

Let Us Bow Before Him

✘ *If*

we are to see the church strengthened and the nation healed, we must learn how to approach the throne of God in humble, reverent worship.

America

is in a time of crisis. During the last several decades, more and more people have turned away from God, no longer wanting to hear what He has to say about their lives and circumstances. The result has been a frightening moral decline that threatens to destroy our country from the inside out.

Since the

September 11 terrorist attacks, however, many ears have begun to open again. Fearful and uncertain about the future, many people are more willing than ever to listen to what God, through His church, has to say about the evil that has befallen our nation.

What

a profound opportunity we have to see this nation turn back to God and to bring in a great harvest of souls! If we will cooperate with Him, God will turn the present evil to good and use it for His glory.

The

key will be not how the depraved world responds to the crisis

but how

the church of Jesus Christ responds. What will we do with the opportunity God has placed before us?

SPEAKING FOR GOD

Many people today are searching for God. They want to hear the voice of

God, and they are looking to us to tell them what God is saying.

How

do we dare speak for the God of all creation? How do we speak for the

One who said, "Let there be..." and there was? The One whose voice is so

strong, He literally sustains this world by the power of His word?

The

thought of speaking for God should scare us to death—death to ourselves, death to our own agendas, and death to our own ideas and

concepts and religion. God forbid that flesh should enter in when it's

time to speak the words of God! Yet so often we say things without much

prayer or thought, supposedly speaking for Him.

The

Bible tells us, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go

near to listen, rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not

know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be

hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and

you are on earth, so let your words be few.

“As

a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when

there are many words ... Therefore stand in awe of God” (Eccl. 5:1-7, NIV).

By nightfall on

September 11, religious commentators from all over the world were

already speaking for God. Some of the words that were spoken may have

been on target; others may not have been.

Certainly,

in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, there was a need for

Christians to provide comfort in the midst of overwhelming devastation.

But many were quick instead to utter the “opinions” of God.

Was it time

to speak His words? Where was the time spent standing in awe before Him

first?

GETTING IT RIGHT The world is listening to us right now as never before. That’s why we must be careful to watch what we say.

Remember,

Job’s friends were quick to speak in his anguish; they had many noble

things to say about his situation. Yet God ended that chapter of Job’s

life by declaring that the words those friends had spoken weren’t right.

As good and religious as their speeches sounded, they weren’t the words

of God.

Can preachers and teachers who have been right about God's words in the past suddenly be wrong when an urgent matter arises? I believe they can.

When

King David told the prophet Nathan that he wanted to build a temple for God, Nathan thought the idea sounded good. Surely a house built in God's name would honor the Lord! And up to that point, Nathan had always been right; he had always accurately spoken the oracles of God. So he told David, "'Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you'" (2 Sam. 7:3).

That

night, however, God came to Nathan and told him that David was not supposed to build the temple; David's son, Solomon, would be the builder in the next generation. Nathan had to go back to David and retract the words he had spoken too quickly.

Just

because any of us has been right in the past doesn't mean we are right now. Before we jump to a conclusion about what God would say in a given situation, we must first stand in awe of Him. We must let our words be few.

After all, God is in
the heavens; we are here on Earth. We don't always know or
understand
how God is going to accomplish His perfect will. What makes
sense and
seems right to us now may not be right at all.

When
Jesus was being taken away to be tried and crucified—and
ultimately
raised from the dead, completing the good work that was given
to Him by
the Father—Peter reacted by doing what he thought was right.
In the
urgency of the moment, he drew his sword and cut off a
soldier's ear.
But Jesus rebuked him for it.

You
and I need to be careful not to do what Peter did. Yes, now is
the time
for believers to draw their swords of the Spirit and rise to
face the
challenge before us. But the question is, how will we use
those swords?

Will
we use them to cut off the ears of our hearers? Will we use
them with
meanness, speaking condemnation to such a degree that those
who are
dying to hear have their ears cut off instead?

To
avoid such a mistake, we must not draw our swords until we
have first
stood in awe and listened for what it is that God wants to say
in this

hour. That should be our first response in any urgent matter:
to stand
in awe, be silent and listen.

A HOLY FEAR

We need to return to a holy fear of the Lord and a reverence
for His
Word! Remember how the people of Israel responded when Ezra
read out
loud the books of the Law? Nehemiah 8 tells us that as he
opened the
Scriptures, all the people stood up. Ezra praised the Lord,
and all the
people lifted their hands, cried “Amen!” and bowed down and
worshiped.

I
believe God is calling His church to fall on her face before
Him
again—not once, not just in this immediate crisis, but until
the
kingdom comes. It’s time for us to put our faces to the ground
in our
congregations, in our homes and in our prayer closets. I’m not
talking
about a physical posture only; I’m talking about an attitude
of the
heart that demonstrates both humility and awe.

Many
leaders have quoted 2 Chronicles 7:14 in recent months: “‘If
My people,
who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and
seek My
face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from
heaven and
will forgive their sin and will heal their land.’” What this
Scripture

tells us is that if we experience a lack of healing in our nation, it's not because unredeemed people are sinning. It's because Christians aren't bowing.

Healing and revival can come only as we, the church, bow down before Jesus and confess Him as Lord. We must do this long before we see Him face to face.

The truth is, if we say all the right things but have the wrong heart, God will not do battle for us. First Peter 5:5 says, "'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" If we take our swords and speak the truth with pride and arrogance, God will oppose us, and our words will have no effect. If He sees our humility, however, He will raise up His mighty arm on our behalf. His grace and sufficiency will be with us and with the words we speak.

GOD ROCKED THE HOUSE

Acts 4 tells the story of Peter and John being opposed by the religious rulers of the day strictly because they were servants of Jesus. The rulers initially released the two apostles after warning them "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18).

Peter

and John went back to the church and reported everything that the chief priests and elders had told them. When the believers heard the news, they did not draw their swords; instead, they raised their voices together in powerful prayer:

“‘Sovereign made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David: “Why do the nations rage and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One.”

“‘Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed. They did what Your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus'” (Acts 4:24-30).

After they prayed, the Bible says, “the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word

of God boldly" (v. 31).

Do

you want God to rock your house, your church, your nation, the way He

rocked that first-century meeting place? Do you want Him to fill you

with the Holy Spirit so you can speak His word with boldness?

I know I

do! The key is this: Before we speak—before we draw our swords—we must

take time to stand in awe.

And

it's important that we do that together. Acts 4:24 says the believers

"raised their voices together in prayer to God." The Greek word

translated together is actually a compound word meaning "same" and

"mind" or "passion." From the beginning the church was birthed from

among a very diverse people, and we are still diverse today.

We are never going to agree on all things. We have different gifts. But we have the same Lord.

If

we are willing to come together with one mind and one passion—the

passion to see God glorified and salvation multiplied—then God will

rock the house. If we come together as a church in this nation across

all denominational, ethnic and racial barriers; if we choose to humble

ourselves before God and be unified in His name; if we cry out together

with like passion; then He will be glorified, and salvation will be multiplied. His Spirit will fill us, and each one of us will boldly speak His word.

A GREAT OUTPOURING

Acts 2:17-18 tells us that the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit of all time will be characterized by the bold proclamation of God's Word. Neighbor to neighbor, friend to friend, parent to child, believers will not hesitate to tell others about Jesus. They will live with the Word of God fresh upon their tongues and burning in their hearts.

In that day, they will stand in awe. They will listen. They will bow down. