

Prepare for War

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

When I consider war, my thoughts always turn to the many people who have died while serving our country. I also think about what causes wars. Some wars are about liberation and giving people freedom. For the most part, this has been America's role in wars. As a nation, America has been faithful to bring liberation to people around the world. The U.S. did that in going against the Kaiser in World War I and against Hitler in World War II.

As Christian citizens of this nation, we should be prepared, as never before, for war—spiritually and literally. Certainly, Satan is at work to undermine the liberties that believers have enjoyed on these shores since 1776. But, sin is sin; and, as we will see in these pages, there are consequences to pay for sin. America needs our prayers and our commitment to live for God. Today, He is pleading for people to hear His Word and to turn to Him.

Chapter One

DECLARATIONS OF TROUBLE

Years ago, when I was a young preacher, I asked God to help me always preach it the way it is, whatever the cost. Still, the most difficult thing for me as a pastor is how easily some people get offended. For example, if I hear that you are against me, I would never get up and preach against you. If it seems to come out that way, just know that my mind isn't even on you. Yet, it often gets back to me that people I love and trust have said, "He was preaching at me because he heard something about me."

When a member of the congregation gets offended, he takes liberty away from the one who is preaching. I'm not preaching because I heard someone say something. I'm not that kind of a preacher. That kind of a preacher, to me, doesn't have integrity.

You don't have to agree with me. Furthermore, don't feel you are against people when

you disagree with them. I like to have people in my church who understand that they have the freedom to think, who are not puppets.

Having said that, I believe that America's next wars will challenge her iniquity and sinful ways as never before. These are different kinds of wars than we have ever faced in the history of our nation, because we don't know where the enemies are. When have you ever heard of so many people ready to kill themselves? Terrorists come in disguise, and they are more than willing to kill themselves just to kill us—in hospitals, colleges, you name it.

Thank God for the precious people who come in to our nation. I thank God that our country lets precious people come in, but I believe we also need to use caution. How do certain ones get in? How does a guy get on an airplane with enough explosives in the soles of his shoes to blow up the plane? How was he able to do it? How did he get through airport security?

We live in a country where three hundred people in our cities are slaughtered every day because of drugs, killed in cold blood. Most of those dying are between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Murders. For some unknown

reason, very little is done to stop the drugs from coming in, even though a tremendous amount of money is spent trying to restore the drug users.

Immorality is running wild, spurred by the constant barrage of images in film and in the media that glorify sin and violence. In addition to all the problems with drug dealers and addicts, homosexuals are getting licenses to adopt children. America, in part, is under tremendous judgment, and God is speaking to her people. Billy Graham says it. Men of God everywhere say it. We need to pray.

I do believe that the terrorists struck on September 11, 2001, because we were being judged. I'm sorry if you disagree with that assessment. It remains my belief that those attacks were a wake-up call for America. Americans do not want to hear that. It doesn't bother me if they want to hear it or not. The truth is, what happened on 9/11 was a wake-up call for America, and it found us sleeping.

God Wants Our Attention

“O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD” (Jeremiah 22:29).

This verse represents the only time in the en-

tire Bible that God gave a triple salutation. Never before and never after has He given such a salutation.

In the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts, the emotional height of a declaration is determined by certain marks, used to indicate to the reader where God raised His voice in the language.

“O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.”

Just think of that! Here is Almighty God—Creator, Redeemer, Lord, Master, Savior—and He cries out three times, “O *earth, earth, earth*, hear the word of the LORD.”

What was His cry? That we would listen to the Word. What is His cry to me? That I would hear the Word. I must hear the Word of God in order to prepare for war.

Chapter Two

PROGRESSIVE WARNINGS

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

“Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

“From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified

with ointment" (Isaiah 1:2-6).

Have you ever wondered why God said, "Hear, O heavens"? Heaven listened. As we read in Revelation 8:1, heaven was silent for one half hour. The angels stopped singing, the music stopped, and the praising stopped.

Heaven will be silent for one half hour before the terrible judgments begin in the Tribulation Period.

The Power of God's Word

*Think of it carefully, study it prayerfully;
Deep in thine heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mysteries, slight not its histories;
None can e'er love it too fondly or well.*

*The Word of God is incomprehensible,
The Word of God is unfathomable.*

*I am not skilled to understand
What God has willed, what God has planned,
But this I know, at His right hand
Is one who is my Savior.
That He should leave His home on high
And come for sinful men to die,
You count it strange? Well, so did I*

*Until I met the Savior.
Living, loving, let me bring
Strength and solace from this spring,
That He who lives may be my King,
Who died to be my Savior."*

You have heard me quote these phrases from Dr. S. Franklin Logsdon of Moody Memorial Church. He treasured the Word of God and made these statements before his sermons. Dr. Logsdon was a great Baptist preacher, and he allowed me to speak at one his conferences because our little church had gone from six people to nearly a thousand.

He came to me on the last night of the conference and said, "Can I see you in the corner?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Can you forgive me?"

I said, "Why? I certainly have felt unworthy, but I've had the time of my life. This privilege of speaking as a guest here in this church with you, this probably has been the greatest highlight in my life."

He said, "Pastor, I haven't prayed with you one time. I have sinned. Please forgive me. I have sinned by not praying with a younger pastor."

That is how humble a man he was. He could quote all of Jeremiah, all of Malachi, all of Hosea. He'd quote them and give the Hebrew. He was a brilliant man. But I learned something right there. I learned what it meant to preach beside a brilliant *and* humble man.

Dr. Logsdon understood the value of prayer in the midst of warfare.

