

The Presence of Trouble Doesn't Mean the Absence of God

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes that experiencing trouble does not equate to God's absence, and believers can find strength and victory through their faith in Christ.

Duration: 34:31

Scripture: Mark 4:19-20, John 16:33, Romans 8:37, 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Topics: "Trouble", "Faith in Trials", "Overcoming Adversity"

Description

Carter Conlon emphasizes that the presence of trouble in our lives does not equate to the absence of God. He explains that as followers of Christ, we may face increased challenges and tribulations, but we can find peace and strength in Jesus, who has already overcome the world. Conlon encourages believers to remain steadfast in their faith, to let their light shine amidst darkness, and to understand that true victory comes from a deep-rooted relationship with Christ. He reminds us that while troubles may come, we are more than conquerors through Him, and we should not be swayed by false teachings that promise a trouble-free life. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the real Jesus, who empowers us to stand firm in our faith despite the trials we face.

Transcript

Praise God, praise God. Thank you. Thank you.

You may be seated. And for those that are with us online tonight, please remember that at the end of the service tonight, we're going to have communion together. So if you can get some bread and some juice in your house so you can celebrate with us, or crackers or whatever it is that you have, we're celebrating the victory that Jesus Christ won for you on the cross 2,000 years ago.

And I also encourage those that are with us online from all around the world to meet for a few minutes before this prayer meeting even goes online and pray with us. Some of us are gathering here, our orchestra starting to gather on the platform at a few minutes before seven, beginning to pray so that the spirit of prayer will permeate the sanctuary when we do go online. Those of us who are leading in prayer moments are gathering as well to pray because this is a time to pray.

If ever there was a time to pray, folks, it's now. We recognize the darkness that is coming upon this whole world, the lawlessness that's beginning to increase, and we need an absolute infusion of God's life, first of all in His house and then secondly through His people to those who live in darkness around us. Because Jesus Christ Himself declared that, you and I are the light of the world.

We're a city set upon a hill that cannot be hidden. And by God's grace, the life and light of Christ will not be hidden in our lives in this generation. Paul the Apostle said, if our light is hidden, it's hidden from those that are lost.

So let's not let our light be hidden any longer. Let's pray, God, give me a joyful countenance. Give me a hopeful countenance.

Peter the Apostle said, we're to be ready to give an answer for those who ask a reason for the hope that is in us. So if they're going to ask, they have to see some hope. There's got to be something a little different in our countenance than the anger and division and bitterness and all of the hatred that's going on in the world today and the immorality that's abounding.

There's got to be something different in you and I. And so let's pray. Let's believe, God, that we'd be lifted out of the spirit of this age and brought into this incredible life of Christ by the Spirit of God. As Kate prayed tonight, God, breathe upon these bones.

If you can't pray anything else, pray that tonight. Oh Lord, breathe on these bones and cause me to live. Cause my voice to be raised up.

Cause me to have hope in the future. Cause me, oh God, to turn away from what is evil and turn towards what is good. Cause me to begin to think about what has virtue and what is praiseworthy and what's of good report.

What's a positive reputation. God, help me to think on these things and you promise that I will be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ who strengthens me. So Father, tonight, God Almighty, Lord, a little boy brought you a lunch, a couple of fish and some loaves to feed a crowd of almost 10,000 people and you weren't offended by the littleness of his offering.

And so God, our prayers, we don't consider our prayers to be much more than a little boy's lunch when we look at the size of the need that is all around us. But oh God, you multiplied that lunch and you not only fed 10,000 but there were leftovers. So God, we're asking you tonight in Jesus' name to take our prayers and take the feebleness of our efforts, oh God.

We come to you as little children. I see that boy coming to you, Jesus, saying this should do it. You and I can feed this crowd.

And so here we are, Lord, with our little prayers. God, in light of what you could pray and in light of what you know, it must seem so small, but yet you're not offended at it. And we ask you, Lord, to take this offering we bring to you tonight and multiply it and bring freedom.

Oh God, bring freedom to people. Bring living bread into homes and hearts, God, all over the world. Lord, we ask for the little granddaughter that's at death's door.

God, spare her. Spare her. Move upon her life, oh God.

Lord, feed that family with faith. Jesus Christ, raise up those that are living in the ashes because your word promises that you would bring beauty out of ashes. Open prison doors to those who don't know how to get out.

Give sight to those whose eyes are blind. Help those, Lord Jesus, who are so in poverty they don't know how to go forward. They don't have any strength.

They've got no resource. God Almighty, take our prayers tonight and multiply them and spread them out throughout the world, oh God. And let there be leftovers, Lord.

