

Dear Friend,

We are all familiar with the military recruiting slogan of the United States, "Uncle Sam needs you!" It implies that in order to secure and maintain the freedoms we as a country have known, someone has to be willing to rise and give of themselves to defend it. It rightly portrays itself as a noble and worthwhile calling. I know that you willingly join with me in thanking those who have given of themselves in the service of our liberties.

In the same way, please allow me today to be bold enough to say, "Jesus Christ needs you!" The Son of God needs us to rise up and give of ourselves for the sake of the security and eternal destinies of others. It is indeed the noblest of all callings. It demands self-sacrifice and the willingness to be stretched beyond our former natural abilities. It requires an 'others before me' focus. *"How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?..."* (Romans 10:14-15). *"No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier"* (2 Timothy 2:4).

I'll see you at heaven's recruiting center, the altar of God. It's time to pray.

With you always,
Pastor Carter Conlon

RIISING TO A HIGHER CALLING

Carter Conlon

Many people have an idea of what kind of life would make them happy. However, I want to suggest to you that no matter what kind of an impression you may have formed in your heart, it is far short of what God has for you. He has something so much higher. As a matter of fact, the scripture says, *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9). He has something unique for you—something only He can do through your life. That is what makes it a supernatural life.

So how do we get to this life? Let's start with Matthew chapter 16, verses 24 and 25: *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"*

In Luke chapter 17, Jesus also talked about this concept of losing the life that you could have had for what God has for you. He prefaces it with these words: *"Remember Lot's wife"* (Luke 17:32). Now, Lot was a man who escaped from a perishing city—a place that was under the judgment of God. Yet in His mercy, God sent messengers to take Lot, his wife, and their two daughters out of the city before He judged it.

In this particular journey out of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife turned around and longingly looked back, hoping in her heart to preserve what God had told her to leave behind. This is the dilemma that a lot of people face today. God is trying to draw them out of where they are, yet there is something in their life they want to preserve.

YOU HAVE A VISION OF WHAT YOUR LIFE COULD BE, BUT THAT VISION FALLS FAR SHORT OF WHAT GOD HAS FOR YOU.

Perhaps you, too, have a vision of what happiness is. You have a vision of what your life could be, but that vision falls far short of what God has for you. And so He has you by the hand today, trying to lead you out. Nevertheless, many people look back longingly at the things that should be left behind, thinking there is something there of great value even though God says, "No."

This same dilemma faced the people of God who were brought out of Egypt, a place of captivity, and into the wilderness. Initially, they wanted

out of captivity. Their whole vision was, “If God will just get us out of here, how wonderful our lives will be!”

So in faithfulness, God heard the cries of His people. He sent a messenger and brought them out into a wilderness place for a season. However, the problem with this early generation was that they did not want to enter into the place God had for them. They wanted to come out of what was oppressing them, but they did not want to make the journey in. A lot of people are like that today. They want out of addiction, they want out of a bad relationship, they want out of unforgiveness. They want out of all these things, and God in His mercy hears their cry and takes them out. But He has something much bigger and better than just a wilderness experience or a testimony of what used to be in the past. Likewise, He brings us out, and He wants to bring us into something that only He can make happen!

**WHOEVER DESIRES
TO SAVE HIS LIFE WILL
LOSE IT. WHOEVER LOSES
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WILL FIND IT.**

Unwilling to Leave it Behind

Jesus reminds us that if we seek to save what we think our life should be, we will lose the life that God has for us. Let's look at Lot's wife again. She was destined to have a life and to bring a blessing. But in disobedience she turned around, looked behind, and what happened? She brought incredible loss not only to herself but also to her family. She lost everything that God had for her, and it ultimately brought incest into her home. From her two daughters and her husband came two tribes of people, the Ammonites and the Moabites, who became enemies of the people of God.

That is amazing. Just one person looked back and was unwilling to leave the past behind. Likewise, there are certain things we must leave behind—even the things we assumed were good. When Lot's wife turned around, there had to be something she thought was

good back there, something of value. Did she have a sewing business? We don't know what it was. But she turned around and looked back, and when she did, she brought incredible heartache into the lives of thousands of other people who came after her.

