

Prepare to Worship in the Wilderness

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's word and provision, and leaving behind human effort, as represented by the wilderness.

Duration: 55:15

Scripture: Exodus 12:4, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Wilderness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher warns the audience that they are entering a difficult season and that they need to be prepared for trials. He shares a personal experience of witnessing a long line of people at a feeding program, highlighting the growing need in society. The preacher then prays for God to give him the power to break free from worldly influences and to speak boldly about his faith. He also expresses concern about the high percentage of evangelical youth involved in premarital sexual activity and calls for a return to holiness and a deeper commitment to God.

Transcript

God bless you this morning, Times Square Church and those that are watching online at home and Roxbury and other places, God bless you. Thank God for his presence. Thank God for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Bittersweet week for many people with the remembering of the passing of Pastor David, but I'm comforted today to know that he's not in sorrow. He's not sad, he's not unhappy, he's not worried about anything today. He's had one year and one day, one year and two days now in the presence of God and everything that that involves and that entails.

And I thank God for the comfort that comes from that. He did warn me before he died. He said, when I do die, please don't build a shrine to me.

Do a great disservice to the church. He said, you have all the same Holy Spirit that I have. And he said, the one thing that you must never forego is the presence of the Lord.

And we've had the presence of the Holy Spirit here and God's Spirit has stayed with us and I thank God for that with all of my heart. I don't know how you feel, I just thank God for his presence. Now it's interesting today that Pastor William and I, now we don't confer, none of us do ever before we preach, but

I found out this morning before we came out here to pray or just as we came out to pray, that we're both preaching on exactly the same topic today.

And the scripture tells us, and in the mouths of two or three witnesses, things are confirmed. So pay very close attention today to what you're about to hear. Exodus chapter eight, message title is, Prepare to Worship in the Wilderness.

Prepare to worship in the wilderness. Now, Father, I thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit. If you weren't here, Lord, this word would be a dead letter.

I would have no power to speak it and nobody here would have any power to hear it. You are the author and the giver of life. You are the author and the finisher of our faith.

Everything we are and have and will be comes from your hand. We ask only that you guide us into your ways. Lead us, Lord, into your heart.

Prepare us for the days that are coming our way. Help me today, Holy Spirit, to speak this clearly and help everybody who's gathered here today to be able to hear it. Lord, we wanna honor your name in the earth and in this city, and you're the one who'll give us the strength to do that.

I thank you, Lord God, with all my heart that you will unlock this word today and make it real, and you'll bear witness to what has come from your heart. I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Exodus chapter eight, one verse, verse 27.

We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he shall command us. This is Moses and Aaron standing before Pharaoh. Now, this is a time when the nation of Egypt was under judgment.

The judgment of God had already been determined on this particular geographical location. The nation had virtually corralled the people of God and were using God's people, and the testimony that God had determined to be in them and through them, they were using it to their own advantage. The people, the scripture tells us, were more and mightier than the people of the nation that held them captive.

And Pharaoh had said in his heart, lest they become aware of this, let's set taskmasters over them. Let's afflict them with burdens. Let's give them straw.

Let's give them very little to work with and send them out to build things that are not eternal. And they captivated, they literally corralled the people of God. And God's own people became weary of this.

They became weary of the loss of their strength. In Exodus chapter one, verse 22 tells us that Pharaoh instructed the midwives to cast their sons when they had a child, a male child was born, to cast their sons into the river. And people became weary of this.

It represents the loss of continuing strength. Your sons were your strength in that society. And it speaks about cast their future away, cast their strength away, cast their ability to see a way out and to see a place and a position of strength.

Keep them weak, cast them into the river. Give them inadequate provision. Feed them straw.

And I don't know about you folks, and I'm just gonna say it straight out that I am absolutely tired of much of the straw that is being preached in our generation to God's people. I'm weary of it in my heart. I'm weary of all the letters coming in.

I'm weary of the emails coming in of people saying we've searched with pillar to post, town to community, trying to find a place where the word of God, where somebody will just open the Bible and preach from the word of God and we cannot find it. All it is is principle preaching now. Three rhyming words about some new thing or characteristic that I can add to my portfolio and my life.

And subsequently they were involved in profitless labor, just making bricks to build buildings. That's all they were doing, building pyramids, building buildings, building monuments. And they were tired of it.

The children were being cast into this river. Folks, listen to me. We're living at a time right now when a recent survey tells us that 70 to 80% of evangelical youth raised in the church are now involved in some kind of premarital sexual activity, cast into the river of passion.

