

# Is This Your First or Last Year■

by Carter Conlon

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**Scripture:** Luke 13:1, Proverbs 6:16, Galatians 2:20, Romans 8:9, John 7:37, Isaiah 6:8

**Topics:** "True Repentance", "Surrender to God's Will"

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## Description

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## Transcript

There are a lot of preachers today that won't preach a message like I'm going to speak to you this morning, mostly because they want to be admired, and they want your affection, and they want your money. But we have never shunned in this house from declaring the full counsel of God. There are blessings of the Lord, and there are warnings of the Lord as well, and both are equally applicable.

I am more aware, now that I've turned 65, I'm more aware that I'm going to stand before God one day in the not too distant future, and I will give an account for you, for every name, for every person, those online, those that are here in the Main Sanctuary, in the annex in North Jersey, I will give an account for you. And God forbid that at that day that you would not be at the throne of heaven. God forbid that you sat under the sound of my voice and the word that God gave to me, and somehow it failed to find root in your life, and didn't produce the fruit of God, and allowed you to develop a false comfort that's not offered by the scriptures.

I pray with all my heart that if you should miss heaven for eternity, that your blood will never be on my hands, that I will have delivered you the full counsel of God. You will have had a clear choice to make, and the promises and the provision of God to make that choice will have been given you very clearly. There's a promise of blessing when we turn to God.

There's a promise of strength and great grace, and I pray with all my heart that that would become yours today. I'm going to speak to you today from Luke chapter 13. The title of my message is, Is This Your First or Your Last Year? Is this your first or is it your last year? Father, I thank you with all my heart, God, for the touch of heaven.

I thank you, Lord, for your mercy. I thank you, Lord, for your care and your compassion towards your people. Thank you, Lord, that you know every heart, you know every practice in this sanctuary.

You know things, Lord, that are leading people into deeper darkness, and you know those who are moving towards light. Your love is such, Lord, that you will send your word to heal us. You will send your word to guide us.

You will show us the way to walk. This is what your word tells us, and so help us, God, as your word says to us. If we can hear your voice, may we not harden our hearts this day.

I bless you, and I praise you, God, for this congregation. I would ask you, Lord, as you also asked your father, that not one in this sanctuary would be missing except for those who make a willful choice to walk in evil. But, oh, God, for any person here who can hear truth and turn, let them turn towards you, especially now.

And we thank you for it in Jesus' name. Luke chapter 13, beginning at verse 1. There were present at that season some who told him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. He also spoke this parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and found none. Cut it down. Why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, Sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and fertilize it.

And if it bears fruit, well, but if not, after that, you can cut it down. You know, Jesus is talking to his disciples and to everyone who's gathered around to hear him. And he's talking about two things in particular in the beginning.

He's talking about people whose blood, they were asking, was mingled with their sacrifices. So obviously these people were in a place where they're offering some kind of a religious observance. It was a sacrifice and obviously some form, I suppose, of worship.

And a sudden just judgment came on them. A sudden violence came on them. And their place that they had chosen to worship at was proven to be insufficient, may I put it that way, to save them from the judgment that came on them.

And there were some others who were in a tower. And a tower is traditionally a place of safety. The tower in a besieged city of that time would be the last place that everyone would gather to.

They would go up into the tower, they would close the doors, and they would hope that that tower, which they had built as a place of personal safety, would protect them. In other words, the people that we're discussing or Jesus is talking about were in a place that they thought was safe and they were offering up some kind of a religious sacrifice when sudden judgment came upon them. And Jesus said these people were not more evil than the other people of their society.

And unless you repent, unless you turn, unless you turn from living in a place that's not a place of truth, offering up a sacrifice that truly does not represent Christ, unless you turn from seeking security in something that God himself has not offered through his son, he says you will likewise perish. Your place of worship, if it's not true, will not protect you in the coming days. The place of comfort that you have chosen to build in your own heart and maybe in your own mind into which you think you're going to find safety, will not protect you in the coming days in this world.

