

## THE GLORY OF GOD IN AWFUL PLACES

by Carter Conlon

“I’m in an awful place!” Have you ever uttered those words to someone, or even to God? Maybe you have just silently groaned them from your heart. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines awful as: extremely bad, unpleasant, disagreeable, a place that inspires fear. Perhaps you’re in an awful place and you’d like to get out right now. This is exactly where David was in Psalm 55:4–6: *“My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”* In modern terms, this would say: If I could just figure a way to get out of here, life would be a whole lot better! If you have and are presently in such a place or you have recently walked out of such a place, then God has a word for you today.

**Have you ever come to a realization that you do not see anything of God in such an awful place?**

*“Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest”* (Psalm 55:7–8). Now, we don’t have to go into all of David’s trouble here, but suffice it to say that it was trouble with people that he was having. In his heart, David just wanted to get out, and get away. He wanted to get away from all of the strife to escape

the criticism and words of the so-called well wisher. He wanted to find a place of peace and rest.

Have you ever come to a realization that you do not see anything of God in such an awful place? The place starts to look so dark, that there is no light at the end of the tunnel. You don’t find any purpose to it, and you don’t see any reason why you should remain in it. You may even consider this to be an evil place. Of course the enemy will be right there telling you that somehow you have angered God and you should just leave this place, but a very deep work of God is going on.

You see, the enemy himself knows that this is an awful place. He knows from history that when somebody endures and comes out of one of these places, this person has learned something deep about the way the kingdom of God operates. As you continue to read, God will reveal to you how He works in these awful places. The enemy knows how much violence can be brought against his kingdom, and he will lie to you and try to get you to escape from this place, to destroy the work of God in your life.

As we see in Psalm 55, David was in such a battle and was seeking a way out: “If I had my way and my plan, I’d be out of here. I’d rather live in the wilderness than remain in this place.” How confusing it must have been for David at this time, because he remembered his youth and the expectation in his heart that God was going to do something supernatural through his life. He remembered that

day when Samuel bypassed all his brothers, poured the horn of oil on his head, and spoke words of special anointing over his life. In the same way you can remember the day you came to Christ and He revealed Himself to you. You can remember the incredible things He spoke over your life and the victory that He won for you on Calvary. As with David, this anointing began to lead you into places where you knew that only supernatural strength could win victories.

**It would be awesome if we could just reign in life without any valleys.**

### ■ THE PROMISES OF GOD

Think of David in his youth standing on the hillside facing Goliath, when the whole Israelite army was in fear and unable to fight for the honor of God. David ran into the valley, coming up against the giant with the anointing of God on his life and the promises of God in his heart. He defeated this incredible enemy with one small stone. David proved that day that God’s Word to him was completely true; but even with all the promises he had, he found himself crying out in Psalm 55:4, 5 *“My heart is sore pained, terrors of death are all round me. Fearfulness and trembling are upon me, and I’m overwhelmed with horror.”*

David is overwhelmed; a sense of darkness had come over him, a sense of foreboding, of something terrible

that had happened. David did not understand what was going on in that place. In some measure David must have felt that he was being robbed of the promises God had given him. David cried out in despair, “Oh if only I had wings like a dove, I’d get of this place, then I would be at rest. I would go off and find a cabin in the wilderness, and that’s where I would stay. Oh, I would be so happy there.”

Now David, I am sure, would have liked to have reigned without any suffering. It would be awesome if we could just reign in life without any valleys; but that is not realistic folks. So we need to ask ourselves these questions: Why would this awful place need to be at all? What is the purpose to this? I thought I was supposed to be happy when I was saved.

#### ■ A GREATER LIFE AWAITS YOU

Jesus answers these questions for us in Luke 9:23–24 *“And he said to them, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”* If we seek to preserve what we think life is and should be, then we will lose the life that God in Christ has destined for us to have. For instance, if you seek to save your image, your ambitions, or even your idea of religion; then you lose the life Christ had destined for you to have. What He has for you is something deeper, more powerful, more glorious, and something that is motivated and moved by the resurrection life of Christ. As Paul has said, *“in Him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:18). This is the life Christ says I don’t want you to lose.

