

Running From Church to Find God

by Carter Conlon

The church has a responsibility to love and encourage all people, regardless of background or culture, and to recognize the potential of God in every person.

Duration: 50:59

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Titus 2:11-12, Philemon 1:6, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Seeking God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing gratitude for the presence of the Holy Ghost and the transformative power of Jesus Christ. He prays for God's guidance and asks for the grace to release any debts or wrongs done to us. The preacher shares a story about an evangelist who was not afraid of the devil and had a strong trust in the Lord. He then discusses the blessings that come to the righteous, including business sense, a good reputation, and provision for their household. The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting and obeying God's word and promises that He will provide light in the midst of darkness.

Transcript

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You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. I'm going to speak a message today from a little book near the end of the New Testament called Philemon.

Now if you'll turn there, you're going to find 1 and 2 Timothy, then Titus, Philemon, then you'll find the book of Hebrews. So if you've gone to Hebrews, you're too far. Go back one book.

I've been in this book all week, studying it, reading it in every possible translation, reading commentaries on it, praying about it. I was arrested by the Holy Spirit literally in this book on Monday and have been in it ever since. Only 25 verses of scripture, but there's incredible truth in it and something that I feel that the Holy Spirit wants us to understand this morning.

Please pray with me now. Father, I pray that you would anoint me. I ask you, Holy Spirit, to enable me to go so far beyond my own limitations.

All I bring to you, Lord, are just a few loaves and a couple of fishes and there are thousands to feed. I'm incapable of touching every heart, every area, understanding every culture, background, circumstance. But Holy Spirit, there are no limitations to you.

I'm asking you today to take every word that is spoken and multiply it a thousandfold. Speak to every heart, speak to every life, speak to my heart anew and afresh. Let us be deepened and furthered in the things of Jesus Christ.

Lord, we want to be a church that honors you in this last hour of time. We want to honor your name on this earth. You have to teach us how.

You have to bring the liberty of truth into our hearts and make it a reality in our everyday practice. Teach us from this little book of scripture. God, there's incredible truth here.

I've only skimmed the surface, but what you've shown may help me to relay it clearly. Help us to hear it. Help us to apply it.

Let your kingdom come. Let there be a change. Let your will be done today.

God, I'm asking for deliverance and freedom in this house today for many. And I thank you for it in Jesus' mighty name. Philemon.

Now, Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17, all scripture is given by inspiration of God. Everything in this book is not just the product of man's thought. This is the Holy Spirit actually divinely inspiring the authors to sit down and to write the very thoughts of God on paper.

And God, of course, saw to it that none of the scripture was lost. It was compiled eventually and put into the text that we now call, theologically speaking, we call it the canon of scripture. Those works that are recognized as inspired by the Holy Ghost.

And as such, Paul says to Timothy, they're profitable for doctrine. That means for right Christian practice, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished into all good works. Now, the word perfect in the original text means complete, whole or serving his intended purpose.

We have an intended purpose on this earth. We are to represent the one who sits at the right hand of all power and all authority. And I want to do that.

I don't want to suppose that I'm doing it. I want to actually be doing it. I don't know how you feel about that today, but we can make mistakes as Christians.

We can become entrenched in doing certain things, certain ways and not even realize that we're not fully representing Jesus Christ in some areas of our interaction, in particular with other people. Now, this letter is written almost 2000 years ago, a personal letter by Paul. And Paul is asking this man called Philemon to receive and to restore a slave that had run away from him.

And even though it's written in that context, there's truth in it, which has as much of an application to my life today as it did for those who were written about back then. I want to speak to you about just some of the things that the Holy Spirit has been speaking to me personally from this letter. Now, first of all, when Paul wrote to Philemon, he was in prison, and most commentators agree that Paul was imprisoned at this time.

It was around the year 862, and Paul was imprisoned in Rome. It was not the most severe of his imprisonments. There was still some liberty at this time for people to, as it were, come in and go out into his presence.

And prior to this imprisonment, Paul had met a man whose name was Philemon. And most probably Philemon was a wealthy man. We don't know this for a fact, but we do know he had a house, because the Bible tells us he had a church in his house.