And this is really the lesson he's trying to teach them. Unless you repent, unless there's a change of heart, unless there's a change of direction, a change of behavior, unless there's something come into your life that bears fruit that can only come from the inward dwelling presence of God. It can't come through human sacrifice.

It can't come through pretended religious observance. It does not come by crafting a place of safety in our own minds, which we think will protect us. It comes from a deliberate turning away from that which the word of God says is wrong, a turning towards what he says is right, and trusting God for the strength to perform it.

Not doing it through human effort, but trusting God to perform it. Now in the second part of what he's talking to his disciples about, on the same theme, he said, a certain man planted a fig tree in his vineyard and came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, for three years I've come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none.

Cut it down. Why does it use up the ground? In other words, for three years, the Lord says concerning this particular tree, I've come searching for fruit, not religion, not a made up safety, but for fruit that can only be born by the spirit of God. Genuine conversion, a change of heart, change of mind, a change of direction.

Isn't that what God promises us through Christ? He promises a new heart. He promises a new mind. He promises a new spirit.

He told us in the New Testament that if Christ is in us, we become new creations. The old things in our life pass away and all things become new. I'm concerned today.

I'm concerned in the church of Jesus Christ, in our generation, that many people are bypassing holy and trying to get to happy too soon. Want to come to the house of God and just want to be happy. Want to be told how blessed we are.

Want to hear again all the promises of God, but all the while bypassing holy to get to happy. It's a sacrifice that doesn't protect. It's a tower that will not keep you in the days ahead that all of us are going to have to face.

Three years. Three years. Three years, the Lord says, I've come to you.

Somebody here today, somebody, somebody, you've been here at least three years. And the Lord says, three years, I've come looking for fruit in you. Three years, I've come looking for that which only can be born by the spirit of God.

Three years, I've come searching for an evidence of Christ in you, which is the hope of glory, resurrection life. I've been searching for it. And seemingly you have, you've built an altar and you're sacrificing at this altar and you've crafted a tower of protection in your own mind, but it hasn't affected your behavior.

You're still doing what you used to do. You're covering it all up with religion. Now you're covering it all up with fig leaves, but there's no fruit that can only be born by the spirit of God.

And three years, three years, I've been looking for fruit and I find none. Cut it down. Cut it down, says the master of the vineyard.

But the person who was given the charge of keeping that vineyard, perhaps as I am today, interceded for that particular tree, that particular planting of the Lord. And he said, sir, let it alone for one more year, and I will dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well, but if not, after that, you can cut it down.

Please, God, have mercy. Please, Lord, have mercy. And by your grace, God, I will try the best that I can to dig around that tree, to get down to the roots of what it's drawing its life source from, to try to help it to understand what you want to do in that particular life.

God, I'm asking you, have mercy. And I pray that for this congregation constantly, because I am personally aware of a lot of mixture in this congregation. People are living in adultery.

People are living together outside of marriage and fornication going on all over the place and other things like it. And somehow people come to this house and craft a sacrifice and craft a tower in their own mind that's not going to keep them in the coming days. There will be no protection of God.

It's strictly an illusion. It will not take you to the throne of God. You will not dwell with Christ forever and ever.

And by God's grace, I'm going to go after that in this church with everything the Holy Spirit gives me. I'm going to go after it because I care. If I didn't care, I wouldn't go after it.

If I didn't care about you, I'd tell you how blessed you are. I'd tell you how wonderful you are. I'd tell you about the great destiny that's ahead of you.

I'd tell you everything to shut your ears, close your eyes, and let you live and die in your own delusion if I didn't care. But I do care. I do care that when I get to the throne, you are there with me.

I do care that you don't miss heaven and end up in hell. Hell is a very real place, and it's a very long time to be there for eternity. I do care because there is a cross.

There is a savior. There is a salvation. There is forgiveness.

There is a newness of life. There is a promise of eternity. Jesus himself said, I came to give you life and to give it to you more abundantly.

