

The Year That We Flourish

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of unity, faith, and purity in the church, and encourages believers to lay hold of God's truth and experience growth and transformation in the year 2018.

Duration: 45:16

Scripture: Psalm 133:1, Mark 9:24, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Corinthians 9:14, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 1 Corinthians 13:13

Topics: "Church Unity", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity, faith, purity, forgiveness, and selflessness in the church community. It calls for a commitment to flourishing in God's way, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, and living for the benefit of others. The speaker urges the congregation to learn from past mistakes, embrace God's promises, and be faithful in prayer and service.

Transcript

Please give me your best ear today. I think the best days are just ahead of us. If we can lay hold of that truth, if we're willing to embrace what God has for us, I believe that 2018 will be the year that we flourish as a people.

2018, that's what I've called this message today before we go to prayer, the year that we flourish. If you'll turn with me in the book of 1 Corinthians 1, please, if you will. Father, I thank you with all of my heart for your presence here today.

I thank you for the evident and powerful anointing of your Holy Spirit. I thank you Lord for the strength, God, that you are more than willing to give us as we are willing to embrace your calling for our purpose on the earth at this time. I ask Lord for an anointing to be able to speak this word and I ask God that you would give your people, all of us gathered here today, the ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is speaking to this church.

And I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, beginning at verse 3, Paul addresses a church very, very much like ours.

They were a church that lived in the midst of a sensual and self-focused city in time. And he issues, he writes a letter to them to encourage these believers and to make a heartfelt plea, which we're going to see today. The book of 1 Corinthians is really a heartfelt plea from the heart of God through the apostle Paul

for this church that lived at a specific time in history, that they might fully realize why they had been planted there and what was the calling of God upon them.

If you've attended this church for any amount of time, you realize this morning that we've been placed here in Times Square, potentially for such a time as this. People will be gathered in our streets this afternoon and this evening. They will endure the freezing cold with an optimism in their heart that as a glass ball drops down, that somehow it will usher in a better time.

It might for some, thank God for that. But many, many people will be disillusioned. They will walk away and all things will continue to be as they have been or even start to decline.

We have been placed here in the middle of Times Square as a testimony of who God is, what God is able to do and what God desires to do in this generation. And I hope that you and I can fully realize and appreciate that and understand that this morning. Paul, 1 Corinthians chapter 1 beginning at verse 3, he says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, let your heart be at rest and let the strength of God be your portion now. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God, which was given to you by Christ Jesus. The grace that was given to this church to be established in a place where all of the critics said it couldn't be.

They said, there's no chance. David Wilkerson is a dreamer. A church cannot be established in the middle of Times Square.

There's no parking there. Real estate is too expensive and too hard to come by. That whole area is literally under lockdown in one sense, and nobody can move in there with the church.

There's no possibility that you can bring over a hundred nations together and live in harmony and unity in one church, et cetera, et cetera. Then when the church was established, then they told us that, well, you'll not make it past 15 years. When we made it past 15, they said, you'll not make it to 30.

We made it to 30. I thank God. I thank God always, Paul said, concerning you for the grace of God, which was given to you by Christ Jesus.

It has been the divine hand of God that has planted this church and sustained this church and kept this church. We've gone through trial. We've gone through flood.

We've gone through fire. We've gone through some difficult places, but we have stayed together. We are here together.

This house is full. Over 104 nationalities gathered together for what I personally believe is a divine purpose given to us by God through the grace of Jesus Christ. Verse five says that you were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and knowledge.

There was a word that was given here starting back in 1987, a word that spoke about the future, a word that caused us to want to leave old patterns and ways of living and to embrace something new that God had for us. A word that gave us a sense of purpose from the beginning, from the inception of this church, Pastor David Wilkerson knew that God had established this church as a lighthouse for a darkened time. He believed that as it got darker throughout the world, the beam of this lighthouse was going to shine farther and farther and farther.

We're living in a time now where our permitting is now in 199 countries. The radio program is going across the nation all throughout America today. The word of God that was given to his heart is in measure already being fulfilled.

