

Greetings From Caesar's House!

by Carter Conlon

God can work through any situation to further His purposes, and we must trust in His sovereignty and sanctify the Lord in our hearts to be a light in a dark world.

Duration: 39:58

Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 5:14, John 8:12, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, 1 Corinthians 12:18, Ephesians 1:18-23, Philippians 1:12, 1 Peter 4:12-14

Topics: "Divine Purpose", "Faith Testimony"

Description

This sermon from Philippians chapter one titled 'Greetings from Caesar's House' emphasizes the importance of finding divine purpose and being a light in the world where God has placed us. It highlights how even in challenging circumstances, God's purpose can be fulfilled, and our lives can be a testimony to those around us. The message encourages embracing God's plan, being a visible expression of His love, and standing firm in faith, knowing that His power within us cannot be conquered.

Transcript

Philippians chapter one. If you go there in your new Testament, please with me, I have a message for you today entitled greetings from Caesar's house, greetings from Caesar's house. Father, I thank you for the touch of heaven in this sanctuary today.

I thank you for mercy, Lord. This is a kingdom of mercy. I thank you, Lord, for your willingness to partner with us, with all of our struggles and our frailties and our failings, God almighty, and all of our questions, but yet you come to us and you call us your own Lord, you invite us to rule and reign with you for all of eternity.

Father, I thank you, God almighty, that you don't even ask me today to stand and speak this in my own strength. For if I had to, I couldn't do it. It's only by the abiding presence of your Holy spirit that I can even understand your word, let alone speak it.

And so I'm asking you to overshadow my frailty and speak to your people, feed your sheep Lord, I'm asking God for an anointing on every heart that's gathered here today, that, that we can understand your word and grasp it and desire it. I ask Lord that you take us out of common thinking and bring us into that, which comes from your heart and your mind. So everyone here, the purpose for their life, deliver the oppressed, set free God, those that are wounded, I'm asking, Oh God, in Jesus name, that you do what

only you can do so that when people leave here today, they would say in their heart, only Jesus could have done this for me.

Father, I thank you for it with all my heart in Jesus name. Amen. Philippians chapter one and beginning at verse 12.

This is the apostle Paul and he's writing from Caesar's house and he's a captive in this place and he's writing a letter to those that he has established in the Lord verse 12 Philippians chapter one. But I want you to know brethren that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Now here's Paul and he's telling this believers in Christ and he's speaking to you and I today through the word of God, that what looks to be a bad situation has actually furthered the cause of Christ in the world.

You know, we, we have viewpoints, we all have viewpoints of what we think ministry should look like, what we think the results should be, how it should all go. And that, that's the dilemma of my heart. It's the dilemma of your heart.

All of us, we get a vision of what our life should be. And when it doesn't turn out that way, we spend our whole time trying to get out of the very place where God has actually put us so that we can be a testimony to the people there of who he is. And Paul was saying, I want you to know, like in the natural, people are looking at the apostle Paul and he's, he's, he's been falsely accused.

He's been, there are people who are threatening to kill him. They compromise religious authorities of his day are in cahoots really with the secular leaders wanting to be rid of him. They're calling him a troubler in Israel.

They're saying that the things that he's speaking are strange, et cetera, et cetera. And of course he's, he's had to appeal for his own safety to Caesar and people would be looking at that and saying, isn't that tragic what happened to the apostle Paul, how he was taken as a captive. And, and instead of having this miracle ministry in some stadium in a city, he's more or less confined to the corridors of Caesar's palace as it is, or see where Caesar's dwells, but Paul says, I want you to know these things that happened to me have turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.

Paul is saying, I'm seeing something happen through my life that couldn't have happened if God had not put me in this place, I'm reaching some people that wouldn't have been reached if I were not here, it looks to be captivity, but how many know the word of God cannot be bound. The scripture says you cannot bind the word of God. You can, you can try all you want, but heaven and earth are going to pass away one day, but the words of God are not going to pass away.

They are eternal words. They cannot be bound. They cannot be eliminated.

They cannot be eradicated. And God help any society that tries to do that. So it's become evident.

He says in verse 13 to the whole palace guard soldiers, in other words, and to all the rest, all the attendants, all, everything that would go on in a place of authority and government and power, all these things that are happening all day passing through the corridors. It's become evident. Paul says that I have been captivated for a divine purpose.

