killed and he could have killed me a short time before and just seeing the same spirit of God that had come on me had come on him and the absolute transformation in that man's life. I remember how it shocked me. It stunned me.

I've shared with you before, this man who was a Hell's Angel affiliate ended up a cake decorator in a bake shop making roses and stuff on cakes and stuff like that. Only God, only God, only God could do this. Hallelujah.

But I had a choice to make. Was I willing to embrace others as God was? Half the reason why Israel could not understand the Messiah walking in their midst is because they wouldn't embrace the Samaritans. They

wouldn't embrace the lepers.

They wouldn't embrace the prostitutes. They wouldn't embrace the poor. They were unwilling to embrace the heart of God.

Subsequently, even though they were unified in common purpose, that common purpose unfortunately ended up being united around the hatred of God and the things that he does because of people. When he calls you to reach out to someone in his name, do it. Obey God.

Do it. As strange as it may seem, as foolish as the moment may appear, reach out to someone when he calls you. You'll never know the supernatural if you can't trust him to break those barriers.

And sometimes you're going to end up looking foolish. Sometimes you're going to feel foolish. I was sitting on a train heading home to New Jersey one time.

And for whatever reason, the seats were facing each other on the train. And so our knees are about a foot apart from the person across from me. It's rather uncomfortable.

So I had the daily post or whatever paper, and I was just reading this trying to ignore everybody around me. The Holy Spirit said to me, Tell the lady sitting across from you everything is going to be okay. Now I really, really said, No, I'm not doing it.

I'm not telling. I'm sorry. You tell her.

And because she's in her 30s. At that time I was about 50. There's a man beside me, another man beside her, and you know exactly what they're going to think, and I know what they're thinking.

So I just opened my paper. I'm not doing this. So I tried to keep reading some story, and the conviction got stronger.

And the Holy Spirit said, Tell her everything is going to be okay. So finally I put down the paper. I said, How am I going to do this? Because I know these two guys are going to be listening.

So I put the paper down and said, Excuse me, young lady. And she looked at me and I said, I'm a pastor. Hopefully I thought that might give me some legitimacy.

Now how do you say this? God talks to me, and so I just said, Listen, I feel the Lord telling me to tell you that everything is going to be okay. And at this point I can see these two guys, their eyebrows are kind of... And she bursts out crying. I mean, bursts out crying.

It's as if the tears just flew off her face. She starts crying. She's sitting there.

And when she could finally compose herself, she said, I've got cancer. And I'm going in for a mastectomy, I believe it is tomorrow. I've got two or three, I forget, little kids at home and my husband.

And I've been sitting there saying, God, you've got to tell me if everything is going to be okay. You've got to tell me. Another time I was coming home from Starbucks, coming back to the church from Starbucks across the street, and a young man was begging on the corner with a cup in his hand.

And the Holy Spirit came on me and said, go talk to him. Pretty rough looking kid. And I walked up to him and I put my finger right in his face.

I said, what are you doing here? And the person who was with me was almost like, woo. This kid looked a little bit rough. And I said, what are you doing here? And he looked at me again.

I said, you know, you have a Christian mother. You come from a Christian home. And I said, you've got a lot of prayer offered up for your life.

And I said, here you are, a beggar in the street, when just around the corner tonight, it was Tuesday at 7 o'clock, you're the son of a king. And the tears started coming down his face. I said, I'm right, aren't I? You've got a Christian mother.

And he said, yeah, I do. I said, get to church tonight. He said, I will.

I'll be there tonight. When God says reach out, do it. When he tells you to reach out, do it.

The Holy Spirit knows what people are thinking. The Holy Spirit knows what that obstinate person... Can I tell you another story? After church on a Tuesday night, Pastor Claude and Yuka, who used to play the piano here, we went over to a restaurant down on 8th. And we're sitting in the restaurant.

And at a table were about four men and a woman, that I think was a call girl. And they were so vile that the owner of the restaurant was embarrassed. Their conversation was just so, it was vile.

And we were sitting there wondering what to do. The owner of the restaurant came up and said, would you like me to move you to another place? Because he couldn't do anything to quiet these... And their conversation was really, really inappropriate at any level, anywhere, anytime. And I had a stirring come into my heart.

And I said, no, just wait a minute. Just wait a minute. So I got up and I went over to their table.

I said, hi, how are you all doing tonight? And they just kind of looked at me. And I said, you know, we have a service on Sunday, around the corner, Sunday at 10 o'clock, 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock. And I see you're all visiting.

I thought they were from Alabama, but it turns out they're from England. And I said, I'd like you to come. And they said, well, why are you doing this? And I said, well, I recognize the accent.

You know, the Lord did that. And I said, you know, I figure you're from the south. And everybody from the south goes to church.

So I thought you'd like to go to church while you're in town. And they said, we're from England. And I said, well, you're still welcome to come to church on Sunday.

And then this one guy starts absolutely cursing at me. I don't even want to repeat the words, but who are you and where do you get the audacity? I'm changing his words, okay, so. To stand here and invite us to church.

