

Dear Friend,

I have good news for you today! In this present crisis, it may seem to some that all is lost; however, from my perspective an incredible moment for the church has arrived.

The coronavirus has caused us all to revisit our priorities and get back to the biblical basics that have been the bedrock of our churches and society for hundreds of years. People are now looking for something stable to stand on. Everything that can be shaken is being shaken, so that only that which cannot be shaken might remain (Hebrews 12:26–27).

You and I have an incredible opportunity today and tomorrow to be the lights to this darkened world that Jesus says we are to be (Matthew 5:14–16). I encourage you, with all my heart, to take up that wonderful lamp of testimony today and ask the Holy Spirit for the simplicity and strength to make a difference where you travel and live. If you will, I promise you that a new surge of joy will come into your heart and you will receive strength from God for the journey ahead.

Please join us for our Worldwide Prayer Meeting online on Tuesdays at 7PM ET. The prayer meeting, filled with the faith of the faithful, will be the sweetest place to be. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Yours, in prayer,

Pastor Carter Conlon

GOD IS WITH US— LET'S RISE AND BUILD

by Carter Conlon

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia" (Ezra 1:1).

Let me set the scene for this particular moment in history. The people of God had been called to a specific place—the nation we now call Israel—and to a particular city—Jerusalem. In this place, the glory of God dwelt in the temple. And the people were called to be a special people, changed and empowered by God, to be a praise and a testimony to Him in the earth.

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This exact same calling is on your life and mine as part of the Church of Jesus Christ in our generation. However, the people of that time dealt very casually with their calling. The service and worship of God gradually became a matter of convenience, taking on forms that God never intended. Sadly, God's ordained purpose for them slipped through their fingers like sand, and suddenly they found themselves powerless as an enemy

called Babylon began to take them captive. In three stages, the people of God were taken into a foreign land for seventy years. This tends to happen throughout history—to believers, families, churches. We end up in a place we were not destined to be.

This captivity was a time of chastening—a time for the children of Israel to reconsider their calling in the earth. And then, suddenly, revival came! It is important to note that, first of all, revival is God's initiative. It is something that God determines in His heart to do. The Lord had already predetermined that He would let the enemies of His people capture them for seventy years. He had spoken through the mouth of Daniel the prophet at the time they were taken into captivity that at the end of seventy years, He would visit them and bring them home. And this is exactly what happened, as we saw in our opening scripture. Cyrus, a Medo-Persian king, was not a partaker of the Jews' religion, yet the Lord stirred his spirit so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom: *"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah"* (Ezra 1:2).

Revival usually happens in response to a cry among at least some of God's people. Of course, there were probably others who were quite content in Babylon in those days. Perhaps they had acquired a fairly good life for themselves there. However, there is always a voice that rises up.

Who in this kingdom actually belongs to God?

It could simply be a person such as you or me in our own house, sighing, "God, the way Your people are being treated is not right. It's not right that You are not known and revered. Your word is being cast into the streets as if it is something evil. It is simply not right!"

The decree continued: "*Who is among you of all His people?*" (Ezra 1:3). Who in this kingdom actually belongs to God? Who desires to live a life that brings glory to His name? Who is concerned about regaining what was lost through neglect and negligence?

"*May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem*" (Ezra 1:3-4). King Cyrus was saying, "As the people get up to go rebuild, everybody who is part of the family of God should help them in whatever way they can, even if they cannot go themselves. Everybody needs to do something in this rebuilding of the testimony of God in the earth!"

■ NOTHING HAS BEEN LOST

What happens next is phenomenal: "*King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods*" (Ezra 1:7). This included everything that God had given a pattern for to King David, who in turn had given it to his son, Solomon. Solomon had fashioned all of the instruments that were necessary in the worship of God—all the things that were part of the religion of that time.

Yet when the Israelites were taken captive, they probably assumed all of the articles had been lost, never to be regained. That is exactly what the devil would have wanted them to believe. But you see, nothing of God is ever lost. It is merely in storage. The Bible tells us that the articles were counted: "*Thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, twenty-nine knives, thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a similar kind, and one thousand other articles. All the articles of gold and silver were five thousand four hundred*" (Ezra 1:9-11). Can you imagine being there as all these items were brought out of storage? The Babylonians or the Medo-Persians could have easily melted them down and made gold bars out of them. But God is always in charge of everything!

You may say, "Where is the word of knowledge?" It is in storage. "Where are the gifts of healing?" They are in storage. "Where are the prophets?" They are in storage. Nothing can be lost to the kingdom of God. There have been times and seasons throughout history when God suddenly says, "Bring out everything that was taken captive and give it back to My people!" The Lord makes everything available to His people once again and asks, "Who wants

to rebuild? Who wants to go home? Who wants to glorify Me in the earth? Who wants to see captivity taken captive one more time in this generation?"