It's become evident to them that I was sent here by God, even though in the natural, it looks to be a really unpleasant situation and other believers. He says in verse 14, I've been emboldened to stand when they see God's purpose in and through my life, that it cannot be stopped by my circumstance. And that's what I want you to understand today.

I know this is a hard time to be alive. This is a hard moment in history right now. And circumstances are coming against those who want to live for God.

Circumstances are coming against everybody in this generation. But I want you to know that if Christ is in you, the purpose of God in your life can't be stopped by your circumstance, no matter what that circumstance is. And I love it at the end of the Philippians, right near the, at the back, when you go to chapter 4 and verse 22, he says, all the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

All the saints, but especially those like Paul, it's a code in a sense. Paul's saying, folks, pray for me. I'm winning a lot of people to Christ here where I am right now.

And there's a zeal, there's an exuberance among those who are of Caesar's household where they're supposed to be in a place of all authority, of all knowledge, of all power, of a dominant society and all the rest of it. But yet I am winning them to Christ in this place. Jesus said in Matthew 5, 14, you are the light of the world.

A city that's set on a hill cannot be hidden. You are the light of the world. God has placed inside of your life and inside of mine, his Holy Spirit, his eyes, his voice, his strength, his divine purpose.

You, you're the light to this darkened world. And you must, and I must be set in a, in a prominent place. Like a lighthouse, for example, is set in a prominent place where it can be seen by people for miles.

It warns them of impending danger and points the way to safety. But just as a lighthouse needs to be seen, it too must be stationed in a place where it can technically see. To be seen, you must be in a place where you can see.

You must be able to see. You must be able to see your purpose. You must be able to understand why God has planted you where he has.

And he won't withhold it from you. If your heart wants to see it, he'll show it to you. Jesus goes on to say, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

And that's the way it was with Paul. He was placed by God in Caesar's house, just like with a lighthouse. Paul was placed by God at the entrance of a dangerous place.

I want you to hear me on this. Some of you have been placed by God at the entrance of a dangerous place. People are living in danger there, even though they don't know it.

In Paul's case, it was a place where by subtlety, by threat, by force, a dominant society was trying to impose its values and its will on everyone within its perceived domain. This was a dangerous place. And it was here that God chose to position his chosen servant, Paul.

In the same way, if you're a faithful servant of God, don't be surprised at where God may choose to position your light in this darkening hour of history. Don't be surprised that you are where you are. And instead of trying to get out of where you are, I think it's a better thing to say, God, show me your purpose for my life where I am.

Help me to flourish where I am. Help me to win people to you where I am, in spite of the fact that I seem to be captivated, in spite of the fact that people in the natural look at me and think my life is an absolute joke, I'm off track, I'm bigoted, I'm whatever they're saying of the Christian person in this hour. Say, God, your word can't be bound, your Holy Spirit can't be hidden.

So Lord, give me the courage to stand, even if it looks that I am feeble, I have the power of the God who created this universe living inside of this earthen vessel, I have a light, and don't let me hide it under a bushel. Help me, God, in the strength of Christ to stand in a visible place and let the testimony of what you're doing in my life be seen, especially at this darkened hour of time. Paul said that the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 12, 18, God has set the members, that's of his church, of his body, each of them in the body, just as he pleases.

In other words, the talent he's given you, the function he's called you to, the ability, the location, everything that you do, both inside and outside of the assembled place where we're worshiping today, is ordained of God. Nothing is a fluke, nothing is by happenstance. I have learned that more than one time throughout my life, I now know that.

Nothing, I gave my life into the hands of God. I've been in places where I've said, what am I doing here? I've been in places where I've tried to get out of where I was, only to later find out the purpose of why I was there. I found over the years that all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

There's no such a thing, unless I have willfully chosen to vacate the purposes of God for my life, there's no such a thing as a Christian person with an honest heart being in a place where the fruit of God cannot be born and will not be born through your life. It's his choice. I don't know how we got it so turned around in our generation that we think that we can make a choice and he somehow has to bless it.

It's his choice. It's his choice what marriage you're in. It's his choice what job you're on.

It's his choice what country or city you live in. It's his choice. What paycheck you take home.

It's his choice. Everything is his choice. The children you have, it's his choice.

It's all God. Everything has come from his hand. Everything is in his hand.

There's no happenstance in this life with him. But listen now, just like with Paul, you cannot allow or be captivated with the change that your situation provides for you. Every situation provides its change.

I'm telling you, there are threats everywhere you go. I've lived through that. I know what that's all about.