The border's all gone. The holiness of God having left this casual approach to God has created something among our youth that is, to me personally, it's terrifying. Pastor Patrick was just telling me that a recent study conducted, there's a new motto now among youth in this generation, those that are outside of the evangelical church as it is.

Party hard, die young, and be a good-looking corpse. And this is becoming a mantra. It's becoming a motto now.

Folks, you can see where that's going to lead in the coming days. You and I know what's gonna happen when this generation can't get jobs. There's no lining up in orderly fashion for soup kitchens gonna happen in this generation.

You can be sure of that. The people were tired of this, and they began to cry out for divine help. And when they began to cry, the Lord heard it.

Now, I don't necessarily think it's people getting together in prayer meetings. I don't necessarily think that there's any kind of a particular movement happening along these lines, although there might be sporadic prayer meetings in various places. It was an inner cry.

It was just mothers and fathers going to work, people coming out of the house of the Lord on Sunday, tired of trying to be the first to the restaurant when they see the destruction that's happening to their society all around them. It's an inner cry, oh God. It may not even be spoken.

It's the mother or father going to bed at night, getting up in the morning and knowing their children are out in the street doing things they shouldn't be doing or in schools where teachers are corrupting their minds and convincing them there is no God. And suddenly, there's just this inner cry from God's people. Say, Lord, come, deliver us from this.

Deliver us from this generation that is dominating the testimony of God, even though 70% of the people in this country, for example, believe in God and in Jesus Christ and in the Bible, yet told when we can or can't pray, what we can teach or not teach our children, when we can speak and when we can't speak. And we're living in a generation where men and women who would be mighty in God are marginalized because of the solution, in a sense, that we have no voice, we have no power, we have nothing we can

do, nothing we can say in our generation. And the Lord heard this cry and he sent an answer.

In Exodus chapter three and verse seven, it says, the Lord said, I've surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt. I've heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters and I know their sorrows. And I'm come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large unto a land flowing with milk and honey under the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppressed them. Come now therefore and I will send thee to Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt. The Lord has heard the cry.

I believe that with all my heart. I'll stand here and I'll stake everything I am and have on this. The Lord has heard the cry of this generation and there's about to be a separation between church and state.

It's what the liberal left want, they're about to get it. There's going to be a separation and I'll talk to you about it in a moment. In Exodus chapter three and verse 18.

Now this is what the Lord said to Moses. And they shall hearken to thy voice and thou shalt come thou and the elders of Israel unto the king of Egypt and you shall say unto him, the Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us and now let us go. We beseech thee three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

I'm sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go. No, not by a mighty hand. I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof.

And after that, he will let you go. Now God told Moses that the people of Israel would hear the word of the Lord. But that Egypt, the society as a whole would not until the severity of the judgments left it no other choice.

In other words, after the judgments, there would be a separating between those who know God and those who don't. Those who are God's people and those who are not. Now it must have seemed strange in verse 18, when they were to stand before the king of Egypt and say, the Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us and let us go, we beseech thee three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to our God.

It must have seemed strange that their journey to freedom involved an initial three day journey into the wilderness where they would stop and worship. You ever wonder why such an instruction? Why didn't the Lord just say, I'm taking you to the promised land? Pack up and get ready to go. I mean, why this instruction? The initial instruction really wasn't, I'm taking you to the promised land.

I'm taking you three days outside of this present society that has captivated you. And you're going to stop there in the wilderness and you're going to technically build an altar there and you're going to worship me there. Now I want you to think about this for a moment.

The promised land was coming, but not before the wilderness. And we ask ourselves a deeper question, was there an actual purpose to the wilderness? And if there was, what was it? And does it apply to us today? Now, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11, in speaking of the wilderness wanderings of the

children of Israel, the eventual wanderings, he said, all these things happen to them for examples and they're written for our admonition. That means our instruction upon whom the end of the world, ends of the world are come.

Now, what is the wilderness? What does it mean? When you think of wilderness today, what do you think about? I think about the Sahara desert and it was a desert. It was a wilderness. We know historically there was no water there and the little they did find was bitter.

We know it was a place of complete dependence upon God. And if God didn't feed them, they weren't gonna get fed. Their bread was going to become moldy that they carried with them.

Their flocks and cattle would eventually die even for lack of pasture in some of the journeys. It was a place where God's people were literally thrust into complete dependence upon him. It was a place of no visible comfort and no relief that can be gotten by any amount of human effort.

When you're in the desert and there's no water, dig all you want. You're not gonna find water. It was a place that was shunned.

It was unvalued. It was mocked by people who live there by their own reasonings and refuse to acknowledge the ways of God. There's nobody, if you and I walked out into this society after the service today and you said, try it, try it.

