

LETTER FROM CARTER CONLON

Dear Friend,

I hope this newsletter finds you resting in the comfort of the Lord. Listen to the words of the psalmist: *"Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul"* (Psalms 94:17–19).

The comfort of the Lord is not just a word of assurance that keeps us in spite of the state of our hearts and actions. Rather, it is a word leading us to the place of right motive and action where we can fully understand and embrace His true comfort. There is, indeed, a "peace that passes all understanding" for the believer in Christ. Those who are at rest in the finished work of the cross receive this peace. It enables them to trust that Jesus will be glorified in keeping them from being overcome, no matter where God has them.

The finish line is in sight! We might not be the finest group of runners ever to round the corner; however, it's not about us. It's about the Christ who kept us to the end! Hallelujah!

Yours in Christ,



Carter Conlon
Senior Pastor

THE HUMBLE WILL BE LIFTED UP

by Carter Conlon

The Bible says that in the last days, everything that can be shaken will be shaken (see Hebrews 12:27). There is going to be a separating even within what has professed to be the church of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul describes it as a great falling away—not only in society, but for those who attend the house of God without fully embracing the life that Christ offers His people. Something will enter their heart and mind that will draw them away, which the apostle James addresses.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts,

ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:1–10).

***What depth
of weakness is
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Historians essentially agree that James was writing after the martyrdom of Stephen, the disciple killed by an enraged crowd who were offended when he challenged their spirituality. James, as head of the church in Jerusalem, was acutely aware of this intense persecution.

Why would James speak such strong words to a persecuted church, the first generation after the cross? Surely the church was full of people living for God. I believe that while James was addressing problems inherent in the early church, the Holy Spirit also was giving him an understanding of what would be found in humanity throughout all time. So what are these core issues? What depth of weakness is innate in every person, then and

now, that could cause a falling away from God?

■ UNSURRENDERED DESIRES

James points to unsundered desires that were keeping many troubled on the inside, and in conflict with others on the outside (James 4:1). He asks, “Where are these conflicts among you coming from? Do they not originate from those desires in your heart that are not surrendered to the will of God—desires for personal gain and pleasure?” We see a wide range of selfishness displayed in the church even today. Pettiness or the desire to be greater than others leads to fighting that sometimes even splits churches.

■ EMBRACING THE WORLD

“You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4: 2–3, paraphrase). You might be like that today—never satisfied, everything that supposedly would make you happy always just out of reach. Why? Jesus said that whoever comes to Him would never hunger or thirst. So why do you run from church to church, conference to conference, without finding satisfaction? Why do you fight and not obtain? Why do your prayers seem fruitless?

Resist the temptation to be other than what God has called you to be.

James exposes the reason: “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*” (James 4:3). You are asking God to bless a plan that is not His. Instead, this plan is coming from the lust of your own heart. Maybe somebody claiming to speak for God told you

some great thing would come into your life, so you are holding tenaciously to that promise. However, you are praying according to a wrong view, so your prayer is never answered.

Today, just as in the past, many are still embracing the core values of a fallen world. James’ reference to the people as adulterers may seem harsh, but basically he is saying, “You are still embracing the value system of this world. You have not transferred your heart into the kingdom of God; your thoughts are still not in line with His. In fact, you are not very different from the people in the world, you just have God attached to all of it.”

■ RESIST THE DEVIL

“*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). Everybody likes to think of the devil as being out in the world, but nobody wants to believe that he might actually be in the church. However, according to Ezekiel 28:14, Satan had originally been the anointed cherub. He observed God’s glory and when he saw that he was lower than God, he became offended and led a rebellion in heaven. He was then cast to the earth where he later entered the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve dwelt in Eden, quite content with all God had given them, and Satan approached them with the same lie he uses today: “There is a lot more out there than what you have here. God has you in this little box tending this garden, naming animals, meeting with Him occasionally. But life is meant to be a whole lot more than that. Did you know that you could be as God? You can chart your own course; you can plot your own destiny. All you have to do is agree with me.”

When Adam and Eve agreed, the nature of Satan was sown into the entire human race. So when James says, “Resist the devil,” understand that it is not necessarily an outside

devil but an inside devil. That very nature that was sown into us makes us pursue something other than the will of God for our lives, seeking happiness other than where God has planted us—falling right into the same trap as Adam and Eve. Resist the temptation to be other than what God has called you to be—resist it strongly!

The natural man does not accept that suffering might be part of the Christian life.

■ WHEN OUR FALLEN NATURE SPEAKS

In Mark 8:31–33, Jesus plainly told His disciples, “The Son of man is going to be delivered up to the priests, scribes, and Pharisees. I am going to be rejected and put to death, but I am going to be raised again from the dead on the third day.” The Scripture says that Peter then took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. Although his exact words are not recorded, they were likely along the lines of, “No! This is not for you, Lord. You don’t need to do this. You’re the Son of God—You have all power and authority!”

It is always the natural man, the one to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness, that concludes, “No, it shouldn’t have to be this way!” The natural man does not understand it and does not accept that suffering might be part of the Christian life. The natural man puts it all away and says, “That’s not what the church is about or what we are destined for. No suffering or trials for us. It’s just a golden highway all the way to heaven!”

Peter was speaking from his fallen nature, and Jesus recognized the origin of this type of reasoning. The Scripture says that He turned and looked at all His disciples, not just Peter, and said, “Get thee behind me, Satan, for you don’t have any taste for the things that be of God, but the things that be of men” (James 4:33, paraphrase). I believe that Jesus was looking right through His disciples, right back into the Garden of Eden, for He knew whose voice had been sown into fallen man.