I know what it's like to have people walk in an office when I had a secular job and pointed my face and said, we're gonna get you. People who have actually the power to do it. But there was a power within me that was stronger than what was in them.

The apostle Peter says it this way in 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning at verse 12. He said, beloved, don't think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

If you're reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, he's blasphemed, but on your part, he is glorified. Don't think it's strange.

It's not a strange thing. It's only in a season, a generation where the Christian church was marginally, at best, at least accepted in society, that everybody kind of, the focus shifted. And Jesus became someone that was just supposed to, his whole reason for being was just to make us happy and healthy and more prosperous than everybody else.

And when everybody saw us so lifted up and so high and doing so well on our job and everything else, they were all going to slap their foreheads and say, who is your God? I want to follow him. But in reality, that's not the way it works. Jesus said, in this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I've overcome the world. In other words, you're going to have trouble. There's going to be times that you're going to be pressed down.

Above strength, as Paul said in Asia, where you're going to despair of living. And if it hasn't come your way yet, hang on. It's coming your way, everyone who's here.

You're going to get to that point where your only prayer is a scream and a groan and a tear. You can't even get words out. You don't know what to say anymore.

You feel like hell is coming against you from every side. Everybody who lives for God knows these moments, these valleys of the shadow of death. We all know them.

But we also know that we come out the other side with a testimony. Goodness and mercy have followed me, will follow me all the days of my life. And I have discovered that there is a divine purpose for the sunny days and the rainy days.

When the field is dry and when the field is soaked, there's a purpose for when I feel happy and when I feel overwhelming sorrow. When things are going my way and when things seem to be going the wrong way. There is a divine purpose, God, if you will just allow me to see your hand.

I remember one time I was driving home with, this was way back years and years ago, and I was pastoring in Canada. And I was driving home with two ministers and in the middle of nowhere on a highway where there's so few houses there. And the engine on my car literally blew up.

I mean, it blew a hole in the engine. The engine was gone, it was finished. And we're pulled over on the side of the road.

And one of the pastors said to me, what are we gonna do now? We're in the middle of nowhere. And I looked and I said, well, everybody has to be somewhere. And right now, this is where we are.

There must be a purpose to this. I remember one of the guys just shook his head. So there he goes again, always believing there's a divine purpose to everything.

And so we're standing on the side of the road. There's no cell phones back then. There were, but they were Radio Shack ones.

You know, there were big ones with the antenna. And I remember, said, well, here we are. And as we're talking, this truck that can put a car up on it pulls in front of us.

Says, I see you guys are stuck. I can't do anything for you here, but I can take your car to somewhere where they can fix it. I said, sure, that'd be nice.

I'd really appreciate that. So he put it on his truck and he took it to this garage in a little town not too far away and dropped it off. And so I walked into the garage.

And lo and behold, the owner of this place is a man I knew from years ago, a part of a Christian ministry. And I started talking to him. I found out he's not serving God.

His wife died. He got discouraged and depressed and walked away from the Lord. And so I was able to sit there and I was able to minister to him and encourage him and pray with him and try to help him to get back to God.

And I could see the softening start coming into his heart again. And then he told me, he says, I can't fix your car. He said, but I can send you home with it.

It was quite a distance. And so he loaded up on a truck and similar kind of truck and for no charge, sent me home with my blew up car. They dropped it off in my driveway.

And when I got home, this phone rang. And it's one of the elders in the church that I pastored back then. And he said, I've been trying to get a hold of you for like over a day now.

He says, I've been trying to call you. I've been trying to find you. I said, what do you need? He said, well, the Lord put on my heart in prayer this morning that something was wrong with your car and I was to pay to have it fixed.

Folks, I tell you, there is no, if it was all for that man, if it was all for that man, is it not worth it, folks? Is it not worth the inconvenience? Is it not worth the trouble? You know, it would be nice if I was so spiritual that God could speak to me clearly on the highway. I thought of that after. I said, couldn't you just, you know, couldn't you just talk to me? And it's like the Lord was saying you weren't listening.

So I had to get your attention somehow. I wanted you to minister to that man, and you would have just passed by. And so he will do what he has to do to get us where we need to be.

And what looks to be a bad situation, what looks to be as if we've somehow got a hold of the short end of the stick, we're actually in the will of God, doing the work of God. And I thank God for having learned that time. I could tell you stories that keep us here till 6 o'clock tonight of times that I've seen the hand of God in situations like that.

And you get to learn. As you get older, you just get to learn there's no such thing as coincidence. God's hand is in everything.

