

Dear Friend,

I hope this newsletter and the new year finds you growing in faith and expectation of what the Lord is about to do through your life.

As you read this message, you may feel as Gideon did when the messenger greeted him, calling him a mighty man of resources. If you and Gideon were reading this together, you both might have the same response: "Goodness! Is He ever unaware of who He is talking to!" That is quite simply the problem we all have in our natural reasoning. The real obstacle, however, is that we are most often quite unaware of Who is speaking to us and why.

If you examine the pattern of God throughout history, you see that when times seem to be the darkest, He calls out to those of us who seem to be the least likely candidates to make a difference. He is unoffended by our initial disbelief and continues to move us toward His plan and power to accomplish the victory into which we have been invited.

Just as with Gideon, Jesus has a plan for your family and the people over which your life will have influence. All He asks is that you seek Him in prayer and do what He leads you to do. When this happens, the supernatural begins, and you become keenly aware that you are not alone in this battle.

I believe that 2016 will be the year of answered prayer! As a matter of fact, I know that if you will start to pray anew today, His victory will also become yours.

Yours, in Christ,
Pastor Carter Conlon

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, HURRY UP AND DIE

by Carter Conlon

In all likelihood, many of you are very familiar with Psalm 23, but I would like to consider this portion of Scripture in the context of a life well-lived in God. I believe that the Christian life, at least as has been the case in America, is generally lived in two stages, both of which are ordained of God and supernaturally lived. These two stages are beautifully illustrated in Psalm 23, so let's take a look, starting at the beginning.

There comes a point when each person has to sign over the rights to his life to the One who bought him with a price.

David's song opens with the words, "*The Lord is my shepherd*" (Psalm 23:1). Can you, too, say today that the Lord is your shepherd? In other words, have you truly transferred the ownership and direction of your life over to God? Consider this: If I were to tell you that I was going to give you my car, the transaction would not be complete until I signed off on the title and you went down to the Department of Motor Vehicles and got it registered in your name. At that point, with the title in hand, you would be able to rightfully say, "This car belongs to me."

Now, a lot of people want to call Jesus their shepherd, yet they do not want to release the rights of their lives over to Him. They may come to church and agree with a set of facts, understanding that there is a heaven and a hell and knowing that Jesus died for their sins. However, mental agreement with a set of facts is not salvation. There comes a point when each person has to sign over the rights to his life to the One who bought him with a price. Until that happens, one cannot honestly say, "The Lord is my shepherd."

There are other people who want to retain joint ownership. They come to the altar and sign over the "title" of their life, but they also say, "I will now be a co-owner with Jesus of what He purchased with His blood." However, the Lord will never be a passenger in any car! When you sign over the rights to your life, it does not mean co-ownership. He fully owns you! He owns the rights to your future—to wherever He calls you to go and whatever He calls you to be!

And then there is a third type of people who want to be the lien holders. In other words, they essentially say, "If You do not treat me the way I think You ought to, I am taking back the rights to my life." No! When we come to Christ, we cast ourselves on the

mercies of God. We make the choice to go with Him all the way—no turning back.

It is truly wonderful when you can rightfully say, “The Lord is my shepherd.” Yes, you may have struggles, and you may even argue with God at times. But if He is the Lord of your life, He will lead and guide you, using your life for His glory.

■ I SHALL NOT WANT

David then goes on to say, “*I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1). Having once been a shepherd myself, I well understand what this means. When we were younger, my wife and I had a sheep farm with sixty-eight females, two males, and a bunch of lambs, depending on the season. Sometimes when I got home after working all day, I would go sit in the barn among the sheep for an hour or so, just listening to them.

I was able to pick up on many things. You see, because I was their shepherd, their needs were my concerns. I could tell if there was trouble simply by the tension in the air. If they were chewing too fast, quite often it was because there was a sick lamb in their midst. Or perhaps a snake or rat had gotten into the barn. I would then get up and start looking around and I would always discover the problem!

And so when I gave my life to Christ, it became easy for me to understand that His heart is for me. His heart is to feed me when I am hungry, to calm all my fears, to reassure me by His presence that all will be well. Every need I have is of deepest concern for my shepherd, and so I know I shall not want!

