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Speech at Mount Carmel Baptist Church

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Good morning, church. Let us first give honor to God, through whom all blessings flow.

I have a couple things that I need to share with you; and Pastor Campbell talked about how this came about. This was a conversation on Friday -- Friday evening. Lisa and I were still away and we returned to Philadelphia late yesterday evening.

I first want to start with a passage, and then I have some thoughts that I'd like to share. 1st Corinthians 15-56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I've tried to live by those words in the course of my work in service to the city of Philadelphia, serving the Lord in each and every day, saying a prayer for all of us, first in the morning, last thing at night.



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This, of course, is great, great church, the Mount Carmel Baptist Church, with a great, great leader, the Reverend Doctor Albert F. Campbell, Senior. Please recognize him. And he -- as he has done with me, let me also recognize our Great Mom, Mom Campbell.

To the deacons and deaconesses and the board of trustees, all of the members, and the groups and organizations, and -- I saw as they were passing -- many of the members of the choir. Many of you will recall that the choir took off, 20-some odd years ago -- as soon as I got off the choir, they started singing a whole lot better. But I do thank them, and many of them acknowledged our connection.

I come today with a number of thoughts. And Pastor's correct -- we had some general conversation. He does not know exactly what I'm going to say and that's a testament to our relationship. It's a relationship that goes back a good long way. And some of -- of you I've, of course, known for a long time and some may be newer, so let me just share a little bit.

The first time I came to Mount Carmel Baptist church was on May 12th, 1985. I was working on a political campaign. And many of us, of course, remember the events of that day and the next day. Philadelphia's not been the same since. That was the first time I came to this church, the first time I heard Reverend Campbell preach. A year later in 1986 I joined this church. I've been a member of this church for 25 years. I'm 54 years old.

And no, you don't see me all the time, and no I'm not here all the time, but let me assure you that I'm around. I've been in this church on some pretty important occasions for me and my family. Twenty-five years ago, I became a member. Five years later I walked down this aisle in July of 1991 with Lisa Johnson. And we were married here 20 years ago in Mount Carmel Baptist church. People talk about sustainability, well that's sustainability 'cause anybody can put up with me for 20 years -- deserves something. Please recognize my wife, Lisa.

Four years later -- 16 years ago -- our daughter was christened here. You've seen her on a couple of occasions. Five years ago, in the summer of 2006, Reverend and Mom Campbell stood with me on the porch on Parkside Avenue where I announced that I was running for mayor, when no one thought that we had not one chance -- anywhere. (I'm in church.) And about three and a half years ago, Reverend Campbell was on the stage at the Academy of Music participating in the inaugural celebration on January 7th, 2008. And we pray together.



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Many of you may not know that Reverend Campbell, Reverend Alan [ph], Reverend Good [ph] have prayer with me on a regular basis, 'cause in this job you need some prayer.

So we have a history and we have a relationship. And what I also know is that Reverend Campbell doesn't have each and everybody -- every Tom, Dick, and Harry -- up in this pulpit. And so I recognize that this is a very special granting. And I also told him on Friday I understand that I'm not the preacher of the hour. And this is the first Sunday of August, and communion Sunday. So I'm going to be brief.

Now, I must say first two things. One, some of you may know that 30 Americans died overseas -- an elite unit of our military. And whether you agree with our foreign policy or not, I would certainly ask that you would pray for the men and women who risk their lives each and every day to make sure that we can enjoy the freedoms as Americans that some of us seem to take for granted. They're serving their country. Other people make the decision about what they do and where they go, but they're doing their job. And unfortunately, one of those 30 is a son of a Philadelphia police officer. So I would ask that you would keep all of them, and especially that Philadelphia family that's been affected, in your hearts.

Now, I'm going to say something things this morning that I know from time to time many of you think, but may not say. There will not be "PC". But I've told Reverend Campbell that I recognize that I am in church and I am in his pulpit, so I will certainly be respectful. On the other hand, there are some words that we know that are also found in the Bible -- and I may use a few of those.