We were enriched by him in utterance and knowledge. God gave a word from this pulpit. The one thing that we cherish in this house is that when we stand in this pulpit that we have heard from God, we are bringing you not thoughts about God, but a word from God.

There's a huge difference between those two. Thank God for the word. I shake hands with people at the door Sunday night, and I can't tell you how many people have told me that their lives have been transformed, utterly transformed in this house.

I thank God for that. That's their testimony. I will never negate that or marginalize that or make light of that.

Even verse six, as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, we have been divinely planted, divinely spoken to, divinely enabled, and now may we not fall short of the promise of God. Not only are we longing for the soon return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but we are longing for the manifestation of his presence upon a city and upon a nation that so desperately needs to know that Christ died for them.

Their sins can be forgiven and heaven can be their eternal home. Who will also confirm you to the end that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? Now, this is the promise of God. This is God's commitment to his church.

He will confirm you to the end. I will keep you. I will sustain you.

I will be God to you. I'll be God in you. I'll be God through you right to the end that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now, Paul says at the end of this book in chapter 16 in verse 9, for a great and effective door has been opened to me and there are many adversaries. If God is going to open a door to his own testimony through this church, there will be things that will oppose it.

We will be opposed from without, but we'll also be opposed from within. We'll be opposed by our own hearts. We'll be opposed if God has ordained something bigger than we fully understand.

This coming year, an organization called the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America, an organization that encompasses 30 to 35 denominations and over 40,000 churches, has asked permission to have this church as their prototype, their model of what a praying church should look like. They are launching a three-year initiative to bring the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America back into the fullness of what prayer should be in the house of God, what compassion for the lost should look like, and what evangelization should be. It's a three-year initiative.

They have asked us to be part of the leadership of that initiative. Some of their leaders have been in here Tuesday night. They've been looking at our prayer meeting and they see a house filled with people praying, believing for others, prayer requests coming in from all over the world, and there's a recognition among these leaders that this is what we want our churches to be.

This is an incredible responsibility that God has given to you and I. It is a huge door that God is opening to this church, not only worldwide, but countrywide. People will be coming in. You imagine, they're going to be distributing the thoughts on faith and prayer, radio programs, a call to the nation to all of these churches throughout North America.

They're going to be encouraging their leaders and the people in their congregations to come in on Tuesday night to pray with us, to see what a prayer meeting should look like or could look like in this generation. Now, God has done this. We know God has done this.

There's no program here. We've followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is a huge door.

It's a door bigger than you and I can even think or imagine. It's an opportunity, folks, listen to me, to see the awakening in the nation that we've been praying for. Do you understand that? This is what this is all about.

It's an opportunity. If the churches begin to pray, how many times on Tuesday night have we prayed from this pulpit and in this sanctuary, God, revive your churches. Let prayer come into the house of God.

How many times have we prayed that? And suddenly a huge door is being opened to this congregation to encourage churches and leaders to pray. Not everyone will pray the way we do because the cultures are different. The circumstances, the towns are different.

The congregations are different, but there's little bits and pieces that people will be able to pull. And the greatest piece of all is the passion to pray, the faith to pray, the belief that God is able to answer when we pray and take us out of smallness, the new vision in a sense that our nation can turn back to God for a season and receive incredible mercy. Could you imagine if every church, every Pentecostal church in America began to pray, you imagine what could happen in our communities.

And so God is opening this year, a huge door into this local church congregation. My question to you is when the people come in from all over the country and perhaps around the world, what will they see? And if you were the church, if you were the only church, if you were the only person here, would it be worth them coming in to see what your life is like, how you're living as a Christian, what kind of passion and faith is in your prayers? You see, Paul confirms the church in the beginning of this epistle to the Corinthians. And he says, God will confirm you.

God will keep you. God will be faithful. God will do all of these things for you.

But in verse 10, he begins by saying, now I plead with you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if you want to follow the thread that I'm going to speak on for a little while this morning, you're going to see that almost the rest of the whole book is a plea from the heart of God through the apostle Paul for those things which could diminish the testimony that this church was supposed to be and we are supposed to be in our generation. The first thing that Paul, the apostle, God through Paul pleads for is unity.