#### ■ JESUS OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus, having an understanding of the will of His Father, had taken up the cross, fully knowing where that cross was going to lead Him. Aware of the kind of life it was going to give Him;

and fully acknowledging the adversity He was going to walk into. Now think of it for a moment, He knew this was the destiny of His life, to be given as a sacrifice. He knew the purpose of His life was for the redemption of sin.

If that was the final destiny, why the awful places in between the last supper and the final nailing to the cross? If the cross was really just the issue, why couldn’t He have gone to Calvary and died there quickly. Why did He have to be betrayed for money? Why did He have to face an angry mob in Gethsemane? Why did He have to stand before hollow and hypocritical religious accusers? Why did He have to suffer abuse at the hands of the Roman authorities? Why did He have to be nailed and counted among thieves on the cross? Why did He have to suffer being reviled by those He had created by the words of His own mouth? Why did He have to suffer the humiliation of the parting of His garments while He was still alive? What was the point of all those awful places? The only reason I can fathom is because it had been prescribed in the Word of God that through this journey He would bring glory to God.

#### ■ A CLEAR PICTURE OF SUFFERING

There is a path for you and a path for me. When you study the scriptures you begin to understand there is a pathway for those who are going to follow Him. It is a pathway that God has prescribed and it has a reason, it is not just there to create misery for us. Think for the moment of a man clinging to the sides of a sinking ship. He does not know that soon the downward pull of the ship will take him into the depths of the sea. Now the captain sees this man clinging to the sides of his sinking ship. From his vantage point, he instructs the first mate to take some kind of object and begin hitting his fingers until he eventually lets go. This man is going

to suffer pain to his hand and fingers, but it is going to save his life.

Many people, even Christian people, are like that. They go to church, but are desperately clinging to all kinds of old thinking, hoping that the pastor will bless them in their clinging condition. They say, “Oh bless me, bless me, bless me, help me to hang on.” And the pastor takes out the hammer of the Word of God and in a sense starts hitting their fingers until they have to let go. They are not realizing their life has been spared. Now they are no longer in danger of being dragged down with the whole worldly system. That is the best way I know how to describe the purpose of suffering.

**He met God and came out with something worked in him that cannot be learned in a textbook.**

#### ■ MOSES AND THE AWFUL PLACE

Think of Moses suffering in the wilderness; he had left the grand palace, the place where he thought the destiny of his life was supposed to begin and end. Letting go of what he thought was the purpose of his life brought him to a place where he was able to lead many to freedom. He was given a call by God to deliver the people out of Egypt, but he totally misread how he was supposed to do it. This resulted in failure which caused him to flee into the wilderness. But he had encountered God there.

I have no doubt that if you were to go back in history and talk with Moses, he would say that it was an awful place to be in. This was the prescribed journey that God had Moses on. In this place, he met God and came out with something worked in him that cannot be learned in a textbook, it can only be learned

through the Holy Ghost. God now had a vessel through which He brought three million people out of captivity defeating one of the most powerful armies in the world at that time.

**Reigning with Christ is the power to speak words of life which bring people out of their despair.**

### ■ PAUL AND THE AWFUL PLACE

Think of the testimony of Paul. When Paul was saved, the Holy Spirit went to Ananias and told him, *“I will show this man great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”* (Acts 9:16). You know Paul’s testimony is of being taken from one awful place to another. When you read his testimony you see the number of times he was beaten, shipwrecked, betrayed, and stranded in the sea. When God looked down, he said, *“Now I can put a pen or a quill in that hand, and now that hand can be moved by the Holy Ghost and words in my heart can be put on paper for future generations.”*

Paul found God in these hard places and that is why he and Silas could sing in the midst of an inner prison. All of Hell began to shake because these two men have found Him in one of the most awful places this world could ever put a person into. That is why Paul can say, *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him”* (2 Timothy 2:12). Oh folks, I do believe there are many reading this today who desperately want to say, *“God, why am I in this place?”* not realizing the Lord is preparing you for hard times that are coming. They are going to need direction, they are going to need a way out of their captivity, and they are going to need resources. There have to be men and woman who

know God, who have found Him and known His glory in the awful places.