I came to wash away the stain of sin that's against you, and I came to put a new spirit inside of you. I came so that my life might be lived and born within yours, and you might become everything that I've destined you to be, that you could never be in your own strength. You could never accomplish this.

Build whatever tower you want in your mind. You will never find what God alone is able to give you and where he's able to take you. Now, in order to bear fruit, you must begin to see sin in your life the way God sees it.

It's not just a weakness. It's not just, well, that's just me. You've got to be able to see sin the way God sees it.

Let me read this to you from Proverbs chapter 6. These six things the Lord hates. Yea, seven are an abomination to him, a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood. The Bible says whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and no murderer has eternal life in him.

You justify it any way you want. You point your finger at anybody you want to point your finger to. You become part of this present divided, devouring, vilifying crowd if you want to.

But the Bible tells me clearly that if I hate my brother, I am a murderer and I have no eternal life living inside of me. A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows division among brethren. These are the seven things that God hates.

On October 31st in the year 1517, Martin Luther was a professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg in Germany. He nailed a list of indictments to the door of the dominant church of his day, and he charged it that its practices and its theology had so deviated from the word of God that it not only offered the people a false salvation, but also rendered them powerless to gain victory over the opposing force of sin that was coming against humanity. Matter of fact, the church at that time so knew that they were burying people who had no victory, were obvious open sinners that they created a place between heaven and hell where there was just a temporary time of punishment to justify calling people righteous who were obviously unrighteous and had obviously died in their sin.

And then they took it a step further. And they told people, well, if your loved one is in this middle ground between heaven and hell, just being temporarily punished, you can shorten the time by buying their way out. You can pay the church and actually buy your loved ones out of this place and hasten their journey to heaven.

Martin Luther started studying the scriptures and he stumbled upon this great truth. The just shall live by faith. He stumbled on salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ alone.

And he realized how corrupt the religion of his day had become. And so with a bold move, he walked up to the door of a particular church, which was considered technically the bulletin board of that day and nailed his indictment onto the door against the church of his day that had so corrupted itself that it no longer had any bearing whatsoever or resemblance to the original church. And this is exactly what we are capable of doing as people.

We can craft religious practices that let us get away with certain things. And we realize that, well, maybe I'm not quite in line with truth and maybe God is displeased with me. And we craft all these ways that we can buy ourselves out from under conviction.

We can be just as corrupt as the church of that day had become. Galatians chapter two and verses 20 and 21, Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life, which I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God for a fright or right standing righteousness comes through the law. In other words, if right standing with God could come through human effort, then Christ died in vain.

Now here's the point. Just as Martin Luther began what's known as the reformation, bringing much of the known Western world at that time out of darkness and back into the light of scripture by nailing an indictment to the door of the dominant church of his day with a list of aberrations, may I call it that, or places where they had deviated from truth to the point where it was no longer recognizable as the church of Jesus Christ, even though its altar offered forgiveness to the people and there was no forgiveness there. Its buildings suggested there was shelter when there was no shelter, just like the people that Pilate mingled, that were mingled with the blood of their sacrifices and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell.

Just as Martin Luther nailed this list to the door in a similar way, hear me on this, we must indict ourselves. You must indict yourself, I must indict. There's a point where we come to the knowledge that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

There's no unrighteous, not even one. There's a point where we must hate in our lives what God hates, the pride of the human heart, the lying of the human tongue, the feet that are swift to run to mischief, hands that shed innocent blood. We must learn to hate the sowing of division among the brothers and sisters in Christ.

We must learn to hate it. We must learn to hate the racism and division in our day. Let the world speak about it.

Let it not be found in the church of Jesus Christ. We must not be found at that altar. We must learn to hate it and say, God, just the way that Luther came and he nailed this indictment to the door of the church.

And thank God he did, because it brought about the Protestant reformation in the known world at that particular time. And because of that reformation, we were brought back to the truth of the word of God, brought back to what I'm talking to you about today. Thank God for the courage of one man to indict the whole system.

