

LETTER FROM CARTER CONLON

Dear Friend,

This is a simple letter just to tell you that God cares. He is not a stranger to the trials and sufferings that all of us find ourselves going through from time to time. We know that He promised always to be with us, even to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

Yet there are seasons where we wonder how God shows His loving care to us, especially when it's difficult to feel Him. I suppose there are spectacular ways He could choose to encourage you. Most often, however, He will put thoughts from His heart to you into someone else's heart, like mine today.

This note is not asking for anything from you except that you receive it as the hand of Jesus upon your shoulder telling you that everything will work out for good in time. He loves you and His love for you will never allow this situation to overwhelm you. Be encouraged. You are not alone today and you never will be. Christ is with you and there are many in His church fighting the battle with you in prayer.

You are loved.

Yours in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor.

PREPARING TO STAND IN THE COMING STORM

by Carter Conlon

Fear has the power to paralyze and God knows this. When caught in a storm unprepared people are susceptible to sudden panic. We see this when the disciples of Jesus were caught in the midst of a storm on the Sea of Galilee, and were seized with fear and dread. But, even though they did not recognize it that day, God had already provided a way for them to stand in the midst of it. Their provision was Jesus and with one command He silenced the tempest.

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■ GOD'S SUPERABUNDANT PROVISION

Through His Word, God has made every provision possible for us to stand strong in the midst of our storms. This provision is not a meager ration just for the time of adversity. It is a superabundant outpouring of all you will ever need to completely sustain you. Jesus Himself speaks about His provision to keep you in Matthew 7:7-12: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock,

and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

We may not always understand how fully and lavishly God desires to give to us. We can be limited in our concept of God thinking that He carefully measures His goods to His children, as we do. I am a father of three children and I can remember many times saying, "Son, those shoes are good enough, you can wear them for another semester at school." Or, "Those pants are durable for another six months."

All this careful reasoning goes right out the window when you become a grandfather. Let me share with you an example from my own experience. Last summer I was with my young grandson. The two of us were busy talking while eating chicken fingers and French fries. He looked out the window of the restaurant and pointed towards the strip mall across the street. He said, "I want to go there Papa."

Thinking he simply wanted to sit on the lawn tractors which were for sale outside the mall, I said, "Sure let's go." Instead of heading towards the lawn mowers he led me inside to a department store. He knew exactly where he was going. Once inside, he went directly to a stainless steel basket filled with stuffed animals. Walking around the basket he exclaimed with dismay, "Where is it?" Until he saw what he was looking for and then squealed with delight, saying, "There it is!" With his tiny hands he reached into the basket, and pulled out a stuffed, polka-dotted fire dog. He immediately took his newly acquired treasure and placed it on the check-out counter. He had all the confidence in the world that I would pay for it, which I promptly did.

With the new fire dog under his arm and me in tow we walked down the hall into another store. Again, he knew exactly where to go. He continued to lead the way to the farthest aisle. He stopped at a rack piled high with all kinds of plastic trucks. He dove headlong into the plethora of toys, pushing aside everything until he clutched what he was searching for. Then I heard the muffled voice of my grandson say, "There it is! This is a really cool truck." And off to the check-out we went. He never once had any doubt that his Papa would pay for it. With his newly bought treasures safely stashed inside shopping bags, we headed for home. On arrival he excitedly retrieved his merchandise and placed them on the kitchen counter for all of us to admire.

■ LEAVING CHILDISH THINGS

I thank God this is how he sees his grandfather, but there is so much more I want to give him during his lifetime than stuffed animals and plastic toy trucks. Over the years, I want to impart the things which truly matter and will continue to

form his character. I want to take the knowledge and experience I have gained from God and instruct him, knowing it will help him understand his full purpose in life. As a godly Papa, it is a privilege to be able to give true and lasting gifts which will enable him to overcome the adversities he will face in this world.

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If I am going to pass on these things to him, he must continue to grow and mature as a man. At some point he will have to let go of these childish perspectives. There is a season, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:11, "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away childish things.*"

Likewise, you need to grasp how much God wants to give you. There is a longing and desire in the heart of God to bless his children and to give you the things you need. Your heavenly Father wants you to have complete confidence in Him, as my grandson had in me. He is not only willing to give to you, but He *wants* to give to you. He cannot do so if you remain immature in your thinking.

There is a season as a new Christian where you ask only for the things you want. But there comes a season when you grow into maturity and you start asking for things that are much deeper, much more profound.

Matthew 7:12 declares the depth of true spiritual maturity that is a key to unlock God's incredible generosity, "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*" In other words, you do everything to others that you would want them to do for you. If you were in prison, or you were wounded, depressed, without clothing, food, or shelter; what would you want others to do for you? I would want someone to come to me and help me. I would want them to visit me, to speak a word of healing, to lift me out of my depression; I would want them to use their resources to give me clothing, food, and shelter.

■ ASK! SEEK! KNOCK!