Let there be so much provision that there's leftovers. Oh Jesus Christ, thank you God for taking your word tonight and making it live. Lord, I can only speak it.

I can't make it live in people's hearts. Only you can. And Father, I ask you tonight in Jesus' name, Lord, let your word find free course into every mind, every heart, and every life.

And God, bring forth the fruit that only you can. And I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to speak tonight a message entitled, The Presence of Trouble Doesn't Mean the Absence of God. The presence of trouble doesn't mean the absence of God. There are many, many people, especially in Western society, because we lived in a season of incredible peace in much of the Western world where, I don't know how it happened, but we more or less drifted into a theology that the presence of God means the absence of trouble in my life.

But that's not so. That's not biblically true. As a matter of fact, the presence of God might bring more trouble into your life than you've ever had before.

A different kind of trouble. It's not a trouble with addiction. It's not a trouble with certain sinful activities.

When you become a true follower of Jesus Christ, you'll find trouble will find you, because as they've hated Christ, so you will be hated too as well. And we're starting to realize the difficulty that's coming upon so, so many who call themselves Christians today. In John chapter 16, verse 33, most of these verses should appear on the screen.

Jesus said these words, These things I've spoken to you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. In the world you will have trouble.

In the world, in other words, trials will come your way. In the world, it might get more difficult for you as a Christian than it was before you became a believer in Christ. But be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. In other words, Christ is saying, I have overcome the power of this world to drag you down and destroy you. When it was only the world that you had to overcome what was coming against you, you didn't have the strength to stand.

You didn't have the power to turn away from all of the downward spirals, the downward, the gravitational pull of darkness and depression and sin and everything else around. You had no power. It had power over you.

Now, Jesus said, You'll still have problems. There'll still be troubles in the Christian life. But because of my presence now within you, these troubles will not have the power to overcome you.

You are already more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ who loves you. I shared in a football stadium one time, I was speaking to a group of men and I said, Guys, it's this simple. In Christ, you're already in the end zone before the game even starts.

All you have to do now is spike the ball and just start dancing and declare the victory because he won the victory for you. You are now in him. And yes, you will be opposed.

And yes, people will try to knock you down. And yes, there will be forces that come against you, but you will not be overcome because Jesus said, I have overcome this world. I've overcome the power.

You see, everything that the world could throw at Christ, it threw at him. Every form of violence and persecution, depression, accusation, mockery, everything the world had, it threw at Jesus Christ. And yet he defeated all of it and rose by the power of God out of the grave on the third day and took us with him to the right hand of God, where we sit now, according to the book of Ephesians, at the right hand of God in Christ Jesus, fully received by God, fully victorious, fully loved.

We can't add one ounce to the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus. We are at the right hand of God already in Christ Jesus, more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. And so this world can throw at me whatever it wants to, but it will not take me down because I have the risen Christ inside this earth and body.

I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ. I have the victory that was won on the cross of Calvary 2,000 years ago. The Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1 and 3 predicts a great falling away in the closing days of this world before the return of Jesus Christ.

These closing days, either we are already entered into them or we are very close to entering into these final days. The spirit of lawlessness is increasing. Have you noticed it lately? And even skeptics are saying, how did this happen so suddenly? We suddenly are turning into this moral abyss where evil is becoming good and good is becoming evil.

And things that we thought would never happen are suddenly happening. Behaviors, thought processes, things that were considered immoral, illegal, as well as sin are now being celebrated as moral and victorious. How could this have happened so quickly? A great, great falling away.

For some the falling away means a falling away into a place where no longer they can be reached by truth. There will be many, many people in the last days that are just going to fall so far away from truth that truth can't reach them anymore. They will be out of its reach.

And that is a really sad place for people to be. It grieves my heart to even think of that, that there will be people that can't be reached by the gospel anymore. They have rejected truth.

They have given themselves over to darkness. According to Romans chapter 1, they have been released by God into a darkened mind. And they are not going to be able to find their way back to truth again.

For others the falling away will be a falling into a pull of this world's depravity, which they can no longer resist. The depravity of the world is on steroids now. The depravity, I feel like this world is becoming hell's waiting room.

How else do you describe it? The evil that's going on and the evil that is increasing almost daily. And there will be a falling away of people who had a form of morality, I guess. They had a, I can't even fathom people bringing their children into seeing these, what do you, drag queens dance before them.

It's inconceivable that in this society that parents would take their children into these evil places and allow this to be propagated before their sons and daughters as if somehow this is virtuous. They're falling. This world's gravity of sin is pulling them down into depravity that they can no longer resist.

