

Dear Friend,

Many years ago I wondered about the words Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:9–10. How is it possible that believers in Christ will be hated by all nations and even killed by others? Were these words spoken, as some say, of the future of the Jewish nation alone or do they also speak of us who believe in Jesus Christ? After all, the question Jesus was responding to was strictly about the days immediately preceding His second coming.

As I watch the ever-increasing, anti-Christ sentiment pervading our society today, the meaning is becoming clearer. The last days for both the nation of Israel and for those of us who have been redeemed by faith in the cross will be difficult ones indeed. It would be unwise to write these words off as being for another people of another time and place.

You and I must be awake to the hour in which we are living—and alive to the power of God. If we choose to let God manifest His glory through us, our lives can count for much good in the days that remain. Indeed, the days ahead will be dark, but remember that our destiny is to be a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

There is no safer place to be than in the hand of God.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

THE CALL OF THE SHIPMASTER by Carter Conlon

"Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.' But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, and had lain down, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said to him, 'What prayest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish'" (Jonah 1:1–6, NKJV).

***Did you know that
you already have
the power to do
whatever God has
called you to do?***

In this story we see a pattern that tends to repeat itself time and again among God's people. Jonah was a man who knew that he was called to cry out on God's behalf and warn the

people of coming judgment because of their sinful behavior. In the same way, you and I are called to be a testimony of the goodness of God, as well as a voice warning of the day of divine justice soon to come. Imagine the hell that so many people will experience when they finally stand in the presence of such a pure love, only to realize that what they forsook on earth they now have to forsake for all eternity. How tragic that their last memory before being cast into eternal darkness will be the blazing, intense passion that Jesus had for them. You and I must warn people about this day!

Jonah had this incredible calling of God on his life, and he was given all the resources he needed in order to accomplish it. Did you know that you, too, already have the power to do whatever God has called you to do? However, we all eventually come to a place where we must make a decision: *Do I agree with what God is saying, or do I push away what He is speaking to my heart and gravitate instead toward what I think my life should be?*

Jonah chose the latter. Although he had a firsthand knowledge of how merciful God was, rather than doing what he was called to do, he took a journey far away from the heart of God.

Luke 15 tells the story of the prodigal son—a boy who took a journey similar to Jonah's. This

son demanded his inheritance from his father and went far from home, choosing to lavish it entirely on himself. It was all about his journey, his blessing, his slice of the pie, his pleasure. The Scripture calls it “riotous living,” which essentially means that he was living solely for himself. It is a picture of what we have done in America in the last few decades—where all our theology has largely been focused on self.

There is always a price to pay when we take a journey away from God.

Jonah may not have visibly gone astray from God the way the prodigal son did, but he did take a journey where he chose to ignore the cries of perishing people around him. Although he had within himself the power to make a difference, he simply chose not to. That is the sad reality of our time, for many people in the house of God have made a similar choice. We know what our lives are supposed to be here on earth—a testimony of the glory of God, a light set upon a hill that cannot be hidden. We are supposed to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, understanding that all who live godly lives shall suffer persecution. It will not be an easy journey. However, we must remember that we are not fighting for ourselves, for we are already going to heaven. We are now fighting for others.

What a tragedy it would be to stand at the throne of God one day and look over on the other side at the faces of people I knew—people whom I could have influenced—looking at me with a longing in their eyes. “You knew this! Why did you choose not to tell me? Why did you let your light remain hidden under a bushel? Even if I persecuted you, why didn’t you at least confront me with this

message of eternal life that God gives through Jesus Christ?”

How will the Lord get hold of His people one more time?

The Bible tells us that Jonah arose to flee from the presence of the Lord. He found a ship going in the opposite direction, paid the fare, and got on. There is always a price to pay when we take a journey away from God—when we as His people choose to focus on ourselves and move away from His burden for the lost. Look at the price we are paying in America today. Society is now redefining marriage; the family is breaking down; immorality is abounding; and we are standing on the edge of a social and moral abyss. God help us if we do not rise to the occasion now and pray. We know that when we begin to pray, God begins to speak. When God begins to speak, we begin to move. And when we begin to move, the supernatural begins to happen again. It is not by human reasoning or human power but by the Spirit of God that His kingdom comes and advances in the earth.

■ WHEN GOD SENDS A STORM

So how will the Lord get hold of His people one more time? The Scriptures show us ways that He has done so in the past, and we would do well to learn from them. In the example of the prodigal son, God got this boy’s attention by sending a famine into the nation.

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would [gladly] have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no

man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father...” (Luke 15:14–18). The famine made this son yearn for his father’s house once again. It caused him to recognize that the captivity he had embraced and assumed would result in happiness actually was empty. One day he finally got up and headed home, only to find that his father still loved him with a passion.

In Jonah’s case, the Lord sent a great storm, which is another common way that He gets hold of His people. The book of Hebrews speaks of one last storm that is going to come to this world, perhaps in the not-too-distant future. *“...Now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain”* (Hebrews 12:26–27). In fact, a shaking has already started in this world. Problems are arising that are beyond mankind’s capability of solving, and many are beginning to be filled with fear.