The Preacher's Portion

I can still remember how he explained the progression of God's warnings through the book of Jeremiah. The urgent tone of Dr. Logsdon's voice remains fresh in my mind:

"The Lord said in the sixth chapter of Jeremiah and the tenth verse, 'Hear Me. Nobody will receive My warning. Nobody will hear My voice. Nobody will listen to the judgment that is to come.' And Jeremiah cried out."

Oh, how we need preachers like Dr. Logsdon, who cried out the Gospel just as Jeremiah cried out the prophecy of God.

In Jeremiah 9:20, there was a domestic salutation. What Dr. Logsdon preached then is so true for our times. "O you women, your children will be in the streets, and you'll have to go out into the streets," he said. "Your children will

be taken into captivity in every inconceivable way." Then he went on to describe the terrible things that would happen to them. "My dear people, this is a domestic salutation to families," Dr. Logsdon taught. "And it happened. *It happened.*"

Those who did not obey God's commandment (in Deuteronomy 6, on how to bring up their children) saw the consequences. We find entire families worshipping the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 7:17-18). Then, in Hosea 13:16, we see the results. Infants were dashed in pieces. Women with child were ripped apart.

"My dear people, it happened!" Dr. Logsdon kept saying that. He was emphasizing that things happened just as God had said they would happen.

Oh, America, hear me. It happened, just as God said it would. We need to wake up and hear the Word of the Lord.

Chapter Three

SENSING THE URGENCY

In Jeremiah 22:1, there was a royal salutation to the government of the children of Israel. This came after national salutations, in Jeremiah 3:14 and 3:22. The Word said three times to Israel, "Return." God had warned Israel that if they would turn from following the Lord, He would cut them off from the land (1 Kings 9:6-7). If they turned from the following of the Lord, they would be cut off from their inheritance and become a byword among the nations. Of course, my dear people, this happened.

"Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ru-hamah.

"Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

"Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the

day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst" (Hosea 2:1-3).

Here we have an individual salutation. God began to so beautifully plead with the individual, and He said, "O you individuals, come to Me, come to Me." One individual after another will have to face the judgment of God.

In Jeremiah 22:2, Jeremiah went on to declare, "Hear the word of God, O king of Judah. Hear the word of God." He poured out terrible judgments (Zechariah 13:8, Numbers 22, Isaiah 5:4-6).

"Never be a stranger to my voice," says God. He is saying to believers, "I want you. I'm very jealous over you. It is a righteous jealousy. I have covered your past, and, oh, I want you. I want you to return to Me. I want you who are backslidden to come back to Me."

The Time Is Late

"Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon" (Jeremiah 37:17).

This is something very striking. Jeremiah was asked to go to God in behalf of King Zedekiah, who said, "Can you go and get a message from the Lord? I am pleading you, Jeremiah. Would you get a message?"

Jeremiah came back to the king and said, "I have a message from God. It's too late. It's too late! God will not answer. War is coming and you are going into captivity."

Eventually, Zedekiah saw his children killed in cold blood, and their heads were cut off, and Zedekiah was placed in the dungeon and stricken blind.

So America, hear. God will judge this nation unless her people turn to God and humble themselves.

We have started daily prayer meetings at our church. Why? "If My people shall humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked ways. I'll hear from heaven. I'll forgive their sins. I'll heal their land." This is what God tells us, in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

The Word of God mentions some tremendous warnings, and I have been thinking of those warnings recently. When I prayed for my country today, I thought of those warnings—of how warnings come before judgment, and of

how grace is poured out before judgment too. I thought about how much God loves us, and the fact that overall, believers are still a pivotal influence in this nation.

I don't want to be overly negative. We still have a pivotal group of believers in our nation, and the choices we make from this position can hold back judgment. If enough believers get together and pray, we will stop forthcoming judgment from God.

CONCLUSION

There is a true story about an attorney who went before the jury, and said, "I plead with you to let this man go free. If you do not let this man go free, you will not be able to sleep at night. Your heart will awaken you in years to come. This man is innocent. I am pleading with you. I beg you."

And he would go back to his chair and sit, and he would put his head down.

Then he would go back and plead again. Then he'd go back in the chair and sit again. Then he'd come back and plead again. He said, "I plead with you. I plead with you to let him go free."

The jury heeded him, and they let the man go free.

Judgment is coming to this nation. So many teenagers are going into barrooms, committing immorality, and are not faithful to church. Many have no fear of God. Hosea talks about the

pleading of God. We have mentioned several verses of the Bible that talk about the pleading of God. Now, you listen—and listen well. Listen, and be receptive, be serious, and be absolutely conscientious about the pleadings of God.

God is saying, “I plead with you! I plead with you! I plead with you! I don't want you to go through the terrible hell and the judgment that is coming, but if you will not hear me, My justice demands it. I plead with you,” said God.

The pleadings of God come to us because He doesn't want us to face judgment. His Son paid the price on Calvary so that every one who believes on Him can go free. If you think hell troubles us, it troubles God more. God doesn't want us to face judgment. God does not want us to face the fierce wrath as someone who has rejected the mercy, and grace, and love, and salvation that came by the Blood of the Lamb. He does not want us to face that judgment, and He is pleading our case. Jesus Christ is pleading for our freedom and our liberation so that we will never have to face the judgments in store.

As believers, we need to hear and obey every single word of God. If we live by the Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will continue to be a godly force that can help turn our nation

back to God. We need to be a living testimony, touching people's lives around us in these last days. God will be faithful to work in us and through us if we will continually set our hearts on Him.

There is a war being waged for the souls of men. Now is the time to prepare as never before. Hear the words of the Lord.

Father, we thank you for the gift of salvation. Thank you that with the warning, you have shown us the way to be free forever, through the Cross. By the precious Holy Spirit, use us to bring the Gospel to lost souls everywhere. In Jesus' name, Amen.