They have no power within themselves to resist it. But sadly a falling away from confidence and trust in a savior that many thought they were following. This will be the portion of much of what professed to be that which follows Jesus Christ.

It's, may I call it just nominal church or very Christian light, may I call it that. People thought they were following a savior. And they thought they understood who this savior was.

But in the last days, people will say, look, I didn't sign up to be hated. I didn't sign up to lose my job because I have a biblical world system, value system. I didn't sign up to be considered the off-scouring of society.

And it will get worse. The persecution is going to get deeper in the days ahead. And many, many, many will fall away.

Jesus spoke about this in the gospel of Mark chapter 4. And he said it this way beginning in verses 16 and 17. He said, these likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness. You know, the word that is brought to them might not be complete.

It's part of the gospel. It's about the victory of Christ. It's about the blessing of Christ, the wonderfulness of Christ, the new life in Christ, which is all true.

And they receive this part of Christ as it is with gladness, but they have no root in themselves. They don't go down any deeper. They don't realize that they're going to be called also to stand in times of storm.

They're going to have to build their house on a new value system. As Jesus said, whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him unto a man who built his house upon a rock. And when the winds came and the floods beat against it, it stood.

But whoever hears these sayings of mine and doesn't do them, it's not that they didn't know the word of God, but they selectively chose the Jesus they wanted to follow. May I put it that way? I like this part of Jesus. I don't like this part of Jesus.

So I'll put this over here on the shelf and I'll embrace this part of Jesus. I don't like the part of Jesus that tells me I should take up my cross and deny myself and follow him. I don't like the part of Jesus that talks about sacrifice and giving of myself for the sake of other people.

I don't like this part of Jesus that says my life is to be holy as he is holy. I'm to turn away from sin and practices and things that might be right for other people, even lawful in some cases, but not good for me. No, I don't want that part of Jesus.

I want this part of Jesus. And so I begin to build a house on another foundation. And I call it Christianity.

But when the winds come and when the rains beat against it, the house is not going to stand. The house is going to fall. And that's part of the great falling away.

They came to a savior that they were told would guarantee a life that is trouble-free. Now I can actually point you to some websites and preachers that actually preach that. It's trouble-free.

You'll be the head and not the tail. You'll be at the top and not the bottom. You'll be this and you'll be that and all these things you're going to be and then suddenly you have a five-year-old grandchild with cancer in the hospital.

Suddenly you lose your job. Suddenly, this world is no longer enamored with your Christianity and neither is your boss in the workplace. Suddenly you find yourself on the receiving end of hatred in this world and you realize that the gospel you embrace, the Christ you embrace is not the Christ of the Bible.

You have no root, as Jesus said, really in truth. And because there's no deep root, when the winds come and the rains come, there's a great falling away. Again, Mark chapter 4 verses 19 and 20 says, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things entering in chokes the word and it becomes unfruitful.

Many have come to a Savior that promised them guaranteed prosperity. Guaranteed. Guaranteed.

You give a thousand dollars and God owes you a hundred thousand back. I've actually heard that. Or ten thousand.

Depends on what level of deception they're embracing. I've heard all of that stuff. You know, God owes you because you give to him.

God doesn't owe you or me anything. He gave us his blood. He gave us his life on the cross because of his sacrifice.

He wrote our names down in a book of eternal life. He owes me nothing. He doesn't owe me good health.

He doesn't owe me a nice, a new car. I thank God if I have some of those things, but he doesn't owe me any of these things. And if any of these things are taken out of my life, God is still God.

Nothing changes. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. My name is still written in the Lamb's book of life.

Heaven is still my home. I still have a mansion on a street of gold with my name on the door. I will still rule and reign with Christ for all of eternity.

Let the rains come. Let the floods come. Let the winds blow.

My name is written in heaven and heaven is my eternal home by the grace of God. That's my strength. Though, and he said, in this world you will have tribulation.

In this world, trouble will try to take your confidence in a way. In this world, the storms will beat against you. In this world, you'll have to fight against the thoughts that were against your mind.

In this world, someday you might be healthy today, but that won't be forever. In this world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. You are in me.

I am in you. My victory is your victory. I sit at the right hand of the Father.

Every name that is named, all power, authority, and dominion is under my foot and under my authority. And you are my body and I am the head. You are already more than a conqueror.

You're already victorious because of what I did for you on the cross. First Timothy chapter six, in verse three, Paul says these words, if anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine, which accords with godliness, he's proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strife, revilings, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. Isn't that amazing? Paul says, those who preach that godliness is a means for personal gain are destitute of the truth and of corrupt minds.

