

THE VALUE OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN

by Carter Conlon

Are you frustrated and even despondent in your walk with God? Are you wondering why life is so hard for you when all around others appear to be less burdened? You are doing the best you can to live a godly life, yet others living in wickedness appear to be prospering. You have been thinking, 'what is the purpose of living your life for God when you still have so many difficulties?' If this is your heartfelt struggle, then you are not alone. Many Christians have asked these same questions. There is a reason you are going through tough times and I will give you some answers to show you the true value of being a righteous person.

You are a lighthouse in a darkened generation, yet there may be times when you feel small and only as effective as a firefly.

We live in a generation of unbridled speech. Even some who claim to be children of God seem to be at liberty to say anything they want, while you are always trying to say the right things. When you look at the Psalms you realize the psalmists fought the same struggles and battles. *"Was it for nothing that I kept my heart pure and kept myself from doing wrong? All I get is trouble all day long; every morning brings me pain"* (Psalm 73:13–14, New Living Translation). He says of the world, *"They boast against the very heavens and their words strut throughout the earth"*

(Psalm 73:9, NLT). This psalmist was experiencing the same things you are. He was frustrated and becoming despondent while he was pursuing God, and in his eyes it seemed others were better off than he was. He said, *"Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches"* (Psalm 73:12, NLT). Charles Finney held an interesting perspective of those not walking with God. According to Finney the man who is far from God feels very good about himself. He is quite confident in his holiness and in his stature with God.

■ CALLED TO BE LIGHTHOUSES IN A DARKENED GENERATION

I believe a true Christian who is doing what is right will approach God in humility, as Isaiah did when he beheld the glory of the Lord and exclaimed: "Oh, Lord I'm undone. If you dealt with me in the manner that I deserve, I would be doomed. I have seen your holiness and I see how far short I am in relation to it." Solomon said in Proverbs 11:11, *"By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked."* In Hebrew the word "upright" means that which agrees with God. You could interpret it this way, "outstanding people who do what is right in the sight of the Lord." The New Living Translation says it like this: *"Upright citizens bless a city and make it prosper."*

You are a lighthouse in a darkened generation, yet there may be times when you feel small and only as effective as a firefly. You walk through your day struggling to

survive, ashamed because you are supposed to be an influence in society, yet you feel like you are not making a dent. That is not true! You are being effective even though you cannot see it. Let's look in the book of Esther for an example of this. A wicked man named Haman had succeeded in getting the king to write a law that would exterminate the Jews. God began looking for a person He could use to change the outcome of Haman's plan. He found a seemingly insignificant young woman named Esther, who did not come from royal birth. Yet by divine providence Esther was chosen from among many to become the queen. She now found herself in the court of the king of Babylon exposing the wicked plan of Haman, and pleading for the safety of her people. Esther was unaware of how God would use her life in such a magnitude in helping to change the destiny of the Jews. In the beginning she may not have seen herself as important. She could not have known what great things her life would produce when Mordecai said to her, *"And who knows whether thou hast come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esther 4:14).

There are many ministries today who do not see you as a precious soul, but simply as a prospect.

It was the same for Moses when God called him. He had fled from Egypt, because he had killed an Egyptian

task master in an attempt to save the life of an Israelite. Moses now spent the next forty years in the back side of the desert shepherding sheep. He saw himself as insignificant, even a failure. During this time in the desert Moses developed a deep humility and God knew that he was a man ready to be used. Moses, like Esther, knew the people of God needed to be delivered but because he thought of himself as unimportant said, “God be with the man you send. It is not me. I might have been a powerful speaker years ago, but I have lost that ability. I have no confidence left.” It was in Esther’s and Moses’ weakness that they obeyed God, and through both of them great disasters were averted and freedom came for many. The Lord wants you to know, “I have reserved your life for Myself even though you are small in your own eyes. I have kept you aware of your frailty. You might not see yourself as being much, but you do not realize that I have reserved you for such a time as this.”

