

Dear Friend,

John Adams, one of the founding fathers of our country, said this: "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." Many others of Adams' era made similar comments, to the effect that men are incapable of rightly governing themselves unless their knee is bent to God. Some actually warned that our form of government, without submission to God at its core, could lead to tyranny.

For this reason, I plead with you to pray. The hour is more perilous than many of us realize. Remember the promise God once made to His people in 2 Chronicles 7:13–15. Please take time to read it again prayerfully—and remember that above all that screams and pleads to occupy our thoughts and time, first and foremost it's time to pray.

Yours, in Christ,
Pastor Carter Conlon

WHEN THE ONLY PRAYERS YOU HAVE LEFT ARE TEARS

by Carter Conlon

Have you found lately that when you go to pray, all you can do is weep? I am not referring to tears of gratitude or joy but rather the type of tears that stem from a deep, inner sorrow. It could be due to a sense of failure or unworthiness. Perhaps you walked with God at one time but ended up walking away and doing things you should not have done. Or maybe you once believed that you would make a difference in this society, but as you look at your life, you feel as if your walk with God has resulted in very little good being done. And now, every time you get down on your knees to pray, you have nothing left to say. All you can do is weep.

If this sounds familiar, I believe you will find comfort in the life of the apostle Peter. The book of Luke recounts a moment when Peter "*went out and wept bitterly*" (Luke 22:62). It was during a season he never thought would come to his life: a season of anger and misunderstanding.

***God was calling
you to make a
difference— not
just for you but for
those around you.***

Let's first take a moment to consider how Peter's walk with Jesus began. The Bible tells us that Jesus was

walking down a certain shore when He saw Peter and his brother, Andrew, fishing. At His invitation, Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed Him (see Matthew 4:18–20).

***You and I have
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healing.***

If you are a believer in Christ, you, too, have left something in order to follow Him—perhaps an old relationship or a practice you were involved in; a path you thought your life should take, or a career you believed would satisfy you. Yet you walked away from it because you felt that God was calling you to something deeper. You knew it would be something that would make a difference—not just for you but for your family and those around you.

The book of Matthew goes on to tell us that Peter, along with the other disciples, was given power to go out and proclaim the message of freedom and deliverance and to heal those who were sick (see Matthew 10:1). In the same way, you and I have been called to be ambassadors of freedom and healing. We can help people in

their time of illness—whether mental or physical. Even just one word has the potential to make a huge difference.

■ DIVINE REVELATION

At one point in his life, Peter got out of a boat and walked on water (see Matthew 14:29). By faith, he stepped out and began to see that the impossibilities of life become possible when you follow God's calling. I am sure you have discovered this as well. For instance, perhaps in the past you did not have the power to speak the truth, but because God's voice was calling you, you were given supernatural strength and ability.

In the next chapter of Matthew, we see that Peter had an incredible thirst for learning (see Matthew 15:15). Jesus was speaking a profound truth, and Peter—whose voice always seemed to be the first in, whether rightly or wrongly—essentially said, “Explain this to us! I want to understand.” This is the type of person who comes to church, opens his Bible and says, “God, I want You to speak to me. I want to know truth and walk in it!”

The Scriptures go on to tell us, “*When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’*” (Matthew 16:13–16). In other words, “You are the promised One! You are the One who has come to set us free. You are the One who is going to establish a kingdom on earth that will never end—a kingdom of truth and righteousness.”

Jesus said to him, “You are blessed, Peter, because you did not get this through flesh and blood, but My Father in heaven revealed this to you” (see Matthew 16:17). In other words, “You have laid hold of a truth that humanity in itself is incapable of understanding.” I thank God that there is a point in every believer's life when we truly get the revelation that Jesus is the Christ: He is the One who gives life, the One who redeems, the One who translates us out of darkness and calls us His own.

Shortly after that, Jesus looked at Peter, singled him out because of the revelation that was in his heart, and said, “*You are Peter, and upon this rock [the revelation that he had], I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). People who understand this truth that Peter understood will discover that no matter what hell throws against them, it will not prevail. When they pray, the gates of hell will not be able to withstand their prayers.

With all the revelation that had been given to him, Peter had a weakness that we, too, must watch for.

■ PETER'S WEAKNESS

In the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, we see that Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain. It was there that the inner glory of God that was in Jesus literally burst forth, and Peter saw Him in all His glory. He also saw Moses and Elijah, who were long dead, now alive and speaking with Jesus about His coming death in Jerusalem (see Matthew 17:1–4).

The whole package was there: The divine nature of Christ, His power to keep even that which had died, and a glorious plan for the future. Peter saw it all! Yet with all the revelation that had been given to him, Peter had a weakness that we, too, must watch for: He became so knowledgeable that he began to tell even Jesus how the future should unfold.

Soon we get so smart that we start telling God how the future should progress.

Jesus was telling His disciples, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. They are going to put Me to death, and on the third day, I am going to rise again.” At that point, Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke the Lord! “No! This is not the way it is going to go” (see Matthew 16:22).

That is the danger for those of us who have walked with God for a season. Soon we get so smart that we start telling God how the future should progress. “This is what my future should look like; this is what You are going to do for me.” We must remember that His ways are higher than our ways; His plans are higher than our plans!

Furthermore, Peter also began to boast of his own strength. Jesus was telling them that the Shepherd was going to be smitten and all the sheep scattered. Yet Peter insisted, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never stumble! I am not a novice on this journey. You can trust me, Lord” (see Matthew 26:33).