■ HE MAKES ME TO LIE DOWN

“*He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters*” (Psalm 23:2).

I grew up in a house where I was taught to worry. Before my mother became a Christian, she worried so much that if there was nothing to worry about, she would worry about that! It seemed as if most of her sentences had “and die” at the end of them. “Don’t eat your food too fast—you will choke and die!” or “Be careful crossing the street—you might get hit by a car and die!” By the time I was fifteen years old, I was afraid to go out of the house.

Did you know that God has interwoven the honor of His name in you?

But when I came to Christ, He “made me to lie down in green pastures”—which meant reading the Word of God. I opened the Bible, and He began to reveal to me why I was born. I started to sense that there was a divine purpose for my life and that it would be achieved by His promises. I learned that God had not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind. He led me to a place of stillness in my spirit—a place where all of the clanging voices of doom and despair were silenced.

■ FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE

“*He restores my soul*” (Psalm 23:3). We all have pain and wounds from the past that threaten to dominate our thinking and our lives forever. However, the Lord restores our soul. He brings healing that cannot come any other way.

The verse continues: “*He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake*” (Psalm 23:3). Notice that God does this for His name’s sake. Did you know that God has interwoven the honor of His name in you? What an amazing thought!

God might say to the angels in heaven, “Do you want to see what I look like? Look at that person! I have interwoven the honor of My name in keeping that child of mine—leading, guiding, and transforming him into what he was destined to be!”

One day back on the farm, I was about to leave for work when I looked out the kitchen window and saw that about twenty of my sheep had escaped through a hole in the fence. They ended up underneath my neighbor’s deck next door. I was already dressed for work and didn’t have time to gather a bunch of people to help me get the sheep back. As I was trying to figure out what to do, I suddenly remembered that sheep love oats. I quickly put some in a can and carried it over to my neighbor’s porch. I then shook the can, saying, “Here, you ewes, come follow me!” Even though there were twenty sheep and only one little can of oats, they all felt certain they were going to get some, so they followed me down the road back home.

Wherever God is calling us to go will always be a place of safety and provision.

If I had left them there, I would have become known as the guy who lets his sheep wander all over the place. Therefore, for my name’s sake, I led them back to where they were supposed to be! That is exactly what God does. If you are where you shouldn’t be, you will soon find before you somebody with a “can of oats”—the promises of God. “Follow Me; I have something greater for your life! You don’t have to do this. You don’t have to be in this relationship. You don’t have to keep going to this club.”

Remember, wherever God is calling us to go will always be a place of safety and provision. I would never call my sheep home only to leave them high and dry in the barn. I would break open a bag of oats and fill the troughs so that they all had as much as they wanted!

■ THE BRIDGE

Did you notice that up until this point, Psalm 23 has been all about me? “The Lord is *my* shepherd, *I* shall not want. He makes *me* to lie down; He leads *me*; He restores *me*” (see Psalm 23:1–3). It has been all about my comfort, my promises, my healing and my being led.

Of course, all of these things are important. You don’t make demands of a child when he is learning to walk or read. A child needs constant reassurance that everything is going to be okay. And so the first three verses of Psalm 23 speak to me about the beginnings of the Christian walk. God is reassuring us that He will be with us, comfort us, provide for us, and lead us.

But then we come to the bridge. Just as a bridge in a song is a climactic build to something greater, verse four is a bridge that takes us to a deeper place as sons and daughters of God: “*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me*” (23:4). It is a bridge from that place of youthfulness to something deeper in God. It is where we fulfill our purpose as sons and daughters of God, representing Him in the earth. It is often a place where we must face our deepest inner fears; a place where we may feel incapable of doing what Christ is asking of us.

■ ELISHA'S JOURNEY

The Bible gives us another picture of this bridge in the story of Elijah and Elisha. Elisha was a young prophet in training who ended

up following Elijah across the Jordan River. This crossing was the bridge—representing death to an old way of living and birth to a new destiny.

It was the journey to life and power, yet they would not take it because it meant dying to something they did not want to let go of.

