

Dear friend,

In the New Testament book of Romans, the apostle Paul writes these personally challenging words: *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Romans 10:13–14).

This newsletter tells of my own journey in breaking the all-too-common barrier of fear in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. To this day I rejoice in how merciful God has been in my plodding efforts to get up and make a difference for the kingdom of God and the souls of spiritually lost people.

You and I live in a time when we must speak for God. Our journeys may vary but the end result will always be the same. Jesus promises power to be a witness of His death and resurrection—not only power, but also passion and courage that can come only from the indwelling presence of God.

May these few pages give you the courage to rise up and lay hold of the fullness which the Holy Spirit has reserved for you. The future and eternity of more people than we know depends on it.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

STAYING SILENT IN A PERILOUS TIME

by Carter Conlon

In the days when I was a police officer in Canada, the laws of that country stated that it was a crime to do something that would cause harm to another person, but *neglecting* to do something that resulted in another person's harm was equally as criminal. Take a moment to think about that in light of the numbers of people in our generation who are about to perish without God. So many are living under the illusion that mankind can pursue his own objectives, follow his own reasoning, and still manage to arrive at some utopian end. Yet, in reality, the end that awaits those who choose to live without God is one of such terror that our minds cannot even begin to comprehend it.

***It is not debatable
that we are going
to experience
rejection when
we choose to
stand for what
represents God
in a godless hour.***

You and I are aware of the reality of heaven and hell, and we also know that in between the two stands a Savior. We know the truth because the truth has set us free. The truth has made us into new creations and continues to usher us into greater

measures of strength and freedom every day as we sincerely follow Christ. We do not hold to a mere concept about God, we have the living reality of God inside of us. And so the question arises: Why is it that we, knowing the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, so often remain silent?

■ THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:7–8). Paul identifies the root of this problem of remaining silent as fear or more specifically, as I see it, the fear of man—a fear of retaliation and rejection. It is not debatable that we are going to experience rejection when we choose to stand for what represents God in a godless hour. Yet just as Paul warned Timothy, we are not to back away in the face of difficulty. God is willing to give us the power we need to partake of the inconvenience, the rejection, the scorn, the retaliation—these "afflictions" of the gospel.

It is helpful to understand that the fear of man finds its fuel source in our sin nature. It all began when Satan was no longer content to be a worshiper in heaven—rather, he longed to be worshiped. That lust in his heart led him to think

outside of the parameters that God had established for him. When he came to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he subsequently sowed that fallen nature into the human race—a desire to live and think independently of God, ultimately wanting to be as God.

***God alone can
give us the
ability to escape
being governed
by the praise or
the criticism
of people.***

With that sin nature now entrenched in humanity, the next step was the innate desire to be worshiped—and so fallen man began to turn to one another for approval. That is why we tend to be so greatly affected by other people's opinions of us; why our whole identity suddenly hinges on whether we are a success or failure in other people's eyes. In fact, this lust for the praise of man has driven many to industries where they can live in a realm of applause and accolades. Although they may realize the trap of it by the time they reach some pinnacle of adoration, they nevertheless become addicted to men's approval and can no longer live without it.

Consider how tragic it would be to stand before the Lord one day and have somebody we once knew look us in the eye and say, "You knew the truth. You knew there was a heaven and a hell! I know I was nasty, but why didn't you open your mouth and tell me anyway? You knew I was going to go here. You knew my children would end up here. Why didn't you speak to me?"

Sadly, the only reason any child of God would have is: "I longed for your favor more than the favor of God. I wanted you to like me. I didn't want you to laugh at me; I wanted your accolades and praise." What a trap it is when we love the praise of men more than the praise of God!

■ THE POWER OF LOVE

According to Paul, the only way to escape this snare of the fear of man is by calling out to God, knowing that He has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind. God alone can give us the ability to escape being governed by the praise or the criticism of people. Furthermore, the Scriptures tell us, "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...*" (1 John 4:18, NKJV). The love of God will not only drive out fear, but it will compel us to go back to those who are living without God in order to do them good, irrespective of their response toward us.

No doubt Jesus had the power to resist the accolades of man. The Bible tells us, "*When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone*" (John 6:15). We know that Jesus was so full of the love of God that He allowed Himself to be given for the needs of the very ones who opposed Him. When people walked by His cross and reviled Him, wagging their heads and gambling for His garments, the only thing that came out of His mouth was, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34, NKJV). This is the perfected love of God! It is this perfected love that will empower us to do what we are called to do in this generation—to love those who hate us, for their souls' sake.

On the other hand, the one who fears is not perfected in the love of God.

He is as the blind man who was touched by Jesus yet only saw people as trees walking (see Mark 8:22–25). In other words, this man had only half a vision. Similarly, when you and I do not have a heart to see people the way God sees them, we will be driven back by their hard looks and condescension. However, when that blind man was willing to be touched by the Lord a second time, he lifted his eyes and suddenly saw all men clearly.

■ DESPERATE FOR A TOUCH

If you are desperate to be a witness for Jesus Christ—if you are tired of being one thing in church but another outside; if there is a cry inside of you that says, "God, I have had enough of this powerlessness! I don't care who laughs at me or who thinks I have lost my mind. I want Your power to be able to stand for Jesus Christ!"—then I have good news for you: God is willing to touch you again, just as He did that blind man.

When I first got saved, I genuinely loved going church, loved the fellowship, loved worshiping God. But for the first couple of years, this devotion to God somehow just would not translate into what happened outside of church. I recall walking down the street with some of my friends at the police department and seeing a Christian walking toward us. I immediately began to cringe inside, for I did not mind giving somebody a hug and a "God bless you" at church, but not on the street in front of my friends!

