

The Day That God Condemned The Law

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the need for repentance and a change of heart to prepare the way for the Lord. It highlights the futility of human effort to be godly and the importance of surrendering to God's will. The message calls for a genuine desire to live righteously and to allow God to work through our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Matthew 3:1, Matthew 3:7, Genesis 3:14, Genesis 12:1, Mark 11:12, Romans 6:7, Acts 15:10, Galatians 3:24, 2 Corinthians 5:17

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

Description

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Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning about the day that God condemned the law, the day that God condemned the law. Now, Father, I thank you, Lord, with all my heart for the people that you have gathered here in this house at this time. I thank you, Lord, that you are coming soon.

There's something in our hearts that tells us that it's not too far down the road that you're coming back for your people. Would you help us, Lord God, to be able to affect our society for great good at this time? Would you deliver us as your people, Lord, from everything, every hindrance, everything that blocks your life from emanating through ours? Would you take my feeble efforts this morning, O God, and multiply this and speak to every heart, every life. Lift up those that are cast down.

Give grace and strength, Lord, for those who have embraced a crooked way of living and show them, God, where life really is found. And so, Father, I thank you. Give us the ability to hear your words.

Help us, Lord God, to walk humbly before you, and I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 3, beginning at verse 1. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Now, the word repent means have a change of heart, a change of mind, a change of direction. Just keep that definition. You're going one way, you're thinking one way, you're doing something one way, but now

God is calling you to do things another way.

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Now, John himself was clothed in camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then all Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the regions around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. You know, when I used to read this as a young Christian, I remember thinking, wow, that's a fairly harsh sermon.

When you consider that everybody's coming to him as it is, they're coming from all Jerusalem and Judea and all the region round about. And John is calling out in a sense to that generation who are sin sick. They were tired.

They were tired of the constant sin confess cycle. They were tired of failure. They were willing to honestly deal with the condition of their own heart.

They were going down into the waters of baptism, which basically say, we're done trying to be holy in ourselves. We're done trying to be godly in ourselves. We can't do it.

Now when the Pharisees and Sadducees came, who still had a most likely coming just to question him, to sneer at him, to mock the people that are going towards this place of baptism and admission of failure and fault and failure. And when John saw them, he called them a brood of vipers. In other words, you still have the seed of the devil inside of you.

The devil, the snake has no ears. You know that. Snake can't hear.

That's why I said, who warned you? They have the seed of the serpent in them. And he said, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? So bear fruit that is of God and don't lay claim to having Abraham as your father. Now, what does all this mean? What was he saying to them? We read it and if we don't understand the context of it, we're left just to guess.

But there really is a rationale behind John's message that he was speaking to the people of his time. If you go back in your Bible to Genesis chapter 3, right at the beginning, the very first book in the Bible, when Satan, having the nature of a serpent, came into the garden of Eden to test and tempt the first man and first woman ever created by God, Adam and Eve, our parents, technically speaking, the first parents of the human race. Satan comes down with the nature of a serpent.

He cannot hear and he is led by his own tongue. And he sows the same seed that was in himself into the human race. He said, you can disobey God.

You don't have to listen to the words of God and you will not die. You will not suffer. There will be no consequence to your disobedience.

God knows in the day that you expand, in a sense, the day that you expand the horizons of your thinking, your eyes will be open and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. This is the sin nature of humankind. Now, it's important to understand this.

And it finds its strength in the desire to live independently from God and to become in ourselves as gods or judges of what is good and what is evil. That is the inherent sin of humankind. That is in you.

That is in me. That's the fallen nature of all of humanity, that we can step outside the parameters of what God says is acceptable behavior, what God says is good, and what God says is evil. We can create our own standard of good and evil, of right and wrong, craft our own path forward, and still believe somehow we're going to arrive at some kind of a utopian end, whether it's here on the earth or in eternity.

This is the sin nature of humankind. This is what it is. It's that propensity in every one of us here today to do something wrong, and then you suddenly feel this inner crafting, trying to redefine truth and say, well, it's not that bad.