For it is declared to me, verse 11, chapter one, concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. In other words, people already in this church were becoming separated and weakened by differences of opinion. Now we can be separated politically.

We can end up separated doctrinally even. People can be separated by the preference of preachers because realistically what they were doing is one was saying, well, I believe what Paul believes. Somebody else says, I believe what I love.

Apollos is preaching. I'm a Peter. And then somebody else would say, I'm of Christ.

And even in good things, they were allowing a division to come into the body. In chapter three, verses one to three, Paul says, I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal and as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food for until now you were not able to receive it.

And even now you're still not able for you're still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? Are you not, when you allow division to come into the body, are you not living the same as those who are not empowered by the Holy Spirit? Are you not cutting yourselves out of something? Do you not yet understand that unity in the body of Christ is not negotiable? It's absolutely essential. It's in the power of unity.

Read it in Psalm 133, that the anointing of God and the blessing of God comes in the power of unity that you and I are together. We're not going to agree on every single thing and we don't have to, but we do have to agree that we are the body of Jesus Christ. We are brothers and sisters in Christ forever.

We gather together at the cross and say our mandate in this world is to glorify Christ, to see him honored and to see the desire of his heart in reaching the lost around us fulfilled. And to achieve that purpose, we will not let disunity get into the body of Christ. By the grace of almighty God, we will not let division come in to this church, not even theological division.

If you get to the point where you're arguing a truth, then you've fallen into a place of weakness. You don't have to argue. If you're standing on truth, an argument is not necessary.

And don't forget, none of us are right all the time in everything. We learn as we grow in grace, we begin to learn. Thank God for that.

Secondly, Paul puts out a plea for faith and he encourages the people to escape the trap of reasonings, which exclude the power of God. In first Corinthians chapter two, beginning at verse one, he says, I, brethren, when I came to you did not come with excellence of speech or wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Verse 12, he says, now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

In other words, God has given to us things that we need to fulfill his purpose for us in the earth. Verse 14, he says, the natural man, that man who walks by his own strength and by his own reasonings, does not receive the things of the spirit of God, their foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they're spiritually discerned. You remember in Numbers chapter 13, that 10 of the 12 spies of the children of Israel went into the promised land and, and instead of believing in the power of God, they, they condescended to their own reasonings.

And they came back and they considered the report of the place of promise to be sound and reasonable, uh, based on judgment and observation and all of these things. But God called it evil because it negated the power of God. You see, our faith is not to rest in the wisdom of men.

Our faith is not to rest in some new clever presentation of some truth that we already know, but our faith is to rest in the power of God, that God is able to make the everything that he desires me to be. I don't know how to become a person of love. You might say, but God knows how to make me that kind of person.

So I yield my future and my life and my heart into his hands. And I'm asking him to do. And I believe that he will.

I believe there's no wall. There's no valley. There's no power of hell that can separate me from this love of God, which is mine belongs in me.

And God desires to radiate through me in Jesus Christ. I, I will not be separated from the power of God. I will not fall.

I will not succumb just to clever speakers who don't lead me to believe that God can use me for his glory. God can change me for his glory. God can speak through me for his glory.

God can push back darkness through me for his glory. I will not let the faith that I have in Christ be somehow supplanted just by clever reasonings and clever speech. The next thing Paul pleads for is purity in first Corinthians chapter five and verse one.

He says, it is actually reported. There is sexual immorality among you. You know, the interesting thing about the immorality in this case is nobody seemed to be bothered by it.

It was known it was going on clearly in the body and it didn't seem to bother anybody. And Paul was pleading with this church. Don't let this kind of immorality be found among you.

Don't you know, it will weaken you. But you understand when the children of Israel were coming into the place of promise, there was a king called Balak who hired a false prophet who had the power, he believed to curse the people of God. This prophet stood from various vantage points.

And as he saw the people of God on their journey, the spirit of the Lord overrode his evil heart and began to speak through him and talk about the blessing. The fact that this descendancy that God had established in the earth can't be stopped from its purpose, can't be stopped from its objective, can't be hindered, can't be overcome. He didn't understand what he was saying, but you and I know that God's hand was on these people.