We are in the midst of an incredible storm, but many of God’s people are fast asleep.

■ ARISE, SLEEPER!

As the storm intensified, fear also came upon everybody on that journey with Jonah, and they *“cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them”* (Jonah 1:5).

Eventually they began throwing out things that they had carried with them, just as we are doing now as a nation. We are throwing overboard the very things that have been with us for hundreds of years—godly principles and values that have been tried and proven—all in the name of a new society.

People in our society are beginning to realize that we are in a storm of unprecedented proportions, and a cry for help is rising.

All the while, where was Jonah? Down in the lowest part of the ship, fast asleep! This speaks to me of our time. We are in the midst of an incredible storm, but many of God's people are fast asleep, simply riding out the storm. *It's me and You, Jesus! It's so good to know You and so good to go to church on Sunday. It's so good to get back to business as usual from Monday to Saturday and all the things that I'm called to do.*

Suddenly the shipmaster came to Jonah and said, *"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not"* (Jonah 1:6). Jonah was being rebuked by a man who didn't even know the God that he knew! You and I must realize that we are living at a time when the shipmaster is calling once again. Society is walking past our churches, peering in the doors, wondering, "Is there hope here? Can I find direction here? Will the fear of my heart be assuaged here? If I prayed in this place, would my children come home?" A recent magazine article

talking about the calamities currently facing the world was published with the headline: "Who will save us?" People in our society are beginning to realize that we are in a storm of unprecedented proportions, and a cry for help is rising.

Jonah finally confessed to the men on the ship, "I know the solution to your problem. I have avoided the call of God, but if you will cast me into the midst of the storm, it will cease" (see Jonah 1:12). This is a type of New Testament believer who finally says, "God, if I will give my life for the sake of others who are going through this crisis, if I am willing to be cast into the middle of it, all that I ask is that You cause my life to be used for the betterment of others." So the sailors cast Jonah into the sea. Immediately the storm ceased, and everybody began to worship God.

■ CRY OUT TO GOD

Jonah then began to pray in the midst of his trial, which happened to be from within the belly of a fish. *"I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me"* (Jonah 2:2–3). In other words, "I felt like I had fallen out of favor with God, and a myriad of arguments were coming against my mind." Likewise, when you start talking about returning to prayer and the work of God, arguments from the enemy and perhaps even from the frailty of your own heart will come against you to try to discourage you: "Your time has passed. God did call you once before, but you walked away and chose to lavish this great salvation on yourself. Now it is too late."

Yet Jonah continued to cry out to the Lord. *"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again*

toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head... Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple" (Jonah 2:4–7). Jonah was saying, "Despite all that was coming against my mind, You lifted me. You gave me the power to pray and the ability to fulfill Your calling on my life."

"They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:8–9). In other words, "I once declared that I would serve You, but I strayed far away from You. Now I remember Your salvation and Your mercy. In spite of what I have done, I know that You are still merciful, and I know You will take me—not in my strength, but in my weakness!"

When we call out to the Lord, our lives and testimonies are restored, and as a result many others will find the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

What a reminder that the Lord calls us to the throne of grace, not when we have it all together, but when we find ourselves in a time of need (see Hebrews 4:16). He is not calling us in this hour because we are strong. No, He is calling us because He knows that we need Him, and He desires for us to finish the work He has commissioned us to do in this

generation. I thank God that we have reached a point in this nation where we must go to the house of God and begin to cry out to Jesus once again.

The Bible tells us that when Jonah began to pray, the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited him onto dry land. Jonah found himself back at the place that he thought he had lost forever—the ministry once given to him that he had fled from. It is the same as when the prodigal son got up and went home—at once he was in the embrace of his loving father! Immediately the robe of righteousness was put upon him, along with a ring of authority and shoes for the journey that he was being invited to go on, a journey where he would speak about this incredible mercy of his father's house.

Let us once again become a people of prayer. Pray as you have never prayed before!

God is good and His mercy endures forever! That will be your testimony as well as your message for others. So no matter where you are today, no matter how deep your captivity or how helpless and hopeless you feel, call out to God. When we call out to the Lord, our lives and testimonies are restored, and as a result many others will find the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

You and I must not be silent or run from God's calling any longer. We must determine in our hearts that our mouths are going to speak and

our hands are going to reach out. We must fight for the souls of men and women in this generation—even those who may hate the truth of God.

Let us once again become a people of prayer in the Body of Jesus Christ. Pray for an awakening in your city. Pray that every church will come alive by the Spirit of God. Pray for our nation, pray for our government, pray for our president. Pray as you have never prayed before! And let's believe God together that there will be a mighty harvest in this last hour of time in which we are living!

Carter Conlon
©2014 Times Square Church

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:
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

tscnyc.org

This newsletter is an edited version of "THE CALL OF THE SHIPMASTER," a sermon given on September 14, 2014 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 King James Version.