After all, everybody else is doing it, and seemingly without consequence. It's to expand the borders of what God says acceptable behavior is and believe that there will be no consequence. And even worse than that, it's the inner belief that in human effort, through human effort, I can become godly again.

In other words, Adam and Eve had fallen far from the glory of God that was once upon them. They were now separated from God, but it's that inner belief that with human effort, with human ingenuity, with just pulling up my bootstraps and trying a little harder that I can become godly again in my own strength. Now in chapter three, again, verses 14 and 15, this is the Lord himself speaking to Satan in the garden of Eden.

So the Lord God said to the serpent, verse 14, because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle and more than every beast of the field. On your belly, you shall go and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. Now remember that humankind is created from the dust of the earth.

That's where Adam was created from, from the dust. And if you want to just look at it as a type, this particular verse, the devil is on the earth all the days of his life looking to devour men and women created in the image of God. That's his sole purpose on the earth, to destroy.

He so loathes God himself that he does everything in his power to destroy those of us who are created in the image of God. In verse 15, he says, I will put enmity or a distance or an act of opposition. Actually, that's what it means.

I'll put an act of opposition between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. So this is the very first time we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ actually preached in the Bible is in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15.

The Lord is saying to the devil, you have set out and you believe you have a legitimate right to ownership and to destroy men and women created in the image of God because you have sown your nature inside of

them. They're now easily led astray. And you believe that you will have them for all of not this time, but you will have them for all of eternity.

But I'm going to put an opposition in a seed that's going to be born of a woman and he, this seed. Now the seed is now referred to as a he, he you're going to, you're going to bruise his heel. In other words, you're going to strike as a serpent does at his heel.

You're going to cause him pain. Actually, if you really look at it in its full context, it seems to imply you're going to strike a death blow to him. You're going to wound him, but he is going to rise again and he's going to bruise your head.

He's going to step upon your thoughts that you have the right and the dominion to control those created in the image of God. God was not taken by surprise in the garden of Eden. Christ was foreordained.

The scripture tells us to go to the cross even before the creation of the world. And so how has God, what is the seed going to look like and how is God going to do this in the earth? In Genesis chapter 12, you now see God calling a man called Abraham and he's calling him out of his house and out of his family. The familiar in verse chapter 12 in verse one, it says, now the Lord said to Abraham, get out of your country and from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

And I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise that was made. The promise that was prophesied in Genesis itself, there's going to be a seed going to be born into the world.

A man is going to be born of a woman. You're going to bite his heel. He's going to rise from the dead.

He's going to, he's going to bruise your head. And in him, this thought that you have, that you can control humanity is going to be destroyed. It's a, it's a place of promise, not a place of human effort.

Then in chapter 15, the scripture says he took in verse chapter 15 and verse five of Genesis, the Lord brought Abraham outside and said, now look towards heaven and count the stars. If you're able to number them. And he said to him, so shall your descendants be.

And the Bible says he believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness. This is the first time in the right relationship with God by faith. He believed God.

He looked up at the sky. He was 75 years old. When he left his house, he's given a promise.

That's an impossibility. He's taken outside. And he, he says, now look, count the stars.

If you can count them, this is how your descendants are going to be. Now the stars of course, are for light in darkness. They're for guidance for people who are on a journey or a destination.

There's a lot of reasons for times and for seasons. All of these things are in the stars. When we look up at them, Jesus told us as the body of Christ, you are the light of the world.

We are the fulfillment of the promise. We are the stars. May I put it that way that God showed to Abraham.

These are your descendants. They're going to bring light in time of darkness. Your descendants are going to be able to tell others about times and seasons, and they're going to help people who are on a journey to find the right way, the right pathway, the right course that might lead them to the desired haven, the place that they long to go to.

Now, Abraham asked the question, just as you and I would ask in chapter 15 again, the Lord told him, he says, I'm going to give you this place as an inheritance. I'm going to bless you. Keep that in mind.

And through your descendants, the whole world's going to be blessed. You know how impossible that must have sounded. Imagine yourself being Abraham.

You're 75 years old. You're in the middle of nowhere. God says, look up and look what I'm going to do for you.