We also know he was a slave owner. He was a person who was wealthy enough to buy and sell servants, slaves, as they were called in those days, in his house. And all commentators agree that Paul led Philemon to Christ.

In verse 19, when Paul is writing to Philemon, he says, I, Paul, have written it with my own hand. I will repay it. Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest to me even thine own self besides.

Now, Paul says, I want you to receive back this man, and if he has done you harm. There's absolutely no conclusive evidence that this runaway slave had actually stolen. Some theorize that, but there's no evidence of that.

Basically, the owing, perhaps, would be the services that he had lost because of his absence, and such like. And Paul says, if you feel that he owes you anything, put it on my account. I will pay for it.

But nevertheless, he said, I do remind you that you yourself are indebted to me. Now, most believe that Paul, of course, didn't lend money to Philemon, but basically, Paul led him to Christ. Now, Philemon, at the time of this writing, was part of the church, the Colossian church.

You know, you'll find Paul's letters, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Philemon was part of the Colossian church, and this church was about 1,000 miles from the location where Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Now, this man, Philemon, we learn a little bit about him in this text of Paul.

First of all, in verse 1, the scripture says, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy, our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved and fellow laborer. Now, first of all, he calls Philemon dearly beloved. And the context of that would mean a man who knows and moves in the love of God.

He has received the love of God. He understands the love of God for him, and he is now moving in that love. It's the same word, actually, that God the Father used when Christ was baptized.

He said, this is my beloved son. Although, of course, the context is not quite the same. We're not talking about divinity here in Philemon.

But he understood the love of God for him. And he calls him not only dearly beloved, but you are a fellow laborer. You are a co-worker with me, Paul.

And in verse 5, he says, hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast towards the Lord Jesus and towards all saints. Now, this man, Philemon, was a man of love. He was a man of faith.

And he was a man of reputation for such things. All the saints that came to his house. He had a house church, as it is.

Verse 2 says, unto our beloved Appiah, who most believe was his wife, and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house. Now, most of the churches in Paul's day, you have to understand, were not buildings separate from the home. Most churches in the day of Paul were in people's houses.

And quite often, when somebody with a large or moderate to large house came to Christ, they would open that house, and that house would begin to be a meeting place for the saints of God. So, he knew the love of God. He had a church in his house.

He was a man of love, a man of faith. And he was exhibiting this love and faith towards all the saints. Those that he considered co-heirs with him in Christ.

Verse 7, he says, for we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, More up-to-date translation of that would be, you are an encourager of the hearts of all who come into your home. That's incredible. The man was an encourager.

We call it today an exhorter. Perhaps a man who people came into his house and were downcast, or perhaps seeing coming times of difficulty and persecution, or experiencing difficulty because of coming out of Judaism and into the Christian church. And this man, Philemon, would build them up in the faith as it is, and encourage them that God is able to hold you and keep you, and God will use your life for his glory.

And he was known in the church to have this kind of a reputation. And so, there's a question that we have to ask ourselves. We don't know the circumstances as to why this man Onesimus, his slave, ran away from him.

But it does beg that we ask a question. If a man is all of these things that Paul said that he is, why would his slave run away from him? Now, I suppose it's conceivable that the slave ran away before he came to Christ, but I very much doubt that. It's my own personal feeling.

And you take that for what it's worth. But it's just my feeling as reading this particular passage of scripture that the love of God that was forming in Philemon still had limitations. And that's the way it is quite often with many of us.

We receive God's love. We become filled and increasing in faith as we hear the word of God. We become a refresher and an encourager of others around us.

But still, because of our humanness, because that love is not yet fully perfected in us, there are limitations to that love. There are boundary lines that we draw, places we will not go. We would not call it so, but there are people perhaps that we'd not even consider encouraging for various reasons.

Sometimes it's just simply cultural. Sometimes we just it's just the way it's been done for so long that we don't even see wrong. We see wrong as right and not even understanding how wrong it really is.

Onesimus served the church, perhaps in his master's house. Now, it's only speculation on my part, but I want you to follow this train of thought with me. If it were the case, I want you to picture Onesimus in this

house.

People are gathering. This man has a reputation. And Onesimus is hearing weekly, perhaps daily, of the God which Paul had spoken of, who loved and forgave everybody and had a wonderful plan for everyone's life.