But do we have enough courage today to nail to the cross, in a sense, an indictment of our own lives, to nail our tongues to the cross, to nail our hands to the cross, to identify with the death of Jesus Christ, that like Paul says, I'm crucified with Christ. I'm convinced that in me dwells no good thing. We have to get to that point of saying, God almighty, I nailed myself to the cross.

And that really just means I realized I needed a savior. I cannot save myself. I cannot change myself.

I cannot change my own behavior. I cannot change my own human heart. I can't even do good for any great length of time because I'm so bent on corruption inside this earthen vessel.

I take this whole being and I nail it to the cross and recognize that Jesus Christ bore my sin on that tree. And I reckon myself dead with him. I deserve to die, but he took my place on that cross.

We cannot get there. We cannot bear fruit, the fruit of God by pretense or human effort. The fruit of God can only be borne by God.

You understand that you can't bear it by human effort. You can't bear it by human sacrifice. You can't bear the fruit of God by building your own tower.

It can only be borne by God. And that's what the Holy Spirit is looking for in every life. The fruit that only God can bear.

Now you can fake it in church and you can put on your suit and put on your nice dress and change your conversation, pick up your big Bible and bring it with you to church. But it means nothing in the sight of a Holy God. He looks beyond all of that and he looks at the heart.

He looks at the life. What kind of fruit is being born in this tree? We find ourselves as Paul was nailed to the cross with Christ, needing a savior, knowing full well that without the power of his resurrection life within us, our only future is to be cut down and become prisoners of hopelessness. Paul said, I've been crucified with Christ.

It's no longer I who live. It's Christ who lives within me. The book of Romans chapter eight, beginning at verse nine, Paul says, but you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the spirit of God dwells in you.

Now, if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he is not his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are not, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. If you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit, you put to death, the deeds of the body, you will live for as many as are led by the spirit of God.

These are the sons of God. Now I've heard that verse quoted many times, as many as are led by the spirit of God, they're the sons of God, but you've got to quote it in context of how it's being spoken. It's, it's been used and I've heard it for years.

It's the, the, the leading is always to large ministry. It's always to do something in the supernatural. And in some measure, I suppose there's a measure of truth to that, but the context of being led by the spirit of God and becoming a son or daughter of God is that by the spirit, we're being led by God to put to death, the deeds of the body.

That's how you know you're a son or daughter of God. The Holy Spirit is moving you away from an old way of living into the way that God has for your life. That's how you know, that's how you know.

And all along that journey, it says, for you did not receive the spirit of bondage, verse 15, again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, father. And the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. There's an inner knowledge that I belong to God and God belongs to me.

There's an inner desire in the heart of the true believer to move away from that which hinders and move towards that which is going to glorify Christ. Oh, we don't always do it right. We make mistakes, but there's

a, and there's a covering for those moments of frailty, but God, ultimately there's that cry comes back in the heart, father, father, we want to keep moving closer and closer and closer towards God.

We're not interested in building a false altar. We're not interested in giving a false sacrifice to God. We're not interested in building a false tower of our own protection in our own making.

We want the altar of God. We want the dwelling place of God. We want the protection of God.

We want the life of God. We want the fruit of God. We want that in our lives, which only God can bear.

Only God, only God, religion can't produce this. Human effort can't produce it. Only God.

And it, it, it involves a change of heart, a change of mind, change of life, a change of pursuit, a change of direction. Unless you repent, you shall also likewise perish. Your altar won't sustain you in a time of trouble.

Your tower won't protect you in a time of trouble, unless you have that turning in your heart. You see, you can't bypass holy to get to happy. You can't.

The happiest Christians I know are holy. There's a true happiness. There's a true peace.

There's a true protection. There's a true confidence that only comes from the presence of God inside a human life. You ought to be able to say, I am so changing by the spirit of God within me, that it's amazing what God's doing in my heart.

He's changing my attitudes. He's putting things in my life that weren't there before. This is the kind of person I was, but this is the kind of person by faith that I'm now becoming by the spirit of God, by the spirit of God.