■ AN APPALLING SPIRITUAL CONDITION

Unfortunately, in Ezekiel’s time, when God was looking for one righteous man, He found none. Ezekiel described the appalling spiritual condition of his time with these words, “*There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof*” (Ezekiel 22:25). In other words, a prophetic ministry of that generation was devouring the people of God. They were taking away the treasure God had placed in the righteous, and were not distinguishing between the holy and the profane. This priesthood did not care how the people were living, as long as they were tithing. If everything looked good on the outside, they were content. They were indifferent to the true spiritual state

of the people. The words that came out of their mouths did not represent God. Since this kind of priesthood did not bring the people into the true rest of God, the Lord proclaimed through Ezekiel that His holy name and character were being defiled.

God wanted one man who would stand in the gap and stem the tide of death and judgment coming upon His heritage.

There are many ministries today who do not see you as a precious soul, but simply as a prospect. “*Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves, ravening the prey. They shed blood and destroy souls to get dishonest gain*” (Ezekiel 22:27). Their goal is not to impart the life of Christ to you, or to send you to the mission field; neither is it their goal to see you reach people in your community, or your fellow co-workers. They will tell you how wonderful you are on the one hand and then with the other reach into your pockets to take your wealth. Ezekiel goes on to say, “*Her prophets daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken*” (Ezekiel 22:28). Now this is very interesting. The lies these so called priests were living and preaching are likened to untempered mortar, or inferior cement that could never hold. They were therefore appearing to be building the kingdom of God, but it would not stand against the winds of adversity, or the storms of life that come against every believer.

It is a fearful thing to be under a ministry that is supposedly speaking on God’s behalf, when God has not spoken. The end result of false teaching is that it corrupts

so many people and can make you lose your value as a righteous person. In Ezekiel 22:29 we read, “*The people of the land have used oppression.*” This is what happens to those who sit under this kind of a ministry. Everyone ends up pursuing ‘things’ instead of God, they are all out for their own gain. They have lost the heart of God. They vex the poor and needy and oppress the stranger wrongfully, when in actuality God came down to give life and hope to those who have no hope. You may ask how you can know if you are under such a ministry. It is easy. Everything God speaks is already in the Bible. You need to read the Word to discern whether or not what you are hearing is from God. The Holy Spirit will be your guide.

■ GOD LOOKS FOR ONE PERSON TO STAND IN THE GAP

God saw the deteriorating condition of the nation and therefore “*...sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them, I’ve consumed them with the fire of my wrath. Their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God*” (Ezekiel 22:30, 31). We may never know the full scope of what judgments over the careless of this world are averted when someone chooses to live for Him. God wanted one man who would stand in the gap and stem the tide of death and judgment coming upon His heritage. One man who would stand up and say, “This is not right.” If we look at Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:32, we realize their history in the Bible as we know it, could have been different. If only ten righteous people had been found in those two cities, they would not have been destroyed. With a few righteous men and women, there still would have been a chance for the voice of God to be heard in that generation. Again, you might feel

like Moses and Esther and think to yourself, “I hope God finds somebody, because I am not the deliverer type. I have to fight to survive in my own home, or on my job to be a Christian, let alone be an influence in the lives of other people. I hope He finds somebody on my block or in my office building, as I am not that person.” It is because of these sentiments; this message was given to me by the Lord to encourage you. You can be the person who has a stabilizing effect in your environment.

■ THE RESTRAINING HAND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The restraining of evil is found in the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit operates in a righteous body of believers who are the true church of God. There comes a sense of divine order in your life because of His Holy Spirit in you. A lot of ministries today try to convince you they are the anointed ones. They think they are the only ones doing the work of God, but that is not true, or the way it is according to the Bible. You have the Spirit of God within you. You carry God into the subway, into the workplace, and into your neighborhood. The psalmist in Psalm 73:17 finally came to this realization of the truth when he went into the house of God. In the presence of the Lord he saw destruction was coming to those who did not live for God with a whole heart. In God's presence he saw he had not cleansed his heart and hands in vain, and he began to understand he might be someone's last hope in all that stood between them and the coming of God's judgment.

You see this clearly evidenced in the Word as you read about a judgment which came upon the land in the time of King David. Because of a growing spiritual pride in David, he had foolishly numbered Israel. God had to come against this pride, so He sent a plague over the land and 70,000 people died. The

Scripture says, *“The angel of the Lord stood between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel who were clothed in sackcloth fell upon their faces”* (1 Chronicles 21:16). When David and the elders humbled themselves and were prostrated before the Lord, the destruction was stayed for a moment while everyone waited for further instructions from God.

