

Dear Friend,

So many today seem on the verge of giving up. Perhaps you know someone in this condition or are even starting to feel the downward pull of hopelessness yourself. Sometimes there are actual events we are able to point to and at other times it's just an inexplicable curtain of darkness ahead that seems to offer no ray of hope or way out.

At times like these, people often make wrong decisions that lead to actions that no one ever believed they would have considered. King David had such a moment in his life (1 Samuel 30). The sense of loss which came into his heart caused him to weep until there were literally no more tears left in him. I have no doubt that all hell was whispering in his ears to simply end it all right there. With a past filled with regret, the present hopeless and the future dark, David did what everyone fighting depression must do. He encouraged himself in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:6). He must have thought about the history of how faithful God had been. He would have remembered how he once was given the supernatural ability to overcome what should have conquered him. It caused him to pray. The moment he began talking to God, the plan and strength of the Lord was revealed to him again. He arose and experienced new victory.

Please, don't ever give up. The Lord will keep you. The darkness before you is just an illusion. Its whispers of hopelessness are not true. Jesus loves you. Joy will be yours again.

Your friend,

Pastor Carter Conlon

SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION

by Carter Conlon

Jesus warned His disciples that in the last days iniquity would abound, with such an outbreak of lawlessness that the love of many would begin to grow cold (see Matthew 24:12). As we look around today, it is evident that our society is becoming increasingly vile. There is a sneering and scorning of everything that is godly. Constantly being in the midst of such lawlessness can begin to drive the love for the work of God—which is the redemption of the lost—out of our hearts. Instead, many believers are now sighing, "God, just get me out of here."

Has that been your prayer recently? If so, it may be a sign of depression—but one that is different from other forms of depression. It is a type of "spiritual depression" that can hit the minds and hearts of God's people. Perhaps you genuinely want to live for God and represent Christ to this perishing world, yet when you witness the abject rebellion all around, you begin to wonder, "Will I ever really make a difference? Am I on the winning side or the losing side of all this?" Such thoughts can begin to get hold of the minds of even the godliest of people. In fact, the Scriptures show us that this has been a familiar experience for many who have gone before us.

The prophet Ezekiel lived during a time when society had reached such a point of depravity that God had decreed an end to it. The Lord instructed Ezekiel, "Go through the

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midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezekiel 9:4). In this final moment of that particular society, we see that a sighing had come upon the hearts of the godly. I can picture them walking through their streets with a constant cry, "Oh, God, it is so hard to live here! It is so hard to see the degeneracy of our society at almost every level; to witness everything that I hold dear being ridiculed and trampled underfoot!"

■ GOD HEARS YOUR SIGHING

We read in Psalm 12 that even David shared a similar sentiment during a time in his life. Remember that David was destined to be king of Israel. One day everything was going to turn around; one day he would dance before the ark of the Lord. Yet, before that time came, David had to walk through a season when everything seemed to be against him. Society was going in the opposite direction of godliness. David began this psalm by saying, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psalms 12:1). In other words, "Godliness

is fading so rapidly all around me, and I feel powerless to stop it!”

“*They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak*” (Psalms 12:2). The psalmist is saying, “Their lips are full of empty words. They lie without conscience, and they even use the Lord’s name without any regard.”

The Lord is not offended by you or the situation you find yourself in.

“*Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?*” (Psalms 12:4). In other words, they had cast off all restraint and were governed by their own corruption and faulty reasoning. The sin nature of man had taken over—that seed that Satan sowed into the human race in the Garden of Eden. Humanity embraced the devil’s lie that says you can be as God, determining with your own speech what is good and what is evil. “You don’t have to listen to God anymore; He is not the only one who has an opinion.” It is just like in our day, where evil has now become good, and good has become evil.

Notice, however, that the psalm does not end without hope. “*For the oppression of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him*” (Psalms 12:5). God was saying, “I have heard your sighing; I know what comes against you. Now I am going to arise and put you in a place where you will not be triumphed over.” So if you currently find yourself in a season of being pursued by despair, rest assured that it is not going to conquer you! God has heard your sighs, and He has promised to set

you in a place of safety. “*Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever*” (Psalms 12:7).

