

Dear Friend,

Sometimes in life it's just really good to stop for a moment and smell the roses, as the saying goes. With all the negatives floating around lately, it is easy to momentarily lose sight of the beauty of God all around us.

In my case, the annual addition of little ones to our family has been both a joy and a reminder that the blessing of the Lord abounds in spite of the clouds that do their best to obscure it! Every year we add one or two new names to the height/growth chart on the inside of our basement door. As the book of Psalms says, *"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward"* (Psalm 127:3).

I encourage you to look around today. What has God placed right before your eyes that you may have temporarily lost sight of? Even Jesus exhorted His listeners to consider the birds and the flowers. If sorrow is part of your experience today, the promise of God is that joy will come again in the morning. I pray for you that before this day ends you will again see something that brings joy and strength to your heart.

Know that you are greatly loved of God and He has put all kinds of things around you so that you can see them and believe again.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

A LAST DAY RETURN TO POWER by Carter Conlon

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, and as many as the Lord our God will call'" (Acts 2:38–39).

This was the Day of Pentecost—a day shortly after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune God, came down and indwelt people. This was foreseen by some of the Old Testament prophets, though likely considered by many people in that time as an idea almost too good to be true. I am sure some people heard the words of the prophets and concluded, "Well, maybe from time to time God found a special vessel like Elijah or King David to fill with His Spirit, but it's not for me. That is for just the important, select few."

"Whoever calls on Me, I will fill with My Holy Spirit!"

Yet on the Day of Pentecost, it is as if the Lord said, "That may have been what it was like for a season, but now it is for every person, everywhere!" According to the verse, the promise of God's Holy Spirit and power is also to "all who

are far off," meaning not within the physical proximity but also those who would be found in later places and later dates. That means the promise is for you and your children!

This is how clearly the Lord spoke about it though the prophet Joel: *"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions"* (Joel 2:28). Does that leave anybody out? Is there anyone who is not a son, a daughter, young, or old? We see here that the Lord just leveled the playing field, essentially saying, "Whoever calls on Me, I will fill with My Holy Spirit!"

Now what would be the evidence of this infilling of the Holy Spirit? *"And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"* (Acts 1:8). Notice that God did not say we would become an argument about Him. No! We are going to be a demonstration of His power! The verse continues, *"And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* Everywhere, in all places—that includes your neighborhood, your apartment building, your office, your streets—you are to be a witness of who God is!

What an incredible promise! The early Church clearly walked

in this promise; there was evidence of the divine in them. The Bible says the disciples began speaking in other tongues, and there was a sudden witness of God. Onlookers acknowledged that they were all Jews who could not have learned all these languages (see Acts 2:6–8). This was something that only God could have done!

We have settled for just being churched, as if attending church every Sunday is enough.

■ THE PERIL OF THE LAST DAYS

What a glorious beginning for the Church of Jesus Christ! Yet when we go to the book of Second Timothy, Paul describes a type of religion that would develop in the last days—one “*having a form of godliness but denying its power*” (2 Timothy 3:5). In other words, many people would settle for an appearance of belonging to Jesus Christ while in reality abandoning God’s intended purpose for their lives.

Sadly, much of the Church in America seems to be a prime example of this. We have settled for just being churched, as if attending church every Sunday is enough. Of course, going to church is a good thing. Yet when you compare it to the second chapter of Acts, it falls far short of God’s intended purpose for His Church on the earth! In fact, Paul describes this type of powerless religion as the peril of the last days!

Yes, the last days will be a perilous time, as nuclear weapons are developed and governments

that are against Christ rise up. But the peril Paul is talking about is the existence of a testimony so utterly devoid of the truth of God that ultimately men and women will end up in hell forever. That is the greatest peril that people in our society are facing—a peril deeper than anything else that may arise in the days ahead.

■ RELIGION WITHOUT POWER

So what brought about this type of powerless religion? If we look at the verses just prior in that same chapter, we can see what happened. “*Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money*” (2 Timothy 3:2). Much of our teaching in the Church in America today is self-focused; and much is about money. “Give a dollar and you will get a hundred back. Give a hundred and get ten thousand back!” If you are listening to such teaching, shut it off! You must get back to biblical Christianity.

The verse continues to include “*boasters.*” There are so many who are bragging, “We stood in the presence of a Holy God!” However, if that were actually true, they would have been on the floor on their faces! It is just as the prophet Isaiah said: “Oh, God, I have spoken about You, but now I have seen You. Now I have seen Your holiness; now I recognize that we are all unclean. All our righteousness is like filthy rags before You. Touch my lips with Your mercy, and let my message be about You, Your mercy and Your redemption” (see Isaiah 6:5, 64:6).

“*Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*” (2 Timothy 3:4). Lovers of pleasure! The constitution of this country states that everyone has the undeniable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These are wonderful words, yet that is in the constitution of a secular nation. Unfortunately, this idea has been

adopted by the Church as well. Much of the house of God is now all about *my* life; *my* liberty; *my* pursuit of *my* happiness. “Let the rest of the world perish—as long as I am happy and have money in the bank!”