And so the keeper of the vineyard said, let it alone for one more year and I'll dig around it and I'll fertilize it. In other words, I'll, I'll not only expose its roots, but I'll put something there to encourage it to grow, to encourage it to bear true fruit that can only come from God. I will not just expose it because it'd be pointless.

If all I did was peel off the layers of the onion of every life here and you just were laid bare and you just said, God, you got me, you got me. I'm a total fraud. I'm in the, I'm in the house of God.

But as Solomon once said, I was in total ruin in the midst of the congregation and the assembly. I've hated instruction. I've crafted my own religion.

I'm, I'm charting my own course. I'm determining my own direction. I'm, I'm, I'm creating my own system of truth.

And it's building a tower that I believe or believed it was going to hold me. But suddenly it's all coming crashing down around me. If all I did was do that, then there would be such a hopelessness here today.

But not only does the roots need to be exposed, but the, the ability that God gives to grow is added now. This, this fertilizer, as he says, I'll dig around it and I'll fertilize it. I will, I will give it the full counsel of God, this particular fig tree.

I will, I will show it its inconsistency and why it's such a fruitless tree. And then I will put everything around the roots that is necessary for it to lay hold of and begin to grow and begin to produce fruit that can't be produced without the help of God in his life. And if it bears fruit, he says, well, but if not after that, you can cut it down.

And so here's my question to you one year from today, are you willing to have somebody else sitting in your seat and you're gone? Are you willing? Are you willing? Because there's a point it's not your choice. There's a point where God says, I'm sorry, this person can't be reached anymore. And you, you come out from under conviction, the joy of the Lord escapes you.

And just thoughts come into your mind to just go wholeheartedly into your pursuit, whatever that is. And you vacate your seat and somebody else sits here a year from now. So this could either be the first year.

This could be your last year of sitting in the house of God, or it could be the first year of coming under the conviction of the Holy spirit, entering into the fullness of what God has for your life and becoming the person you could be so transformed a year from now that you'd be up and shouting on your feet and clapping your hands and talking about what God has done. You could be so transformed. If you'd make the choice this day, God almighty, nobody's taken my seat.

Nobody's singing my song. Nobody's taking my place. You're not going to have to look for another.

Here am I send me. That's what Isaiah said. He felt undone.

He felt unworthy, but he was touched by the mercy of God. And he heard the voice of God. And he was the first one to raise his hand.

There was all kinds of heavenly beings all around him that really didn't have the sin problem that he had, but he suddenly, his heart was touched. He recognized grace. He was touched by the mercy of God.

And when he heard the voice of God, his hand was the first to be raised. Here am I send me and the rest is history. And we know the marvelous influence that Isaiah had not only on his generation, but on our generation, he had a panoramic view of history.

He saw clearly the Messiah that was coming into this world. He understood mysteries and things that nobody else understood, but it started at a place of feeling undone. It started at a place of recognizing what he was without the mercy of God.

It started at a place of realizing that God, if you're not sending me, I can't go. But if you are, what a day this could be. There has to be something to come into your heart that says nobody is taking my place.

Nobody. What I'm called to do, what God's called me to do, God's going to do that through my life. But I'm not yielding it up for a false altar and a false tower.

I'm going to the altar of God. I'm going to that real place that God has ordained for me in Jesus Christ. And I'm going into that place of safety that God has promised me through his son, where my life will bear fruit for the kingdom of God.

And it will be born God's way for God's purpose and for God's glory. I plead with you today that one year from today, one year from today, that your song will be, look what the Lord has done. Look what the Lord has done.

I let him, I let him expose the roots of my life. I let him, I let him reveal the shallowness of my profession of being a Christian. But then I let him put in all the promises and all the provision and everything that was necessary for me partnering with Christ who lives in me to become everything that he has destined me to be.

Praise be to God. Now, if you're not interested in this, you're in the wrong place. Tell you that straight out and say, Hey, look, I just want to be happy.

