

# TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

"A GREAT MULTITUDE OF ALL NATIONS AND KINDREDS AND PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES" (REV. 7:9).

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## SURRENDERED SAINTS ON DRY LAND

by Carter Conlon

### ■ THE PROMISES OF GOD

*"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.*

*I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jonah 2:1-10).*

One of the greatest needs we have in the hour in which we live, is to have men and women completely surrendered to the plan and purposes of God. I believe the world is looking for people who are truly given over to the work of the Lord. Their only hope of seeing the Gospel will be through the lives of surrendered saints. As we consider this, let's take a look at the life of Jonah.

**Jonah is a type of person who only wants to have a relationship with God and not with the people to whom he is called.**

### ■ JONAH FLEES FROM THE CALLING OF GOD

*"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:1-3).*

Jonah tried to get away, as far as possible, from God's calling to preach to the people of Nineveh. He is a type of person who only wants to have a relationship with God and not with the people to whom he is called. As a Christian, you cannot have one without the other. A relationship with God will ultimately reflect itself in an interpersonal dealing with all men and women, regardless of their ethnicity. Since Jonah did not want this kind of a relationship he took what he thought would be an easier journey.

### ■ THERE IS A PRICE TO PAY

There is always a price to pay when you are unwilling to follow the plan of God for your life. The

Scripture says Jonah paid a fare to run from God. There is a warning given to those who turn away from the bidding of the Lord: *"Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened"* (Zechariah 11:17). The price will ultimately be a loss of strength and vision, which only comes from God when you are in His will and living in obedience to Him. When you stray, you lose your spiritual vision and discernment. The storms will come as they did to Jonah.

### ■ APATHY HAS BECOME ALL TOO COMMON

Could it be possible we are witnessing this kind of turmoil and storm in the world today? You can see this on every side. Society is starting to break up, and fear is entering into the hearts of men and women. The Scripture says, *"Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep"* (Jonah 1:5).

Jonah was asleep in the lower part of the ship while an incredible storm was raging above. He was only concerned with his own comfort; unaware and unconcerned about the hour in which he was living. This is a type of Christian, who has a clear, definitive call on his life; yet instead of yielding to that purpose, he is lethargic and asleep, caught up

with his own well-being. The Scripture clearly says this will be the attitude in the last days in which we live. This was the picture of Jonah. He was in such a self-induced slumber that only a divine intervention would be able to rouse him out of it.

**They have put away the hard parts of the Word of God, and have gravitated only to the promises**

We too are living in a time when I believe God is going to awaken His church again. Many people have chosen an easy route. They have put away the hard parts of the Word of God, and have gravitated only to the promises, walking in the same self-induced slumber as Jonah. They are below deck oblivious to all the storms above. As long as they are comfortable and happy, it does not matter that things are breaking apart all around them. Just as God was about to rouse Jonah, He is about to rouse the church in our time.

#### ■ THE CALL FOR PRAYER

*“So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not”* (Jonah 1:6). Jonah was called to prayer. There is a need for prayer in our nation today. Everyone who is called by the name of Christ knows we should be on our knees praying in these times. We should be seeking God as never before. When you are running from the call of God, it is hard to pray, because God leads you right back to His original plan for your life. This is why many people cannot pray. They appear to be dedicated but are more concerned about the passing time. In this condition they cannot find the heart of God.

I believe this is the root of prayerlessness in our nation today. If men and women would begin to pray and be drawn out of their state of apathy, the church would be transformed. People would begin living in a godly manner, and their lives would be changing their society. Jonah might have been the only one who truly knew the Lord on board this ship. The sailors needed to see a person who was wholly committed to the will of God. Think about your workplace. Think about your apartment building. Think about your street. You might be the only one who truly knows God and the people around you need to see the Gospel through your life.

#### ■ YOU CAN'T ESCAPE YOUR CALLING

*“And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah”* (Jonah 1:7).

When the storm hit, the Lord gave a spiritual awakening to the people on the journey with Jonah. They realized that Jonah's disobedience and half-hearted following of God might be causing their world to fall apart. Jonah was sleeping, doing nothing to try to take the ship through the storm. The others on board the ship were alarmed, so they questioned him with a plethora of questions: *“What is thine occupation? And whence comest thou? What is thy country? And of what people art thou?”* (Jonah 1:8). They sensed that something about him was either causing or allowing the storm to go unabated. *“And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord”* (Jonah 1:9). This was not exactly true, because if he had truly feared God, he would not have been on this ship, he would have been in Nineveh where he had been called to go.

The Scripture says, *“Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them”* (Jonah 1:10). There is something in the heart of men that causes them to look to the church and ask, “Why have you not told us about your God? Why have you been running from Him?” We see this same questioning by people after the twin towers were destroyed on September 11, 2001. People were flooding into churches all over the country only to discover there was no word of explanation to be found in many of them. Statistics show since that time, fewer people are attending church than before. There is less confidence in the church, because after the attack people came in looking for answers, but they found a casual, social gospel that offers nothing from God, and certainly no word for troubled times.

#### ■ SOFT RELIGION HAS GOT TO GO

The men inquired of Jonah, “What do we have to do that the sea might be calm?” And he replied, “Pick me up and throw me overboard into the sea, and it shall become calm once again.” The same message applies to you today. If you want to make it through in the coming days, you must throw all self-serving and apathetic religion overboard.

*“Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them”* (Jonah 1:13).