And so you're sitting at school, young person, where you should be, in the classroom that God's appointed you to, and in the cafeteria beside the people, whether they're nice or nasty, it doesn't matter, you're

appointed by God. You're a light in the darkened world. And there's nothing the devil can throw at you that can extinguish that light or take away the victory.

Don't think it's strange. Peter says, don't think it's strange. It's not a strange thing.

It's part of walking with God in a darkened, fallen world, that darkness will always try to extinguish the light. But darkness can't put the light out. As a matter of fact, the darker it gets, the brighter the light becomes.

Thank God for that with all my heart. People are going to need you. People are going to need your testimony.

People in your classrooms, people in your work environment, people in your neighborhood, people in your own home, your own family are going to need you, no matter how strong or how weak you might feel. I'm sure Paul had days when he walked in as a captive and must have felt like, oh, God, I don't see your hand in this. But I'm going to trust you.

I'm going to believe that all things do work together for good. But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, Peter said, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. And always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. With meekness and fear, having a good conscience that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ might be ashamed.

In other words, don't be drawn into the same spirit that they are of. Sanctify the Lord God in your heart that the light that's in you will expose the fact that they are living, they are thinking, they are walking, they are partakers of an eternal darkness. Don't be drawn there.

Don't let the conflicts of this society start to take your mind, your heart, your thinking. Sanctify the Lord God. In other words, set apart your life for the purposes of Christ.

Let that be the reason that you live. Let that be why you are where God sends you. Always, always let your speech be seasoned with grace, filled with grace, seasoned with salt, speech that stirs hunger in people's hearts, speech that heals and preserves that which is right and holy and good.

Do not be afraid of their threats. You see, Paul's inner strength came from the fact that he could see who he was in Christ, and he could see who Christ was in him. Nothing, it wasn't hidden.

His purpose of being on the earth was visible to him first. He saw what people who live in the flesh don't see. He saw the worth of every person in the eyes of Christ.

That's what Paul saw. Whether they're soldiers that were mocking him, whether they're temple attendants that were scorning him, it didn't matter. People who, in their own arrogance, thought they held all power in their hands.

Paul saw the value of every person in the eyes of Christ. You need to pray now as I do. God, give us your eyes.

Give me your eyes. I don't want to see people with eyes of hatred. I don't want to judge them.

God Almighty, I want to see people that you died for, created in the image of God. I want to see their value. I don't care what they're doing.

I don't care how they're living. I want to see their value. I want the eyes of Christ.

This lighthouse has to have the eyes of Christ in this generation. Paul saw the passionate love in God's heart for every soul. He understood it wasn't just a verse that he was throwing out at people.

He understood that God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. God so loved the world. Paul had and saw this passionate love of God.

And I'm sure soldiers felt it. I'm sure attendants felt it. I'm sure the mockers felt it.

He saw the cross of Christ as the purest expression of that love. I can just envision Paul in Caesar's palace as it was saying, God, if you would do that for me, what a small sacrifice it is for me to endure these chains and to endure this humiliation that I have to endure most likely every day for the sake of those that are around me, especially those of Caesar's household. Paul had a vision.

He saw the lostness of humankind. How lost this generation is. How lost people are.

How lost they are running to and fro all through every facet of our society, looking for something and they don't know what it is they're looking for. He saw the waves, he saw the rocks, he saw the peril of those who are on a journey which they're incapable of navigating on their own. Folks, ask God for the eyes to see.

If you happen to be watching the news and you're seeing some of the things that are going on in our time, ask him for the eyes to see young men, young women, people lost forever. There really is a place called hell. The absence of God, indescribable sorrow forever and ever and ever and ask God for the eyes to see these waves, these rocks, the perils, the journey, the fact that they can't get through if I don't tell them.

Paul saw the incredible privilege he'd been given to be a visible expression of God's love to those who lived in darkness and who without the safety of God's mercy to them through Jesus Christ would perish forever. It was a privilege to be a light. It was not something to be just endured, it was something to be embraced, something to rejoice in.

God, thank you, thank you, thank you that you can be seen in me because if you couldn't, they would not be persecuting me. He saw that God's purpose through his life could not be conquered no matter the depth or the breadth of the forces which opposed it. That's why Paul the apostle says to the Ephesian church that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, you might know what is the hope of his calling, the riches of the glory of his inheritance and the saints and what is exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heavenly places far above all principality, all power, might and dominion, every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come and has put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Paul saw it, he saw the power of God, not only the purpose, but the power. And he saw, I can't be conquered. The things that God has determined to do through my life cannot be stopped because he is God and men are not.

