

Dear Friend,

I am so thankful for the many notes of encouragement that come back to us through this newsletter. Although thousands of letters are sent out, I have the privilege of reading your words and being thankful that we are able to mutually encourage each other in the Lord.

Here in New York City much good is happening. Last Sunday, so many who had just given their lives to Jesus Christ came for prayer that there was hardly any room left in the lower lobby of Times Square Church. It truly seems as if the floodgates of life have opened. There was such joy in our recent city Pastors Prayer meeting that tears as well as shouts of victory freely flowed.

We have waited for about ten years for this season of breakthrough for the spiritual leaders. I recently told somebody that over the last several years I have often sighed as much as I have breathed! The battle has been intense, but the souls of people and the glory of God make it all worthwhile.

Press on, my dear friend. The days may indeed be dark; however, according to Jesus, you and I are the light of the world.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

## AN HOUR OF HOLY DESPERATION

by Carter Conlon

You and I are living in what I call "an hour of holy desperation." Our society is degenerating very rapidly and horrific crimes are occurring so often that we are becoming dulled to it all. The abnormal is becoming normal; evil is becoming good. As you look around, perhaps you wonder, "How do I fit into this moment in time? What can God do through my life? And if He is going to do something, why is it that my prayers, that I know are according to His Word, have not yet been answered?"

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### ■ A DESPERATE HOUR

To help address some of these questions, let's look at another time in history when a desperate hour came upon a nation. The book of First Samuel speaks of a season when there was no clear word or vision. The priesthood that was supposed to represent God was instead deeply compromised (see 1 Samuel 2:22–24, 3:1). God's character, purpose, and

mind were hidden from the people, leaving them without answers to the questions in their hearts: "What is happening in our society? Where are we going?" What despondency must have filled those who came into the temple!

We see later that the Israelites began to be defeated by their enemies—thirty thousand of them fell before the Philistines (see 1 Samuel 4:10). The testimony of God was being diminished and an enemy had come in and was dictating the terms of society and culture, leaving the people of God seemingly powerless to stand against it. To make matters worse, the Ark of God, which represented the presence, comfort, power and provision of God, had been captured. And so the entire city began to cry out in despair (see 1 Samuel 4:13, 17).

This situation was very similar to the day in which we live—when it seems as if the presence of God—His power and provision that we have known throughout our history—is suddenly gone. It appears that the enemies of God now have the upper hand, dictating to us when we can pray, what we can teach our children, what is right and what is wrong. As a result, a deep cry is beginning to form in the hearts of the people.

Psalm 107 also speaks of these seasons of holy desperation that

recurred throughout history. The psalmist describes a people who were wandering, hungry, fainting, and held captive. It was a time marked by a foolish handling of the truth of God. Eventually, as economies were failing, even the prosperous began to lose hope. Yet it is in these very moments of desperation that the general population begins to cry out to God, as is evidenced in our day. There is a cry rising in this generation—a cry not necessarily heard by the natural ear, but God hears it. It is like the time He came to Moses and said, “I have heard the cry of the people and I have come down to deliver them” (see Exodus 3:7–8). In other words, I have heard their groans of hopelessness. Today the Lord hears the cries of those whose dreams have been shattered, of parents whose children have gone astray as a godless value system has been infused upon them from all directions, of those who ask, “What happened to us as a nation? What has rendered us so foolish that we dare to handle the truth of God’s Word so casually?”

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### ■ GOD’S ANSWER

When such a cry comes into the hearts of so many people, what is the Lord’s response? I believe the answer is found in the book of First Samuel where we began. God allows a holy desperation to come not only into the nation, but also into the hearts of those He will use to call the people back to Himself. In this case, it was a barren woman named Hannah.

*“And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons? So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore” (1 Samuel 1:6–10).*

Here we see Hannah at a place of holy desperation—a place where many of us are today. Note that this desperation differs from that of the world living apart from God. People without God are crying out as circumstances begin to overwhelm them; as despair and hopelessness fill their hearts. We, on the other hand, are not a people without hope. Nevertheless, there is a deep cry forming within many of God’s people.

Perhaps lately you have been asking, “Lord, why haven’t You answered my prayer yet? I have asked You for freedom, for I read in the gospels that freedom is promised to me. Doesn’t the Scripture say, ‘You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free’? Didn’t You tell us that we shall have life, and we shall have it more abundantly?”

Hannah must have had similar questions in her heart as she went to the temple year after year, crying out to God for something she believed should be hers according to the Word of God. Remember, the importance of having a family was embedded in that culture; it defined people in that era. It was the deepest desire of Hannah’s heart, and she knew she was praying to the God who makes provision for all; the God who could do

anything. Yet for some reason He was withholding the answer.

I can imagine the enemy constantly taunting her, “Look at you—barren, fruitless. God must have a controversy with you. No wonder He is not answering your prayer.” And all the while, the nation was spiraling deeper down and farther away from God. The Philistines were gathering on the borders, increasing in boldness and in number, intending to swallow the testimony of God in the earth.

