

Dear Friend,

Yesterday during a live radio interview, the host made an interesting observation. She said words to this effect: "It seems to me that this country (America), like the Titanic, has struck an iceberg and we are rapidly sinking. However, many of our churches are like cabins below deck where soft music is playing and people are just relaxing and enjoying themselves. Where is the alarm among God's people?"

Interesting question. I suppose the deeper issue is whether or not we can still be stirred to action. Those of us who legitimately have the Spirit of Christ within us cannot possibly sit idly by while multitudes face the consequences of our national disregard for the ways of God. If God has given us a voice, then we must speak now. If we will ask Him, He will assuredly lift us all into His presence again and give us the heart, mind, passion and power we need to sound the alarm and call those who can hear back to the mercy of God. Though the ship may sink, thank God the cross still floats—and there is plenty of room for all!

Press on, my dear friend, press on!

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

## THE YEAR THAT KING UZZIAH DIED by Carter Conlon

*"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!' And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1–4, NKJV).*

What an incredible encounter Isaiah had with the Lord! And notice that it took place in the year that King Uzziah died. In order to understand the significance of the timing, it is important to know a little bit about Uzziah's life.

### *Greatness without godliness opens the gateway to a sorrowful and tragic finish.*

The book of Second Chronicles tells us that Uzziah was sixteen years old when he took the throne, and he went on to reign in Jerusalem for fifty-two years. Under his leadership, the nation rose to incredible heights of political, financial and military power, for "as long as he sought

*the Lord, God made him prosper"* (2 Chronicles 26:5). The people flourished, giftings were bestowed, and their ability to invent and produce new weapons of war made Judah the marvel of the nations.

You and I can lay claim to something similar in America. We are a young nation compared to most on the face of the earth today, yet it is indisputable that people who came to this country from all over the world were made strong by the hand of God. We were marvelously helped, wonderfully gifted, and became the envy of the world in many respects.

However, there is an important lesson that we must learn from Uzziah. His death was an ominous warning to the nation that greatness without godliness opens the gateway to a sorrowful and tragic finish.

#### ■ PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION

What exactly happened to Uzziah? The Scriptures explain it rather clearly: "*He was marvelously helped till he became strong. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense"* (2 Chronicles 26:15–16, NKJV).

Although it was an act clearly forbidden in the law, Uzziah decided to go into the temple to offer incense. This act was a type

of a society and its leadership becoming its own judge of what is right and what is wrong. He had known success for so long that his heart was lifted up in pride; he had reached a place where he assumed he could do nothing wrong in God's sight. Of course, the Bible warns us that pride always goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (see Proverbs 16:18).

Eighty priests of the Lord went in after Uzziah, warning him, "It is not for you to burn incense to the Lord!" (see 2 Chronicles 26:17–19). In other words, "What you are doing is not right. God has not prescribed it to be done this way. You are taking something that is wrong and calling it right; taking something evil and trying to call it good." Yet, as these men who represented the truth of God withstood this king of pride, he became furious with them. What a stark difference from those early years when he had sought the Lord in humility!

## *Why did we assume we could transgress the Word of God, which was once our own foundation, and not pay a price for it?*

Similarly, you and I are living in a time when a fury is mounting against those who speak for God. We are somewhere between persecution and prosecution in the house of God in this nation. Those who stand for truth, as Isaiah said, have become a prey of the ungodly—something to be vilified and cast down (see Isaiah 59:15).

With the censer still in his hand and anger rising in his heart, the Scriptures tell us that Uzziah's forehead broke out in leprosy. It was a visible sign of the spiritually diseased condition of his mind—an outward expression of what had long ago started to ferment inside of him. He found himself shamed for the rest of his days, and he died in a leper colony.

## *Once the envy of the nations, America is now becoming the mockery of the nations.*

This goes to show that the disease of the soul first manifests in the minds of the people and then in their subsequent behaviors. For example, where did we ever get the idea in this nation that we were as God—that we could declare what is good and what is evil? Why did we assume we could transgress the Word of God, which was once our own foundation, and not pay a price for it? We suppressed the truth we once knew and, as a result, we have subjected ourselves to living in an illusion and opened ourselves to a diseased mind.

It is just as the Apostle Paul warned in the book of Romans: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them...Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened...And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them

*over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting"* (Romans 1:18–21, 28).

Once the envy of the nations, America is now becoming the mockery of the nations. We are becoming increasingly weak and confused; we are paralyzed socially, politically, and morally. It is obvious that the hand of God is not upon us in the way it once was.

### ■ GOD'S RESPONSE

So how does God respond when a nation finds itself in such a perilous condition? First of all, remember that it was "in the year that King Uzziah died" that Isaiah saw the Lord. In other words, it was the year when all hope seemed to be gone. It was the year when military might was failing, the economy was in tatters, and enemies were laughing. It was the year when greatness and glory seemed to be something relegated to history, leaving people afraid for their future. It was the year that God responded with a final act of mercy to that generation, and He did so by drawing someone into His presence. That is what He always has done, and that is what He always will do.

*"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!' And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke"* (Isaiah 6:1–4). Isaiah was drawn into God's presence where he was given a revelation of the majesty, power, holiness and glory of the One whose purposes were being fulfilled in the earth.