I remember finally coming to the point where I was tired of being ashamed of Christ in public. In fact, it drove me to such desperation that one day while I was in my patrol car, I literally punched the steering wheel and cried, "I am sick of this! God, I am going to serve You if it kills me!"

Shortly thereafter, a Christian police officer at work invited me to go down

to the prison to share the gospel. He added that the chief had granted permission for us to do so in uniform. Aware of unrest that recently took place there, I warned him, “If there is another disturbance in that prison and we are wearing our uniforms, we are dead!”

“I know,” he casually replied. “So do you want to come or not?” I suddenly had a flashback to a couple of days before when I hit the steering wheel, telling God that I would serve Him if it killed me—and I eventually consented.

On our way to the prison, he told me, “A friend of mine is an affiliate of the Outlaws (a type of Hells Angels motorcycle gang in Canada) and it is his one-year spiritual birthday. Do you want to stop by the halfway house where he is?” I agreed, concluding that the halfway house certainly sounded more appealing than the regional prison.

When we arrived, I was astonished to find the whole place full of heavy-duty ex-cons who loved God and were talking about Jesus! They were completely unashamed to tell me of the things they had done in the past, yet also about how God had saved and filled them with the Holy Spirit.

The director of the house ended up inviting us to stay for a service they were having, which turned out to be a phenomenal time of worship and testimonies in the presence of God. At the end of the service, all of these ex-cons gathered around and asked me, “Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?” I quickly reverted to my theology and replied, “Of course. When I received Christ, I was filled with the Holy Spirit” (which is true in measure).

“Yeah, but have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?”

I looked at them and thought to myself, “Well, of course, you guys need that. You are just getting out of jail, so God has to give you something to help reintegrate you into society.”

They persisted, “Will you let us pray that God will give you His Spirit?”

I finally said, “Alright, you can pray for me.” As I stood there, clad in full uniform, one of the guys went to stand behind me—and I immediately objected, “Get away from me! Don’t stand there!” I was never comfortable with people standing behind me.

***There comes
a point in the
testimony of the
Christian church
when we realize
that we simply do
not have time to
argue doctrine
any longer.***

Although they told me I would be wise to have someone stand there, I insisted that I was fine and proceeded to lift my hands as they began to pray. The next thing I knew, I hit the hardwood floor! I certainly was not expecting that to happen! I remember lying there, speaking in another tongue, half thinking that if the chief ever found out about what was happening, he would have me admitted to a psychiatric hospital.

I left that place wondering, “Was that real? Did that really happen to me?” At the time, I was being disciplined in a church that did not believe in the second touch of the power of God for the purpose of witnessing for Christ. Yet all the way home in my car,

whenever I would open my mouth, this “river” would flow out. I was so aware of the presence of God.

Entering the door of our farmhouse, I exclaimed to my wife, “Hey, listen to this!” as I started to speak in tongues. I then went outside and began running through the fields of our farm, shouting and praising and speaking in tongues. All the while, my wife was thinking, “My husband has lost his mind!” Yet she eventually saw an incredible change in my life. I was no longer bound by fear; no longer ashamed to speak the name of Jesus Christ.

■ APPOINTED TO SPEAK

God had put a compelling love in my heart. Yes, there were times when I was opposed and even threatened. Nevertheless, I simply could not remain silent, for I genuinely cared about the people I was speaking to. It was not a program or something I felt obligated to do, nor was I merely waiting for the right moment to toss someone a tract. No! I was compelled to speak about Jesus Christ. Men and women around me were dying in their sin, and somebody with the compassion of God had to speak to them. This is the calling on each one of our lives.

Paul said it this way: “*Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things*” (2 Timothy 1:11–12). Paul said, “I suffer, I am called, and I am appointed.” In the same way, each of us is appointed by God to be a vocal witness of the truth. We are not called to be silent in this hour. We are called to stand for what we believe in; to testify of how God has transformed us and continues to work in our lives. We are called to stand unashamed rather than cowering down under the sneers of fallen humanity. And God has made a way for us to do so.

STAYING SILENT IN A PERILOUS TIME

Prior to these verses, Paul said to Timothy, “...but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:8–9). It is according to His own purpose and grace! It is as if God is saying, “I saw you coming, and I made a way for you. I made a way to cut the cords of needing the praise and approval of man. I made a way for you to fulfill My holy calling on your life—not just in part but in full measure. I made a way for you to love people with a supernatural love. I am willing to fill you with My Holy Spirit, giving you courage to stand as a voice for the kingdom of God—not by your ability, but by My Spirit!”

***Ask the Lord to
touch your life
again and fill you
afresh with His
Holy Spirit.***

Not only can we not afford to remain silent, there comes a point in the testimony of the Christian church when we realize that we simply do not have time to argue doctrine any longer. Instead, we recognize that we need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to stand up and do what we are called to do. Remember, God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind. It is only the power and love of God that will compel

us to open our mouths and reach out to people in a time when godlessness appears to be pulling into the fast lane. And it is the sound mind that says, “God’s promises are true. What He has done for others throughout history, He will also do for me.” After all, Jesus Himself said, “If a son asks for bread, his father will not give him a stone. How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?” (see Matthew 7:9–11).

And so I encourage you today to ask the Lord to touch your life again and fill you afresh with His Holy Spirit. Ask Him to perfect you in the love of Christ—a love that will cast out all fear; a love that will not allow you to remain silent in a perilous time!

Carter Conlon
©2013 Times Square Church

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.

Tel:

212-541-6300

Fax:

212-541-6415

Church Location:

237 West 51st Street
Between Broadway & 8th Avenue

Mailing Address:

1657 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10019

e-mail:

info@timesquarechurch.org

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

tscnyc.org

This newsletter is an edited version of “STAYING SILENT IN A PERILOUS TIME,” a sermon given on June 9, 2013 in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the King James Version.