

GETTING THROUGH DARK DAYS

by Carter Conlon

The hour in which we live is one of uncertainty, fear, and financial insecurity. It is a volatile season where everything can change in a moment. For instance, you could be laid off from your job tomorrow or you can lose your house to foreclosure. Perhaps a catastrophic event happens that changes the landscape of your life. It is during these unsettled times when many voices will try to surface in your mind. Some will be your own fears seeking to dominate your thoughts; others will be false reasonings sent by the devil himself. All of these voices will be working to destroy your ability to stand strong in difficult days. Unfortunately, there will be multitudes of people who will never learn to hear the voice of God. They will become prey to anyone and everyone who claims they are speaking for God. Jesus said *"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many"* (Matthew 24:11). It is therefore imperative for believers in this hour to clearly know and understand how God speaks. It is also crucial for the church of Jesus Christ to be led and directed by truth. *"Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from what we believe; they will follow lying spirits and teachings that come from demons"* (1 Timothy 4:1 NLT).

■ THE LAST DAYS OF JERUSALEM

In the Old Testament, God used Jeremiah the prophet as a "voice of truth," to speak to His people in Jerusalem. The Israelites were living on the brink of sudden ruin and impending captivity. God's voice could be clearly understood when Jeremiah boldly proclaimed His Word

to them. *"For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord"* (Jeremiah 29:8–9). God loved His people and gave them warning after warning, but they chose to ignore it. Instead they believed the lies and smooth talking of the counterfeit prophets who preached a deceitful gospel of peace and prosperity. This wrong message lulled the majority into complacency, which kept them in a sinful and destructive lifestyle. These compromised people mistreated their fellowman without fear of reprisal from God; all the while the dust clouds of their captors gathered on the distant horizon.

Jeremiah continued to be a contrasting voice for the people of Jerusalem. Even in the midst of great personal difficulty and persecution he faithfully spoke the word of God to them; warning them of the judgment to come. When the judgment of God suddenly arrived on their doorstep they capitulated into panic and fear. They were gripped in unbelief and dread, because they had wholeheartedly embraced the fraudulent voices around them.

■ WHY FALSE PROPHETS?

Jeremiah knew Satan had placed false prophets right in the midst of the people. Listen to his lament

concerning them, *"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place"* (Jeremiah 14:13). Their misguided message was given to a people whose value system was entrenched in a perishing society. There really was no difference between them and the surrounding nations.

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The devil sends bogus prophets, because they offer a bright but elusive future in a place which is about to experience the judgment of God. They preach peace when there is no peace; they preach prosperity, when there is no prosperity. One of the most ominous signs judgment is coming is the rise of phony prophets, all claiming to speak in God's name.

Even God's judgment did not stop their falsehoods. While Babylon's army was systematically deporting the people, these same false prophets, who went into captivity with them, took along a new message. They began lying to them saying, "We won't be here long, just look back at the past, God is going to restore what we had before." This is exactly what false prophets are all about. It is the strategy of Satan, to keep you in a continual state of uncertainty; caught between an illusive future and a vanishing past.

Now, here is the key to understanding why Satan works so hard to deceive you. It is to inundate you with counterfeit promises so you will come to the wrong conclusion about God. A conclusion which says God cannot be trusted. That is the issue. This is why Satan gives false promises of the future and then false promises of the past. He does this to keep you in a place of not knowing the true voice of God. In this way he keeps you off balance and chasing every new thing that comes along. You will always be shifting with every new wind of doctrine. Ultimately, this lack of trust in your heart will finally lead you to cast off your confidence in Christ, during the hour of your greatest trial. We are living in that place in some measure today.

■ MANY VOICES

I think many in the church today, especially if they have been a 'gospel surfer' have come to the place of saying, "Who is speaking for God? Will the real Jesus please stand up?" When everything begins to shake and calamity is at the door that is when you need to know you are hearing the voice of God. You need to know with assurance it is God and not your own heart speaking. You need to know it is not Satan animating some person who appears as an angel of light. You need to know that you are not being led into something that is going to bring you into a spiritual desert and

ultimately spiritual destruction. Now, there may be a legitimate question arising in your heart: With all of these voices clamoring to speak for God, how can I know which one is actually God speaking?

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■ HOW YOU CAN KNOW GOD'S VOICE

Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, (and the word 'know', means I am intimately acquainted with them.) and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*" (John 10:27-28).