Look what I'm going to do through faith. And Abraham said in verse eight, Lord God, how shall I know it that I shall inherit it? So he said to him, bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, and a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these to him and cut them in two down the middle and placed each piece opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds in two.

And when the vultures came down on the carcass, Abraham drove them away. Verse 17, and it came to pass when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. And on the same day, the Lord made a covenant or promise with Abraham saying to your descendants, I've given this land.

When you look at the sacrifice, it's a perfect type of God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit coming down in a pre-Christ visit, may I call it, pre-cross time visit. You see the sacrifice laid out on the ground that represents to my heart Jesus Christ, the smoking furnace and the burning lamp, the Father and the Holy Spirit passing between that sacrifice. And here's really what happened in the Old Testament.

God said, I'm going to make a promise to you. And what I require of you is to believe the promise. That's all.

Abraham, all you have to do is chase the vultures away that try to come down and devour what you're about to see. That's your part. You have to push away the unbelief.

You have to push away everything that will try to come and to rob you of this incredible promise that I'm making to you. And at sunset, it was truly amazing. The promise came into view in a darkened time.

And by the grace of God, again, in our generation, we've got to lay hold of the promise of God again through Jesus Christ, the promise of new life, the promise of a new heart, the promise of a new future, the promise of new abilities given to us as the people of God, the promise of the ability to pray and see these incredible evil things that are coming upon our society torn down and a way made now for people to come back to God through Jesus Christ. As the church of Jesus Christ in this darkened hour, it's so important that we lay hold of every promise of God again. Remember, it's not by might, it's not by power, it's by my spirit, says the Lord.

All through the Old Testament, we see the thread of this promise, this promise of increase, this promise of blessing, this promise of redemption, this promise of crushing the head of the serpent, this promise of

having a people as numerous as the stars in the sky who would be the descendants of Abraham, who Paul the Apostle said is the foreshadow, the type of those who receive salvation by faith through Jesus Christ. Now, remember now, the sin nature Satan had sown into humankind had us believe that in ourselves we could be as God is. That's the sin nature in everyone.

We can be as God is. We can redefine truth. We can redefine institutions.

We can redefine life. We can just give things new meanings and new words. We can escape the orders and somehow escape the wrath of God at the end of it all.

That's what the sin of humankind is. That's how it manifests itself. Now, in order to show the descendants of Abraham that we are not God, he introduced a set of 600 plus laws that those who would be godly had to keep.

Can I say it as simply as I can? It's as if God said to the descendants of Abraham, now the promise is supposed to come through your lineage, but lest you think that you can be God in yourself, lest you think you can produce the fruit of godliness without divine intervention, here are 600 plus laws for you to keep. Now, you have to make promises to me that you're going to keep them. And if you're able to keep them, I'll be God to you.

And if you're not able to keep them, if you break even one, it means that you have broken them all, which means that you are not God in yourself, which means that a blood sacrifice will have to be offered for your failure, and then you go out and try again to be as God is. It's as simple as I can make it for you. It's amazing that the historians tell us that out of the temple, it literally created a river of blood, a river of blood for people who wanted, in a sense, maybe to be godly.

Can you imagine? Thank God we're not living back there. Could you imagine? You want to be godly. You really are sincere.

You want to be godly. So you pick up your lamb, or you maybe buy it in the outer court in those days, and you bring it in to the temple, and you talk about the wrong things you've done, maybe lies you've told or whatever you've done, things you've looked at that you shouldn't have looked at. And so the priest would take the lamb and do the ritual that needed to be done, offer up its blood on an altar, and then pronounce you free, clear, and clean.

Then you walk out of the temple. You're heading back home, and some guy just drives his cart through a puddle and splashes all of your robes with mud, and then you curse him out before he's 100 feet down the road. And oh, no.

Oh, no. I'm not in the right relationship with God, so you got to turn around and go back. And how much for the goat? The goat.

Lambs are too expensive. How much for the goat this time? One more time into the temple with your goat under your arm. And how long do you think that would go on before people got tired of that, before they got discouraged, they got fed up, saying, I can't be godly in myself.

The apostle Paul talks about it in Romans chapter 6, 7, and 8, if you have time to read it when you get home. I know what to do. I even delight inside of myself.