He was an everyday family man, but in his hands God had placed everything that was necessary to stop the judgment.

■ SO HOW DID GOD INTEND TO STOP THIS DESTRUCTION?

Beloved, you have to see how God can use anyone He chooses to halt destruction in its tracks. We find the true hero of this biblical account in 1 Chronicles 21:18. The Bible says, *“Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”* Ornan's threshing floor was on the top of Mt. Moriah, where Solomon's temple would eventually be built and where the dome of the rock actually stands today. He was a typical working man who separated the wheat from the chaff on his large open threshing floor. We know he was a family man since the Bible says he had four sons. His sons must have been young, because the Scripture says when they saw the destruction, they were fearful and hid themselves. He was an everyday family man, but in his hands God had placed everything that was necessary to stop the judgment. You have to believe that Ornan was a righteous man, because God would

never have directed King David to an unrighteous person for help. We cannot help but wonder if this man was not like the psalmist of Psalm 73. Upon seeing all the destruction, Ornan could have thought, “God, what can I do about this? How can my life make a difference?” All of a sudden, Ornan saw the king of Israel approaching him. The king was being directed by the Spirit of God to go to this man, because Ornan had the resources which were needed to stop the destroying plague. It is amazing! He was just an ordinary man in what was considered an ordinary place; but the king said to him, “I need what you have to stop the plague from spreading among the people.” It must have stunned Ornan for a moment. “What do I have that somebody else does not have? There is nothing special about me. It seems impossible that King David would need the mundane things of my life. He has gold and silver in abundance; he has houses, lands, influence, authority, and power. What do I have that he could possibly want?” Yet this simple man, Ornan the Jebusite, offered the king his oxen for the sacrifice, and his wooden threshing instruments for the fire. What he did was offer who he was and his livelihood to help stop the plague. It was incredible to Ornan that God would now use his life to prevent further destruction to men's lives. Here is this common person, working and going about his daily business, yet extremely aware of the judgment taking place all around him. Exactly like today. We can see the encroaching dark clouds of impending judgment. We see it in the workplace and we hear it in the conversation on the streets. People are aware it is now getting precariously evil in our generation. The minds of men are becoming troublingly dark and there is no other way to describe it.

■ REVELATION OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

The very place David was standing, this man's threshing floor, the place of a man's obedience and sacrifice, would be declared to be the house of God. David took the oxen and while he was sacrificing them unto the Lord, he was given a powerful revelation, *"This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel"* (1 Chronicles 22:1). In the prophetic context of this scripture we see David had a moment of revelation and a panoramic view of all the ages of time. He saw Solomon's temple. A temple where the glory of the Lord would dwell; he saw the Herodian temple replacing it after Solomon's temple was destroyed. He saw Jesus Himself walking into that temple, stopping the plague of sin and sickness that was destroying the lives of men and women and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. David saw the temple of Christ's body being crucified but raised again in three days. And he saw the power of God coming down and inhabiting the temple of our lives, the lives of ordinary men, women and children. Hallelujah!

Or as in Ezekiel's day when God said, "I just sought for one man," let that one person be you.

Jesus said, "It is on this foundation that my church is built and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Christ dwells in frail humanity just like you and I; He dwells in people who make the choice to live for Him. His glory and power, His restraining

influence, is made known through those who may go through deep struggles in this life. You may even be wondering, 'God, why does life seem so hard?' But when you get to heaven, and the video section of your life is opened up, you will begin to see all the destruction that was averted, stopped, halted, put to an end in the lives of many because you chose to live for God. When you live for Him, He will stay the destroyer's hand through your life.

You are not an insignificant person with God; the restraining power of God is upon you, and He is doing more through your life than you will ever know. I do not know what the future holds, but I do know according to the Scripture, that if ten righteous people can be found it makes a difference. Or as in Ezekiel's day when God said, "I just sought for one man," let that one person be you. When God seeks for a man, He does not send His angels down only to Bible colleges throughout America. No! Angels quite often appear at a construction site, a classroom, a hospital, or the home of a single parent. All of a sudden, the Lord approaches you as David approached Ornan the Jebusite, and says, "I need to stop the destruction, and I need to do it through you."

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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	

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