### ■ REIGNING WITH CHRIST

A lot of people think of suffering as now, and reigning as later in heaven. I want to suggest that we can also view this as being in the present. If we suffer we shall reign. When Jesus arose from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghost, He was victor over death. He had suffered, but now He was living on the other side of that suffering. He was still in a human body, still on planet Earth until the day He ascended to His Father. He was already reigning. He had already won the victory—it was not to be won, it was won!

The first thing Jesus did after he rose from the dead was to speak hope to someone in despair. In John 20:11, the scriptures tell us that Mary Magdalene had lost hope in her awful place, but Jesus spoke with such tenderness and authority that He immediately brought her out of her despair. That’s reigning with Christ! When you’ve gone through suffering and hardship, yet you’ve trusted God, you’re reigning with Him. God’s hand has kept you; He has lifted you out of the place that would have swallowed anybody who had not received the power of God. Mary had lost all her hope, and the things she thought would bring her freedom looked to be dead. But Jesus spoke her name with incredible tenderness, *“Why are you crying?”* Jesus asked her. *“Who are you looking for?”* (John 20:15). He spoke her name and she came out of her awful place.

**To reign with Christ is to have the power to bring the peace of God with you wherever you go.**

Beloved, this is what I mean when I talk about reigning with Christ. It is the power to speak words of life which bring people out of their despair. Reigning with Christ is the power to speak a few words with such tenderness that prison doors are unlocked. The wounded heart is healed, the hopeless find hope once again, and blinded eyes see what they could not see before. This is reigning with Christ, and I dare say that those who have never suffered will not know Christ in this capacity.

The second thing Jesus did was to appear in a room where his disciples had gathered. They had locked the doors for fear of the Jews. This was an assembly of the fearful, but Jesus walked in, and the first word out of his mouth was PEACE! Amazing! To reign with Christ is to have the power to bring the peace of God with you wherever you go. You walk into your house and your children are fighting and everything seems to be out of control, but the presence of God in you brings His peace. That is what happens to those who reign with Christ. There is a power in their speech to lift people out of despair and an anointing and authority to bring peace wherever they go.

Again we see in John 20:22 that Jesus breathed upon them and said, *“Receive the Holy Ghost.”* If you’re reigning with Christ, you’re not just trying to just help somebody out of a situation, but you have something from God. You are living in a place where you can open your mouth and the life of God is infused into those who are listening. Anybody can stand in a pulpit and open the Bible and read it to you. But if God finds a vessel who has suffered and come out in victory, all of a sudden it takes on a new dimension. God gives you authority to breathe life into hopeless situations. You’re going to walk in a new realm of life, a life of reigning with Christ. The classroom to that reigning is

suffering. They are God-appointed, God-awful places! In these places, you'll find Him—and there's no sense in trying to escape. If you escape it, you escape the very work that God has been doing in you, to bring about a life that will glorify him.

### ■ HOPE FOR TROUBLED TIMES

Today, if you will trust God and believe the scriptures when it says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28). God will give you the power to say: “No, devil, I am not running away from my awful place. I'm not leaving. I am going to trust God who will reveal Himself to me in my desert place. *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6:33 KJV). If you will simply believe this verse of Scripture, you can say, “I am going to reign with Jesus Christ and walk in resurrection power. I am not running from this situation. I'm not going to look for deliverance from the outside. I'm going to find God right where I am right now, in this job, in this community, in this building, in this body, in this marriage, in this circumstance.” Thanks be to God!

We are entering a time in history when people are losing their hope, just as Mary Magdalene did. Everything they hoped for is dead and gone. We are coming into a time, as with Moses, where people are weary of crying because of their bondage, and they don't know what to do. We are coming into a time when people are going to be desperate for a word of

encouragement by someone who has endured suffering and has known God in the midst of it.

We are coming into a time when people are going to be desperate for provision, and God has been preparing an army. If you study the Word, you'll know that the army He prepares has always been found in awful places.

But it is in these awful places, the glory of God is manifested. Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon  
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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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