Upon having this encounter with God, Isaiah immediately became aware of his own uncleanness as well as that of the people around him. *“So I said: ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts’”* (Isaiah 6:5).

Think about it—Isaiah was a religious man living in a religious nation; he even had some responsibility in the temple. Yet, until that moment, he had never fully seen the holiness of God. Suddenly, in the presence of the Lord, he understood that all of our human righteousness is as filthy rags. He understood that there is nothing we can do of our own accord—no sacrifice we make, no good thing we produce—that will ever give us the right to stand in the presence of a holy God.

Keep in mind that the nation had been faltering because of pride under Uzziah’s leadership. At this point, the only thing that could counterbalance it would be a people who were not filled with pride but rather humility, so the timing of Isaiah’s encounter was strategic.

Once Isaiah was humbled in the presence of the Lord, the Scriptures describe an amazing transaction that took place: *“One of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged’”* (Isaiah 6:6–7, NKJV). In other words, beyond recognizing his own uncleanness and that of the people, Isaiah now saw the willingness of God to forgive those who would turn back to Him! Isaiah did not have to plead or beg for it. Mercy came and

touched him, and he became aware that it was the delight of God to forgive and cleanse.

Similarly, in our day those who have been humbled because they have been in the presence of the Lord begin to recognize His incredible mercy. They understand that it is in God’s heart to forgive every man, woman, and child in America. He doesn’t want to judge! It is His desire to gather a people to Himself once again.

#### ■ A DIFFICULT MINISTRY

After being touched by mercy, Isaiah began to hear the thoughts of God’s own heart as He was conversing with Himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’”* (Isaiah 6:8). In other words, who will go and be an ambassador of mercy to this undeserving people?

*“Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’ And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’” Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.’ Then I said, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered, ‘Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump’”* (Isaiah 6:8–13, NKJV).

Isaiah was eager to be sent as an ambassador of mercy, yet God was warning him that this ministry was not going to be easy. Nevertheless,

it would make an eternal difference in one out of ten people that he would speak to.

By drawing a parallel to a tree that is cut down but still has life remaining in its stump—eventually causing a new tree to sprout forth—God was essentially telling Isaiah, “This society has reached a point where the majority are against My ways. Despite the fact that you have stood in My presence, they are so bent on being their own god that most will not repent. Nevertheless, for your effort, one in ten will hear what you have to say. Even though the nation goes into trial and cities are laid waste, there will be one in ten who will have My life planted within them. No matter what happens around them, they will live. They will stand and endure; they will be like a tree planted by the rivers of living water.”

***Who will be  
willing to stand,  
facing the fear of  
rejection and the  
pride of wanting  
to be loved by  
everyone?***

One in ten! Of course, that one in ten will still have to go through the same sorrow and trials as everyone else. However, a seed of God’s life will be found within them, enabling them to live when all around them seems lost.

#### ■ WHO WILL GO?

And so this is my question for you now: Is the one in ten worth it? Is it worth suffering the rejection, the scorn, the vilification, the sneers, the lies of the nine—everything that we will have to endure in this generation if we desire to stand for God? Now bear in mind that if God gives us one in ten, it means that more than 30 million people in

the United States will turn back to Him! Some who are already walking with God will be strengthened, others who are backslidden will come home, and many who do not know God will find Him.

***When God is about to use your life in a deeper way, you will become very aware of your own failures and frailties.***

Oh, can you hear the voice of God calling out once again, “Who will go? Who will be willing to stand, facing the fear of rejection and the pride of wanting to be loved by everyone? Who will go and tell the people of this generation about My desire to forgive in spite of their folly? Who will tell them that if they will just come and stand in My presence, I will touch them and plant within them new life and new hope?”

Perhaps you have thought lately, “I cannot even bring myself to speak the name Jesus in my workplace. I am such a coward!” Or maybe all you can see are your struggles and failures, and you wonder how you could ever be a mouthpiece for the Lord. Yet the beauty of the story of Isaiah is that at the point when he says, “Here I am, send me!” he is still undone. He is weak, and he knows it. He knows that he has no right to boast of himself, for he has seen what he is without God.

In the same way, when God is about to use your life in a deeper way, you will become very aware of your own failures and frailties. However, it is in that place of brokenness and humility—that place where you are completely undone and keenly aware that you do not have the right to even speak the name of Jesus—that you truly recognize God’s mercy in your life. In His mercy, He has forgiven you, cleansed you, covered you and called you. And if He is willing to do that for you, He is willing to do the same for others around you.

Therefore, this is not a time to be silent. This godlessness of our generation is not going to go away on its own. Light must counter it and you and I are the light of this world. We are the hope of this generation.

Remember, it is in God’s heart to use those of us who feel like we are undone. People who have been humbled in the sight of God tend to have a natural compassion for people in our society who are indulging in all sorts of behavior. They will not speak with arrogance, simply presenting another argument. No! They will stand humbly before people, speaking with kindness. Just as they have been touched with the tenderness of God, tenderness will emerge from their lips. These are the ones whom God will use as His ambassadors in this hour, for they will be sent with one message to declare: “God is good, and His mercy endures forever!”

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

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