But yet still, perhaps, is it possible this man had somehow still gone on? He was on the outside. He was still unloved, still unencouraged and still unnoticed. Did he have to run away to find God? Now, it seems almost some would say, Pastor, this is an absurd thought.

No, it's not. Look back in American history. Look back in Canadian history.

When I look back in the history of America, I'm dumbfounded. I'm appalled at the fact that men and women went to church and considered themselves Bible-believing, born again, full of love, full of faith, Christians, and had slaves in un-furnished, uninsulated shacks in below-zero weather living in their backyards. Now, folks, we're not far from this story of Philemon.

I wonder if anybody ever read it or understood it in that generation. It seems inconceivable that people could call themselves Christians and yet have such an atrocity going on in their own backyards. Unbelievable, when you look at it.

Yet, it's not just American history. It's not just Canadian history. In Canada, the native Canadians were treated in a similar fashion.

And we look back and we say, how is it possible? But I think we're wiser. Yes, we learn from history. We must learn and never repeat the same terrible mistakes again.

And, folks, I say tragically today that churches even today that are segregated along lines of culture and race are at best incomplete in the love of God and at worst an absolute disgrace to the cause of Jesus Christ. Onesimus is serving this church still outside, still unloved, still unencouraged, still unnoticed. And the question that came to my heart is, did he have to run away to find God? It's incredible.

Is he everyday hearing of this God that loves everybody while he himself is serving? And he went to Paul. And when Paul wrote to Philemon, Paul said, Onesimus, I have begotten him in my bonds. He came to me when I was in prison.

So that gives me an impression that it was not a lengthy running away. That Onesimus had come to me while I was in prison. I wanted to Christ.

And he says in verse 11, which in time past was to be unprofitable, but now profitable to the and to me. And, you know, I don't believe this is a play on words with Onesimus' name because the topic here is too serious. This is a life and death issue that Paul is writing about.

A runaway slave was to be punished by the penalty of death. And Paul knew that this is not a time to be light. This is not a time for word games.

This is a life and death letter that Paul is sending back with this man Onesimus to his master, his employer, as it is Philemon. I don't believe, I feel that Onesimus perhaps came to Paul and said, Paul, everyone around me is being encouraged. And yet I'm coming in and I'm maybe he wasn't very good at what he did.

Maybe at times where he stumbled and fell or was not as punctual as he should be. We don't really know the issue, but he had this sense and he had been told perhaps that he was unprofitable. Worthless.

I've invested all this in you and look how you're turning out. I had such hopes for you. It's quite often those that are closest to us that have to run away from us to find God.

And it's the truth. It's the truth. It's the Holy Spirit is so burdened my heart with this.

How far do people have to get away from you and me to find God? Those closest to us, we can quite often go to church and shake everybody's hand and bless you and God be with you. We can join the counseling ministry and come in twice a week and counsel everybody under the sun and have all of the answers for life's problems. And then we go to our job as employees and then treat those that are under our authority as if they are unprofitable and there's no hope for them.

We go home. I think of families. I think of the number of children that have had to run from their Christian parents to find God.

Going home, all this encouragement seemingly flowing from our lives in the house of God and let our own children do one wrong thing. Let them show up wearing something we don't like. And all of a sudden or let them say something that's an opinion that they're entitled to.

We may not agree with it, but it's an opinion. Nevertheless, they're trying to find their identity and who they are in God. And then they share an opinion and we treat them as if they're useless.

I've invested all this time in you and look how you're turning out. You'll never amount to anything. You're stupid.

You're unprofitable. And what a tragedy it is in our generation that our own children have to run from our homes to find God. I think of churches today that have no youth.

Pentecostal churches supposedly filled with the power of God. Seminar after seminar on the agape love of Jesus Christ. And you go into their churches and there's no youth.

There are no young people. The whole church is dying. And I know because I used to travel in these churches and speak in them as a revivalist.

And you say, well, what happened to the youth? Did they have to run away from this place to find God? Churches that talk and testify of the love of God. Brothers so-and-so, sisters so-and-so in the church. I was saved from drugs.

I was saved from theft. I was saved from immorality. I was saved from this and that.