I don't want to be holy. You know, then there's a lot of happy, happy churches. Just go find one.

This is the wrong church for you. In this church, you're going to walk with God or you're going to get very, very uncomfortable. You won't regret it.

You won't regret it. In the early years of my life with Christ, I remember I said to my wife, Pastor Teresa, I said, if this thing is real, I want the whole package. And if it isn't, I want none of it.

And yes, I had to get through a lot of stuff. Matter of fact, if you do get that book, It's Time to Pray, it's all in there. I've chronicled the whole journey, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

May I put it that way? It's all in there. If you want, ever want to dirt on me, just get ahold of that book. It's all in there.

Even the author was helping me with the book. He looked at me more than once and said, are you sure you want to write this? I said, yes, I want the truth told. That God doesn't take perfect vessels.

He takes struggling vessels who have an honest heart. Takes us with all our warps and our woof and all of our struggles and all our trials and all our failings and all our mistakes and all our stupidity and digs down and gives us promises and promises we will change and become the man or woman that he has destined us to be. Those who are led by the spirit of God, they are the children of God.

Those who will let God do his work inside their lives. So this might be the year. This might be the year.

This might be the moment. Now you'll either over the next 12 months, get extremely spiritually dull, bored, and just can't wait to get out of here. Or you're going to be moving to what God has for you.

You're going to be telling everybody in your neighborhood. You're going to be telling your family, your family are going to see the change in your life. Your coworkers are going to see it.

You're going to be moving towards what God has for you. And just like Isaiah, you're going to be saying, here am I send me. If nobody else will go, God, I will go.

Let them, let me tell them who you are. Let me tell them what you look like. Let me tell them what you can do with a flawed, broken, shallow vessel.

When I just made the choice, God, I'm going to go with you. And I don't know what that's going to mean in your life. And frankly, neither do you, but I know it will lead to something that will produce a song.

Oh Lord God, it will produce a song inside of you. This world knows nothing about this kind of a song. Can't produce it.

Can't produce it. Come, let us reason together. Come, come, come, come, let us reason together.

Even Jesus, the last day, the great day of the feast, people had been celebrating and building the altars and reading scriptures. And he stood up on the last day and it says he cried. He cried.

This is a cry in the heart of God. This was the most religious crowd in the face of the earth. And they were sincere to a point, but many were crafting their own righteousness.

They're crafting their own altars and crafting their own towers. And Jesus didn't cry. If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

He that believes on me as the scripture has said out of his inner parts, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. I will do for you. In other words, what you could never do for yourself.

No amount of religion can produce this. No amount of trying to prop yourself up can produce this. It can only come from the spirit of God.

If you're tired, if you want a living relationship with God, if you truly want to walk with him, he said, come to me, come to me. And so here's my altar call today. Lord, I want this to be my first year, my first year of a new journey, my first year of letting you go after everything in my life that's hindering your presence in me.

I want it to be my first year of the tearing down of the old and the building up of the new. I want to be at a real altar. I want to be in a real tower, both of which you promised to provide for me.

You said you were looking for people to worship in spirit and in truth. I want to be that kind of a worshiper and I want my life to become everything that you've destined it to be. No more games.

No more games, Lord. No more games. This is life and death.

This is very, very real, but I am coming to you and I don't want somebody else in my seat a year from now. Matter of fact, I want to be in my seat, but standing it with my hands raised. I want to be praising you.

I want to be thanking you. I want to be saying, God, thank you. You came to me a year ago and you exposed the shallowness of my profession.

You dug around the roots of my tree and you opened my mind and my heart to your promises. You made me into the person that you've always longed for me to be. God, you've done such a work that I'm hungry, Lord, for more.

All I want is you. All I want is your kingdom. All I want is your Holy Spirit.

All I want is you to illuminate my mind to the truth of your word. God, save me from every false altar that my heart wants to build and every false tower that I want to find comfort in. Oh, God almighty, God almighty, let it be you and you alone in my life.