Before arriving at the Jordan, they passed by different cities with prophets who saw Elisha’s journey only as one of loss. They warned Elisha, “If you follow this path, you are going to lose your master! It is going to be difficult” (see 2 Kings 2:5). It is in such a place that many Christians stand idle in indecision, and some end up turning back. But not Elisha.

The Bible tells us that when Elijah crossed over the Jordan with Elisha following close behind, the people who knew truth watched, refusing to embark on the journey themselves. It was the journey to life and power, yet they would not take it because it meant dying to something they did not want to let go of; it meant a lifestyle that they were not prepared to embrace. They did not mind studying the Scriptures and knowing the history. But to be given for a failing, fallen society was not something they found palatable at all.

In America, this, too, has been the source of weakness in our testimony of Christ. Our theological focus has primarily been on ourselves. We have lived in verses one to three of

Psalm 23 for the last fifty years and, as a result, society is now turning against the testimony of Christ, with multitudes heading for hell. It is time for us to be willing to take the journey! We must go across the bridge in verse four and move on to something deeper for all of our lives.

Sadly, many will not cross the bridge because it means death to their own desires. It means entering into the work of God as mature sons and daughters, living for the benefit of others. Of course, it is not easy for any of us; we all inherently want to be happy and comfortable. Yet we are being called to this place known as the valley of the shadow of death.

■ A DEEPER JOY

David was willing to take the full journey, and we see in Psalm 23 that he eventually came to the place where he could say, “*Your rod and your staff, they comfort me*” (Psalm 23:4). He recognized that God was working through him an honorable and eternal purpose.

A self-focused Church will never touch this generation.

“*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies*” (Psalm 23:5). David was led to a table of divine strength in the midst of a hostile society. Although he was surrounded by enemies, he was able to sit down and eat with a peace deeper than any he had ever known; with confidence that could not be taken away from him.

David went on to say, “*You anoint my head with oil*” (Psalm 23:5). In other words, “Now I understand the purpose of my life. I thought I had won the victory in the days of Goliath, or when I sang my sweet songs and drove the devils away

from Saul. But then You led me through the valley of the shadow of death, and now that I have come out the other side, I see that my life is meant to be something greater than I once thought. I understand that this is about Your kingdom and Your people!”

“*My cup runs over*” (Psalm 23:5). Now gladness flowed out of his entire being. There is a joy available in the Christian life that is so deep and so far beyond just singing songs in church or feeling good about ourselves. The Lord and the angels in heaven rejoice every time a sinner returns home, and He is willing to let us share in this joy!

God is calling us to cross that bridge to where it is no longer about us but about His plans and purposes.

That means your joy will no longer merely be because there are oats in the barn or because you feel comfortable and warm. Your joy will be so far beyond all those former things you learned in verses one to three. Now it will be found in seeing the heart of God satisfied through your life in your generation.

■ GOODNESS AND MERCY

Lastly, David said, “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*” (Psalm 23:6). When I get to the

end of my journey, I want to be able to look behind me and see goodness and mercy in people’s lives. I want to be able to say, “Lord, You gave them to me, and I didn’t lose them. I did everything I knew to feed them and remind them that You care for them. I did everything I could to get them to follow me across the bridge so that they might be given for the needs of this society. I taught them that there is a table even in the presence of hateful places where, in the natural, we would rather not go.”

Which brings me back to the title of this newsletter: “For heaven’s sake, hurry up and die!” Let’s hurry up and die to ourselves and to our fears so that we can cross the bridge, making a way for many others to come to Christ. A self-focused Church will never touch this generation. That is why God is calling us to cross that bridge to where it is no longer about us but about His plans and purposes. So let’s go and be everything that God has called us to be. Let’s believe Him for the supernatural. Let’s allow Him to make us ambassadors of the Christ who went to a cross!

If we will allow Him to take us on this journey, God will cause us to make a difference in this world. He will give us grace and strength so that we might pave the way for countless others to find Him as Lord and Savior!

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

Live Webcast:
All our Sunday and Tuesday services can be watched live and replayed for seven days on our website.

tscnyc.org

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