And then everybody gets in a knot because a teenager shows up with an earring. Come on. And the same ones that have been the recipients of such incredible grace chase those that are coming to Christ out from their midst.

Not passing on the same grace. I've been in these little country churches that so nitpick their teenagers that they finally leave. If they want God, they've got to virtually get out to find him.

I spoke in Penn State University this week. I spoke to a lot of young people. And I was overwhelmed at the hunger in these young people for God, the questions they began to ask about Jesus Christ, the openness to allowing me to share my testimony and where I had come from, where my wife, Teresa, and I had come to Christ and how God had led us and kept us.

And the wonderful plan that God has for our lives. Then you begin to realize in some of these questions that many of these young people, some of them at least, have had Christian backgrounds. And I wonder why.

Why are they here today so far from God? Do they have to run away from the churches to find God, to find a living relationship with Jesus Christ? How tragic it is that the recipients of such grace, at times, are so unwilling to give it to others. Onesimus traveled a thousand miles to find Paul. We have to ask ourselves, was it a chance encounter? Or was he so desperate for God that he knew to find the man, that he had to find the man in whom he knew the true nature of God was? Was he just so desperate for God? Do you think it was a chance encounter, leaving Philemon's house and traveling a thousand miles to find Paul in a Roman jail? I don't think so.

I think Onesimus was looking for Paul. He said, I've got to find this man that everybody talks about, that seems to unconditionally love everybody, because I'm not getting it where I am. I'm unprofitable.

I'm looked upon as a servant, a slave. I'm not a very good one at that. I've got to find this man.

And Onesimus leaves, at the risk of his life, and travels a thousand miles to find the apostle Paul. Now, I don't believe it was a chance encounter. I feel it was divine, absolutely divine.

He sought him out. I've got to find this man that I'm hearing so much about. And Paul says to Philemon, he said, yet for love's sake, in verse 9, I rather beseech thee, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I've begotten in my bonds, which was in time past to the unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me, whom I've sent again, that thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own vows.

Paul said, listen, Philemon, this man was unprofitable to you. You didn't see him the way God sees him. But I have brought him to Christ, and I see now the potential of God in him.

He's got a heart for God, Philemon, and God's going to use him. As a matter of fact, I'm so convinced, Paul was saying, if you read a little later on in this letter, Paul was saying to Philemon, I'm so convinced that I would rather have him stay with me. I would like this man to be beside me because there's something so valuable in him.

He was unprofitable to you, but Paul said he's profitable to me. And now also he's profitable to you, too, as well. And Paul says, if we are workers together, if we are on the same side, if we are traveling the same path, Paul says, Philemon, receive him just as you would receive me.

And this is the cry of Jesus Christ to his church. If we are doing the same work, if you truly are my body on this earth, I ask you to receive every person that comes across your path just as you would receive me. Every race, every color, every background, every hang up.

Don't look at the outward appearance nor what the person is doing. See the potential in God that is in the heart of every person I bring across your path. Paul's gospel involved restitution.

Restitution means as far as is possible, make past wrongs right. In the gospel of Luke, chapter 19, there was a man called Zacchaeus who was a tax gatherer. We draw an inference from it that he was wealthy and he was also perhaps somewhat corrupt.

And Jesus saw him in chapter 19 of Luke in verse 5. He said, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for today. I must abide at your house. And he made haste, verse 6, and came down and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying that he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I've taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

Now, it's an incredible thing. We don't know exactly what Jesus was preaching, but we know how Zacchaeus heard it. And Zacchaeus heard something.

And he said, Lord, I give half of what I have to the poor. And everything that I've taken from any man by false accusation, I'm going to give him back four times what I took from him. And Jesus said to him, This day is salvation.

Come to this house for as much as he also is a son of Abraham. Now, salvation didn't come because of Zacchaeus' works or his good intention. Salvation had already come to Zacchaeus' house.

And the evidence of that salvation was his desire to make restitution for past wrongs. I think today of people who come to Christ and walk away from debts which are possible to repay. Walk away.

No thought. I'm forgiven. I'm cleansed.

I'm whole. I'm happy. I ripped off everybody in my neighborhood.

I went to the grocery store and charged a thousand dollars worth of groceries. But I'm now redeemed. Everything is in the past.