And when God's hand is on you, you can't be overcome. But he gave this king some advice. He said they can't be overcome, but there is a way to stop them, seduce them, seduce them into sexual relationships with the unsaved, seduce them into living immorally.

And if you can do that, you can greatly hinder their purpose. You can actually make them weak like the rest of the nations all around them. Paul was pleading, Paul was pleading, sex outside of marriage as defined by God between one man and one woman is sin.

And the wages of sin is still death, death to dreams, death to vision, death to strength. There's no way to soft pedal that. There's no way to make it go away.

It doesn't matter if everybody here disagrees with that truth. It doesn't matter. It's an absolute in the kingdom of God.

It is sin and the wages sin still pays what it always has. Death, weakness, lack of vision, lack of strength. Paul said, don't let your closest friends be the sexually immoral.

There are people who choose to live that way in the body of Christ, but you don't have to be their best friend. You understand me? You can reach out to these people. You can talk to them about the love of God.

You can talk to them about how forgiveness can come into their hearts and how their lives can change. But if they choose to live in immorality, that's where the fellowship ends. You can read it yourself in first Corinthians chapter five, God forbid that we should ever give somebody living in fornication in this church, the false assurance that heaven is one day going to be their home.

God forbid. Paul next pleads for forgiveness in first Corinthians chapter six and verse seven. He says, now, therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another.

Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourself be cheated? In this church, there were grudges coming to the surface. And the longer we're together, the more chance that is that that's going to happen. Some of you might know that already.

The longer we fellowship, the more you get to know people, there's a chance that grudges come into the heart. Now, the Corinthian church couldn't go to the word of God for justifying these grievances they were holding onto. So they had to go to the court of secular opinion.

Some people want to hold on to grudges, but they know the word of God will not back them. So they have to go to those outside the kingdom of God to get some kind of reinforcement. And that's what these people were doing.

Why don't you rather just accept the wrong and pray for that person and believe that God can change their heart? And he takes it even a step farther. Why don't you rather let yourselves be cheated? Forgiveness. And lastly, there's a plea in the heart of the apostle Paul for selflessness.

You see, they were living in a city and a society that was completely self-focused and selfishness was in the air. And so this is a radical departure for this church to embrace the selflessness of Christ. The one who denied himself took up his cross and became obedient, even unto death and went to the cross, not for his own, but he went to the cross for you.

And he went to the cross for me because selflessness was at the core of the heart of the son of God. In chapter seven, he encourages the Corinthian church to be selfless in marriage. Now I could talk a lot about this today, a lot from, from beginning to end.

I mean, this is, Paul says a lot about it, but to be selfless, you know why a lot of people in this congregation can't get married is because you're not selfless. Still on the foundation of self, still looking around the church for somebody to enhance your resume, wondering what can this person do for me? How can this person satisfy my need? How will this person look hanging onto my arm? That's a totally wrong foundation for marriage. If you're going to look around and say, God, would you show me somebody that I can be given for so that person, that, that woman, that man could reach their full potential

in you.

That's the foundation of marriage. If you get into marriage and selflessness is at the core of your marriage, you're going to run into trouble. When your needs are not met, when you feel like that person is not the person, like the person you thought they were when you married them.

If you're, if the foundation of getting into that relationship in the first place is looking for only what that person can give to you, you're going to run into trouble. Be fortunate if your marriage lasts a year. And we do have that that happens.

People are just so enamored, so in love, but they're so selfish and eventually comes to the surface. Oh, thank God that if we're willing, if we're willing, he gives us the power not to be selfish. If we're willing, he gives us the power to be given.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. Wives see that you respect your husbands. Lastly, be in submission one to another.

It's a partnership of marriage. It is the type on the earth of Christ and his church. When people encounter you as a married couple, it should be to them as if they've just gone to church.

Do you understand? They've seen Christ in his church. They've understood something. There is no closer type to Christ and his church on the earth than a marriage and a Christian marriage.

That's why the devil is so after marriage to destroy it and redefine it. Selflessness in marriage. Commit yourself to being selfless and watch what will happen this year.

Watch what will happen. I'm continuously astounded that in this church, I venture a guess there's two, three thousand single young people in their thirties who want to get married and somehow they can't seem to get together. There's only so much we can do from our side.