Go to work on Monday and say I'm just an awesome day on Sunday, the pastor told me that we're about to go into the wilderness. Well, to those that are outside the kingdom of God, this is abject foolishness. To us, it means something else.

It means entering in that place where we finally are dependent on God, where we've given up on human effort, where we are in a place that we are going to trust his word, God will. Almost every song we've sung today is along these lines. God will take care of you.

There's a point where you and I either believe that or we don't believe that. It's a point of faith, it's a point of trust in God. Pharaoh and his company had no stomach for it because in Exodus 14, three, when he started pursuing the people of God after they had left Egypt, you can just picture him sneering, sitting in his chariot, laughing and saying, these foolish people coming out into the wilderness to worship God, not realizing that the wilderness has shut them in, has boxed them in.

That's exactly what he said. What a stupid people. They've come out into this place.

Their God can't be much of a military strategist to do this kind of a thing. But Pharaoh himself didn't realize, you see, that the wilderness, in fact, was the doorway to the miraculous. It was the place that the people had to get to before the miracles could start.

If God has to do that in us, the days ahead, my friends, are going to be very, very difficult, not just for this country, but for the whole world. The days are going to be extremely difficult just ahead of us, not too far down the road now. Now, the wilderness is a doorway to the miraculous.

Let me explain this to you. In order to understand the wilderness, you and I have to first go back to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Now, when mankind sinned, follow this reasoning, if you will.

When man sinned, choosing to walk by our own sight, our own senses, and our own reasonings, when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden, Satan came to them and said, if you partake of what I'm telling you, and you imbibe this as it is, you embrace this, you will become as God, and you will know what is right, and you will know what is wrong, and you will be able to do things that you've never been able to do. You will become what you, God's ways are restricting you. You're created for more than this.

And I think he appeared as the nature of a serpent, but there must have been something attractive about him. Because the scripture says, when Eve saw that this was pleasant to the eyes, and it was something to be desired, and there was the capability of this reasoning to make you wise, there must have been something about Satan himself that was attractive to her. And when she and her husband partook of this, wrong reasoning as it was, and fell, sin entered the human race, we know that.

And the corruption of the serpent himself became the very nature of fallen man. And when this happened, in a very real sense, the world and all it represents and supplies became fallen man's heaven. Man rejected heaven in the Garden of Eden, and the world became heaven to fallen man.

And fallen man began to look for his fulfillment, his dreams, his destiny, his eternity, everything to fallen man is found in this world. And the things that this world offers, the things that this world provides, and that's why a worldly focus is so dangerous in the church of Jesus Christ. That's why one of the writers in the New Testament warned, if you have escaped the pollutions of this world, and yet you allow somebody theologically to entangle you in it again, your end result is worse than the beginning.

It's better to not have known the way of truth than having known it and turning back to what should have been left behind. And you look at much of what people are hearing today, it's folks, if you really just stop and think for a moment, if you just stop and reason it, you would see theologically much of what is being preached in many places today, not all thank God, but in many places is turning the church back into the world again, back into finding fulfillment in things that are passing away. You may or may not get the promotion, the whole thing about you do it this way.

And I was in a place, I heard it, I heard it myself, you're gonna be the top and not the bottom, you're gonna get to the top of the ladder. You use Jesus and you get that promotion, you get that suit, you get that car, but suddenly by God's grace, that guy who's been sitting under that stuff is gonna find himself. There's no promotion because there's no job.

And it's the mercy of God that will pull this carpet out that has captivated so many of his sons and daughters having received their inheritance and taken it and gone far away from the heart of their father. And so fallen man's heaven became earth and the place of trusting in the word of God, divine provision, God's power alone to keep us and to supply our need and the promise that he's given us of an eternal home in a sense became fallen man's wilderness. It became the last place that he wanted to go.

It was a place like Pharaoh looking and saying, how foolish, what kind of a God do these people serve that he would call them three days out into a desert? This is insanity. I can see Pharaoh as he mounted his chariot and took his army with him. Surely by now, these people must have come to their senses that they followed an illusion out into this wilderness to worship.

What an insane instruction, because in a sense where God is, is where fallen man doesn't want to be. He sees no value in faith, no value in trust, no value in the provision of God, no value in the supernatural, no value in having a testimony that stands and says only God could have done this in my life. In other words,

man became his own God and earth became his heaven.

God and God's ways became to sinful man the least desirable place on earth to be. In a sense, obviously it was his wilderness. But Jesus, in talking to the people of his generation in Matthew chapter 12, he said there'll be no sign given to this generation, but the sign of the prophet Jonah, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a whale.