Pastor mentioned that we've had some incidents in Philadelphia, the most recent of which was Friday before last, 20, 30 kids running around Center City and it's happened in other parts of Philadelphia as well -- a 16, a 17, a 19-year-old, and, yes, an 11-year-old. And while I may have been out of my office, I was not out of communication. And I sent a message to police commissioner Ramsey, the first thing that morning as soon as I heard that report -- read that report -- that we have to do something. And we put our team together that day to start working on some things. And so I want to share my thoughts.

The first is this nonsense must stop. It must stop. If you want to act like a butthead, your butthead is going to get locked up. And if you want to act like an idiot, move. Move out of this city. We don't want you here anymore.



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And first I want to apologize. I want to apologize to all the good, hardworking, caring people here in this city, and especially our good, young people here in Philadelphia. But I have to tell you this morning that I am forced by the stupid, ignorant, dumb actions of a few -- and we will announce tomorrow actions that we will take that unfortunately will affect many here in our city.

Parents: Get your act together. Get it together. Get it together right now. You need to get home to your kids before we have to. Parents who neglect their children, who don't know where they are, don't know what they're doing, don't know who they're hanging out with -- you're going to find yourselves spending some quality time with your kids in jail -- together. Together.

Now this stupid behavior requires a strong response. But I can assure you that we are not going to just be responding. We're going to be much more proactive in our activities, and we're going to try our best to anticipate some of these senseless teenage insane acts that we have been seeing over the past few months.

Parents -- mothers and fathers -- now I happen to know that raising children is kinda tough. I've got two kids, one of whom is a teenager right now. If you need help, we have help for you: Department of Human Services, community behavioral health will help, and many other social service agencies. Do not be afraid. Do not be ashamed to reach out and ask for help, counseling, guidance, or support. But you need to get the help now before it's too late for the help to help you. Get some help.

And fathers, fathers, fathers have a particularly important role to play; not more important than mothers but just as important. You know, you're not a father just because you have a kid or two or three. That doesn't make you a father. A father is a person who's around to participate in a child's life. He's a teacher. Helps to guide and shape and mold that young person, someone for that young person to talk to, to share with -- their ups and their downs, their fears, and their concerns. A father has to provide instruction to a young boy on how to become a good man, a *good* man. A father also has to be a good role model -- help a young girl be a strong woman.



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Now let me just say this: If you're not doing those things, if you're just hanging out out there -- maybe you're sending a check or bringing some cash by -- that's not being a father. You're just a human ATM. You're just an ATM. And if you're not providing the guidance and you're not sending any money, you're just a sperm donor. You're just a sperm donor.

You're what the girls call out in the street, "That's my baby' daddy." "That's my baby' daddy." That's not good enough. Don't be that. Don't be that. You can do better than that.

And you know something? That's part of the problem in our community. Let me speak plain: That's part of the problem in the black community -- and many other communities, but a particular problem in the black communities. We have too many men making too many babies that they don't want to take care of, and then we end up dealing with your children. We're not running a big baby-sitting service. We're running a big government and a great city. Take care of your children -- all of 'em. All of 'em.

You know, you're sitting around with your jaws tight, "Oh, she got two or three other guys around." Well if you were doing what you're supposed to be doing, she wouldn't be with the other two or three guys in the first place 'cause you would be there taking care of all your children!

Now, you were around for the sex -- now be around for the parenting. Be around for the parenting 'cause let me tell you something: The Immaculate Conception of our Lord Jesus Christ took place a long time ago, and it didn't happen here in Philadelphia. So every one of these kids has two parents who were around and participating at the time. They need to be around now. Ain't no Immaculate Conception happening up in here. Parents, you need to step up [be]fore we have to step to you.

Now tomorrow, at 12 noon on Dilworth Plaza we're making a series of announcements -- get a ton of folks involved in this effort. It's not a one-time thing. It's not a summertime thing.

Young Audience Member: Amen

Mayor Nutter: I heard a child say "amen." Some of them smarter than some of these adults running around here.



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Tomorrow, we're going to announce a series of steps and actions that will be taken. Some will be positive and some you won't like. Unfortunately, that's the way it goes.