Selflessness, selflessness at the core. God, would you show me somebody that I can be given four in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, till death do us part? Would you show me somebody, God, that I can be given four? In chapter eight, Paul the apostle makes it an appeal to selflessness in supporting the weak. Verses 11 to 13, and because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died.

But when you thus sin against the brethren, you wound their weak conscience and you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother to stumble. In chapter eight, Paul is making a plea.

I plead with you, brethren, support the weak. Don't judge them. Don't criticize them.

Don't push them to the sides of the temple and look for people that just make you feel good, but be given to those that need help. Be given to those that may be not as strong as you are at the moment. Remember that you one day might be weak, and you might be in this house in a place of needing the support of others.

You might fail, falter, fall, fall into a valley of despair. You might go through a season of darkness, through the valley of the shadow of death, and you're going to find out that nobody in the body of Christ stands alone. We all need one another.

We're strong Monday, but we might be weak the following Monday. So remember that. Support the weak among you.

Chapter nine, Paul encourages these believers, he pleads with them to consider giving financially to the work of God. There obviously, if you read chapter nine, was an opinion being propagated by some in that fellowship that supporting financially the work of the ministry was not necessary anymore under the New Testament. That is not true.

And if you read chapter nine, at least half or more of it, you'll see that Paul is encouraging the people to consider giving to the work of God. Again, in chapter 11, he encourages, pleads with the people to live for the benefit of others. It is the theme of our Bible school.

True ministry is living for the benefit of others. It's so hard when society is not telling you that. So hard when everything that is on the airwaves is the opposite of this.

Chapter 11 is about learning to care for each other in community. Remember, he said, when you come to the communion table, and if you're pushing the poor that have nothing to the sides of the temple, and you're taking this communion saying, I'm of Christ and Christ is of me, you're bringing a spiritual dullness into your own life, failing to understand what it means to be part of the body of Jesus Christ. Chapter 12 is about recognizing and appreciating the contributing of others.

There's nobody here that can say to any other person here, I have no need of you. No, every member of the body is necessary. And every member needs to be valued.

You need to be able to look at one another in this house without judging one another. And say, I don't know you, but I know you're valuable. If you are a believer in Christ, you're valuable to the body of Jesus Christ.

You have something to contribute to the church. And I recognize that contribution. Chapter 13 of Corinthians is Paul pleads again, that we be committed to unselfishly loving each other, bearing, believing, hoping, enduring.

He said, all these other giftings are all going to pass away, but love is going to remain. And it is the greatest of all. We have on our marquee written outside for 30 years, the church that love is building.

That was prophetic. I believe that with all my heart. And may we, by God's grace, be committed to unselfishly loving each other.

That means we have to bear, we have to believe. We have to go through difficult times together. We have to resolve our difficulties and our conflicts that do arise in the body of Christ.

Love will conquer it, folks. Love will conquer it. If I care about you, I will care enough to bridge the difference that sometimes may try to make itself between you and I. I will do everything I can to meet you on that bridge, that the fellowship that we know will not be broken in the body of Jesus Christ.

And chapter 14 about spiritual giftings, the apostle Paul pleads that we would use the giftings we have to lift others up, not to exalt ourselves, not to be known as somebody who prophesies or somebody who has this or does that or lays hands on the sick. Oh God, that we could just use everything that we've got, everything God's given us for the sake of others. That's what true ministry is all about.

That was the, you'll see that plea all the way through the book of first Corinthians. Paul knew this because he was actually a man who was living this way. He knew that's where the power of God was and the strength of God was.

The revelation of Christ was there. How else could he know? He said, there's a great and effectual door open to me. You see, he knew that only in the spirit because in the natural, he's in chains.

In the natural, it looks like he's going to spend the rest of his days in jail. But somehow in his heart, he knew from the spirit of God that there was a door that was opening. How could he know that we would be speaking his words today? 2,000 years later, this was the door.

The door was through the church world for all the time until the return of Christ. He couldn't fully have understood it, but he said, I know there's a huge door that's been opened to me and there are many adversaries. And Paul was trying to encourage this church to come in behind him, walk together in purity, walk together in unity, walk together with faith, knowing the kingdom of God is a supernatural kingdom.