Our confidence is in God—no matter where we are, no matter how powerless we may feel.

A psalmist wrote about it in Psalm 126:1: "*When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream,*" In other words, "We thought it was all lost forever. But suddenly we realized the hand of God was moving again—that our captivity had indeed been taken captive!"

The psalmist continued, "*The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*" (Psalm 126:3-6). In other words, "Our confidence is in God—no matter where we are, no matter how powerless we may feel to do anything about the hour we live in." If you and I have that cry in our heart, we will come home rejoicing, bringing a harvest with us!

■ IN EVERY PLACE

The next chapter of Ezra goes on to say: "*Now these are the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his own city*" (Ezra 2:1). And for the rest of chapter two, different houses that arose to rebuild are

listed. For example, in verse three, we read: *“The people of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two.”* Verse six says, *“The people of Pahath-Moab, of the people of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.”* Verse ten: *“The people of Bani, six hundred forty-two.”* Verse fourteen: *“The people of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six.”*

This is what it speaks to me: Not everybody will get up and rebuild, but in every town, in every city, in every state, there will be somebody! If the United States of America were in this book of Ezra, perhaps it would say: “Of the state of Florida, 7,644 got up to build. Of the state of New Jersey, 5,322 got up to build.” And not just states, but little towns. “Of these little towns, 600 got up—400—123.” There will be people of all denominations, in all places rising up!

Never underestimate what God can do through you as you stand up and answer His call.

The people of God did not hear just the decree of King Cyrus—they heard something in their spirit. “God is with us. Let’s rise up and build!” It is the same thing that many are hearing in America today.

■ WHEN SOMEBODY STANDS UP

In every one of these houses listed in the book of Ezra, somebody had to be the first one to speak. Somebody had to stand up in their house and say, “I am hearing something in my heart. God is calling us back to the

place where we once were—a place where we worship Him again in spirit and in truth, where we as His people bring glory and honor to His name.” And so it will be today—someone has to be the first to stand up in his or her house.

Perhaps you would say to me: “Who is going to listen to me? I am the least in my house.” But you see, that is why throughout history, God has used people who give us a picture of what real spiritual authority looks like. Consider, for example, Nehemiah. He was merely a butler to the king who received a report that his city was in reproach and his people were suffering. Yet Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem with the king’s permission, and he told the people *“of the hand of my God which had been good upon me and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me. So they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ Then they set their hands to this good work”* (Nehemiah 2:18).

Now, I have no doubt that there were leaders, architects, and skilled civic workers in Jerusalem. Yet, suddenly, this man, whose only claim to fame is that he carried a tray to the king, showed up and said, “God’s hand is on me, and the king has given me good words, telling me this thing can be done.” And the people’s response was: “Let us rise up and build!”

Never underestimate what God can do through you as you stand up and answer His call—whether you are a person of high or low position, whether you have been successful or a failure in your own sight. You see, God is giving us a window of time to do something only He can enable us to do. If we are wise, we will rise up and begin to rebuild the

testimony of God on the earth once again. We will believe that God is still God of the impossible. We will take to heart what Nehemiah told the people: “For the sake of your children, rise up and build. For the sake of your families, rise up and build. For the sake of the stranger, rise up and build. Watch what God will do!”

Carter Conlon
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SUMMIT STUDENTS TRANSITION TO ONLINE LEARNING

As we all know, 2020 has been an unprecedented year. With the arrival of COVID-19, our plans for the semester suddenly changed as we made an overnight decision to close our campus doors and transition to online learning.

The closing of our campus for the semester also meant canceling our official graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020. The day students began to pack, we decided to host an impromptu graduation for our seniors. Dr. Conlon spoke candidly with the graduates, telling them that though we may have wanted to keep you here, the Lord has need of you now. You are READY.

We are so very proud of this remarkable group of men and women. The challenges this generation face may be great, but they press forward, as we all do, with great optimism and faith for the future.

Join us in praying for our students, our country, and the many nations our student body represent. We continue to hear testimonies of how God is using students and alumni during this time to live for the benefit of others. May we all continue to be a source of light and hope to those around us.

For the latest updates, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Look forward to staying connected in the days ahead.



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.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday 10AM | 1PM | 3PM | 6PM
Tuesday 7PM | Worldwide Prayer Meeting
Friday 7PM | Young Adults (18-35)
Teens Night (1st Friday)
Small Groups
Special Events

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

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