I delight in the thoughts of being the kind of a person that I should be, and I know what is right, but I don't know how to perform it because inside my heart, I want to do what is right, but there's a law of death at work inside of me that fights against. That's the law of sin. That's the sin nature of humankind.

That's that constant thing inside that wants to break out all the boundaries of God and say, no, I'm going to do this my way. I'm going to live it my way, and if I can't be godly, then I'm going to redefine godliness, which is happening on a large scale in our generation, unfortunately. A river of blood flowing out of the temple, people becoming more and more discouraged as the days go on, and all it did was create a hierarchical religion where the naturally strong or the naturally sneaky got to the top.

They were able to cover themselves with robes and disguise what was really going on inside of them. That's why Jesus said, you outwardly appear righteous, but inwardly you're full of dead men's bones. It was a religion of rigidity, hypocrisy, and discouragement, and it thrived off of the failure of the people.

Eventually in the outer court, it developed a whole system of commerce around failure, and the Pharisees' families were making a fortune off of the failure of the people. They really didn't want the people to be successful. The apostle Peter in Acts 15:10 says, it's a yoke which we didn't need or our fathers were able to bear, and Paul says in Galatians chapter 3 verse 24, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law was allowed by God to teach us that we are not God. We cannot be God. We cannot get back into right relationship with God.

There is no hope back to God. There's no way back to God through anything of human effort, human ingenuity. We simply can't get back to God, no matter how hard we try.

Some of you here this morning, you know what that's all about. You make your New Year's resolutions every year, don't you? I'm going to be a better this, a better that. I'm going to stop doing this and start doing that.

How long does it last? 12, 15? In most cases. You know what is right, but you can't find a way to get there. This is what the law was introduced to the descendants of Abraham, because it was through the lineage of Abraham that a savior was going to be born.

Through the savior, a people were going to be born again into this world by the spirit of God, escaping as it is, escaping the trap of sin that Satan sewed into the human race, and then ultimately turning around and becoming an opposition to its power to captivate people all over the world. We are called, we are a free people, and we're called to bring freedom to others. We're called to pray.

We're called to stand. We're called to preach, publish, teach, defend the gospel of Jesus Christ with all of our heart. Now, Genesis chapter 3 and verse 7, there's something a little bit humorous here.

When the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, they knew that they were naked. They lost the covering of God, presence of God that they had known is gone from their lives. Sin, the wages of sin, the Bible says is death.

It still pays the same that it always has. They're now separated from God, and they knew they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. How ridiculous they must have looked.

How ridiculous human effort to cover itself looks. It looks ridiculous in the sight of God. It looks ridiculous in the sight of man.

Can you imagine? They've got, these are fairly broad leaves. They've made a hat for them. They must have looked like laughs standing in the garden of Eden.

They've got some kind of clothing they sewed together, and it's all made out of fig leaves, which makes now in Mark chapter 11, if you'll turn there with me, I want you to see this. Mark chapter 11, right near the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus, just before he went to the cross, he was going into Jerusalem. Now in chapter 11 of Mark verse 11, it says, Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple.

And so when he had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, he went out to Bethany with the 12. Now on the next day, when they'd come out from Bethany, this is chapter 11 of Mark verse 12 now, he was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, he went to see if perhaps he would find something on it.

And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response, Jesus said to it, let no one eat fruit from you ever again. I happen to believe in my heart, you can disagree with me if you want, but I happen to believe that, you know, the mind of Christ is not limited by time as ours is.

I happen to believe that once again, he was just looking at Adam standing in the garden, and there was such a longing in the heart of God to have his friend and his friend's children back. He knew that the deceptiveness of human effort would keep people out of his kingdom and out of his presence. He knew that humanity had to be brought to a place of understanding a hopeless condition or what he was about to do could never bear the genuine fruit of God that he had said that he'd come to accomplish.

And when he looked at that tree, he's looking at Adam covered in fig leaves. And he said, no one eat fruit from you ever again. In other words, I'm going to break your power to deceive the power of the human heart to deceive his own heart, the power of human effort to produce his own covering or its own covering.

And his disciples heard it, verse 15. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, overturned the tables of money changers in the seats of those who sold doves.