Studying can often be a smokescreen for not walking in obedience.

■ RESISTING THE TRUE WORK OF GOD

Paul continued: “*And from such people turn away!*” (2 Timothy 3:5). Let me put it this way: Turn away from being that kind of a person! Turn away from being somebody who simply seeks a form of godliness with no power in it—no compassion, no willingness to obey God, no desire to live righteously.

“*Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Timothy 3:7). Always learning, yet unwilling to be led by truth. It is those who say, “Wait, Lord, do not call me just yet. I am still learning.” It is like when Jesus instructed the people to be good to their neighbors, and a lawyer came up to Him with the ridiculous question, “And who is my neighbor?” (see Luke 10:29).

In other words, “I am studying it, and when I am finally able to figure out who my neighbor is, count me in!” Studying can often be a smokescreen for not walking in obedience. You can be always learning, going to the newest seminar, listening to a new message, following a new ministry—but never being led to where truth always leads.

■ THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS

You see, truth will always lead to a life that is surrendered to

the purposes of God, a life filled with the power of God. That is how the early Church started, and regardless of how things may look now, I believe the Church will ultimately end up like that! I am believing for a spiritual awakening among God's people. I believe we will rediscover our identity in the last days, and we will once again live with the conviction that with God, all things are possible. We will understand that we have an incredible inheritance—that with our salvation comes the power of God's Holy Spirit. This promise is going to be rediscovered very soon!

They stepped out into the marketplace—willing to be mocked—for they cared more for the praise of God than the praise of man.

It began with a hundred and twenty people who simply knew that without God, nothing would happen. They gathered in an upper room and prayed, yielding themselves to God, and He filled them with His Spirit! Then they stepped out into the marketplace—willing to be mocked—for they cared more for the praise of God than the praise of man. They encountered thousands going into the temple to learn things about God. Perhaps they were discussing things such as the deliverance from Egypt or the Feast of Booths. They were learning all kinds of things about God, but suddenly on the way home, they met a hundred and twenty people who had met with God. There is a huge difference between the two!

Similarly, in our nation, we have been learning about God for years. We have talked about the character of God, the mercy of God, the Father-heart of God. We are constantly learning things about Him, and these things are all true. However, we have done everything but meet with God! When you meet with God, you are transformed by His power.

Remember, the hundred and twenty disciples were just ordinary people. They did not have diplomas on the wall, yet the Bible tells us that the Pharisees, who perceived they were ignorant and unlearned men, were astounded at the power and wisdom with which they spoke (see Acts 4:13). The only thing they could say about the disciples was that they had been with Jesus! They were not there giving an argument. Rather, there was an irrefutable argument manifesting itself through their lives—the power of God's Holy Spirit! Suddenly, three thousand people who had met about God now encountered a hundred and twenty who had met with God! And when they saw them, they said, "What must we do to have this kind of life *with* God?" (see Acts 2:37).

Put off the façade of being a Christian, and put on Christ.

As we saw in our opening Scripture, Peter responded: "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*" (Acts 2:38). In other words, "Put off your old way of living. Put off all your attempts to be holy in your own strength. Put off the façade of being a Christian, and put on Christ. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you!"

According to the Scriptures, three thousand souls were added to the Church that day—three thousand religious people who had been doing the best they could to be godly in their own strength; three thousand who were perhaps tired of learning about God and His former power; three thousand who noticed that there were people who actually possessed the power of God!

We must return to the full purpose that God intended for our lives on this earth: To be living witnesses of who He is.

■ REDISCOVERING THE PROMISE

So what must you and I do in order to get this power of God today? After all, we will surely need it in order to confront the days ahead of us.

First of all, we must return to the full purpose that God intended for our lives on this earth: To be living witnesses of who He is. That requires willingness and humility, for we will be mocked and ridiculed. Jesus warned us, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master...If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!*" (Matthew 10:24–25). There is no escaping it! Do not expect this world to love you because you finally step into the public with the power of God in your life.

Yet, regardless of what the world may think, there must be a resolve in your heart that says, "I do not care what it will cost. I want this new life. I want strength to go with God. I will not settle for being lukewarm—for merely

coming to church and learning about God. I want to meet with the Living God!”

Do not expect this world to love you because you finally step into the public with the power of God in your life.

It is a choice you and I must make. Remember, the promise of the Holy Spirit is to you, to your children, to the young, to the old, the educated, the uneducated, the strong, the weak, the servants. But the question is: Do you truly want it? Do you want the lifestyle that accompanies it? Are you willing to walk along the pathway where it will lead you?

If you are willing, I encourage you to go before the Lord in humility and ask Him to fulfill His great promise to you. He will surely be faithful to His Word. And then as His Church, we will return to the power of God in these last days!

Carter Conlon
©2017 Times Square Church

This newsletter is an edited version of “A LAST DAY RETURN TO POWER,” a sermon given on **May 21, 2017** in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tsc.nyc. 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.

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.

tsc.nyc