In the same way, think about those who will not go into the life that Christ has for them—the heartache it brings to their own families! In our future, everybody associated with us will suffer if we choose not to go into what God has for us but instead will try to preserve what we thought our life should be. That is the point. *“Whoever desires to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”* Loses their life—in other words, they let go of what they thought would bring happiness and fulfillment. They are willing to say, “God, I do not know what You have for me, but whatever it is, I know that it is better than anything my own heart can come up with. I am willing to let my vision go so that I may possess what You have for me, knowing it will bring blessing into the lives of others all around!”

My Story

I personally remember having to make such a decision. I was brought up under a lot of pressure. My father was in his first year of college when he had to leave to join the military and fight in World War II. By the time he came back, the opportunity for an education was gone. Now I was his firstborn son, so he started to vicariously live his dream through me. My grandfather was a judge, and I was going to be the next lawyer. I was going to have every opportunity that my father did not have—so he saved all his money in order to send me to college. The only problem was that at that time, I had absolutely no desire in my heart for the things that he wanted for my life. As a result, it brought incredible pressure into my life. I became fearful at the age of fifteen because I felt as though I could never live up to his expectations of me. I started to suffer panic attacks, which continued for nine years before I became a Christian and then Christ set me free in a moment of time.

Suddenly, fear no longer had a stronghold in my life, and I was no longer afraid of crowds. I already had an undergraduate degree in law and sociology, so I was only three years away from earning a law degree. That which was denied to me for so long due to fear was now made available. And so a battle began to rage in my heart.

On one hand, I was a believer in Christ, and I felt God was calling me to do something. Yet I had this other desire in my heart. I began to conclude, "I would make a great Christian lawyer. I'm not sure if there is such a thing, but I would make a great one!"

I could have sought to save my life by choosing my own direction and making it a Christian thing. That is what a lot of people do—and perhaps they do some good. But I think of one outreach service in Africa where a hundred thousand people raised their hands to receive Christ. None of that would have happened if I had been in a courtroom somewhere, arguing a case before a jury. I would never have known what my life could have been.

MAKE THE CHOICE TO RISE UP AND ENTER INTO THE FULLNESS OF THE CALLING GOD HAS FOR YOU.

Press On

The apostle Paul says in the book of Philippians 3:12: *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."* In other words, "I have been called for a purpose. I do not fully understand it, but I am moving forward because I want to lay hold of it!"

This is a decision we must continually make. I am 68 years old, and it might be easy to envision what my life should be for the rest of my days. I could formulate some plans, seek to save my life at this point, and not go the full distance of what God has for my future. But many people might suffer if I make that choice. Paul continued, *"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you"* (Philippians 3:13–15).

Agabus, a true prophet of God, took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, *"Thus says the Holy*

Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:11). But Paul answered them, *"What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus"* (21:13). I love the next verse: *"So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done'"* (21:14).

Aren't you glad Paul did not listen to Agabus? I am truly thankful that Paul did not seek to save himself and that he was willing to be imprisoned for the Lord. He had no idea that from a jail cell, he would pen the doctrine for theological practice for the Church for the next 2000 years! He simply pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Clearly it is not always an easy path; in fact, it is a path that might even cause you to lose your freedom.

Yet I implore you today, do not look back as Lot's wife did. Make the choice to rise up and enter into the fullness of the calling God has for you, no matter how difficult the path may seem. You may not know exactly where the journey will lead, but if you are willing to follow Him, your life will have an impact far greater than you could ever imagine!

Carter Conlon
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Summit is launching our summer series of online enrichment classes, digging beneath the surface on important topics and questions like these. As Christ followers, we are invited to live out the hope of the gospel message every day. These four-week courses are designed to come alongside your faith journey and strengthen your understanding of who Jesus is calling you to be.

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Carter Conlon is General Overseer of Times Square Church, Inc. He joined the pastoral staff as an associate pastor in 1994 and was the senior pastor from 2001 to 2020.

Times Square Church is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City, founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of "The Cross and the Switchblade."

Senior Pastor
Tim Dilena

Church Online
Sunday 10 AM & On Demand

Worldwide Prayer Meeting
Tuesday 7 PM

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