

LETTER FROM CARTER CONLON

Dear Friend,

Are you one of the many people today who harbor grave concerns about the future? Whether it's on a global, national or personal level, the storms of our time seem to be taking on an intensity we have not known before.

In these times, the lessons of Scripture can become our greatest comfort. I am reminded of another day and another storm which believers in Jesus Christ had to face (Mark 4:35–41). Self-concern so gripped these early believers that they lost focus—and then they lost faith. Two things are worth noting in the Scripture. Firstly, we see that they were indeed going to the other side and that Jesus was with them in the journey. Secondly, there were "other little ships" alongside them (v. 36), trying to make the same journey without the relationship with the Savior which they enjoyed. I believe the disciples lost faith in the midst of the storm because they lost focus. When they feared for themselves, they lost sight of God and those around them.

God wants to give you His heart for other people. Ask Him for the capacity to care, as He does, about where those in our generation will spend eternity. I have personally found that fear gives way to faith as I allow God to perfect His love for others within me.

Yours, in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

GIVE ME A REASON TO NOT GIVE UP

by Carter Conlon

"Give me a reason to not give up!" This is the deep cry in the hearts of many today. They don't need an extensive list of reasons—even one would suffice. If you have that cry in your heart, it's an honest cry, and I believe the Lord has an answer for you.

"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.... Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Psalms 73:1–2; 13–14).

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The psalmist begins by saying, "God, I know You are good to Your people. I know You bless those who walk with clean hands and a pure heart. But as for me, I am ready to give up. I have tried to avoid evil and keep myself focused on the works of eternity. I have walked a narrow path when others, even those who claim to belong to the body of Christ, seem to walk a much broader path. But to what end? What

influence has my life had on the ungodly? How have I affected this world, or even my own family?"

The psalmist continues, "*For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men" (Psalms 73:3–5).* In other words, "The ungodly seem to be enjoying pleasures that I have deprived myself of. They claim to be free, strong and happy, which is more than I can say about myself at the moment." Have you ever reached a place as a Christian where the unsaved look better off than you?

"Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches" (Psalms 73:7–12).

You may desire to be a testimony in the workplace, while everyone around you seems to be at liberty to utter any vile thing they want. They speak with scorn about what

you dearly hold as truth. They do everything that you would like to do in your flesh, and you would like to fight back but you feel the restraining hand of God telling you not to respond in kind.

Your life doesn't appear to be making a difference, so what is the point of living a life separated unto God?

■ WHAT IS THE POINT?

“Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me” (Psalms 73:13–16).

You attend church on Sunday, and then go home to scornful people. They laugh about how simple and narrow your beliefs are while there is such a broad, wonderful world out there. Perhaps you wonder, “Is it even worth it? My life doesn’t appear to be making a difference, so what is the point of living a life separated unto God? Why can’t I just numb my mind and watch meaningless television every night like everybody else? Why must my walk be so strict?”

Sometimes such thoughts begin to plague your mind after you have walked with God for a long time. You see the young lifting their hands, radiant and glowing for God, and you think, “Oh, if they only knew what’s ahead of them. If they only knew how tough it’s going to get. But I dare not speak of it and offend this simple

faith they seem to have.” So you live with inner turmoil and pain.

■ UNDERSTANDING WHAT LIES AHEAD

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psalms 73:17–18). You come into the presence of God and suddenly see something that is not visible to the natural eye. You begin to understand what lies in store for the ungodly—that there is an end to all things, and it is coming soon. You realize that the lost have no idea what they are headed for—that they are sliding into a place of destruction. It’s as if rain has caused the steep hill where they’re walking to suddenly become slippery clay. And try as they may, they will not be able to escape the judgment that is coming.

Beloved, don’t ever lose sight of the fact that there is a heaven and a hell. The Bible describes hell as a place of torment where there is never-ending fire, gnashing of teeth, everlasting darkness, and endless hopelessness. It is the complete absence of God! Only the Holy Spirit can give us even a glimpse of what it is like to be apart from God for eternity. Remember that in this world, even the ungodly are surrounded by the presence of God. The heavens declare His glory, and the Holy Spirit is always whispering, even to the worst of sinners. This is why Paul said that every person from every tribe and nation will stand before God one day without excuse.

“How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors” (Psalms 73:19). What emptiness is coming their way, and how suddenly it will happen! *“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”* (Isaiah 33:14).

Dr. Karl Oppenheimer, who helped create the atomic bomb eventually used in World War II, was gravely afraid at the bomb’s first testing. As a physicist, he knew that it had the potential to set the earth’s atmosphere on fire. And if it did, it would create an irreversible chain of flames that could engulf much more than intended.

The devices we have today are hundreds of times more powerful than the atomic bomb! Isaiah, as well as Peter the apostle, both said that the heavens are going to be on fire. We look at our generation and see people grasping for nuclear weaponry for the sole purpose of destruction. What terror is coming in a moment of time? Do you realize that we all are living on borrowed time now?

I wonder how many millions of people today are crying out in hell, “Oh, God, send somebody to my family!”

■ THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

In light of this, there is a reason not to give up, no matter what lies ahead. In Luke 16, Jesus told a story: *“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day”* (Luke 16:19). In an earlier passage we see where the psalmist said that the wicked seem to have more than their hearts could wish for; they indulge in the things of the world and claim that it satisfies them.

“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: and moreover the dogs came and licked his sores”

(Luke 16:20–21). Sometimes you may feel like Lazarus—poor and struggling, disciplined and kept on this narrow path. You are unable to enjoy any of the things others do; in fact, you're the victim of their verbal abuse and all that they plot against you.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:22–28).

On the other side, the rich man was in torment, and suddenly he needed the very person he had regarded as insignificant and unworthy of his attention. God had placed Lazarus before him and if he had listened to what God was trying to tell him through Lazarus, heaven instead of hell could have been his destiny. It’s amazing that the rich man now knew it was this suffering man Lazarus who had the word that his family needed to hear.

■ WHOM WOULD YOU SEND?

I wonder how many millions of people today are crying out in hell, “Oh, God,

send somebody to my family! Send that suffering man! Send somebody who represents the cross of Jesus Christ, somebody who is willing to endure the narrow place for the sake of others. Send somebody who understands that God so loved the world that He became a man, suffered, and went to the cross, so that they don’t have to come to this place of eternal torment!”

We have been left on earth for the sake of other people.

If you were in hell this very moment, whom would you want to speak to your family? Would you want a smiling guy on television with his new positive view of how you can have God and the world at the same time? Personally, I would prefer to have that grandmother who walks with God and has trusted Him for her provision and strength. I would prefer the single mom who faithfully gets her four children to church every Sunday. I would be looking for somebody who knows suffering and can bring the reality of Christ to others. Somebody who is willing to be given for other people—who can stand in the midst of their pain and testify, “It’s been worth it all!”

■ THIS IS WHY WE ENDURE

Paul says in Philippians 1:29, “*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*” Why must we travel the narrow path? It’s only for one reason—that the glory of God may be revealed through us. The glory means the full weight of God—the keeping and sustaining power of God. Something of God that is deeper than anything this world has to offer. How else does God speak to this generation? How else does He reveal His cross? Is it not through the lives of His people?

Aren’t you thankful that Jesus didn’t come to the earth and just talk about the cross? He didn’t open the Bible and talk about what it looks like, how it feels, and then suddenly vanish and go back to heaven. I am profoundly thankful that He went to the cross!

The cry in the heart of this generation is, “Don’t *tell* me about Jesus—*show* me Jesus! Too many people merely talk about Him but I want to see the One who went to a cross.”

This is why we suffer, why we are called to walk a narrower road than others. This is why we turn our face to the other side when it gets slapped. We have been left on earth for the sake of other people. Our names are already in the Lamb’s Book of Life and we have our mansion in heaven, but this whole Christian life is not about us, it is about others. Therefore we endure.

“As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee” (Psalms 73:20–22). Oh, God, forgive us for how foolish we’ve been! Judgment is coming, and You have called us to be a testimony of Your mercy to the ungodly. Thank You one more time for bringing everything into focus, for letting us see the reason why our life is so narrow while others seem to be able to walk another way.

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalms 73:24). Our prayer today should be, “Guide us with Your counsel—let us not live according to our own way of thinking anymore!” What an atrocious theological trap has been laid for this generation—the belief that knowing God means that everything must be going well. We all should have a big promotion and a beautiful house as evidence that God is with us. But that’s a total lie.

The gospel we preach must be able to be preached in prisons, in China, in Iraq, in Vietnam. We have to be able to go all over the world. If we have to modify what we preach, then it isn't the gospel.

Do you believe that living for God is worth it, in spite of your hardship?

We must always remember the reason we are here today. We are to be visible demonstrations of the keeping power of Almighty God even through our suffering. When you study the theology of Paul, you will see that this was the very cornerstone of everything he preached, and it was the basis of all his revelation of Christ. Because he embraced suffering, he was given a vision of the keeping power of God, which became the catalyst for many to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

■ ONE REASON

You may have been thinking in your heart lately, "Give me a reason not to give up!" Well, how about your son or daughter? How about your grandson, your wife, the kids across the hall? How about the rich man who thinks his wealth is going to get him into heaven? How about the religionist who just goes to church but does not live for God? I want you to think of a reason, because the reason could be just one person. That's all it takes—one person, one reason why you will be given the grace to walk this path and finish this race.

I know that as you think about it, the Lord will put before you at least one reason. Your family does not need to go to hell; your coworkers do not need to die in their sin. If you are willing to embrace the pathway that God has for you, you will be able to walk with your hands in the air and your heart aflame again. Your desire will be, "God, let Your glory be seen in me. As I go through all my challenges, let my life be a testimony to others. When I open my mouth, let me speak of Your faithfulness."

Beloved, do you believe that living for God is worth it, in spite of your hardship—in spite of the ridicule, the heartache, the discipline, the narrowness of it? Do you believe that the salvation of the lost makes living for God worth it all? It is a very narrow life, but it is a very fulfilling life, resulting in an eternal reward. You only go through difficult times for a short season of time, but in the end you will be in eternity rejoicing, counting it all worth it. Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of "The Cross and the Switchblade." It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

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