Now some of the more positive things we're looking is programs or services and activities at our rec[reation] centers. Other supports we may be able to provide, we're going to get our social service agencies involved but also the D.A. will be more involved and the courts will be more involved.

We took a whole lot of stuff couple of years back. And by the way, every one of those libraries is open. Tell your children: Get a book! Read a book! Learn something. School is open September 6th on Tuesday, day after Labor Day. Spend the next month reading. How about trying it out for a change? And whatever you do, just stay out of trouble. Think for yourself. Don't do stupid stuff.

Now, some of you know I grew up nine blocks from here -- 5519 Larchwood Avenue. I'm going to be "West Philly" no matter where I live, no matter what I do for the rest of my life. And before I ever heard of the "Philadelphia Code" or the "Pennsylvania Code" or any other code, I was very familiar with the Basil and Catalina Code. It was the code of my parents.

Now, I have to tell you, when I heard this particular report -- and we've had other incidences -- but it is inconceivable to me -- inconceivable to me -- that in my teenage years that I would be out somewhere running along downtown at nine o'clock at night. Impossible for me to fathom. Because my mother said, "Boy, I know you have a watch, but if the watch stops working, if you forget to wind it, if the battery breaks, there's only one thing you need to do: Look up. When that light goes on, have your butt on the steps. I don't care whether its Eastern Standard Time, Daylight Saving[s] Time, Pacific Time, Mid-Atlantic Time, North Pole Time. When that light goes on, have your butt on the steps. Don't let me have to look for you."

Now that's what she said. It was real easy, real simple. And you know, I know a lot has happened in the 40 years since I was an early teen. I know that some things have changed. But now, there are a few things that don't or shouldn't change: Respect other people; keep your hands to yourself; don't touch what doesn't belong to you or what you didn't earn; keep your butt in the house or on the steps until you're told otherwise; and mind your manners.



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Now, my parents were would be very clear that these were there rules, and that as long as I lived in their house, that was it. See, because I didn't own anything in that house. And I had a job. And I bought stuff with my own money. But when I cross that threshold, it was theirs.

"That room? We let you sleep in that room."

"This air conditioning? We let you have some of that air conditioning."

"That heat that I pay for? We let you have some of that heat."

"Those clothes on your body, I bought those clothes."

"I brought you in here, I'll take you out of here."

"Now, let's be very clear about some rules. Now, when you get old enough and you move out, then you can do what you want to do. But as long as you live in this house, you do what I tell you to do."

And that's the way it was. Well that's the way it needs to be.

Now parents, please talk to your children. Talk to them today after service. Talk to them tonight. Talk to them tomorrow 'cause things are going to change. This is some serious stuff. It's not a joke. It's not a game. And not funny.

A curfew is going to be enforced. Other things are going to happen. And they need to understand that there are serious consequences to aggressive, violent, idiotic, stupid behavior -- not only for the teen but also for the parents or the guardians. Everybody's going to be held accountable in this one.

We're taking these steps for the safety of all of our citizens and our teenagers -- and our teenagers. We want to make sure that they don't either do something that's going to get them in trouble, or be somewhere where they may get hurt. This is about all of us. It's about everybody. And so, let me say again, the bottom line -- this nonsense must stop right now -- right now.



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And lastly to our teenagers: You know young people always talk about, "Well, I've got to get respect." You get respect when you give respect. That's how you get respect. And I believe in my heart and in my soul that 99% of young people here in the city of Philadelphia are good, and have good intentions in their heart.

So, I don't want anyone to think that we've got thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of untold numbers of bad young people running around -- 'cause we don't. We have some really great young people in this city. They go to school. They try to get good grades and try to graduate and go on with their lives. They participate in sports, art, music, poetry, cultural services. They're out tutoring. Some of them have jobs and are working. Some are taking care of their siblings, parents, and even grandparents.

Unfortunately, there's a few -- could be a hundred, could be a couple of hundred, could be a thousand -- that's still less than one percent, but there are some really bad ones. And unfortunately, they engage in violent behavior. They're lawless. They act with ignorance. They don't care about anybody else, and they're behavior is outrageous.