If that's the cry of your heart, we're going to stand in just a moment. I'm going to ask you to make your way to the front of this auditorium and consecrate this next year. This next year, say, Lord, I'm putting down all my defenses.

You speak to me, whatever you want to speak. When I'm alone, when I'm reading your word, when I go to church, you speak to me, Lord, you speak to me. I'm asking you to dig down deep.

I'm asking you to give me faith in my heart and take me to the place that I need to go on this earth. Ultimately, when it's all over, I want to be in a place, Lord, where I stand at your throne. I don't want Pastor Carter to be there weeping over my name.

God almighty, protect me from being the kind of a person who hears and doesn't do. Father, I thank you, Lord. I have delivered your heart.

I have spoken for you today. I know that with every fiber of my being. I plead for these people, Lord.

I plead. There are many here, many good people, many going into eternity with you, but there are some who are not. I plead for them, Lord.

I plead for them. My God, my God, my God. It's not about numbers in this church.

It's about people, individual people that you died for, that you love. Give courage, Lord, to the young who need to make the break. Give courage to the old.

Give courage, my God. I thank you for it in Jesus' name. We're going to worship just for a moment.

Have the Lord spoken to your heart and you want to make that commitment and say, this is the first year. Maybe it's a brand new commitment. I don't know what it is, but you just say, this next year, Lord, this next year, my God, go deep in my life and lead me where I need to go.

If that's the cry of your heart, as we stand, I'm going to ask you just to come and join with me in prayer, and we'll consecrate ourselves to the work of God and the service of God. Praise God. New York City is really a Corinthian church.

The potential here for great mixture, but there's also a potential for great evangelists, pastors, teachers, because you are so wholeheartedly given to what you're given to. It's now time to make the break from the wrong and break to the right. You watch what God will begin to do.

You watch where you will go, the words you will put in your mouth, the healing that will come into your life. It'll be something that will astound you when you see and know what only God can do. I'd like you to pray this simple prayer with me.

Lord Jesus Christ, without you, without your power in my life, I am dead. All of my religion is dead. Every attempt I make to be a Christian without your help is also dead.

And so I repent. I make a conscious choice to turn to you as my savior, not only to forgive me, but to give me the power that I need to live a Christian life. Help me, Lord, to bear fruit that can only come from your Holy Spirit inside of my life.

Lead me to the place that you want me to go. Help me to have courage to go there in every area of my life. Speak to me along the way.

Give me courage, comfort, and strength, all of which you promised to me in your word. I love you, Jesus, and I want to live a life that will bring honor to you. And ultimately, when it's all over, I want heaven to be my home.

Don't let me settle for a false altar and a wrong tower. Let me be found at the altar of God and the tower that you have provided for me through Jesus Christ. I believe that as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, so too I will be raised from the power of death into this new life that belongs to me through Jesus Christ.

So speak to my heart. I'm not afraid of your word. Tell me what I need to know and take me where I need to go.

And I thank you for this. To this end, I dedicate the next year of my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

And amen. Pastor Patrick said it earlier. I had forgotten that this is the year that we flourish.

This is the year that God begins to do something deep in our hearts, deeper than we've ever known before. This is the year. This is the moment.

This is the time. Oh, God, I'm asking you in Jesus' name that righteous, holy, called men and women of God would be born in this house today into your kingdom. I'm asking, Lord, that it could be written of us.

You could look down and say, these are the sons and daughters of God. They are open to the Holy Spirit, leading us away from that which is wrong and into that which is right. And so, God, I thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God, for the simplicity of Christ and the faith in Christ. God, you will produce in me what I can't do in myself, and you will take me where I can't go and give me what I can't ever earn in my own energy. You will make me into what I could never be by my own strength, that I'll be found in the real tower and at the real altar.

And come what may, come what may, having done all, we will stand and be at the throne of God one day. And I thank you, God, with all my heart, with all my heart. And I thank you in Jesus' mighty name.

Amen and amen.

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