And he says, from such withdraw yourself. Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

I have never seen a hearse with a U-Haul behind it. All the years and all the funerals I have done. It is certain, it is certain that you will leave the way you came.

I will leave. The only thing I can take with me to heaven is you. That's the only thing.

My children, my grandchildren, my nephews, my nieces, every person god ever sets before me. You are the only thing I can take with me. I can't take anything else.

It will all be left behind for somebody else until it rusts and goes back into the ground itself. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and despair into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil for which some have strayed from the faith and their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Beware of the preaching of this other Jesus. You see it's been a Jesus that's been a largely accepted in America in the last two, three, four decades.

But that Jesus is about to come crashing down. That is not the real Jesus. In this world you shall have tribulation.

You might have money for a season but you shall have tribulation. And folks don't put your trust in your bank account because those things might be going into the sea very, very shortly as well. Those who are unstable and preach the gospel will take even a greeting and turn it into a doctrine.

In the third epistle of John, John the beloved says to the beloved Gaius whom I love in truth, he said, beloved I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health just as your soul prospers. And they'll take that verse and create a whole theology around it. And it was only a greeting.

It was only a greeting. It was like me writing to you and saying I hope all is well. And you taking that and making a doctrine out of it and saying, according to Pastor Carter, everything should be well if you're a Christian.

No, it was just a greeting. He said, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health even as your soul prospers. And yet the unstable will take a verse like that and will create another concept of

Christianity out of it that won't stand in the storm because what happens to you if you believe this and your health goes? Folks, there's one thing you can all be sure of here.

If Christ doesn't come in the next 40 years, most everybody here will be dead. There's a point where your health goes. There's a point where your heart fails.

There's a point where this old body just gives up and gives in. Thank God. Thank God.

Would you still want to be here a thousand years from now? No, not me either. They will take the words of the Apostle Paul to propagate their error while completely ignoring his testimony. Now, I find it strange that those who preach another Jesus in our society today use the words of Paul, but they completely discount his life.

Isn't it amazing? Listen to who would want the testimony of the Apostle Paul. Second Corinthians 11, let me just read it to you. Verse 23, are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool.

I am more in labors, more abundant in stripes. That means beatings above measure in prisons, more frequently in deaths often. In other words, I've been close to death more than one time.

From the Jews, five times I received 40 stripes minus one. Most people didn't even survive one of those whippings. 39 lashes on the back, and Paul had had it five times.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked.

A night in the day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides the other things what comes upon me daily, my deep concern for all the churches. But this is the man who said, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I know how to be hungry. I know how to be full. I know how to have lots of things.

I know how to have nothing. I know how to survive a night in the sea. I know how to survive being beaten by whips five times almost to death.

I know how to survive being beaten three times by rods, being betrayed, being wounded beyond human power. I know what it's like to be in Macedonia where we despaired even of life, that the pressure that came against us was so powerful. I learned in all these places that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

And I learned that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I learned that there's no mountain, there's no valley, there's nothing that can come against me, there's no name that is named, no devil of hell that can take me away from the love of God which is mine in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah to the lamb of God.

Glory to the name of Jesus. Glory to the name of Jesus. In this world, you shall have tribulation.

Settle it, but let your roots go down deep because Jesus Christ said, I will never leave you or forsake you. Jesus Christ said, whatever you need when you ask in prayer, believing you shall receive. We're not

talking about a finer car and a bigger this and a better that and a deeper personality and all the rest of these things.

We're talking about whatever you need. And I can hear Paul, God, I need grace. And God answers his prayer by sending Titus to him to comfort him.

Whatever you need on this journey, you ask. When the waves start beating against your house, when the winds are blowing against your mind, when your body is craving things that you left behind, call out to me and I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I say with all my heart, it's time for the real Jesus to rise among his church.

It's time for the real church to rise. It's time for the praises of God to be sung again. It's time for the glory of God to be known again through his people.

It's time for us to be lights in this darkened generation. It's time for us to have a song as David the psalmist talks about that that is so pronounced and so powerful that people see it before it's even sung. It's time to let God be God and let him give us the strength.

Jesus said, I have overcome everything that this world throws against you and you will not be taken down. You will not falter. You will not fail.

You will not be trampled upon. You will not be overcome because I am in you. And if you can hear this, he intertwines the very honor of his name in keeping you.

He looks at you and says, I won't let you go because the honor of my name is at stake. I will not let evil triumph over you. If you'll call out to me, I will indwell you, forgive you and lift you and empower you.