Oh, yes, it's in the past. And I'm redeemed. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of restitution.

As much as is possible, we are to make right past wrongs. And we ask ourselves the question then, well, how far are we to go in making past wrongs right? Was it Paul told Onesimus, go back a thousand miles. That's a long journey without a train or plane or an automobile or any of those things.

I want you to go back a thousand miles at the risk of your life. And I want you to make this wrong that you've done right. I want you to go back to this man Philemon who is now a brother in Christ.

I want you to humble yourself before him. And I'm going to send a letter and I'm believing God. Paul saying that things are going to work out to the glory of God.

People today seem to think we can come to Christ and there's no restitution has to be made for past wrongs. Well, I absolutely disagree with that. I believe that if we're open to the Holy Ghost, God will begin to speak.

He spoke to me about things in my past when I came to Christ, some very humbling things. Many of you know some of my stories. I'm not going to tell them again, but going back in pain where money was owed.

I even tried to find a member of the Outlaws Motorcycle Gang, which is equivalent to Hell's Angels here in America. We had had a very, very difficult face to face encounter. And I felt that I had wronged this man, even though obviously not a Christian.

But I sought him out and tried to find him to tell him that I felt that what I had done was excessive, it was wrong, and to tell him that God had saved me and changed my life and could do the same for him. I searched for him. I didn't find him, unfortunately, but I searched for him for quite a considerable amount of time in an attempt to make restitution with a member of a motorcycle gang, even though I was a police officer.

There are so few today who go back and say, I'm sorry, forgive me. For all the wounding, all the people are left by the wayside, all those who to whom we are indebted in one way or another. And Paul was so concerned that things would be made right that he said to Philemon, it is so it is so important.

And Paul said, if I will repay you in verse 19, he said, I've written it with my own hand. I will repay it. Although I did not say to thee, thou hast unto me even thine own self besides.

Yea, brother, he said, let me have joy of being the Lord, refresh my bowels in the Lord, having confidence in thy obedience. I wrote him to thee, knowing that thou would also do more than I say. Now, Paul was so concerned that things be made right that he said, put it on my account.

Now, that's a true Christian. Imagine leading somebody to Christ. I want you to picture this for a moment.

Leading a man to Christ and finding out that he had an incredible debt that he owed somewhere and being so concerned that this man be reconciled not only to God, but to his fellow man, sending a letter and saying, whatever he owes you, put it on my account. I will repay it. I've written it with my hand.

I want to venture guess there's not much Christianity like that left in the world today. And it's a sad thing. Are we really open to obeying God? I'm not saying every one of us has to pay everybody else's debt.

But what I'm saying is that are we really open to obey God in all these issues? Do we really, really want to go deep in Christ? Do we really want to represent him before our generation? It's going to take a little bit more than songs and words. This is a darkened generation we're living in now. These are people robbed of truth, and many have run away from the church.

I personally believe, and it is my belief, that the charismatic excesses, many of the things that we've experienced in the last 10 years or so, are simply people that are running from the church looking for God. They couldn't find him within the established order as it is, which has become rigid and sleepy and dull and hard. So little life and testimony is all confined to 10 and 15 years ago.

Songs that have no life, worship that doesn't doesn't invoke as it is the presence of the Holy Ghost or bring that closeness to Christ. And people are coming out, in a sense, and running and traveling, looking for God like Onesimus was. Thank God he found a man of God.

And the question that you and I have to ask ourselves honestly in the Holy Ghost is when we encounter somebody that has that deep search for Christ in their heart, when we encounter them or they encounter us, will they find the gospel of Jesus Christ in us? Will they find the truth of God? Will they find a man or woman who can honestly steer them in the pathway of life, victorious life, abundant life, everlasting life? Are we willing to pay the price that is necessary to truly represent Jesus Christ in our generation? I prayed

a prayer, my wife and I prayed together last night, I prayed a simple prayer that I've been praying and that prayer is just as God, whatever it takes, whatever you have to take me through, whatever pain I have to endure. In my physical body, God, whatever you have to do to produce Christ in me for this generation, do it, God. Do it.

