

Dear Friend,

What a joy it would be for me to know that after having read this letter today, you broke out in song! Especially if this happens to be one of those "I don't know if I can do this any longer" days.

I love the second letter of Paul to Timothy, where the apostle declares how he longs to see Timothy again, remembering his former commitment and dedication to the Lord, that he (Paul) might be filled with joy. If you are dealing with sorrow and disappointment today, how wonderful it would be to clap our hands together and declare once again that "[God] is good; for His mercy endureth forever!" (1 Chronicles 16:34).

Paul gives Timothy good advice when he says: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). Not in our strength, our abilities or even our own faithfulness, but solely and entirely in the grace of God!

Have a great day.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

## THE INCREDIBLE FRAGRANCE OF MERCY

by Carter Conlon

Have you noticed lately that anti-Christ sentiment has been increasing in fervency? It seems as if everybody advocates tolerance toward everything and everyone but the followers of Jesus Christ. We are the only people on earth upon whom there is an unrestricted open season for mockery and defamation. I am sure I do not have to convince you that it is going to become increasingly difficult to stand as a follower of Christ in the coming days. However, we can always find hope in the Scriptures.

### *We are the testimony of God's mercy in this world.*

*"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18).*

It is important that we encourage each other in this season, reminding one another that no matter how difficult this life is, no matter how hard our days might be, it is only for a short season. One day soon it will all be over, and the

Church will be taken from this earth and gathered to be with our Christ forever.

At the same time, what a tragedy it will be when the only thing that restrains evil in the world, the Church of Jesus Christ—the truth of God, the presence of God's Holy Spirit in His people—is taken away. When that restraint is removed, a pungent and devastating smell of sin will permeate the earth. The Bible tells us the heavens will melt with a fervent heat at the anger of God (see 2 Peter 3:12). The time of rebellion, the time of mankind's arrogance in thinking that he can be his own god, will come to an end. The seed that Satan sowed into humankind in the Garden of Eden will finally reach its own day of judgment, for the time of mercy will be finished.

Until that day, however, you and I carry in these frail earthen bodies an incredible fragrance of the mercy of God. We are the testimony of God's mercy in this world. Paul described it in 2 Corinthians 2:14: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." The word savor means "a fragrance, an odor." Through His people, God makes known this incredible fragrance of His mercy.

Have you ever walked through a department store or passed by

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someone, and suddenly a fragrance catches your attention? An attractive scent can cause you to stop for a moment and consider its source. It is the same with you and me—there is a scent of Christ on us that causes people to stop for a moment and consider their ways.

Sometimes it is hard to believe that we carry the fragrance of Christ, isn't it? Yet if we have Christ within us, there is indeed a scent of Christ on us, whether we are aware of it or not. We carry it through the ups and downs, the victories and defeats, the efforts and exhaustions of the day—just as a quality perfume still smells good in the evening even though the one wearing it may not be as aware of it as she was in the morning.

Have you had a day like that lately? You get up in the morning and read in your Bible, “Have faith in God. For whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass” (see Mark 11:22–23). You begin to boldly speak to whatever that mountain is and command it to get out of your way and out of your mind. Filled with the victory of Christ, you then set off to the workplace or wherever it is that you have to go that day. A sweet song plays over and over in your heart as you sit on the subway.

As your day progresses, however, you begin to experience the battles,

the temptations, the defeats, the exhaustion. By the time you get back on the subway at the end of the day, your head is no longer up—it is hanging down. And the devil is right there, trying to tell you what a failure you have been; what an awful testimony of Christ you are.

We have all had such days. Yet, no matter how exhausted you might be or how hard your day, your week, or your month has been, I want to remind you of something—you still smell good! Your head may be hanging down as you consider all that you have gone through, but the scent of God's mercy is still strong! As you pass by, people still stop to consider their ways. It is not because you have had a perfect day or because you walked around quoting Scripture, for that is just not what happens to most of us. We all have those moments when something slips out of our mouth that shouldn't have, or when we display a wrong attitude toward somebody. Nevertheless, as you walk out at the end of the day, the incredible fragrance of Christ is still on you because it is a fragrance of mercy.

When we get to heaven, we are not going to present a list of accomplishments, for there is nothing we could have done that could get us to heaven. It is all about the mercy of God. His mercy wakes us up, His mercy opens our minds to truth, His mercy sets us free from the snares and traps of the enemy. The mercy of God does not impute our sin when we make mistakes throughout the day—we are still covered in the blood of Jesus Christ.

**■ NOT PERFECTION, BUT SINCERITY**

What comfort there is in the thought that we do not have to be perfect; we just have to be sincere in our walk with God. That is all He requires of us. When the Lord called Abraham, He said, “Abraham, I am going to bless you and increase you. I am

going to make you a blessing in the earth; a father of many nations” (see Genesis 17:4–7). We know that God was talking about the Church of Jesus Christ—the ultimate lineage of Abraham. Yet before He gave Abraham this incredible promise, the Lord told him, “...*I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect*” (Genesis 17:1).

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In the original Hebrew, the word perfect means “to be sincere.” That is all God asked of this man. The Scriptures show us that Abraham made incredible mistakes throughout his life. At one point, he even let his wife be taken into another man's harem. Nevertheless, the promise of God remained, and now when we think about Abraham, we think of mercy!