So the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. In other words, I'm taking a three day journey into the wilderness for you. A three day journey where Jesus Christ had to be completely dependent upon God.

A three day journey from the cross to his resurrection into the wilderness. A three day journey into a place that the natural man thinks is foolish and doesn't understand. A three day journey where he said, father into thy hands, I commend my spirit.

In other words, I'm putting my future, I'm putting my life, I'm putting every promise you've ever made to me into your hands, believing that out of death, you're going to bring life. A three day place where there's no visible comfort, no relief that can be gotten by any amount of human effort. Folks, you can't raise the dead in your own strength.

A three day place that is shunned, undervalued, mocked by people who live by their own reasonings and refuse to acknowledge the ways of God. This is where Christ went. And when he rose again from the dead, he gained for you and I full access by faith to the place where God really is.

John says in him was life, and this life was the light of men. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1.30, but of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Now what this really means is, Christ has given us a new mind.

We don't think the way people in this world think. Their thinking is limited. It's limited to a speck in the universe called planet earth, but God has given us a bigger mind than this.

He's given us the ability to understand mysteries that are foolishness to those who are living by their own reasonings and by their own senses. He's brought us into a place that is foolishness to the natural man, but to you and I who are saved, it is the power of God. This preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ.

He's our righteousness, our cleanness in the sight of a holy God. He has come to us in our fallen condition and he has covered us and he has cleansed us. He's our sanctification, which means he's our power to change.

If anyone is in Christ, he becomes a new creation. The old things are passed away. All things have become new, and it doesn't come by human effort.

It doesn't come by human reasoning. It doesn't come by any steps to anything. It comes sovereignly by the power of God in a surrendered heart and a surrendered life.

He's our redemption. He's our full acceptance with the father. There's nothing more you and I can add to this.

The only thing you and I can do is obey God now and walk with him and say, Lord, take me, make me, bring me, do in me whatever you want to do. God almighty, get me out of this system of thinking. Get me

out of this place of living on straw and making bricks.

Get me out of this and lead me once again into the sovereign, supernatural, God-glorifying power of Jesus Christ. One more time, oh God. Paul says in Colossians 2.10, and you are complete in him.

That is Jesus Christ, which is the head of all principality and power. Hallelujah to the lamb of God. He sits at the right hand of authority and power.

David said, why do the heathen rage? Why do the kings of the earth imagine a vain thing? Why do they imagine they can stand against the testimony of God or cast off as it is? The testimony of God and his people. Three days in the wilderness speaks to me of a people who in our time are willing to make the journey back to the full purpose and victory of the cross as it is written in the scriptures. Not by what anybody anywhere has told you, but you open this book yourself and I open it myself and say, God, take me into the wilderness if you have to, but give me an understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Give me an understanding of who I am in Christ, of what I'm called to be in Christ and where I'm called to go in Christ. Let it be foolishness to the world, but oh Jesus, lead me into the full victory of the cross. Take me that three-day journey, that three-day journey through the death of my dreams and my plans and my ambitions and everything I think this world has to offer me.

Take me through that three-day journey that Jesus Christ went through from the time he died on the cross and rose again from the dead. Take me through that journey. Give me the power, oh God, to break free from the cords of everything around me that tells me I can't and this is as far as you can go and this is as much as you can say.

My God, put something in me, Lord, that causes me to speak, compel me to speak, compel me, Lord, do something sovereign in my life that cannot be denied. I must speak about it. People will ask questions about it.

My God, do it now and do it today, Lord. Take me into that place. That place.

Three days in the wilderness. Three days, three days, a space, in a sense, away from the captivity of this life, the captivity of this world, the captivity of its thinking and its rebellion against the Holy God and its taunting voice telling the church of Jesus Christ who have the living Christ within us what we can do and what we can't do, how we can worship and how we can't worship, where we can gather, where we can't gather, how we can raise our kids and how we can't raise our kids. My God, give us backbone again in this generation.

Now you ask me, how do we begin? Go to Exodus 12. Where do we start this journey? Well, we start just as they once did, the children of Israel did. Exodus 12 and three, it says, speak to all the congregation of Israel saying, in the 10th day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb.

According to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house. And here's what this means to me, a lamb for a house. Open your Bible, lamb of God, the word of God.

Open your Bible, build an altar of prayer and dedicate your house to the glory of God. That's where we start. If you're a single person, you do the same thing.

You go home today, you open your Bible and you say, Lord, talk to me, speak to me, cleanse me, change me, help me to agree with you, show me the plan and pattern you have for my life. And from this day forward, I dedicate my life, I dedicate my home, I dedicate my family to the glory of God in the earth. Now folks, you can do that.

