

Dear Friend,

At our affiliated Bible school in Pennsylvania (summitpa.org), the cornerstone motto upon which all theological learning is built is that "we are called to live for the benefit of others." This, in essence, is where the true strength of the Christian life is found. When we theologically turn to self-focus, we generally end up in a state of spiritual laziness, personal indulgence and an overall absence of focus.

The most tragic result, however, is a loss of the true testimony of the reality and power of God in and through our lives. This is what the accompanying story of the life of King David is all about. There are definite times in our lives when we have to choose how and for whom we will live. We are at such a crossroads now in America. The choices you and I make today will affect not only ourselves but also those who will follow us.

After reading this message, I urge you to prayerfully ask the Lord if something in your life needs to change. He will answer you and without doubt will give you and me the power to live in a way that will change the future for many.

With much love,

Pastor Carter Conlon

IF ONLY DAVID HAD CALLED FOR HIS CHARIOT

by Carter Conlon

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love'" (Revelation 2:1–4, NKJV).

Drifting from God is often gradual and thus hardly discernible.

While people who have been in the kingdom of God for only a short time have a tendency to draw back into sinful practices, those who have walked with God for a long time often have the potential to draw back into something much more insidious. That is what happened to the church at Ephesus. They were a church with a zeal for truth; they had done good works in the name of Jesus. Yet, despite their history of incredible victory, there was a dissipation happening in the hearts of the people—they were moving out

of the place of loving Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. And so this church at Ephesus faced a moment that would potentially determine their future.

Until the warning came, they were unaware of their condition. Drifting from God does not start on Monday and culminate on Wednesday. It is often gradual and thus hardly discernible, occurring over a season of months or even years. Now in order for you and me to fully understand what was happening in the church at Ephesus, let's go back and consider the testimony of one of Israel's greatest kings—King David.

■ THE INITIAL VICTORIES

Just like the church at Ephesus, David loved God with all his heart in those first years. He took care of the little things he was given to do, and he did them unto the Lord with all his heart. When a lion came to take one of his father's sheep out of the flock, David caught it by its beard and delivered the lamb from its mouth (see 1 Samuel 17:34–35). He could have easily concluded, "Well, it's only a lamb, let the lion take it," but that was not what was in his heart. He knew that God had entrusted something to him, and therefore he was willing to risk his life in order that all he was given to do would be fulfilled.

David had a burning inward concern for the testimony and honor of God.

When he walked into the Israelite camp and saw a giant called Goliath defying the name of God while His people simply stood there in fear, David said to King Saul, *“Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.”* Moreover David said, *“The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”* And Saul said to David, *“Go, and the Lord be with you!”* (1 Samuel 17:36–37, NKJV).

Envy, lies, rumors—these all come with the cup of leadership.

All David initially had for weaponry was a donkey, cheese, bread, raisins and greetings for his brothers. But later he went down to a stream and gathered five smooth stones fashioned by the hand of God, and he ultimately won a marvelous victory for Israel. David was willing to press through all the unbelief around him in order to fight for the honor of God’s name.

After the spectacular victory against Goliath, David had to learn yet another lesson of leadership—pressing through the envy of others. *“So the women sang as they danced, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.’ Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, ‘They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?’ So Saul eyed David from that day forward”* (1 Samuel 18:7–9, NKJV). Envy, lies, rumors—these all come with the cup of leadership, which David discovered. We, too, will have to face things that will challenge the very core of who we are as followers

of Jesus Christ. Yet, ultimately, we are called to represent the One who went to a cross and gave Himself for all mankind, saying, *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do”* (Luke 23:34, NKJV).

■ THE GREATEST ENEMY

After all these victories, David eventually came to the point where he encountered the greatest enemy he would ever have to fight—himself! More specifically, his own fallen nature. You and I also have this fallen nature within that we must battle. In spite of what the Lord tells us to do, there is something inside of us that attempts to craft another way. And so we take something that is deficient, though it may not necessarily be evil in its inception, and we call it good. Ultimately, we head in a direction that begins to deplete the passion for God from our hearts—our ability to believe God and press through unbelief; our desire to persevere despite the personal cost. That is what happened to David.

“It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold” (2 Samuel 11:1–2, NKJV).

It was a time for battle, yet David tarried. Historians tell us that he was somewhere between 53 and 59 years of age at this time. Perhaps by this point in his life David was simply tired—tired of praying, tired of seeking God, tired of putting his life on the line. Or maybe he was bored with victory; maybe success had been too much a part of his life. After all, he had reached the pinnacle. The Bible tells us that when David

conquered Jerusalem, the fear of him went throughout all the nations of the earth. There wasn’t a nation at that time that didn’t know about this man that God was with. Up until this point, everything that God had promised was still his.

Remember, the devil never paints the whole picture!

Now, in this place of success, we find David lying down in the middle of the day. He gets up in the evening when he should have been going to bed, and he walks over to the edge of the rooftop of his palace. What was he looking at over the edge of his roof? Were there not lambs in the city waiting for deliverance? Were there not soldiers on the front lines who once again needed him to bring greetings and encouragement? Surely there were some in that city who were crying out for help. There must have been children without fathers; weak ones whom the devil was trying to devour.

What happened to David that he could no longer see God had still entrusted lambs to his care? What happened to that young man who walked into the ranks of the armies of Israel, jealous for the honor of God?