And what would cause you to get out of your seat and come here? I thought at this moment, I was very thankful Pastor Claude was here, because he's really got it. And so I said, I'm here because the Holy Spirit stirred my heart and told me that somebody here at this table needs to know if there's a heaven or a hell. And suddenly it got very, very quiet.

And the most vocal, violent man of the whole group starts to cry. And he looks at me and said, my God, it's me. I gotta know.

I gotta know. He said, is there a heaven? And if there is, how do you get there? And he starts crying. I'm talking about snotty nose crying in a restaurant.

And everybody, all of a sudden the party's over at that table. The language all changes. Everybody leaves.

He starts to cry. He invites me to sit down and I get to present the gospel of Christ to all of these people. You and I can't be afraid of people.

The Bible says a perfect love casts out fear. We've got to walk in this unity with God and loving the souls of men. Enough to risk the rejection.

Enough to risk the, you know, it may not always work out that way. There may be circumstances where it might be just time to sit down or things are going to start to hurt. Find others who want the same walk with God that you do.

And pray and sing with them. And by God's grace, make them friends and family for life. That's one of the great blessings of this church, I believe with all my heart.

Is that in this church body, you can find people who want to walk with God just the way you do. You can pray and sing. You can find a prayer meeting.

And you can make friends in this church that will be your friends for life. You shouldn't be lonely in this body. You can find a friend.

If you want to know how, get involved in ministry. There are 32 or more ongoing ministries to the poor, the homeless and the addicted and the marginalized in society in this church. You can go on a missions trip.

There are dozens of countries that we go to constantly. There you'll find friends. There you'll find somebody that sticks closer than a brother.

And most of these will be for life. And lastly and mostly, live for the honor of God and for the souls of men. Make it your choice.

And then if you do, Psalm 133 will be the testimony of your life. The Lord told me last night to give an altar call today. And here's the altar call.

I'm in. I'm in. No more excuses.

You've heard the word. And that's the altar call today. In the annex you can stand between the screens.

For every man, woman and young person that just says, I'm in. I'm in. Count me in.

Mighty God, I'm in. I'm in for the long haul. I'm in for the real relationship with God.

I'm in for the honor of God and for the souls of men. And I promise you that Psalm 133 will be the testimony of your life. God will bless you.

And this dew of heaven will come upon you. And everywhere you go, there will be a command of life. I thank God that as a young Christian, he gave me the courage to make the right decisions.

And I'm challenging you today, young and old, make the right decisions today. I'm in. And that's going to mean some changes in some lifestyles today.

It's going to mean an alternating of some value systems. It's going to mean a willingness to be vulnerable to people. But it's really where the power of God is found.

As we stand, if the Holy Spirit is drawing you, you want to make that decision. Even if you're in a struggle, you still come. Make your way to this altar.

We're going to pray and believe God with all of our hearts. Just do that now. On the balcony, you can go to either exit.

Make your way down. A last day return to the power of unity. I believe missionaries will be born at this altar today.

Evangelists, teachers, pastors. Godly witnesses of Christ in this generation. You are the salt in the streets of this city, folks.

There's no other way. There's no other testimony. No other way it's going to be done.

It's through you and through me. Let's take a moment to worship. Then we'll pray together.

Well, I don't know what to do from here but to say amen. That's it. That's it.

I'm in personally for the long haul. With God first and with you second. We're in it together.

But we have to be a people of truth. We have to walk in truth. And this has to be a sincere walk with God.

And he will come and walk with us. Now, Lord, I just thank you, God, for this congregation. I thank you for those that have responded.

This is an issue of the heart, Lord. There's no words that we can be coached in. This is an issue of every man, every woman's heart.

But, God, we are here before you. And just like Hannah was, we say, Lord, whatever you give to us and birth within us, we will bring it back to you for your glory. God, we will let it be used for your glory.

Come walk with us, Lord Jesus Christ, in this city, in this generation, at this time. This time where darkness is so prevalent at every turn. But people are so despairing they're willing to hear now.

There's a season, there's an open time when people's hearts can hear. Would you give us the courage to love them? Would you give us the ability to walk in truth? Would you take away from us compromise that's robbing us of strength? Would you give us a love one for another? As your scripture says that we are, you pray, Jesus. Father, I pray that they may be one as you and I are one.

Lord, you knew the power of God operated in unity. And, Lord, make us one with one another and with you, Lord. Let us move as a body into this city, O God, and truly be the salt of God in the streets of New York.

I pray, Lord, call this city to prayer. Oh, my God, call this city to prayer, Lord. Oh, Jesus, before the day of judgment comes, let mercy triumph, O God.

Let mercy triumph in hundreds and hundreds of thousands of lives. Let mercy triumph, O God. Father, we thank you, Lord.

We thank you, God. I thank you so much for this church, God. Oh, Lord, this truly is a treasure in your hand.

Oh, God, give us the strength that only you can give. Guide us, Lord, into the coming days. We thank you for it, Lord.

With all our hearts, we say thank you. Now, you've got to thank him for the strength because he's going to give you the strength. He's going to give you the power.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

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