The voice of God will never promise you peace when you are living in compliance with the value system of the world. In other words, God will not promise you peace if you are embracing the same values as the ungodly around you. A worldly system which God has condemned and is about to bring His judgment upon. Jeremiah said "*They (meaning the false prophets) say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after*

the imagination (that means the stubbornness) of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you" (Jeremiah 23:17). In other words, the Lord is saying, "I have not sent these prophets, but they have gone. I have not spoken to them, but they have run to the people saying to them, they are speaking in my name. But, if they had stood in my counsel, they would have turned the people from their wicked ways."

The voice of God will always challenge sin in the life of the believer. Sin is willful rebellion that stands in opposition to obedience to a holy God. If you are living in compromise or blatant sin, you will not be at ease in the house of God, where the true gospel is being preached. If you are desirous of hearing God's voice for yourself, then you have to repent, which means turn from your sin. To live as a Christian is to live a supernatural life by the power of His Holy Spirit. To live for Christ is to have a totally different value system to this world. It is to embrace the heart of God, who longs to reach fallen men, women and children. To let them know there is a Savior who loves them and will keep them in these trying times.

Once you have turned to God with all your heart He will begin revealing His Word and His voice to you. "*And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left*" (Isaiah 30:21).

The major difference between people who are hearing God's voice and those who are not will be evidenced by God's leading. David said, "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters*" (Psalm 23:2). They will be led by the tender voice of our Savior. They will be given promises of reassurance no matter what they have to face in the coming days. God will

be with them. There will be quietness in their soul and a confidence in the midst of conflict. This is the same word Jeremiah gave to the people who were about to be displaced, “*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished*” (Jeremiah 29:4–6).

Wherever God calls and allows you to go, pray for that place and city.

■ BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

In other words, bloom where you are planted. No matter where you may end up in life, what city or country you eventually find yourself in, dig down deep and bloom there. Trust what God is saying. Nothing which comes your way is by accident. God has allowed it for a specific reason and your heart has to learn to trust His voice and direction for your life. You can now be confident that you are not in the hands of the devil, you never were, and you never will be. You are in the hands of God.

Jeremiah admonished those who were transported into Babylon, “*seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have*

peace. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:7,10). Wherever God calls and allows you to go, pray for that place and city. Live there as a person who has confidence in God and brings honor and glory to His name. Even if you are living in a place where everyone seems to be living apart from God, there choose to live for Him. Do not cast away your confidence in God in the difficult days. Wherever you live and whatever state you find yourself in, remember what Paul said, “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Philippians 4:11–13).

There is a song of praise that comes from trusting in the Lord your God. The Lord said through Jeremiah, “*I know the plans I have for you, thoughts of good and not of evil to bring you to a desired end*” (Jeremiah 29:11). He has to have a people in this generation that say, “*Though the mountains be shaken out of their place, though the seas overflow their borders, I will not be afraid. I will trust in God. God will not fail me, nor forsake me. He will give me a testimony in the midst of my enemies.*” One day when you are called to heaven, on the other side of this valley, just over the hilltop, there is a land of glory waiting for you! It is a place where your song of praise will never die; where you will never thirst; never get hungry and where you will never have to shed a tear. There will be

nothing around you to disturb the peace of God in that place. Hallelujah!

Carter Conlon
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Dear Friend,

Even the most devoted servants of God can find themselves experiencing measures of despair. There are times when things around us don't seem to be unfolding as we thought they would.

The Apostle Peter wrote about these things to the early church. *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you"* (1 Peter 4:12). In other words, nothing that is happening has taken God by surprise. He knew it was coming well before you did and had already made plans to get you through!

In 1 Kings 19:4, Elijah was at the lowest point of his lifetime. Everything around him seemed to have spun out of control. He was at the very bottom of human despair and seeing his own future as hopeless. Suddenly, the most phenomenal whisper he had ever heard came to his heart. It was the voice of God, tenderly and intimately inviting him to continue on his life's journey. Nothing in the plan of God had changed. Everything was unfolding exactly as the Lord knew it would. Nothing strange had happened. It was only human vision that had become cloudy. God's eyes still saw the end from the beginning.

Be prepared today to hear the whisper of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps tonight when you lay your head on your pillow you'll hear: "Don't worry, you won't be discouraged for long. Tomorrow I have a plan and you and I are going to walk through it together. And by the way, I'm soon coming in a spectacular way to bring you home!"

Yours in Christ,



Pastor Carter Conlon

This message is an edited version of "Getting Through Dark Days," a sermon given on **October 5, 2008** 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 scripture references are from the King James Version.

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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