You may be asking yourself, "Where am I going to find the resources and the strength to do all of these things?" We now go back to the words of Jesus: Ask! Seek! Knock! You will be given everything you need. If you are afraid to go into the prisons to visit those incarcerated, ask Jesus, and He will give you courage and love which casts out all fear. If you do not know how to minister healing to the wounded, Jesus said, seek the healing that I have and I will give it to you in abundant measure. If you need wisdom to see people set free from oppression, just knock and He will open the Word to you. Jesus will generously give you all these gifts. When you are being led into a place of ministry where you do not have the natural ability to perform what He calls you to do, He proclaims, "Come to me, everything you need can be found in me!"

Jesus calls self-focus iniquity.

■ FALSE SPIRITUAL VOICES

Right after Jesus speaks of His provision for us, He warns in Matthew 7:15, “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” There will be false spiritual voices which will arise to keep you in a continuous state of childish self-focus; always asking, as a child, for some new toy, or for some new thing. False prophets are not concerned with reaching out to others in the compassion of Christ. Their whole focus is themselves. Jesus tells His disciples, “*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*” (Matthew 7:16). In other words, the compassionate fruit of Christ for people is not there. The message they preach always revolves around the gratification of self; how you can better yourself and have a wonderful destiny.

The treasure of God is fallen humanity.

These false prophets claim to know the mind of God and have the ability to cause others to marvel at their wonderful works. But on closer examination you find that their words lack true power and authority to turn people from their sin. Regarding these false prophets the Scriptures declare, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in*

thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21–23). The definition in the Greek for iniquity is: lawless, presumptuous; wicked, full of self assertion. This word is in opposition to and in absolute contempt for the will of God. This is an amazing thing that Jesus calls self-focus iniquity. The childish self-focus preached by these false prophets will keep you from entering into God’s full purpose for your life.

When the focus is off yourself and placed on reaching out to others, you are touching the heart of God and your house will stand in the coming storm.

■ THE TRUE TREASURE OF GOD

The will of God is not for you to accumulate the most toys before you die; to get to the highest rung on the ladder, to be the best looking, to have the nicest clothes or the biggest house. This is childishness. We are to live way beyond that. The treasure of God is fallen humanity. They are so important to Him, He left you and I here on the earth that we might be co-laborers with Him in the harvest. It is to compel people to come home to God.

He does not expect us to do this in our own strength. He has given us His Word and His Holy Spirit to accomplish this calling. In Him there are no barriers. There are no limitations. There are no prison doors that can remain shut to all He wants to give and do in your life. When you choose to let go of the childish self-focus, God is able to take you to places you have not even dreamed of going. He will give you abilities you never thought would be possible in your life, and wisdom you never possessed before.

■ STAND STRONG

Now the title of this message is ‘Preparing to Stand in the Coming Storm.’ If we continue reading in Matthew, chapter 7, Jesus says “*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock*” (Matthew 7:24–25). Those who are wise will be able to stand strong no matter how fierce the storm. Jesus was speaking to His disciples that when the focus is off yourself and placed on reaching out to others, you are touching the heart of God and your house will stand in the coming storm.

Then the Bible goes on to say, “*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it*” (Matthew 7:26–27). Those who are self-focused are building upon the sand and are without a proper foundation. In the coming days of hard times, their gospel of accumulating worldly wealth will not be able to withstand the strong winds of adversity.

The cry of the true church of Jesus Christ should be, “God, I need your power, I need your wisdom, your compassion, and I need to hear your voice, now.”

■ SPIRITUAL MATURITY

The apostle Paul is a great example of a man who grew into full spiritual maturity, being completely sold out to the will of God. He was willing to let go of all worldly accomplishments for the sake of the true treasure of heaven, reaching men and women for Christ. In his life Paul was given first to the glory of God, but then he was totally given to the purpose of winning the lost. Because of his complete surrender to God, the heavens were open to him and he saw the exceeding riches and power of God for those who believe.

Paul wanted the church of his day to grasp this incredible revelation of the generosity of God. His prayer for them was, *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power”* (Ephesians 1:17–19). In essence, he was saying to the church at Ephesus, “Oh that you could see what I see! That your eyes could be opened to all that is available to you who live a surrendered life.”

■ IT'S A TIME TO ASK

It is time for the church of Jesus Christ to put away childish things. That season is gone. A terrible

storm is coming to the whole world. It is time to say, “God, make me a voice in the storm. Cause me to stand upon a rock. Put compassion in my heart. Give me love that is beyond anything I have ever known.” It is time to pick up your Bible and say, “God Almighty, send me into the harvest field!” You have to be ready to go when He calls, and to do what He asks you to do. This is a miraculous life. It was never intended to be anything else but a miraculous life. Hallelujah!

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.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

| | | | |
|----------|---------|----------------|--------|
| Sunday | 10:00AM | 3:00PM | 6:00PM |
| Tuesday | 7:00PM | Church Service | |
| Thursday | 7:00PM | Prayer Meeting | |
| Friday | 7:00PM | Church Service | |

This message is an edited version of “Preparing to Stand in the Coming Storm,” a sermon given on June 14, 2009 in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. You can also write to: Times Square Church, Sermon Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. 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 written permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripturereferences are from the King James Version.