What we can't accomplish, God is well able to accomplish. It's not a kingdom that advances by committee or by human ingenuity or by the cleverness of speakers. It advances by the power of God's Holy Spirit, creating and recreating a new life, new giftings, new power, new hearts, new minds, new purpose, new vision in the hearts and lives of those who open their heart to the fullness and the purpose that God has for them in Jesus Christ.

It's a kingdom of forgiveness. After all, it's all about the one who said, father, forgive them. They don't know what they do.

That's why we build bridges and forgive. That's why we don't go to court with one another. That's why we do everything we can to resolve.

And if we can't resolve it, we take the hurt upon ourselves as Jesus did on the cross. We follow him. This is a kingdom of forgiveness.

And ultimately, it's a kingdom of selflessness. Well, we don't live for ourselves. We don't use God, his house or his people for ourselves.

We know he's given to us. We know he's enabled us. We know he's going to keep us.

We know he's going to confirm us. We know he's going to bring us home. We know we have a mansion in glory already with our name on the door.

We know all of these things. We know we will rule and reign with Christ forever. But till that day, we are a people called to be given for the benefit of others.

That is the call of our lives. That is what we do. That is our motivation.

That's the source of our prayers. That's the leading of our heart. That's why we don't lay down and die.

When we get to be old, we keep going as long as God is speaking. We keep moving because we're not living for ourselves. We're living for the benefit of others.

May God help us. You see, folks, here's my point. There's a great and effectual door being opened to us now.

And we must learn from the mistakes of those who missed the moment. There are others before us who missed the moment. I mean, it's not even debatable.

It's all through Scripture. They were given a divine moment, but they didn't grasp it. Maybe they didn't take it seriously, and they missed it for all the reasons that we find in Corinthians.

Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 10, I'm going to close with this now, beginning at verse 1. Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea. In other words, God's hand was on them, and the miracle power that we have known was theirs as well. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food.

They all drank the same spiritual drink. They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. They had the power of God.

They had the promises of God. They had the provision of God. They had the pathway of God, the purpose of God.

It was all theirs, just as it is ours today. But with most of them, God was not well-pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now, these things became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted, and do not become idolaters, as were some of them.

As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and fell in one day 23,000. Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents.

The tempting of Christ means to say, well, is God able to do what he said that he would do? Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.

In other words, if you are still practicing any of these things, and yet you think you're going to stand, Paul the apostle says, you better listen again, because you have no assurance you're going to stand if you're not willing to walk away from those things that God says you should not be partakers of any longer. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man, but God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape that you might be able to bear it.

There's nothing come your way that others have not had to experience or get through. God is faithful. Remember we started with that.

God is faithful. He will confirm you to the end. He won't allow you to be tested beyond what you can endure, but we'll make a way for you to escape that you might be able to bear it.

In verse 14, he says, therefore, my beloved flee from idolatry. The ultimate idolatry he speaks about here is setting up our own reasoning above the word of God. Remember that's the sin nature of humanity that we can be as God is.

We can declare what is good and what is evil. That's idolatry. Flee from setting yourself up as God in your own life.

Flee from it. God is faithful. He will make a way.

This generation fell in the wilderness I just read to you about, but another generation were coming in now to a place of promise under the leadership of Joshua, but these people had to be identified as the people of God before they could know the victory that was set before them. They had to have the reproach of Egypt rolled away from them. They had to receive a new identity, a new purpose individually and as a congregation.

I believe with all my heart that 2018 will be the year that we flourish and we will fulfill our calling. I do. Now, as I've spoken this morning, there are some things that have hit you directly.

There's some arrows of God's love that hit you right in the spot where you needed to be hit. Now, the choice is yours. The choice to say, I commit to flourish in God's way.

I admit that I will not flourish my way. I can't change the ways of God. I can't somehow get around truth and still know his blessing.

I'm not going to join the crowd that looks at a glass ball and thinks it's going to change their day and their future. I'm not going to be among those who stand and their hope for the future is an illusion. I have a sure hope.