No matter what opposes it, he sits at the right hand of all power and all authority. Every name that is named is in subjection to Jesus Christ. And he has put his light inside of my life.

I have nothing to be ashamed of. It's a message that can lead to eternal life. Lastly, to the Corinthian church, Paul says, you see your calling brethren.

I guess the question is in my heart this morning, do you see your calling? Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame things which are mighty and base things of the world and things which are despised God has chosen. And the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Not only those of us who God has chosen in mercy to bring honor to his own name through, we can't glory because we know what we are. And the longer you walk with God, the more you will know what you are without him. But also no fallen humanity can boast that in itself it possesses a strength greater than the strength of God, even in Caesar's household.

I want you to consider this for a moment. Paul is a captive in Caesar's household. And Caesar's household are partakers of an empire that has pomp and circumstance, has an emperor who thinks he's God, by the way.

Has armies with soldiers with shiny armor and helmets with huge plumes on them. Chariots with white horses by the hundreds parading through the streets. Polished marble in their foyers, in their lobbies.

Polished floors, attendants everywhere. Trumpets announcing everybody coming through. Phenomenal, they are the dominant world power of their time.

They're taking over the world, it's Rome. Nobody has the power to resist them. Yet in the middle of that palace, historians say Paul was about five foot seven, by the way.

I don't know how true that is, but they say that's about what he was. So here's this little guy, five foot seven, no offense if you're five foot seven, please don't take offense. But he's a prisoner, he's accused, he's standing in the midst of all of this pomp and circumstance and might and dominion as it has expounded on itself.

And the soldiers even, the soldiers who are part of this conquering army are looking at this man and on one hand, they have the power of Rome and all it represents. On the other hand, they have a captive named Paul and they're looking at Paul and they're saying, I'm going with this guy, for real. I'm going with this guy because I see something in him stronger than anything I've ever known before.

Whereas these people on this side are insatiably lusting for more and more and more power. They never get enough. They're never satisfied, you can never make them happy.

All they can do is conquer and when they conquer, they want to conquer more. And they're turning to the poverty within and they're starting to disintegrate from inside. And over here is this man, he's got something in his life, he's got a light in his eyes, he's got something in his voice, there's something in his whole demeanor that tells me that what is inside of him is more powerful than anything we have over here.

Don't think in your classroom, your workplace, wherever it is that you are, don't think that people are not watching you every moment of the day. They will laugh, they'll ridicule, they'll criticize. I'm sure there were a lot of soldiers, they had to laugh.

You're forced to laugh because if you don't laugh, you're not part of the crowd over here. But there are some soldiers, there are some attendants, there are some even perhaps in places of authority, I don't know, are suddenly looking and they're just seeing something in this man that can't be conquered, something in this man that loves in spite of being scorned and rejected. You see, if you will choose to stand on your college campus, you choose to stand in your workplace, you choose to be a Christian, you sanctify the Lord God in your heart and don't be afraid of their threats.

Peter said, the spirit of God and of glory rests upon you. And it will expose the fallacy of people who live in darkness and somehow think it's strength when it isn't, and they will turn to you. Years ago, I was a very, very vocal Christian in my workplace and I came under a lot of fire because of it, but the worse it got for me, the more men I was able to lead Christ.

It was amazing because they saw something. Police officers are very observant by nature and they just watched. And I was able to lead more men to Christ when I was in the fire than when I wasn't because they saw something.

And they themselves, as Paul said, some have, some brethren in the Lord having become confident by my chains are more bold to speak the word without fear. In other words, when they saw that the strength that Paul had couldn't be overpowered, they were given courage to speak themselves about this new life in Christ. How many here would like to be able to live a life where people around you say, I'm going with you? I'm going with you.

You might be the guy or girl who's laughed at in the college classroom and you're called out a date and you're vilified and you're called stupid, but I'm going with you because I see something in you I don't find anywhere else on the job. How many would like to have your coworkers suddenly come to you in times of crisis and just say, wherever you're going and whoever your God is, I want that for my life. That's why Peter says in the middle of all the trial, sanctify the Lord in your heart, set the Lord's work apart in your heart and then be ready to give an answer to every person who asked you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

First, sanctify God. Say, Lord, I'm going to find your purpose here. I'm not gonna live my life to get out of this place, but I'm going to find your purpose here.