And you will be a testimony in this fallen generation that I have overcome this world. Hallelujah. The people who can't be taken down because they are following the real Jesus.

Hallelujah. We're going to go to communion in just a moment. And I want to, instead of reading the typical scripture that I read during communion time, I want to read Romans chapter eight, the confession of the apostle Paul, before we go to communion, where Paul says these words, what shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Come on now.

Come on now. If God is for us, who can be against us? You need to tonight, you need to go to your room and say, devil, did you hear that? Did you hear that tonight? Did you hear that? Did you hear what was read from the word of God? If God before me, who can be against me? Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are to try to tell me you can take me down or you can take away my song and you can destroy my testimony or you can cause me to fall away? Who do you think you are? God is for me. God is for me.

And when, when the word of God says who can be against us, that included you, Satan included every devil of hell you'll ever send against me, against my life, my home, my heart, my family. He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And Paul is saying, if God didn't withhold his son, why would he withhold anything from you? Why, why would he send his son to a cross to let you struggle or let your enemies triumph over you or let you be drawn away from the security and the strength that is found in Christ? Of course he wouldn't. How will he

not freely give you what you need if he wouldn't withhold him? And who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It's God who justifies.

Who is it who condemns? In other words, Paul's asking rhetorical questions and he already knows the answer, but who has the power to condemn what God has justified? Who has the power to call unclean what God has cleansed? Who has the power to tell you you won't make it to the end when God says you will make it? I'll carry you there. I'll keep you in the center of my father's hand. And Jesus said, I'm telling you, no one can take you out of my father's hand.

It's Christ who died. And furthermore, who's also risen, who's even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us, who shall separate us from the love of Christ. Now this, these are words from the man who was beaten, stolen, shipwrecked.

You understand all the things he went through. These are the words that were in his heart. This is the foundation that kept him who shall separate us from the love of Christ.

So tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword, as it is written for your sake, we're killed all the day long and we're accounted a sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things, yet we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul could say with us tonight in this world, I've had tribulation, but I am of good cheer for he who lives within me has overcome this world. And I have been given a power that's not found in humanity. It's not found in the strongest of men or women.

It's found in God. It's found in the weakest among us who have opened our hearts to the strongest among us, Christ our Savior. And so tonight for those that are listening online and you've come in looking for a way out of your trouble, I have good news for you and bad news I guess, I don't know.

But the good news is you can get out of your present trouble through Christ. There will be other trouble come your way, but it won't be the same as what you're going through now. Do you understand? Right now you're fighting to get out of depression, off drugs.

You're fighting for your marriage to be saved, all these other things. He will set you free from that. And then you will come into an opposition because you are a follower of Christ.

That's a given. This world hates him and will hate you because of it. But you won't be overcome.

You see where you are tonight without Christ, you will be overcome. But in Christ you won't be overcome. So I'm not going to make a false promise to you tonight that you won't have trouble in the future because then I would be a liar and it wouldn't be true.

Trouble comes everybody's way. Heartache knocks on every door. But the promise is that because of Christ you will not be overcome.

He overcame this world. Hallelujah. Pray this simple prayer with me tonight.

Lord Jesus Christ, I open my heart to you and I thank you for wanting me and I thank you for forgiving me for the things that I am doing and I have done that have separated me from your heart. Your heart is to give me life and freedom and a strength that I've never known. So I exchange tonight my heart for yours.

I ask you to be my Lord and my savior. I will follow you all the days of my life. Help me to go down deep into an understanding of your word and build my life and build my house upon a rock.

Because I know I'll have trouble in the future, but I also know that I win. I won't be overcome. And one day heaven will be my eternal home.

Thank you for loving me, saving me, and receiving me tonight in Jesus' name. Now for those at home, I just have a sense, just raise your hands and just say thank you, Jesus. Thank you for setting me free.

Thank you for hearing my cry. Thank you, God, for giving me hope even in the midst of my trials. Thank you for giving me a promise, a strength that is deeper than my own.

Thank you for coming to me in my poverty and my pain and offering me eternal life. Thank you for giving me a reason to live, for giving me a future and a hope and a promise that though the winds blow, though the waters rise, though they beat on my house, I will never be taken down again. For I built my life on you, the Lord of all the universe and the King of all glory.

God, thank you. God, thank you. God, thank you.

In Jesus' name. We're going to sing one song, then we're going to come to the communion table to celebrate the victory of Christ for you tonight. And if you've made that prayer a reality in your life tonight, just text the word DECIDED to 51000, and a video will come your way to help you to understand what you need to do now.

We love you tonight. Thank God for you. See you in just a moment.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/30/SID30685.mp3>

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