■ WHEN THE DEVIL PAINTS A PICTURE

It is important to realize that the devil loves to paint a picture for everyone—a beautiful, idyllic picture. *“Oh, if you can just get that villa in Nassau and spend your winters there, how peaceful life will be! You can swing in a hammock under the palm trees, listening to sermons online.”*

The devil paints these nice pictures in order to take us right out of the battle, and I am certain that he painted an enticing picture for David. *“Oh David, you have worked hard. David, you have fought a long battle. David,*

just enjoy yourself! Satisfy yourself! How wonderful it will be to spend just an evening or two with this woman that you see from your rooftop!” With seeds planted, eventually the lust of David’s heart begins to take over his thinking. He starts seeking after what will gratify him and therefore ends up taking something deficient and calling it good.

Beware when the thought comes, “Take ease. You’ve fought long enough!”

In that critical moment, David looked at the picture before him and made a wrong choice. Now you and I would be wise to learn from his mistake, remembering that the devil never paints the whole picture! In this case, he left out the four dead sons that would result from the wrong decision David made with Bathsheba; the cries of lament that would come: *“O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee”* (2 Samuel 18:33). Out of that relationship also came a son called Solomon who took his father’s lust and multiplied it by ten. He built heathen temples and died a disillusioned old man. Solomon had a son named Rehoboam who forsook the counsel of those who knew the presence of God and was responsible for splitting the kingdom of Israel into two, paving the way for its captivity.

Oh no, the devil doesn’t paint the whole picture! He leaves out the dead kids, the broken homes, the divided kingdom. He leaves out the anguish, the sorrow, the heartache—all of these things that came into David’s life. Beware when you start to be led by the desires of your own heart and no longer by the Word of God. Beware when the thought comes, “Take ease. You’ve worked hard enough. You’ve fought long enough!”

■ A PIVOTAL POINT

The devil was not the only one who had painted a picture for David. The Lord had once given David an incredible promise. *“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever”* (2 Samuel 7:16). In other words, “David, walk with Me, and I will bless you and your house; your heritage and your future! There will never fail to be somebody from your house sitting on the throne of Israel.”

Yes, God promises to bless us, but His blessing is not unconditional. We cannot walk away from Him and still expect to see the blessings He promised us when we were walking with Him. There are always consequences to the choices that we make. And we all come to those pivotal points in life that have the potential to greatly impact the course of our future, just as David did.

I cannot help but think—if only David had made a different choice at that pivotal moment. Instead of saying, “Bring me that woman!” if only he had said, “Bring me my chariot! There are still lions devouring out there. There are still soldiers who need encouragement!” Or perhaps even better than that, he should have said, “Bring me my mule, and load it with cakes and raisins and cheese. I am going to go and see my brothers. I am going to go see Uriah. I am going to find out how they are doing in the battle, and I am going to encourage them. I may be too old to lift up a sword now, but I can still go there in the midst of them and encourage them!”

■ FINDING OUR WAY BACK

Sadly, David did make a wrong choice when he was up on that rooftop, never believing that he would become a murderer and a liar, leading people into defeat. Yet even then, David discovered that God was still merciful. David returned

to His first love because ultimately, as the Scriptures describe, he was a man after God’s own heart. Psalm 51 gives us a glimpse of his heart of repentance: *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest...Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit”* (Psalm 51:1–4, 10–12).

You have been invited into something so much bigger than yourself.

What a reminder for us that even if somewhere along the way we have made a wrong choice, we can still take heart. The Lord continued in His address to the church at Ephesus: *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works,”* (Revelation 2:5). In other words, come back and do the first works—those little things God gave you to do that you considered precious, and therefore you did them with all your heart. You pressed through the scorn of others, the unbelief, the discouragement, and you began to learn that God takes the foolish to confound the wise, the weak to confound the strong.

Jesus went on to say, *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that*

overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). The tree of life for you and me in the New Testament is the cross of Jesus Christ. The Lord is essentially saying to those who will heed His warning to repent and do the first works, “I will give to you to partake of the full victory that was won at Calvary—the strength, the vision, the power, the joy—that which the world does not have and can never offer.” You will not find these things in relationships or by relocating to some other place. You will not find it by joining some other ministry or finding some other new thing. You must learn to get the victory right where you are. That is what first love is all about, and with it are all the blessings that come only from the hand of God.

***Press through
the unbelief,
even if people
tell you that
nothing is
ever going to
happen through
your life.***

Remember, you have been invited into something so much bigger than yourself. God is calling you to lay hold of this new kingdom that He has invited you into, so whatever He places in your hand to do, I encourage you to do it with all your heart. Press through the unbelief, even if people or your own heart may tell you that nothing is ever going to happen through your life. And then when the day comes that you find yourself on the rooftop,

ask God to deliver you from the enemy within—from all of the thoughts that you have fought enough. Ask the Lord for the grace to look out and see all the children who still need deliverance, the people who still need encouragement, the battles that still need to be won for the honor and the glory of Jesus’ name—and then call for your chariot!

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	The Gate*	

*Youth and Young Adult Service

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This newsletter is an edited version of “IF ONLY DAVID HAD CALLED FOR HIS CHARIOT,” a sermon given on **November 23, 2014** 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.