Remember, they had created a system of commerce out of the failure of human effort, which is the fruit in the sense of the law. Jesus walks in and he's about to do in the spiritual realm what he's now doing in the physical realm. He's driving out the buyers and the sellers, overturning the tables of the money changers and those who are really profiting from the failure of people trying to be godly in their own strength.

And he would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then he taught saying to them, is it not written, my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of thieves. Now the thievery of man-made religion is stealing from people the presence of God, the redemption of God, the power of God, the promise of God, that if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation.

The old things inside of all things have passed away and everything has become new. This is the thievery when man-made religion takes over from the power of the cross, the mercy of God and what God sent his son to do. And the scribes, scripture tells us, and the chief priests heard it and saw how they might destroy him for they feared him because all the people were astonished at his teaching.

When evening had come, he went out of the city. Now in the morning, as he passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to him, Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed is withered away.

And so Jesus said to him, have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done. He will have whatever he says.

Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe you will receive them and you will have them. Not just the fig tree, but the whole mountain. Now the only mountain in the area is Jerusalem itself.

You had to walk up to go to Jerusalem. And I believe because he's coming back from Bethany, going into Jerusalem, they're actually facing a city now that has been built around the law. The religious system is the law in this city.

He says, no, have faith in God. Not just this individual fig tree, not just this, this one person who's got a false covering, but this whole system that has been sent in a sense to allow man to deceive himself into thinking he can be God without the power of God. This whole system that's a schoolmaster to teach men and women and children that you can't be godly in your own strength.

Not one of us here. You can't, I can't, none of us can. We have the power as the church of Jesus Christ to speak to this mountain again in our generation, this mountain of deception in our society, this mountain of deception, even in the house of God, in many instances, this mountain of this sense of righteousness that sits over a nation such as ours, a nation that murders its children, a nation that redefines marriage into something that is ungodly.

This nation that murders its children in the womb and calls it a privilege and a right. This nation that is so backslidden, so dark, so down, so far from God, but we as the children of God, we as the descendants of Abraham, we who have been sent into the world as a blessing, we have the power in prayer to speak to this mountain and command this mountain to be moved and to be cast into the sea. We have the power to pray for a spiritual awakening in our generation.

God, wake the people up to their condition, the divisions, the evil speech, lies. There's so many lies now you don't know. I don't think liars know they're lying anymore.

It's so deep in people now that lies have become truth. And as Isaiah once said, truth has fallen into the streets and in the natural, it looks so hopeless. Other than this one fact, by faith in the salvation that God offers through his son, Jesus Christ, we have been sent by God as the seed that God prophesied would come through Abraham to be a blessing in the earth and to actively resist the darkness that wants to swallow a whole generation.

That is the privilege and the purpose of the church of Jesus Christ. Now knowing this, now we go back to our opening text in Matthew chapter three, where John said, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Turn away from everything that is crooked.

Turn away from self-deception. Turn away from trying to redefine truth and think there's no consequence. Turn away from getting your source of information from places that are not places of truth.

Turn away from social attitudes that are not right in the sight of God. Turn away from bitterness and embrace forgiveness. Turn away from self-seeking and start living for the benefit of others.

Turn away from setting up your own standard of right and wrong and righteousness and sin in all of its deception. Folks, I'll tell you one thing. You can get a lot of things wrong in this life, but this is the one thing you can't afford to get wrong.

There is only one way to eternal life. There's only one pathway that leads you there. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

Make his path straight. Prepare the way of the Lord. In other words, let him come.

It wasn't telling the people in a sense that I'm telling you how to get to God. What he was saying to them, I'm telling you how, what kind of a heart you have to have to let God come to you. Have a desire to do right.

Have a desire to live right. Have a desire to walk right. Have a desire to put away sin as God defines it in his word.

Not as we want to redefine it, but as God defines it. Have a desire to put it away and make a straight path for the son of God to come into your heart and become your Lord and become your savior. Put away the human reasoning.

Put away the human effort that you try to convince yourself that you're good when the Bible does not bear witness to your testimony. All Jerusalem, Judea and all the region round about Jordan went out to John and were baptized by him and confessing their sins. The interesting thing of all of this is when the people were being baptized by John, admitting their fault and admitting their failure.