It is clear that Peter was not listening to what Jesus was saying to him. He did not want

to hear that the pathway might be something other than what he thought it should be. He did not want to hear how weak he really was without the power of God in his life. Nevertheless, Jesus told him, “I have prayed that your faith will not fail. When you have returned, when you have changed and have been made into another man, strengthen those who are coming after you” (see Luke 22:32).

■ A DEEP SENSE OF FAILURE

Shortly after this conversation, everything started to change. Judas came into the Garden of Gethsemane with his band of religious robbers who were armed with torches, lanterns and rage—ready to be rid of this Christ. Peter immediately took out his sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest. Jesus told him to put his sword away, and then He took the servant’s ear and put it back on his head so that he was completely healed.

“I believed Your promises, but my life is not turning out the way I thought it was going to.”

Peter was then sent into a tailspin, as his whole world began to fall apart. I am sure he was thinking, “This is not the way it was supposed to be! This is not the way I understood the kingdom of God. Lord, You have the power to walk on water, yet You are letting Yourself be taken captive! Didn’t You tell me that upon my life the Church was going to be built and the gates of hell would not prevail against it? Yet I see the gates of hell coming in! Aren’t You supposed

to defeat the armies of Rome and establish the kingdom of God for us here and now? What is going on?”

As Jesus was taken to His trial, Peter was warming himself by the fire. Suddenly someone approached him and said, “You were with Him, weren’t you?” Peter quickly denied it. Then Peter was approached a second time and identified as one who had been with Jesus, which he denied with an oath. He essentially said, “I swear to God that I am not part of that party.” By the third time he was approached, he cursed himself, perhaps saying something along the lines of, “May God strike me dead if I know that man” (see Matthew 26:69–74).

By that point, Peter must have been frightened, angry and confused. He had been walking with Jesus for three years, and now things were just not working out the way he thought they would. This same thing happens to many people in the Church of Jesus Christ. “I walked with You, God. I believed Your promises as I understood them, but my life is not turning out the way I thought it was going to. I was told that becoming a Christian meant my trials were going to be over—I would be happy, healthy, wealthy and wise all my life. Yet here I am— unemployed, lonely, and with failing health. I don’t know how much of a Christian I really am.”

As Peter denied Jesus for the third time, a rooster crowed, and Jesus turned and looked him right in the eye. Suddenly Peter remembered the words that Jesus had once said to him: “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times” (Matthew 26:34). At the

time, Peter did not understand what was being told him, but now it had become a reality.

“Oh, God, what have I done? Have I failed You beyond hope? You said that You prayed that my faith would not fail, but I cursed myself with an oath saying that I didn’t know You!” And the Scripture says, “*He went out and wept bitterly*” (Matthew 26:75).

Similarly, some people today cannot pray without weeping. They are overcome by a deep sense of failure. They chose to turn away from things that were wrong and yet, even as a follower of Christ, they ended up doing things they never believed they were capable of. Now they are afraid to even come into His presence.

■ WHEN JESUS SPEAKS PEACE

Just a few days later, some of the disciples were gathered in a room behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jews. Peter was there, likely still wondering in his heart, “Have I gone too far? Have I sinned away my moment of grace?”

Almighty God was trying to tell us that He is not offended by our weakness.

Suddenly Jesus entered the room. I can imagine the moment their eyes met. You see, the last time this had happened, Peter had just uttered, “May God curse me if I know this Man!” This time, Jesus looked at Peter and said, “*Peace be with you*” (John 20:19). How amazing! In other words, “Peter, you do not have to fear your curse because I became a curse for you on the cross. I took your curse upon Myself.”

In the same way, if Jesus were to appear to you today, I believe He would look at you and say, "Peace! I want peace with you, and I want you to be at peace with Me. I died for you because you could not save yourself; you had no strength to live the way the Word of God says you should. I want you to understand that I have come because I desire peace with you."

***Open your heart,
and let Him touch
your life in a
fresh way.***

Think about it: When Christ was born on this earth, He did not come as a twenty-five foot tall angel! He came encased in the body of a baby—whose diapers had to be changed by somebody. Almighty God was trying to tell us that He is not offended by our weakness. He came to save us—to bring us into peace with Him.

***You will be a
channel of God's
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generation!***

So today, if you find yourself needing mercy; if you feel you have failed or as if all you have left are tears—I challenge you: Be at peace with God and let Him be at peace with you. If you are wondering how to do this, simply do as Peter did and let Jesus speak peace to

you. Realize that He is not offended by your struggles or failures. Open your heart, and let Him touch your life in a fresh way.

The Bible tells us that after Jesus spoke peace to His disciples, He showed them His hands and His side, and the disciples were glad. He said to them again, "*Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you*" (John 20:21). In other words, "I am sending you now, Peter, as an ambassador of mercy. You now know what forgiveness and grace look like. The Father has sent Me, and I am sending you." And so we see that not only is God willing to bring you into peace with Him, He desires to appoint you as His ambassador in this hour. You will be a channel of God's mercy and kindness to a generation that so desperately needs to know what kind of Savior He is!

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.

Tel:
212-541-6300

Fax:
212-541-6415

Church Location:
237 West 51st Street
Between Broadway & 8th Avenue

Mailing Address:
Times Square Church
1657 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10019

e-mail:
info@tscnyc.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

Live Webcast:

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

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This newsletter is an edited version of "WHEN THE ONLY PRAYERS YOU HAVE LEFT ARE TEARS," a sermon given on **February 14, 2016** 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 New King James Version.