In a similar way, people around us are not necessarily looking for perfection, nor are they afraid of our weaknesses. In fact, our human frailties can actually be an attractive thing to those who are looking for Christ. Before I knew the Lord, if I had encountered a flawless Christian who always spoke and did everything right, I would have considered it hopeless for me to ever come to God, knowing I could never measure up to that standard. I thank God that the examples He put before me were just ordinary people. Sometimes they made mistakes, sometimes they didn't.

I recall a time before I was saved when my wife and I went to a fellow police officer's house for lunch. He and his wife were Christians, and they were intent on winning us to the Lord. However, instead of winning us to Christ, I managed to talk him into having a glass of wine. They didn't drink, so obviously I was very persuasive. Afterwards, the poor guy felt so condemned that he felt he had ruined his testimony.

Now I do not advocate taking a glass of wine at any time, but I can tell you one thing—it showed me that the guy was human. It also showed me that he was sincere, for I saw how downcast he became. In fact, I ended up trying to encourage him! He was deeply affected by what he felt was a failure of a testimony before us, and he was completely unaware that all we saw was mercy. The fragrance of the mercy of God was still emanating from just a normal man who truly loved God and sincerely wanted to walk with Him. I found it very appealing that God loves and covers regular people who may not be perfect but who are sincere.

So when you have one of those days where you find yourself walking home with your head down, thinking, "I have blown it. I have destroyed the testimony of God, and now these poor people are never going to find Christ because of me"—remember that sincerity is actually incredibly attractive. The fact that we are covered in our struggles is a sweet fragrance to this world—evidence that in ourselves we can never be perfect, and that the only perfect One is Christ within us.

#### ■ ANOINTED WITH FRESH OIL

In Psalm 92, we are reminded once again that we walk through this earth as recipients of mercy. *"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and*

*thy faithfulness every night"* (Psalm 92:1–2). Daily we are encouraged in the morning, and we are thankful at night. In other words, in the morning God gives us His promise, and at the end of our day, He reminds us, "Don't worry about your failure. My promise to you is still yea and amen!" And so we continually have a song to sing because it is not about us, it is about Christ in us. That is our hope and our strength.

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*"Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands"* (Psalm 92:3–4). God's hands, not yours, have done this work. It is not your strength, it is God's strength. It is not your joy, it is God's joy that covers you. It is God's joy to change you and walk with you. It is His joy to call Himself your God!

That is why the Scriptures tell us that we have the right to condemn every voice that rises against us in judgment—this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. When the devil comes against you and says, "Look at how you have failed! Look what you said; look what you did; look what you didn't do!" you can point right back into his face and say, "Listen,

I have something that you don't have, I have mercy covering my life! Devil, you stink of rebellion, but I smell of mercy!"

The Psalmist continues, *"But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil"* (Psalm 92:10). In other words, "God, in spite of my mistakes or how I feel about myself, when I come to You, You will anoint me again. You will touch and strengthen me again, lifting me up and setting my feet on a right path. You will raise my head and give me a heart for the lost again."

You must believe that God is not angry or disappointed with you for your frailties and failures. He is more than willing to touch you once again with that sweet fragrance of His mercy. Oh, how this should cause us to love Him! It should cause us, as the Scripture says, to take up our instruments and begin to praise Him. It should cause us to lift our voices and sing as we have never sung before!

#### ■ A TESTIMONY OF MERCY

If you are a sincere believer in Christ, yet lately you have been feeling like your testimony stinks, I say to you today—you still smell good! So don't lose heart or allow your own struggles to cause your head to hang so low that you cannot praise God anymore. Do not let this testimony of mercy be taken from you. Refuse to fall into the trap of the devil that is wrapped in the arrogance of pride and accomplishment in your own strength. Instead, simply choose to walk with God in sincerity.

It is in that sincerity that you will change, as Paul says, from image to image and glory to glory. That means that from place to place, step by step, little by little, you will change into what God purposed you to be. You may fall along the way, but you will get up again. Remember, God

has already forgiven, covered, and cleansed you, and even in your struggle He is still proud of you. So do not succumb to the lie that God is disappointed in you. You must rise up against every lie of the devil that will ever try to convince you that you are worthless. You have the right to declare, “No! I am a testimony of mercy!”

***Don't hide from the goodness of God. Let Him embrace you, especially when you feel worthless.***

It is the delight of God to invite you on a journey to represent Him in the earth as an ambassador of incredible mercy. You are called to tell others that the mercy you have known in all of your struggles and failings can also be theirs! This is the message of the Church of Jesus Christ. This is the power of God that restrains evil. This is who we are on the earth until the day that humankind reaches the point where this testimony is no longer received.

But until that day, may I encourage you: Don't give up. Life is hard, but God is good, and He will keep you if you will let Him. In the Song of Solomon, He spoke to His bride (which is you and me): “Come out of the place where you are hiding. Let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for I love the sight of

you, and I love the sound of your voice” (see Song of Solomon 2:14).

Don't hide from the goodness of God. Let Him embrace you, especially when you feel worthless in His sight. God's promise to you is a fresh anointing—a fresh touch of mercy, a fresh awareness of how deeply you are loved, and a life that continually emits the sweet fragrance of Jesus Christ.

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	The Gate*	

\*Youth and Young Adult Service

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