I love it in the gospel of John where finally in the midst of all this, he just says to the people, behold the lamb of God. You can't see the lamb of God. You can't understand Christ.

You'll never know what the cross is all about until you finally come to the end of yourself. You've finally been willing to go down to that water of baptism for them. It just meant we're just tired of trying to be holy in our own strength.

We're tired of defining and redefining truth. We're tired of the Pharisees and the Sadducees with all their mumbling and jumbling and whispering and peeping. And we can never understand what they're talking about.

We're just sick of the whole thing. We simply want God. And when the people came to that point, that's when John was able to say, behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

You can't see the savior folks until you're sin sick. You can't see the savior until you, you really want to live your life the way he defines that it should be lived. When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said, brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Who told you that the anger of God one day is going to be exhibited against all of this, all of this phony religion, all this false covering that just covers sin, all of this stuff that declares itself to be right when it's not right in the sight of a holy God who warned you to flee from the wrath.

And then he says something interesting to them. Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance. And don't say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father.

For I say to you that God's able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. In other words, don't claim that Abraham is your father, because the kingdom that God was showing us through your father, Abraham was a supernatural kingdom. It had nothing to do with the natural.

It was not a kingdom where the strong make it in the weak falter by the wayside. It was a kingdom where God by his Holy spirit was going to come and invade every life and give strength to those who require strength to live for him. And he said, now the ax is laid to the root of the trees and every tree does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

The good fruit is by God's definition, not by ours. In other words, this, this day, this day, the law is over. It's finished.

This day, hypocrisy comes. It's not like there won't be hypocrisy, but the power of it to deceive is broken this day. John said, I'm declaring to you that God is sending an ax to the root of this tree, which of course was his son, Jesus Christ.

And every tree does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water to repentance, but he who comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I'm not worthy to carry. And he will baptize you with the Holy spirit and with fire.

This was the promise of God. When you come to Christ with an honest heart, when you get to the point of saying, God, I can't do this. I can't tell the truth of my life depends on it.

I can't be honest. I can't be a good father. I can't be a good husband.

I can't be a good friend. I'm so twisted in my thinking. Some people can say, God, I don't even know what's right and wrong anymore.

I've so defined and redefined by my own failure, the standard of truth that I find myself now agreeing with evil and calling it good. But by mercy, God, today, you're laying the ax to the root of that tree. And the promise, if I will turn from my way of thinking and turn to your way, the promise to my heart is that you will fill me with your Holy spirit and you will give me power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.

My life will become the fulfillment of what you prophesied to the devil himself in the garden of Eden. I will be one of those that Abraham saw in the sky. I will be a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

You will teach me how to pray. You'll teach me how to make a difference in my generation. I am inviting you today.

God, I'm inviting you to take an ax to the root of everything more that is not birthed in you. I'm inviting you. Oh God almighty.

I'm inviting you. That's got to be the cry of every heart now. Oh God, every practice, every relationship, every self-deception, every excuse that I make for wrongdoing.

God, lay the ax to the root of it this day. And your promise is that you will fill me with your Holy spirit and put a burning passion in my heart for what is right. A burning passion in my heart for the work that you've established on the earth for my life to do and to accomplish.

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

There is no other hope for this generation folks. There's no other hope. God has given us a short window of reprieve, an opportunity to consider our ways and a calling once again to come to Christ and come to the life he offers as he defines it.

There's no other way to eternal life. But through the shed blood of Jesus Christ for your soul, there's no other life to be lived, but the life that God has destined for your life to be on this side of eternity and ultimately forever with him. It's been my prayer in the last couple of months.

Lord, lay the ax to the root of everything in my life that will take me astray in my last days. Everything God, every little secret plan, every thought, every fox that runs across the vine in my mind, God almighty lay the ax to it. And one more time, fill your holy, fill your church with your Holy spirit and the passion for your work on the earth.

We are the stars that Abraham saw. God deliver us as your people, Lord, from everything that keeps us weak. Everything Lord that causes our voices to be muted.