## ***Have you been experiencing a yearning, an inner groaning in prayer, yet you are not quite sure why or where it is leading you?***

How hopeless the whole situation can appear sometimes...unless, of course, there is a bigger purpose that we do not realize; unless God has waited for something that we have not considered.

The Bible tells us that Hannah eventually reached a point of desperation where she could not even form words anymore. I have experienced that in my own prayer time before—where I come to a point of simply having nothing left to say. But it is in those very moments, just as it says in Romans, that *“the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26).

Have you been experiencing a yearning, an inner groaning in

prayer, yet you are not quite sure why or where it is leading you? Rest assured, there is a divine purpose in it. A God-breathed holy desperation has come into your heart, and it is no accident that it is happening in this particular moment in history. It is evidence that God desires to do something in and through you.

#### ■ WHAT GOD IS WAITING FOR

The Scriptures tell us that Hannah, in her most desperate hour, finally *“vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head”* (1 Samuel 1:11).

That is what God was waiting for! You see, oftentimes when we receive an answer too quickly, our human tendency is to take the answer home. Sure, we may testify of how God was faithful and blessed us, but ultimately we will take the blessing and consume it on ourselves. That is why often God must wait until we come to a point of holy desperation just as Hannah did—a place where we purpose in our heart to take that answer and give it back to the Lord for His glory.

At the time, Hannah had no idea that this holy desperation was what God was producing in His own people as His answer to the peril her country was facing. What she did know, however, was that there would be a cost accompanying her vow. Imagine how difficult it must have been, knowing that the priesthood was completely backslidden and the nation was in declension, yet still choosing to bring her son—the desire of her heart she had prayed for for so long—and commit him to the temple.

## *The life Christ blesses us with is not for ourselves but rather for others.*

I can picture what Hannah’s neighbors must have been saying as she left for the temple that last time with her little boy. “What in the world are you doing, Hannah? God finally answered your prayer and gave this child to you!” It is the same thing that you and I will have to fight along the way—the false reasoning; the advice of those who would never walk such a journey. “What are you doing, going to the mission field? Why are you putting yourself in such a position? Why are you denying yourself? Is this not the desire of your heart? Isn’t it God who gave you this blessing? Why are you giving it back to Him?”

Somehow Hannah had the sense to know that the life Christ blesses us with is not for ourselves but rather for others. It was something she realized back in the temple when she first made that vow to the Lord, promising to bring back to Him the life He would give. In fact, it was at that point that Hannah went away with her countenance no longer sad (see 1 Samuel 1:18).

The incredible thing is that *“ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel”* (1 Samuel 3:3–4). God’s great plan was in this child! God called Samuel, and he became one of the greatest prophets in the time of the judges. Through Samuel, the truth of God came again to a generation that had lost their moorings, for he had a word that people trembled under. Samuel wept over King Saul; he anointed King David. And it all

came from this woman’s cry of holy desperation.

#### ■ A DIVINE PURPOSE

And now, before the light goes out in your city, before all hope is lost, God is calling to the light within you. You are the answer to the cries of this generation—a generation that is wandering, lonely, captivated by immorality, thirsting for something that is lasting.

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That is the reason for the groaning and the unrest you have been feeling. That is the reason for the delay in the answer to your prayer. God has been waiting for you to reach that place of holy desperation where you finally pray, “Lord, I am coming to You one more time, and if You answer me—if You give me freedom, if You give me life, if You birth something divine inside of me—I am not going to take it home to consume it on my own personal desires. I will bring it back to You, even if it will cost me. All I ask is that You use it for Your glory. I believe that somehow through my life, the kingdom of God will advance and the works of the devil will be destroyed. Even those who oppose their own salvation will be set free.”

This is the desperate cry God has been waiting for in a desperate hour. We do not have ten years to get this right. I dread to think what this

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nation will look like ten to fifteen years from today if there is not a spiritual awakening among God's people. That is why we must awaken to the fact that we are not called to a picnic—we are called to a war for the souls of men. We are called to be a sign that astounds those who live according to their own reasoning and their own strength. We are not powerless; we have the One who created the universe by the Word of His mouth living inside of us! Every son and daughter of God has access to His resources and power in full.

Yet sadly, we have lived far beneath our position in Christ in this generation. The Church of Jesus Christ must awaken out of her slumber. We must get out of our mindset that it is all about my needs, my house, my fulfillment. No! Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. The Bible tells us that Hannah later gave birth to three sons and two daughters. She sought first the kingdom of God, and He gave her what would bring her into that place of completeness she had always longed for.

It is interesting to note that even before Hannah was brought to that place in her life, on the day she left Samuel in the temple, she prayed an incredible prayer:

*“My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God...The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble...The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed” (1 Samuel 2:1–10).*

In other words, the people of God will be given life again. There will be strength, there will be provision, there will be victory. We may not fully understand how, but we do know that when holy desperation drives us to the place where we truly purpose to bring back to God what He gives us, an answer to the cry in this generation will come out of it!

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	Prayer Service	
Friday	7:00PM	The Gate*	

\*Youth and Young Adult Service

**tscnyc.org**

This newsletter is an edited version of “AN HOUR OF HOLY DESPERATION,” a sermon given on **September 8, 2013** in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at [tscnyc.org](http://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.