Well, we're not going to tolerate that. We won't tolerate it and we're not going to excuse it because there is no excuse for it. Sense and nonsense cannot exist in the same place, in the same city, in the same world, and it's not going to happen here in Philadelphia. We can't have both at the same time. Can't have both.

And so, this behavior could have actually resulted in even more injuries, or worse. They could have killed somebody. Oh, then they'd really be in a world of trouble. Then all the sudden, they'd be crying: I want my mom. I need my dad. I need somebody. No, it's too late then. No, no, we're -- we're past that. It's too late. It's too late. You've damaged yourself, you've damaged another person, you've damaged your peers, and quite honestly you've damaged your own race. You damaged your own race.

So, to our young people: If you want black folks, if you want white folks, Latinos, Asians, or anybody else to respect you, and not be afraid when they see you walking down the street, then leave the innocent people who are walking down the street, minding their own damn business, leave them alone. Stop it. Cut it out. We've had enough of this nonsense going on. We've had enough. Some of them should be ashamed of their behavior. And some of them have made shame on our race.



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I'm speaking plainly. I'm telling you what's on my heart. It's a disgrace, what's going on. Not one of these victims, not one, did anything to any one of those young people. They weren't bothering them. They didn't say anything to them. They were minding their business. Some were out enjoying themselves. Some were just coming from work -- they didn't do one thing. And then all of the sudden, for the cowards that some of them are, in the crowd, thought they were anonymous, jumped up and started beating on people, assaulting them, in the streets of this city.

Well you know, now, if that was one of their friends, if that was their brother, if that was their sister, their moms, their grandmoms, somebody, they'd say, "Oh, that ain't right, that's wrong." Well, it's wrong when you do it too. It's wrong when you do it too. And so if you want to be aggressive, we're going to be aggressive. And let me just share this with you: We got the biggest, baddest gang in town -- a committed group of citizens and a committed government and we're working together and we're not going to have this nonsense anymore.

And lastly let me say, some of those young folks are lucky. They're lucky that one of those citizens didn't jump up and start whipping their butt, which, clearly, they did not have enough of when they were young themselves. They're lucky they didn't get themselves beat up with this nonsense. So, let me close. We want a safe city. We will not tolerate ignorant, stupid, out-of-control behavior. It hurts our citizens, damages property, and besmirches our reputation as a great city.

And so to all of our young people, but a particular message to our young African-American boys and girls, let me say this: If you want all of us -- black, white, or any other color -- if you want us to respect you, if you want us to look at you in a different way, if you want us not to be afraid to walk down the same side of the street with you, if you want folks not to jump out of the elevator when you get on, if you want folks to stop following you around in stores when you're out shopping, if you want somebody to offer you a job or an internship somewhere, if you don't want folks to be looking in or trying to go in a different direction when they see two or twenty of you coming down the street, then stop acting like idiots and fools, out in the streets of the city of Philadelphia. Just cut it out.

And another thing. Take those doggone hoodies down, especially in the summer. Pull your pants up and buy a belt, because no one wants to see your underwear or the crack of your butt. Nobody. Buy a belt. Buy a belt. Nobody wants to see your underwear.



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Comb your hair -- and get some grooming skills. Comb your hair. Running round here with your hair all over the place. Learn some manners. Keep your butt in school. Graduate from high school. Go on to college so you can go and make something of yourself and be a good citizen here in this city.

And why don't you work on extending your English vocabulary. Extend your English vocabulary beyond the few curse words that you know, some other grunts and grumbles and other things that none of us can understand what you're saying.

And if you go to look for a job, don't go blame it on the white folks, or anybody else. If you walk in somebody's office with your hair uncombed and a pick in the back and your shoes untied and your pants half down, tattoos up and down your arm, on your face, on your neck, and you wonder why somebody won't hire you. They don't hire you because you look like you're crazy. That's why they're not hiring you.

So, you do those things, and act like you got some sense, and you'd be surprised what opportunities will open up to you.

That's what was on my mind. That's all I've got to say.