Everything Lord that causes us to have no influence because of the mixture in our lives. I pray God with all my heart that you would touch your church today Lord. Here in this sanctuary in North Jersey, online, around the world, God, those that are listening, you're coming soon Lord.

Help us God to make a straight path for you to come into our lives in a new way, a powerful way. Some of us for the first time and others, Lord God, just a renewed passion for your work. Deliver us Lord God from dullness of heart and spirit, human effort, futility.

God help us to be your people. I want to give an altar call this morning. It's so simple.

Lord lay the ax to the root in my life of everything that I'm redefining, of everything that I'm involved in, things that I should not be doing and give me again, or maybe for the first time, your Holy Spirit. Lead me, guide me, guard me Lord Jesus Christ. Let my life from this day forward be lived for you.

Let's stand together. If that's the cry of your heart, would you just come and we're going to pray together. Just slip out of wherever you are.

Balcony, go to either exit of the main sanctuary. You just slip out. Just come join this gentleman who's already here.

Just come. For those who could say, I'm just done trying to be God in my own life. I'm done.

I'm finished. I'm going to be like those that came from Jerusalem, Judea and all the regions around about Jordan. I'm just done trying to be God.

I'm done trying to call evil good. I want to live for Jesus Christ. I want Jesus Christ to be the Lord of my life.

And I want to live for him all of my days. I want to ask you a question. If Jesus Christ returned today, are you ready to meet him? If you can't say yes, are you willing to be made ready to meet him? Are you willing to admit that you have sinned against God, which means that you're not living life as God has designed and stated it needs to be lived.

You live outside the boundaries of truth. And you may have justified the way you live, but God calls it wrong. That's what sin is.

And sin separates from God, not just here, but forever, forever. There's no way of getting around this one. There's no way of one day arriving at the throne of God and plea bargaining your way in.

It doesn't work that way. You have received him as savior or you haven't. I would be sad, I think, to be at the throne of God one day and you were here and you listened to my voice this morning and you're not there.

I'd be sad for you when you had the chance. We don't know how many days we have left. We don't know if we have a tomorrow, folks, we have no idea.

But if you'd like to know that heaven is going to be your home, if you'd like to open your heart and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior, would you just right now, wherever you are, balcony, main sanctuary and in the annex or anywhere online, even just raise your hand right now with me. Just just raise your hand. God bless you.

Keep them up high all over the place. Everyone who's got their hand raised. God bless you up in the balcony.

Thank you, Lord. Just keep your hand up. For those who are about to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior.

I'm going to ask you to pray a simple prayer with me and we'll ask everybody here to pray it with you. If you know you should be down here, too, as well, you can still pray this prayer. If you mean it, if you make it your own, you mean it in your heart, you can know that when you die, heaven is going to be your home.

But it has to be sincere. Can't be just a religious thing. You have to truly open your heart to Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for dying for me. To pay the price for the wrong I have done. I'm sorry for my sin.

I'm sorry for the way I've lived. From this day forward, I want to be the kind of a person that you have longed for me to be. By your strength and by your power inside of my life.

So I open my heart to you. Jesus Christ, son of God, I invite you to come into my life. Be my Lord and my savior and my God.

I give you the rights to my life. From this day forward, I belong to you and you belong to me. Lead me now and guide me and help me in this new journey that you've called me upon.

I believe that at this moment you've washed away my sin and I am saved. Amen. Amen.

Praise God. I see lots of tears here. Thank God.

Don't be concerned about the tears. Now for the rest of us, let's pray together, please, if we will. Stretch your hands out just towards the platform.

God Almighty, help us, Lord. We are supposed to be an active resistance to the kingdom of darkness. Help us, Lord, to make the break from everything that brings weakness into our lives, including trying to be godly in our own strength.

We yield to you, Lord. We ask you to make a way into our lives with the power of your Holy Spirit and cause us to shine as lights in the darkness. Cause us to pray and to believe that we have spiritual authority.

God, make a difference through each of our lives. Give us the grace to put away sin and to cease from calling anything evil good. Thank you, Lord, for hearing us.

We are your church. We love you and thank you for loving us. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Praise God.

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