Wherever you've got to take me, give me the grace to go. There has to be that kind of a cry, or we'll never reach this generation. I saw a classroom of young people hungry for God, hungry, such incredible potential, but never having been introduced to the life giving one, never knowing the great grace, the great plan that God has for all who will come to him, not understanding that the ground is level at Calvary and you can come if you're lame or maimed or blind or useless.

And God doesn't see mankind that way. He will take every man, every person, every young person and use them for his glory. As I was preparing this this week, I said, God, forgive me for all the time I've judged people in your house.

As a young preacher, not knowing any better, being incomplete in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, laying out standards and judging those harshly that I felt didn't meet the standards that I'd laid out before them, causing young people to run from the house of God. I believe in his grace, he'll give me the opportunity to go back after them someday, one by one, to go back and get them. I now understand the mercy and the grace of God.

I now understand his glory. I understand the wonderful pathway of obedience and the fruit that it brings into a Christian's life, the absolute glory of Christ. There's nothing in the world that can compare to it.

To wake up in the morning and the presence of God is on your life. To be led, to be walking with God, you get to the point where you say, God, I don't want anything to take away that relationship. I don't want to lose that presence of Christ.

Don't let anything, don't let the praise of man, don't let the treasure of this world. God, don't let anything take that away from me and begin to obstruct it and obscure it from this generation. And lastly, Paul says to Philemon, for perhaps he therefore departed for a season that thou shouldest receive him forever.

Not now, verse 16, as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me. But how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. And Paul is saying, Philemon, forgive him and receive him back into your life and your home, no longer as a servant, but as a brother, a beloved brother.

Paul saying, Philemon, Christ loves him. I love him. And you love him, too.

You must forgive him. And in verse 21, he says, having confidence in my obedience, I wrote to thee, knowing that that would also do more than I say. Do more than I say, Philemon.

Go beyond yourself. Go beyond yourself, and the only way that you can do it is in the power of God. Tap into that resource of almighty God that is yours when you came to Christ on Calvary.

When you came to the knowledge of your salvation, a resource of heaven was opened to you, Philemon. Tap into that resource and let God now make you everything that you were destined to be. Go beyond your natural ability.

Go beyond your natural love. Go beyond your natural capability to forgive. Go beyond.

Tap into heaven itself. Now, historians tell us an incredible thing. The Hendrickson commentary tells us that historians say that Philemon set Onesimus free.

He came back to his house, was restored to fellowship, and was released and set free. But it didn't stop there. One of the historians says that the Apostle Paul made him the leader of the church at Berea.

He became a church leader. You know, the Berean church were the ones who searched the scriptures to see whether or not truth was truth. And he became this unprofitable servant, became a church leader, and was eventually martyred for the Christ that he followed and walked with and believed in.

The historian Theodoraeus states that the house of Philemon was still spoken about and still pointed out as an example as late as the 5th century. Folks, that means 400 years later, Philemon's house is still being spoken about, still being talked about. Folks, if you want to stop the devil from devouring your house, obey God.

It's as simple as that. Obey God. Turn quickly to Psalm 112.

I have a desire in my heart. I am the first to come to Christ in my family lineage in the way that I know him, and so is my wife, Teresa, of many generations past. And I have a desire that God so bless my house that the anointing or the presence of God would still be in my house if the Lord tarries for another four or five generations.

That great-grandchildren I will never see will know the presence of the Lord and the blessing of God. And I believe this with all my heart. If I make right choices, God says, I will bless your house.

I'll bless your house. Folks, your house might be in turmoil today. Your marriage might be suffering difficulty.

Your children may be in rebellion. You may be in poverty, spiritually and financially. But I want to tell you something.

If you will make right choices, touch heaven as it is, and ask God for the grace that he freely offers to those who come to him for strength, he says, I will bless your house. I will bless your house. Psalm 112, the psalmist says, Praise ye the Lord, and blessed is the man that fears the Lord and delights greatly in his commandments.

His seed, that means his children, those after him shall be mighty upon the earth. I've shared this with my own children, and I've told them it doesn't mean that you're going to be kings or great rulers, but it means the power of God will be on you. There's the true might in this earth.

You will not be mediocre people who live your lives for yourself, living in self-consumption and all that comes with that. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth and the generation of the upright. That means the following generations of the upright shall be blessed.