Even if your children are no longer under your roof, you have authority. Fathers that are here, understand me today, God has given you authority. You have power, more than you realize.

Praying mothers, you have power, more than you realize. You can move the hand of God for your family. Open this book, build an altar.

Folks, it's never been complicated. You read it yourself. You have the Holy Spirit in you who will talk to you and teach you and show you.

Read it yourself, build an altar of prayer. What you read, agree with it. I pray much with an open Bible now, many days.

I pray with friends as well, but I pray with an open Bible. And as I'm reading, I'll come across a verse that sparked something in my heart and I'll stop and I'll pray. I'll talk to God, let him talk to me.

And then when I feel the conversation has come to an end, I'll just keep on reading. And it's a place of an open Bible. It's a place of prayer.

And every day I dedicate my house to the glory of God. I dedicate my children, I dedicate my grandchildren, and I don't know how he's going to do it. I don't have to know how, I just know who he is.

And I know he's given me authority. I don't have to try to make anything happen. I'll just live for the Lord and he'll do the rest.

And I have confidence in that. I believe that with all my heart. I believe my prayers can move the hand of God to touch my, not just my sons and daughters, not just my family, not just my grandchildren, but my nephews and my nieces, my extended family, my brothers and my sisters.

I believe it with all my heart. I prayed my mom and dad into the kingdom of God and won them to Christ before they died. Thank God, I've seen the power of God.

I've seen this glory of God. Dedicate your house. When I was a young Christian, I had a friend make a sign and I was in a very staunchly religious and very anti-evangelical area.

I had to make a sign that says, choose this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, we'll serve the Lord. And I hung it right over the road.

There was a limb of a tree and I hung it right over the road. Everybody had to drive underneath it every day. I made a choice.

I made a choice to said, have I done everything perfect? No, absolutely not. Have I made mistakes? Yes, you better believe I have along the way. Have my children been raised in the absolute, you know, uncompromising, godly environment? We've done the best we can.

I've not been without flaw and I've not been without fault. But I'll tell you, in spite of it all, all God ever said to Abraham is be sincere, be sincere. And I'll bless you and I'll bless your house and I'll make you a blessing.

Folks, we got to rise up. Moses stood before Pharaoh and Pharaoh said, well, why don't you worship in the land? This just before our opening verse, that was a deal he tried to make. Why don't you just, all right, worship God, but worship him in the land.

Kind of more or less stay within the confines we've placed around you. And Moses said, no, sir. No, we go three days into the wilderness and we go with our kids and we go with our old and we go with our young and we go with our cattle.

We go with our substance. And I don't see any reason in my heart why you and I have to make any other deal in this generation. It's the same Jesus yesterday, today, and forever.

I'm going to heaven, folks, and I'm not going alone. I'm going with my sons, I'm going with my daughter, I'm going with my grandkids, I'm going with my family. I'm not willing to leave one behind.

And I don't see anywhere in the Bible that I have to. If Paul could say to a rotten old Philippian jailer, you give your life to Christ and God will save your family, then it applies to every one of us in here. Every one of us that Jesus Christ, he's able to touch your children.

It's a place of trust. It's a wilderness in a sense. It's a place where there's no human effort can procure it, but the promises of God are yea and amen.

Verse four of Exodus 12. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of souls. Every man according to his eating shall make your account for the lamb.

And I'm just going to tell you what it speaks to me. Verse four just says, let your heart now be open also to the needs of others. Don't be selfish in this.

Open your heart and open your home. And let others partake. Let others feast in the sense of what God has given you.

That's the key to answered prayer. It's the key to the presence of God. In Isaiah 58, the Lord says, if you will not hide from your own flesh, then you call out to me and I'll say, here I am.

I'll answer you. I'll speak to you plainly. If you will be drawn out to human need around you, to those that are hungry.

Verse seven says, they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts of the upper door posts of the houses where they shall eat. This speaks to me of a trust that whatever happens, God will keep you. We sang about it just before I got up to speak today.

Whatever happens. Folks, there's a lot of scary news out there now. If you're following the news, you're hearing the report that Spain is on the edge of defaulting maybe a year or so from now.

And they said, one economist said, when Spain defaults, it's gonna make Greece look like a garage sale. Italy is in financial trouble. You can see it now all over the world.

You and I know difficult days are ahead. You don't even have to be prophetic to know that anymore. It's obvious.

But get the blood on your doorpost. There was a death about to pass over Egypt. As much as Egypt had tried to take away the strength of the people of God, now she was about to suffer exactly what she tried to do to God's own heritage.