■ THERE IS MUCH LEFT TO DO

The prophet Elijah was another example of someone who experienced spiritual depression—in his case, after a significant victory. Elijah and all the prophets of Baal had gathered on Mount Carmel for a confrontation between true and false spirituality. In the end, the literal fire of God came down, licked up the water that was in the trench, and consumed Elijah’s sacrifice. “*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God*” (1 Kings 18:39).

Ahab, who was the king of Israel at the time, witnessed the entire ordeal on Mount Carmel before getting into his chariot and heading back to Jezreel. Perhaps he was going back to report to his co-regent wife, Jezebel, “Listen, I saw the fire of God come down! I saw the prophets of Baal and all their foolishness that produced absolutely nothing. Yet I saw this prophet of God repair an altar, step back, and pray a simple prayer for just a few moments. Suddenly the fire of God came down. I saw it with my very own eyes!”

Elijah headed to Jezreel as well. The Bible tells us that the Spirit of God came upon him, and he outran Ahab’s chariot. I cannot help but wonder if it is possible that Elijah thought for a moment that those who were in government might bend their knees to God, just as the people on Mount Carmel had done. After all, God had manifested His glory, and there was now overwhelming evidence of the reality of the gospel he was preaching. Elijah might have concluded, “Surely this will change the heart of those in government!” Yet, on the contrary, Elijah soon discovered that hostility had actually

intensified to the point that Jezebel threatened to kill him. Could it be that the unbending pride of those leading the nation was what caused him to retreat to a cave, so full of despair that he desired to die?

Take a moment to consider our nation today. There is irrefutable evidence that God made this nation great. He took people from all over the world, and in just a few short eras, managed to do something through those people that had never been done throughout history—technologically, socially, economically. Of course we have not been perfect in this, but our country began with a genuine regard for the ways of God. You would think that knowing America’s history would cause people to bend their knees to God. Yet we look around and can easily get discouraged, asking, “Lord, what is it going to take to touch this nation? What will cause us to finally turn from our present course of destruction?”

God met Elijah in his despair and lovingly told him that there was much left to do, even if he could not fully understand it all yet.

The Scriptures tell us that the Lord came and spoke to Elijah in a still, small voice. He spoke tenderly, as if to let him know that He was not offended by Elijah’s discouragement (see 1 Kings 19:12). In the same way, the Lord would remind you today that He is not offended by you or the situation you find yourself in. He is not sitting in heaven with His arms folded, shaking His head because you are going through a season of spiritual depression.

God met Elijah in his despair and lovingly told him that there was much left to do, even if he could not fully understand it all yet. At that moment, Elijah did not realize that one day all of Israel was going to live for God. He did not understand that a Savior was going to come through the lineage of a king named David. He could not see the Church ruling and reigning with Christ for all of eternity. It was just as the Scriptures tell us—we now only see through a glass darkly; we only know in part (see 1 Corinthians 13:12). However, there is a day coming when we will finally come to a full understanding. Until then, we must let the Lord lift us up out of our despair so that we can carry on.

■ RETURNING TO HOPE

In the book of Luke, we find a story of yet another time when it seemed as if godless religion was prevailing, consequently stripping many of Jesus' followers of the hope they once had. Two disciples in particular had left Jerusalem and were heading in another direction shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection (see Luke 24:13). This represents those who once had hope, but in their mind, their hope has been lost. Jesus Himself walked with those two disciples on the road to Emmaus and began to ask them the reason for their apparent sadness. They replied, "Have you not heard? Are you only a stranger here? You see, God sent His Son, and we had hoped—" (see Luke 24:19–21).

That was all that was left of their testimony—we had hoped! "We had hoped that He was the One who was going to deliver us. We had hoped that He would bring godliness back into our nation and free us from the oppression of the Roman Empire. And now to add insult to injury, our own religious system delivered Him up to be crucified!"

In their eyes, godless religion had won the day. How easily you and I can draw this same conclusion today when we consider the volume of foolishness on television that masquerades as the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do you ever wonder how long this godlessness will win the day? How long these frauds and imposters will be allowed on television to deceive and rob the people of God?