If there's a day that I leave it because you've taken me out. And not only am I gonna find your purpose, but I'm going to find the people that you died for whose hearts are open to you. I'm going to be a light set on a hill that cannot be hidden, even in Caesar's household.

You see, that's the gospel. That's the power of the gospel. That's where the power of the Holy Spirit really is found.

And I know there's people here today that I have a sense in my heart, there's more than one here today who has been contemplating suicide. You've so lost a sense of purpose and identity, so tired of where you are, and you've been looking to get out, and the Lord hasn't taken you out. Because of it, you've lost hope even for the future.

But today, if you're willing to let God heal, rekindle that hope in your heart and show you the divine purpose for where He has you and why you're there. God Almighty should be our cry today, let me find your purpose for my life where I am. Let me be a light in the very place, in the marriage, the home, the job, family, community, the city, the town, where you've put me, let me find your purpose right where I am.

And for some, that's a radical departure from the way you've been thinking, because you've been living to get out. The Lord says, what if I don't want to take you out? What if I have chosen to put you there for a divine reason? Would you be willing to pray and say, God, would you show me? Would you open my eyes? Would you help me to see? You give me a spiritual heart and a spiritual mind, let me see why I am where I am and use my life for your glory. If that's the cry of your heart today, I'm just gonna open the front of this auditorium so you can respond.

In the annex, you could step between the screen, same thing at North Jersey campus and at home for those that are listening at home. We're just gonna pray together. We're just gonna say, God, would you help us all? Would you help all of us to find strength and to find purpose so that we could say like Paul, what looks to be bad has actually turned out for good.

Let that be my story. Let's stand together and we're gonna worship for a few moments. If that's you, slip out of your seat, please, just come.

The balcony, go to either exit. The main seat, just come, just come. You need that purpose in your life again.

You need hope for the future. Just slip out of your seat and just come and join these that are making their way here and we'll pray together in just a few moments. I wanna just give you a word of encouragement.

Those that are here today in heart as well as physically here at this altar. Jesus said, you are the light of the world. And that makes you what he said you are by virtue of the fact that he said you are.

I've put the light in you that makes you the light of the world. You have inside of your vessel, your earthen vessel, the power of God to be a witness. Now, you will fail.

I do, you do, we'll all fail, we'll fall short. But the Bible says, even if my own heart condemns me, God is greater than my heart. He doesn't condemn us when we fall short.

As a matter of fact, even if you have fallen short, sometimes it's an opportunity to be an even greater testimony because the world is not looking for perfection. Folks are looking for reality, looking for real people that have a real relationship with a real God. And if perfection were the standard, nobody could attain to it.

But when you fail, just have the courage to say, you know, I shouldn't have said that to you yesterday. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have called you that name. And that's not right.

And that's not God. That's not the way God has called me to be. And I'm sorry, and I'm asking for strength.

And when they see humility, because there's no humility in this world anymore, it's so disarming. That's part of being the light. It doesn't mean that, the light does not mean perfection.

There's specks on the glass sometimes, you know, but it's still the light. So don't be discouraged by your struggles or trials. Let them become an even, a stepping stone to what God wants to do in your life.

And Father, I just thank you, Lord, for the fact that we are your plan for this world. There is no other plan. This is the plan.

We are the light of the world. You declared it. You told us not to be hidden under a bushel.

And sometimes people hide because of shame, even though because of failure, just a sense of failure. But you told us not to hide. We don't have to hide.

We're covered. We're covered. Covered.

We're bought with a price. We're declared to be clean in spite of our struggles. We're declared to be righteous.

And so God help us just to stand out in public and just be real in this generation. Be a real light. Just be real lights to people who live in darkness.

God Almighty, I thank you for helping my brothers and sisters, helping those who've just lost heart and hope for the future, giving strength where it's needed today. Thank you, God, for breaking the bonds of the lies of the enemy that tries to tell some that they just have no purpose on the earth. That is not true.

That is not true. Father, I just thank you with all my heart, God Almighty, for what you are doing this day. The testimony that you're raising, Lord, in this generation, not many mighty, not many strong, not many noble, but you have still chosen us.

God, thank you. Help us, Lord, to draw on the resource of your life inside of us when we fall short. Give us the grace just to admit our need every day.

Help us to see people the way you do, Lord. Help us to love them in a deeper way than we could in our own strength. Help us, God, to be unifiers and not dividers.

Give us grace. Give us strength, oh God. Father, we thank you for this.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Amen.

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