I have a solid foundation. I have the promises of the word of God. And he tells me he will do certain things.

He will keep me, confirm me, and as faithful as he has been, he will continue to be. But on my part, he asked me to walk in unity, faith, purity, forgiveness, and selflessness. That's my part.

Yet I have to trust him for the power to do that. And he promises to be the power that I need to be the person that I'm called to be. It's my heart as your pastor that after 30 years of preparing for this moment, as the world, the church world is going to come in this year and take a look at what God has done and is doing here, that we will not be a fraud.

That we will not fall short of the glory that is deserving to his name. That we will be a people who love one another. We will be a people who are walking in purity.

I'm not suggesting there's not times when people fall or fail, but we will get back up and we will determine and declare we are the people of God. We're going to walk as the people of God. We're going to walk together in unity.

We're going to forgive if we're wronged and we're going to live one for another. And let God bring the eyes of the church world into this sanctuary for a moment, just a short moment in time to see what a prayer meeting and a people can look like. I hope you recognize the great responsibility the Lord has given us now.

I do. But the choice now is ours to flourish. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord, for the sound of a people who are being humbled before you. There's a sound, Lord. There's a sound.

God, thank you for it. Lord Jesus Christ, we dedicate this house to you, our lives to you, our families to you, Lord, our hope and our future to you. We recognize, Lord, that in you we live and move and have our being.

It's not in us, Lord. It's you in us. That's our hope.

And so we thank you, Lord, that as Paul did, we can be on our knee this morning with trembling and weakness, even an insecurity inside our own heart. But Lord, you tell us that our faith is not to rest in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, your willingness to be God in us and through us, to give us giftings that we could never hope to have without you, to take us places we could never go if you didn't carry us there. And so, Lord, we thank you, God.

Thank you, Lord, that you speak to us this morning because you love us. You speak to us, Lord, because you want to take us into a place of incredible victory. We lift up our city before you, Lord, and we ask for mercy.

Mercy, God. Mercy, Lord. As we have prayed in the past, we pray again.

Let every church in this city become a house of prayer again. God, we believe that you are able to do exceedingly above and beyond all we ask or think. We believe, Lord, that even when we pray, our prayers fall short of what you're willing to do and will do.

We thank you, Lord, for the great report of what you're going to do across the nation, but we ask you to do it, Lord, in this city. No matter what name is on the door, we ask that your Holy Spirit be inside that building. God, that you would meet with men, women, children.

You would simply meet them. We ask, Lord, that park benches in Central Park become altars again. We ask you, Lord Jesus Christ, for prayer meetings in our stores, in our businesses, apartments, on the streets, God, in Wall Street, everywhere, Lord, prayer meetings, on the subway, people begin to pray and others begin to join them.

Lord, it's time to pray, and Lord, we just thank you that you will answer our prayers. The city begins to pray. You will answer the prayers of your people.

We bend our knee before you, Lord, and acknowledge that you are God. Acknowledge that your ways are higher than our ways. We ask, Lord, for this country, Lord, that you would send an awakening one more time, maybe one last time before you return, a spiritual awakening, a great turning to you, Lord, numbers too great to be counted.

Across the nation, God, city to city, town to town, hamlet to hamlet, God, borough to borough, apartment to apartment, there'll be a great, great spiritual awakening in our time. Lord, we thank you for the part that we have been chosen to play in this. We don't know the extent of it, but give us the grace, Lord, to be faithful to what we're given to do.

Help us, Lord, to be servants to the body of Christ and never be lords over anyone. Help us, God, to walk humbly before all men, Lord, acknowledging that, Lord, it's you. It's only you.

It's all you, Lord. It's not us, God. We have no real strength or plan.

It's just you. It's your mercy. It's your grace.

That's all it is, O God. We heard it prayed this morning. We will shout grace to this work when it's finished.

Father, thank you, Lord. Thank you. Jesus, walk with us.

Walk among us. You are welcome here. You are welcome here, Lord.

You are welcome to do your work your way in each of our lives, God. Give us the grace to be your people, Lord. Father, we thank you for this with all of our heart, with all of our heart.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Praise God.

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