You want to stop the devil from demolishing your house? Obey God. Obey God. It's as simple as that.

When God speaks, do what he says. When he starts speaking to your heart, trust him for the power and reach out in obedience and do everything he tells you to do. Wealth and riches shall be in his house and his righteousness endures forever.

God says there will be a provision. There will be an abundant provision on his house and his subsequent generations will know where this has come from, will know it's been my hand. I've made a choice and I've blessed him and I've blessed his house.

Unto the upright, verse 4, it says there rises light in darkness. He is gracious, full of compassion and righteous. And God says for this type of a person in the midst of a darkened generation, I will give you light.

You will know where you are going. There will be a clear path set before you. You won't be caught in the confusion of this generation.

A good man shows favor and lends and he will guide his affairs with discretion. Verse 5 means I will give you business sense. God says a righteous man, I will give him an understanding of how to conduct his business.

That's incredible. I will give him a good reputation in the community. Surely he shall not be moved forever.

The righteous shall be an everlasting remembrance. Verse 7 says he shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now that's a blessing of God. It's not something we can work ourselves into. God says I'm going to do this.

I'm going to give you a fixed heart. And come hell or high water, your heart is not going to be moved. You trust in me and I have placed that trust in your heart.

It is a blessing because you have made the choice to walk in obedience to me. You made the choice to do it the way that I have revealed to your heart through the scriptures. And because of it, I have fixed your heart.

And no matter what comes into this world, you are not moved by the adversity. I love the story of the evangelist as being powerfully used of God. And one night he woke up.

Now, this man was winning in his generation a great portion of the known world at that time. And he woke up in the middle of the night and the devil himself, he said, was standing at the foot of his bed. And he looked at him and said, oh, it's only you and rolled over and went back to sleep.

He's not afraid of evil tidings. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established.

He shall not be afraid until he sees desire upon his enemies. He is dispersed. He is given to the poor.

His righteousness endures forever. His horn shall be exalted with honor. The wicked, or that also means the wicked one, will see it and be grieved.

And he shall gnash with his teeth and melt away. And the desire of the wicked shall perish. God said, I will not let the wicked one touch you.

He will circle you on every side. But he will be no more powerful than an ice cube on a hot July Manhattan sidewalk. He will melt away and not touch your house.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Blessed be God.

Blessed be God. The psalmist David says, who has not given me as a prey to their teeth. The wicked shall melt away.

You know, the Bible says that the Lord breaks the teeth of the evil man. I had a man one time started to slander me. I had actually been training him in ministry.

And he started slandering me all over the neighborhood because he couldn't be disciplined. And his dog chewed up his false teeth. He only had one set.

And he couldn't afford another set of teeth. And he basically could hardly talk without his teeth. So he just went around gumming words that nobody understood.

The Lord breaks the teeth of the wicked man. Paul said to Philemon, this is my last verse. He said, but with all.

Prepare me also a lodging. For I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given to you. Now, Paul never made it there.

But keep in mind that the Holy Spirit was speaking these words. This is Christ, the Spirit of Christ speaking to you and me today. If we look at this verse in that context, it's as if Jesus would say, prepare a place for me to dwell.

Open your heart to me. Open your heart to the truth that you've just heard. And I trust that through your prayers, I shall be given to you.

I will come to you. I will make my bode with you. Jesus said, my father and I will sit down.

We will sup with you and you with us. We will open a banquet to you. We will show you your source of supply.

We will make you everything that makes you a representative of the risen Christ on earth. You won't have to look within yourself because there's nothing within you. But if you will prepare a place for me, I will come.

And through your prayers, I will be given to you. That's the promise of God to you today. By the power of Christ, there are some tongues that need to be brought under control.

Mothers, fathers, listen to me. Don't ruin your own house. Don't deny the grace of God to your own children.

Let them grow. Let them express themselves. Let them come home with their weird looking outfits and music that you don't like.

Let them grow. But you be the channel of God to them. You be the Christ to the Zacchaeus for a season who might be in your house.

Be the Christ to them. And tell them about the wonderful plan of God and tell them that it's not exclusive. It's for everybody.