These men did not want to do as Jonah told them, so they continued in their own self effort. Nobody wants to let their soft religion go. You can grow to love a soft religion while you are living in comfort, down in the belly of the ship. It is easy to sleep as the ship rocks back and forth, while everyone above your head is



perishing, terrified of the persistent and unrelenting storm. A day is coming when dead, self-seeking religion is going to be thrown away in its entirety, and only that which is of Christ is going to remain. The Scripture says, *“they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows”* (Jonah 1:15–16).

### ■ GOD’S INCREDIBLE MERCY AND SALVATION

What happens to a Jonah who is thrown overboard? What happens to a prodigal son, who has taken the gifting of God and gone far away from the heart of his father? The Scripture says, *“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights”* (Jonah 1:17).

Jesus said in Matthew 16:4, *“There shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.”* What this Scripture tells us is that God brought this man into a type of the suffering of Christ. Christ was three days in a grave, going down into the lower parts of the earth. Jonah says, *“I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God”* (Jonah 2:6). From the belly of the fish, he says, *“When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord and my prayer came unto thee into thine holy temple”* (Jonah 2:7). This is where Jonah finally began to pray. Some of you reading this are on your way to the bottom right now, and you know it. If you are wise, you should begin by throwing your soft, self-seeking religion overboard yourself, not waiting for somebody else to do it. If you are in a crisis that is causing you to pray, you are in a good place. This is the mercy of God on your behalf.

**It is only in trials that you discover mercy, and it is often only in failure that you fully begin to understand grace.**

As Christ lived again, so Jonah lived again. Jonah had a revelation of God’s mercy and he saw that God had nothing but compassion for him from the beginning. *“They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord”* (2:8–9). In other words, it is God’s right to save whomever, whenever, and however He chooses. You do not choose or make your own salvation. The Scripture says that Jesus bought you with a price; He paid for your salvation with His own blood. Therefore, you are called to glorify God with your mind, your heart, your body; everything in you is called to bring glory to His name. You are not called to live your own way anymore; you are called to walk with the Savior. You are called to speak when He tells you to speak; you are called to stand in the strength of God where He calls you to stand.

Men have tried to create another way to salvation in this generation, and in doing so, they have created a different Christ. This Christ they have made does not challenge sin; this new Christ does not talk about the cross; He does not call people to obey His will; and there is no punishment for wrong-doing. This kind of Gospel of salvation allows men to fall asleep in the midst of the storms that are brewing in society. But the true Christ is calling His church in these times to awaken again to real righteousness and

real power. Jonah said in essence, “My life is His, and His mercy will save and keep me, and I too will let this expression of mercy flow through my life to others.” It is only in trials that you discover mercy, and it is often only in failure that you fully begin to understand grace.

### ■ DO NOT LISTEN TO THE LIES OF THE ENEMY

Do not let the devil tell you that you cannot come back to God; that you are too far gone for God to be able to use your life. This is the place where grace can be found. Do not let the devil keep you in a place of slumber; and once you wake up, don’t let him condemn you. You have the right to rise up in the life of Christ.

When Jonah began to cry out to God, he had gone as far away from the call of God as he could go. It was here that he said, *“The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple”* (Jonah 2:5–7). He was saying, “When everything in my heart was screaming it was all over, I remembered that God was merciful.” God called Jonah to preach mercy; to go to a place and call men, women and children out of darkness and into the marvelous light of God’s mercy.

### ■ JONAH SURRENDERS

*“And the Lord spake unto the fish,”* which was the place of trial, death and despair, *“and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land”* (Jonah 1:10). Jonah had now surrendered and yielded his life to the purposes of God. As he submitted to the will of God, he was immediately brought

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out of his trial and restored to where he had begun. I am awestruck at the mercy and unspeakable grace of God. We can fail Him a thousand times, yet He is still there, still calling, still willing to restore. When the prodigal son came home after disgracing his father's name, he knew he was not worthy, but it was at that point he began to understand the grace of God. He was given a new robe, a ring, and new shoes, and could now represent his father, because he was no longer full of religion, but full of mercy. He was walking in the grace of God.

**Now is the time to  
awaken from your  
spiritual slumber.**

I can see Jonah standing on dry land, now on a solid footing, saying: "By God's grace I will stand where He places me, and I will not be led by the error of those who are journeying away from His presence." In Jonah 3:1, we read, *"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time."* Aren't you thankful for the God of the second chance? Although you may have made many mistakes, God is willing to speak to you again. For many, it may start in your marriage or it may start with your own children. In the workplace you will begin to take a stand as a righteous woman or man of God, putting away the things of this world for the things of Christ. Now is the time to awaken from your spiritual slumber and begin to realize that men, women and children are perishing in their sin.

### ■ GOD NEEDS YOUR VOICE

In Jonah chapter three, we see that Jonah walked throughout the city of Nineveh preaching the message of repentance lest the inhabitants be destroyed within forty days. The king himself heard the message and believed. The people fasted putting on sackcloth, demonstrating their heartfelt turning to God, and the Lord spared the city! As you go into your community prepared to speak what God prompts you to speak, the miraculous will immediately begin to happen. Words of knowledge will come and you will begin to operate in the gifting of the Holy Spirit. The people you meet will not be called into judgment, but into the mercy and saving grace of God. Have courage. God needs your voice and your life to show the world His incredible love and salvation in Christ.

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.

#### Founding Pastor

David Wilkerson

#### Senior Pastor

Carter Conlon

#### Tel:

212-541-6300

#### Fax:

212-541-6415

#### Church Location:

237 West 51st Street,  
Between Broadway & Eighth Avenue

#### Mailing Address:

1657 Broadway, 4th Flr.  
New York, NY 10019

#### e-mail:

info@timessquarechurch.org

### 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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