■ HOW DO I HUMBLE MYSELF?

“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, *The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*” (James 4:5–6, 10). So now the question is, how do I humble myself? Do I adopt a humble posture, with my head hanging down, saying, “I am just a lowly, miserable sinner?” I have known people who have done that, while inwardly they thank God they are not like other people.

Many people today are gripped with a false view of themselves that is far from the way God sees them.

Peter was rebuked by Christ, but eventually he came to an important understanding. Remember, Peter was the one who told Jesus, “Though everybody is offended, I won’t be. Though everybody flees, I am with you. I am going to go with you right into Jerusalem, and if you die there, I will die there with you.” He was full of zeal despite the fact that Jesus

clearly told him he was just like every other man—a coward at heart. But Peter’s pride would not let him hear it. He viewed himself as courageous and capable of getting to the end on his own—a false view, of course. Similarly, many people today are gripped with a false view of themselves that is far from the way God sees them.

After Peter denied Christ, the Scripture says that he fled, completely broken. As he wept, his self-image finally came crashing to the ground. In his despair he probably thought there was no hope of a future. “I have been abandoned by God. I tried to serve Him but I couldn’t do it. In my heart, I really wanted to do these things and truly believed I was able, only to find out that I am a dismal failure. Surely God is going to reject me.”

Peter was now humbled in his own sight and in the sight of God. He also was humbled in the sight of his brethren because they had heard his boasts and knew that he had run, just as the rest of them had. Soon afterward, they all assembled together with the doors closed because of fear. Suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst and said to Peter and the rest, “*Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*” (John 20:21).

Jesus did not come to Peter with condemnation—He came to him with the true commission. Now Peter was ready to be used of God! Isn’t that amazing? It is in our nothingness that God finally can use us. When we think we are something, we are actually very far from what God intended for us. But Jesus charged them, “As my Father sent Me, not in My own strength, not in My own plans, not in My own wisdom, but in the strength and wisdom of Almighty God—even so now I send you.” Humble yourself

in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up!

■ WHO WILL DELIVER ME?

The apostle Paul also learned what it meant to be humble before God. He was a man with incredible knowledge and likely the most brilliant theologian of the New Testament. Yet he knew that knowledge alone was not enough to bring him to the place that God desired for his life.

True humility comes when all self-effort dies.

In Romans 7, Paul essentially says, “I know what to do, and I actually delight in doing it in my inner man. But there’s a force inside constantly dragging me in another direction so that I am not doing the things I know to do. And the things that I don’t want to do, I find myself doing.” Does this sound familiar? Paul asks, “*who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Romans 7:24) All of his knowledge could not deliver him. Everything that he knew to do, he was not able to!

It can become a source of despair when we read the Scriptures and conclude, “Well, I know I should love others; I should love my wife as Christ loved the church. I should honor and respect my husband. I should be an example to my children. I should be the best employee on my job.” We know all of these things, and deep inside we desire to do them. Yet, if we are honest, we eventually come to the point where we say, “God, I can’t do it. There is a law at work inside that keeps drawing me to speak and do things that I don’t want to. I am unable to change by myself.”

“Who will deliver me?” In the last verse Paul says, “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 7:25). Thanks be to God when I finally acknowledge that it

is not possible for me to live this Christian life in my own strength. Now *this* is true humility!

■ TRUE HUMILITY

The heart of this message can be summed up in one sentence: True humility comes when all self-effort dies, when we finally realize that we are not called to live this life on our own. Jesus said to Peter, “When you were young, you dressed yourself, you went where you wanted to go, and you did what you wanted to do. But as you are growing older (now He is addressing humble Peter—the Peter that is being lifted up), you will stretch forth your hands, and you will be led into places that in the natural you cannot go and do not want to go.” Thank God Peter humbled himself before the Lord. Thank God we have the history of this man being raised up out of brokenness and brought into the life of Christ—an example of a man who failed and out of that failure found the strength of God.

Today you may be tired of the struggle, tired of having no peace and no victory, tired of trying to find satisfaction. You get up and give it your best shot as Peter did, but then you fall on your face again. You study and gain more knowledge as Paul did, but find that this inner battle never goes away.

There is only one way out: all self-effort must die. This means that all toiling, every Plan B, all strategies are gone. You must finally come to God and admit, “I can’t do this. I never could do this—forgive me for thinking I could. Forgive me for wanting things for my life that are not of You. Help me to find and follow Your plan for my life.” Rest assured, His plans are not that hard to find. He

knows how to get you where He wants you to be—you don’t have to figure it out. Just start loving Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself and you will just walk into the plan of God.

Beloved, in the coming days there is going to be a great falling away produced by hardship. You must hear this today, and you must have the courage to be humbled in the sight of God. Humble yourself, and you will see prison doors start to open. Your eyes will start to see truth, and the wounds of your heart will begin to be healed. You will soon see that smallness in yourself does not mean insignificance. You won’t feel that you have to be standing before thousands to be appreciated in the sight of God. Rather, you will simply be content doing what God called you to do in the place He called you to be.

When we get to heaven, the reward is not going to be because we did some great thing. The reward will be because we humbled ourselves. We trusted God to live His life through us moment by moment, not walking in our own strength or zeal, but allowing the risen Christ to lift us up. That is how we will get to the end and hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” 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	

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