Incredible what will begin to happen when we begin to overflow in love in our own house to our own children. It's a tragedy. It's a tragedy that we're raising a generation of young people who have never

heard the name of Jesus Christ other than the swear word in the schoolyard.

It's an equal tragedy that many of their parents attend church somewhere, but have no time to extend the grace that they run to receive every week into their own homes. Put the pointing finger away. I had a pastor's son come to me one time and he said, If my father's God is God, I want nothing to do with him.

No time. No time to embrace. No time to sit down and talk.

No time for counsel. No time to extend the love of Christ in their own home. Just finger pointing and hard words, bringing our own sons and daughters to the place.

Now, I'm not speaking as a man who's faultless in this. Please understand me. But bringing our own sons and daughters to the place where they have to flee from us to find God.

And don't be too proud to say, I'm sorry, I was wrong. What I did didn't represent Christ. And forgive those who have wronged you and let them go.

Let them go free. And Paul says to Philemon, prepare me a place and I will come. I will come to you.

If you will call out to Jesus, he will give you the power to become another person. He will take you beyond your limitations. He will do the same for me, all of us.

He will make us representatives of his heart to our generation. I know that the Holy Spirit has spoken today because he has spoken to my heart all week. If coming to this altar means something to you, if you feel today that's something you want to do, I will in a moment invite you to do that.

If you need to get out of your seat and say, Lord, get my tongue under control. Get my pointing finger away. There are employers here today or people in positions of authority say, God, forgive me.

I've extended grace to everybody, but those under my authority. I bring in people for work assessments and instead of telling them God has a plan for their life, I tell them they're useless. And I'm a Christian.

I'm Christ representative on this side of eternity. Folks, there are ways to encourage people to become more productive without hurting them. There are others here today that you'd have to say, I'm sorry, I've got to go to somebody.

I have to make some wrongs right. There's some old debts that need to be repaid. There's some old people along the path that have been so wounded that until you go to them, it's as if they're, especially if they know you're a Christian.

I've heard it said in the church time and again over the years. How come I have to forgive? Why doesn't that person who's been a Christian longer than me ever come to me? There are times that we have to go and we have to forgive. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, I have heard your word and I know that your word is life. It's the truth and it's the way. God, there are issues in my heart that need to be brought under control.

There are areas where I don't represent you. I've not extended to others the grace that you have given me. I want to find you and know you in the power and in the life that you have for me and so that my life can be a true extension of Jesus Christ to my generation.

Holy Spirit, you've made great promises to my heart. I ask you to open my heart to the word of God, to make a lodging place in my heart for Jesus Christ. Lord, I expect that because I ask that you will come to me and make me what I cannot be in my own strength and take me where I cannot go in my own power and give me what I cannot possess by my own resources.

I believe that even now as I am praying, your life and your strength is being given to me. Make me an ambassador for Jesus Christ and the message of Christ in my home, in my marriage, in my neighborhood, on my job, in my city and everywhere else. You called me to go.

I believe that from this day forward, I will be a different person day to day, growing in the grace and knowledge of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus, I am lofty one. I give you all the praise.

I give you all the glory. Your name, your love and your goodness from this day forward will always be in my heart and always on my lips. For this, I am forever thankful in your precious name.

Amen and amen. Hallelujah. Bless God.

From this day forward, folks, nobody should ever have to run from you to find God. Hallelujah. You might want to get a sign printed and put in your window.

Find God in my house. Come to my house. You will find God.

Hallelujah. Father, I thank you for this hour. I thank you for this time you've brought us together.

I thank you for the wonderful presence of the Holy Ghost. Thank you for worship. Thank you for the word.

But most of all, Lord, we thank you for transformed lives, the presence and the incredible grace of Jesus Christ. Now keep us as we go throughout our day, as we go throughout our journey. And oh, Jesus, draw us so close that we will be a visible expression of your heart and love to our generation till the day you come and take us home.

May we honor you. God, when we fall, you will pick us up and you will strengthen us and make us anew. We ask you for the grace to release everyone who's indebted to us.

Lord, everyone who's wronged us to let it all go. Lord, to release every debt that we may fully understand your heart. We thank you for it.

We praise you for it. In Jesus mighty name. Amen and amen.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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