She was about to lose her firstborn. In other words, her future, her strength, everything that she thought she was, every place she thought her strength was going to be was about to be taken away. But God told his own people, you get that blood on the door.

You get that trust in your heart that whatever happens, God will keep you. God will keep you. I don't know how, and I don't have to know how, but I have seen it.

When I was a young pastor, I remember when I left my secular work and began to pastor, I had no shortage of people telling me it was insanity what I was embarking on. And in the natural, it was, it was a wilderness. Literally and figuratively, it was a wilderness.

It was out in the middle of nowhere. It made no sense to the natural mind. I was giving up a fairly decent salary and a lot of benefits.

And heading out into pastor of 17 people in a hotel, that was the only place they could meet in town and for very, very little remuneration for that. And I was a meticulous financial keeper at the time and I kept records and books. And one day I looked at it.

I said to my wife, we don't even have enough money. We don't even make enough to pay our electric bill. And we had a pastor that was living with us and we had others that we were helping.

And I said, and one day the Lord just spoke to me. He said, close the book. Now I'm not advocating, there's a difference between financial stupidity and faith.

So I wasn't financially stupid, but he said, close the book and trust me for your provision. So I closed the book and folks, it was just amazing what God did. It was amazing.

I had a farmer show up at my door one day, a Christian man. And he knocked on my door and he said, the Lord has spoken to me to fill your freezer with beef. And he said, not just ordinary beef, fillet.

And for real. And he said to fill it. And he said, every time it gets down to about a foot from the bottom, you call me and I'll fill it again.

And he was faithful to that. We had a food bank in a city nearby that just called one day and said, we've got so much bread coming and we don't know what to do with it. Could you use it? We had another freezer, it was filled with bread.

And we were giving food away. We had so much come in, we were giving it away. I remember one time we had very little, this was before the freezer episode.

And we had very little to live on. We had a \$40 a week budget to feed a whole family of five and friends. And I remember one Sunday after church, this man with five kids showed up and we knew why he showed up because they had nowhere to go and they were really, really down on their luck.

And so he came into our house and we had, I forget who else, there was a lot of people. Overall, probably 17 or 18 people showed up. My brother shows up out of nowhere with a friend and we had one pound of hamburger, one pound.

And a couple of small cans of tomatoes. And so Pastor Teresa just made what she could, a spaghetti sauce, put a lot of noodles in a pot and made a spaghetti sauce. And the Lord told her, don't look in the pot, just keep serving it.

With one pound of hamburger, two little cans of tomatoes and maybe a green pepper and stuff, fed about 17 people and there was leftovers. And there was lots of sauce on every plate. She just kept, she didn't look in the pot, just keep serving it.

I have seen the hand of God. I have watched the hand of God provide. I have had opportunity to see.

And I believe that's why the Lord allowed my house to burn down one time and other times to suffer loss because I have lived through this and gone through this storm. And in one sense can call to many from the other side and saying, I've seen the faithfulness of God. I've watched what he will do.

And you got to get that blood on your door and you trust that he is who he says he is. There's a point where we have to trust him. There's a point where we have to believe him, even though it appears to be a wilderness.

There's a point where we're going to be walking out not knowing where tomorrow's meal is gonna come from. But God binds the honor of his name into keeping his own people. The only thing that can hinder that relationship is unbelief and you and I must get away, get the blood on the door.

No matter what kind of death happens around us, it's not gonna touch us. Because he said, when I see the blood on the door, I'll pass over whatever's going on around you, I'll pass over you. Verse eight, and they shall eat of the flesh in that night, roast with fire unleavened bread and with the bitter herbs shall they eat it.

In other words, taste of the scriptures and taste it without hypocrisy. You know, the scripture talks about, Jesus himself talked about the leaven of hypocrisy, how it gets into something and it just ruins the whole meal. Taste of the word of God and read it without hypocrisy, not trying to get around it, not trying to manipulate it, not trying to make it say something it's not saying.

Read this book without hypocrisy. It's written in English, at least our translations are, and read it, read it in different translations. There's lots of good translations.

Read it until you understand it, until you know it, until it becomes part of you, and read it and believe what it says. Don't try to alter it. Eat the bitter with the sweet.

There's some wonderful promises in there. I'll make you the head and not the tail, but it also says you're gonna go through the fire and the fire is not gonna burn you and the water is not gonna overflow you. There are some things in the Bible that you and I would rather not go through, but he says, no, read it and eat the bitter with the sweet.

Don't just look for sweet things in the word of God. Eat the whole thing. Praise God.