You must not succumb to the fear or the spiritual depression. You must not believe the voices that come to try and convince you that you believed promises that may be true for somebody else, but not for you.

As Jesus walked with those two disciples, He began to unlock the Scriptures, showing them that godless religion will never win. All it can do is fulfill God's divine plan for the redemption of humanity and for the strengthening of His Church. Everything is under His control; everything is in subjection to the will of God in order to fulfill His sovereign purposes on the earth. As they approached a village, the two disciples urged Jesus to stay with them. That evening, Jesus sat at the table and broke bread with them, and the Bible tells us that their eyes were opened. Suddenly the disciples recognized the truth—Jesus had indeed triumphed over the devil and had broken the bands of sin and hell!

When the disciples realized they were not on the losing side, their hearts began to burn within them again, and they got up and headed back to Jerusalem. They headed back to what, in the natural, may have looked to be a place of defeat—a place where the enemy had triumphed. But it was in that place that the Holy Spirit later came down and filled them, causing them to partake of a victory that is hidden from those who do not know the Spirit of God.

■ WHEN THE LORD TELLS YOU TO GET UP

The Scriptures speak of a time when Joshua, the commander of the children of Israel, also found himself in a moment of despair. The Israelites had gone in to take possession of the Promised Land, yet after an incredible victory at Jericho, they were defeated by a seemingly insignificant enemy at Ai. Joshua tore his clothes and fell on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening (see Joshua 7:6).

Keep in mind that the Israelites had just begun this journey into the inheritance that God had promised them. But now Joshua was wondering, "If we can't even defeat this little enemy, what will happen when we face greater enemies?" He then began to succumb to a false reasoning. "Why didn't we stay on the other side of Jordan? At least it was safe there. Why did we even start this journey?" (see Joshua 7:7).

Imagine the voice of the enemy taunting him all the while: "Joshua, you began this journey, but you have underestimated your enemies. You have overestimated your own strength, and you have overestimated the promises of God. Now you are going to be defeated and humiliated in the sight of man and before a holy God!" You can be certain that those lies were bombarding Joshua's mind,

trying to stop him from what God wanted to do through his life.

When you are tempted to be overcome by spiritual depression, you must remember that there is a much bigger plan underfoot than you can perceive or understand.

Perhaps lately you have experienced a similar mocking of the enemy. However, you must not succumb to the fear or the spiritual depression. You must not believe the voices that come to try and convince you that you have bitten off more than you can chew; that you believed promises that may be true for somebody else, but not for you. Don't buy into the lie that your life will never have any impact, or that you will never have victory, seeing that you have already been defeated by a seemingly insignificant enemy. These lies of the enemy have the potential to stop you in your tracks and draw you into a deep despair.

It may just be that the Lord has to deal with something in your life. In Joshua's case, the Lord simply told him to get up. There was no great amount of compassion in it. God knew that there was something in the camp that would weaken the entire Israelite army, so in His mercy, He would not let them go forward until it was dealt with. In the same way, you and I cannot be victorious

in the battle if we are holding on to something that we shouldn't be. So if God has His finger on something in your life, obey what He tells you to do. It is not worth holding on to something that is depleting you of strength for this journey.

■ AN INTEGRAL PART

In those moments when you are tempted to be overcome by spiritual depression, you must remember that there is a much bigger plan underfoot than you can perceive or understand. Yes, you are only a little part of this incredible picture that God is painting; nevertheless, you are an integral part! Imagine if you were to come across somebody who is doing a thousand-piece puzzle, and they say to you, "Ah, it is finished!" Immediately your eye will fall on the one piece that is missing. Even though there are nine hundred and ninety-nine pieces in place, that one missing piece still makes a big difference.

Likewise, your obedience to God, your going forward and fulfilling His call on your life, is an integral part of what the Lord is doing in this hour. It is so significant that the picture will be incomplete if you vacate the calling God has given to you on this earth. So don't let spiritual depression swallow you. Don't give in to the godlessness of this hour. Return to the place of hope; get back your passion for the work of God. Keep going forward, like Elijah, even if you do not fully understand it all, for there is much left to be done. There is a great reward if you will not quit!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

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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	Prayer Service	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

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