And believe that the trial will not overcome you and the power of God will lead you because folks, we're going to go into a difficult season. You know, you've heard us warn you for many years, but I know in my heart, those days are almost here now. And for some, they are here.

I was walking home the other day from Lexington, coming down 51st, and I was shocked. There's a feeding program there that ran almost a whole block. People, two or three wide going almost an entire block and two folks from our church were in that line, had an opportunity to stop and speak with and hopefully encourage a couple of them.

And the first time ever, I saw somebody in a suit and a briefcase in a soup line. And that's only the beginning of what's coming to this city. It's going to be difficult, the days.

State governments are broke. City governments are broke. We're nationally broke.

We're living on borrowed money and it's not gonna last much longer, folks. And it's just a reality we're all going to have to face. There's no getting around it.

Eat it, verse 11, says, "Thus shall you eat it with your loins girded, "your shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand." Here's what it speaks to my heart. "Eat from the word of God, prepared for a journey." It's a journey of faith. "Eat it with your loins girded." Eat it, in other words, get ready to move.

Eat it with shoes on your feet and your staff speaks about faith. Get ready to move. Whatever it is that God asks you to do, do that.

Just move. If it's across the table, if it's across the hall, if it's across the block, if it's across the state or the city, whatever it is, just do what God asks you to do because that's where the miraculous provision of God really is. Get ready to move into a place where you've never been before, but believe that the power of God will keep you there.

We're going into some waters that we've not been in before, but God will keep us in these places. He has promised to keep you and he's going to keep you. We need courage to believe for our present day and for our future.

You need courage for it and I need courage for it. Pastor Crandall told me, the Lord gave him a vision recently and he said, I was terrified by what I saw. And he said, I'm not a man who possesses great natural courage.

I don't think any of us are. And he said, I knew I was going to have to trust God for the courage I was going to need. He said, Pastor, it's going to happen soon because I believe I'm going to be alive to see it.

Brother Crandall's 87 now. We're going to need courage, but the power of God will keep us. The power of God will sustain us.

No matter how dark or difficult the days might be. And I want to remind you that shortly after the wilderness, there was a song that broke out. I will sing unto the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously.

The horse and the rider are thrown into the sea. Everything that I thought was going to overpower me, everything that I thought was going to overpower me, everything I thought was going to destroy me, every enemy I thought was going to recapture me was destroyed by the power of God. And you and I are going to make it to the other side.

And we're going to make it with our kids. We're going to make it with our families. We're going to make it to the other side.

Thank God. Before Pastor David died, he told me, Carter, there's going to be a tenderness in this moment that you're going to have to face. He told me, he said, I'm going to pray for you.

The last year of his life, he told me he was faithful. He said, I pray for you every day. He said, you're the first thing on my prayer list every day that God give you the grace to stand because you're going to have to face some things I've never had to face in my lifetime.

And the church you lead is going to have to face some things. He said, but the fellowship is going to be out of this world, the sweetness of God, the presence of God, the compassion that will be known when all of us, I think the church is going to end the way it began in Acts chapter two, when suddenly there's just a looking to the left and to the right to see what we can do for somebody else. The value system has shifted.

We're no longer thinking like the people of this world. We're not hiding in bomb shelters with our cans of beans trying to ride out the storm. No, we're standing in plain view.

We're giving God glory. We're standing out where people can see us. And there is a tenderness and compassion in the heart that can only be born of the spirit of almighty God.

Hallelujah to the lamb of God. I want to give an altar call this morning. And it's very, very simple.

It's for people who need courage. I need courage to believe for now. And I need courage to believe for the future.

The future is scary enough, but now is scary too. I need courage. And this is the time to let it start.

This is the time to say, Lord, you've got to prepare me to worship in the wilderness. You've got to prepare me to have a song in my heart that can't be taken away by the difficulties of the days that are before us. I honestly don't know how difficult it's going to be.

I honestly have no full idea of this. I just know that it's going to be hard for a lot of people and already is hard. But the Lord will give us courage.

And might I encourage you today, if you're already in the wilderness, you already are in a place of saying, I don't know how I'm going to get through. I want to suggest to you the way to get through is begin to worship in the wilderness. Begin to declare God to be faithful.

Begin to sing the songs of victory now, not waiting until you've got the bread in your hand, but declare Christ to be faithful now. He either is everything he says he is to us or he's not. And I've made the choice in my heart, he is.

And I'm going to trust him, I'll stake my life on it. I'm going to believe that he's going to provide. I'm going to believe that he's going to be there to give strength and vision and whatever any of us need, that he's going to be there for us in these days that we're facing.

And I'm going to learn to worship him now. Now, Father, I thank you, Lord, for giving me the strength to deliver this. I ask you, Lord Jesus Christ, to put courage in us as your people.

Lord, to begin to sing and glorify your name, God, in spite of the struggles we're going through. To not hold off the best song until we have the bread in our hands, but to give the best now. To stand at an altar and say, I trust you.

No matter what comes my way, I trust you. Whether I have a job or I don't, I trust you. Whether I know the way out or can't find it, I trust you.

Oh God, I pray that you deliver us from the thinking of this world to have to see something tangible before we can believe. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. It's the substance of things hoped for.

Give us faith in our hearts, Lord, as your people, to stand up and be counted, and to glorify your name in this time of difficulty. Father, I thank you with all my heart for this, and I praise you in Jesus' name. If you need courage for your present circumstance, I'm gonna ask as we stand, please just make your way to this altar, if you will, and let's begin to worship.

In the annex, you could step between the screens, if you will. And let's just begin to worship and declare God to be faithful. Beloved, let's just go to prayer for a moment.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Lord, by the power of your spirit, we thank you that Jesus crucified, went for three days, where, Lord, every power of hell, death and sin was confronted in that three days, and that, Lord, you were the absolute victor.

You conquered all of it, and you came out of your wilderness journey in the power of the resurrection life, filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, Lord, we are united with you. And one more time, you will take that journey with us.

And, Lord, you will be our victory. And, Lord, we will be raised a spiritual people. We will be raised a people freed, oh God, from the thinking of this world, the fears of this world, bound by everything, oh God, that characterizes the people of this world.

And I thank you, Lord, we will rise a spiritual people in the Lord Jesus Christ, and everything that was lost in Eden, oh God, but we return to us. And, Lord, all the fullness, oh God, that you intended us to have in the power of Christ, we will have. I thank you, oh God, we will be raised, oh God, within corruption, that we will be raised a spiritual people, that your life will fully abound in us, that, Lord, we will be able to see and move in through with eyes of eternity.

And, Lord, we will be focused on what is real. And, Lord, we will understand, oh God, and I thank you that you're gonna break off the fear because of it, that, Lord, we will be sown with a new understanding and power because we are united with Christ who went through that wilderness the first time, defeated everything that overcomes the natural man, defeated everything that binds the natural man, defeats everything that the natural man is so powerless and impotent to do. But, Lord, we will be raised spiritual men, Lord, in the power of Christ.

We look to you, Jesus, we are united to you, and you will take us through this wilderness, oh God. We will be raised in the power of the Spirit. Lord, this world will have no hold on us.

The fears and everything that is bound take us, Jesus, through this wilderness. We are made willing, oh God, in the day of your power. We look to you alone because in this last hour you are raising a spiritual church filled with the Holy Spirit, able to see and do and believe you as never before.

So, Lord, we look to you. We raise the cry in our heart, oh God, is take us through this wilderness for we believe we will be raised in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God. You alone can do this, oh God, but we are willing, oh God.

We don't wanna be bound by Egypt anymore. And you're our only hope. You're our only resurrection.

You are our life. You are our wisdom. You are our sanctification.

You are our resurrection, hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. We are willing, oh God, whatever it means.

And I thank you, Lord. You're going to astound us, Jesus. You're going to astound us.

We're gonna go through. We're going through. We're going to be raised.

I thank you, Lord. We no longer fear the wilderness, oh God. I thank you.

You will not leave us behind. Your grace is enough. God's riches at Christ's expense.

Your grace is enough. So hear the cry of our heart today. And thank you, you're an answering God.

You're a delivering God. You're a bringing through God. We love you today.

We are willing, oh God. And I'll thank you at the end. We raise in the power of Christ with the fear broken, oh God, and what binds us, Lord, broken.

Receive your glory through our lives for we are willing, Lord Jesus. Look what you have done. We will be raised out of the ashes.

We will be raised to life, speaking life for your glory. We thank you for it in the mighty name of Jesus, amen. Praise God.

Thank you, Jesus. Now I want to pray for those that have come to the altar. Lord, give courage.

Your word says that perfect love casts out fear. We are perfectly loved by you. We are sealed in the hand of the Father.

And our future is as secure as the hand of God. We believe that, we stand on it. Our song will not be taken away.

We will not trade in the glory of God for the glory of this world. Lord, thank you, God, for finally getting your people free. Oh, Jesus, thank you.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, Lord. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God. Thank you, Father. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God. Would you turn to four or five people around you and just say, we're all in this together. See you at three o'clock.

God bless you.

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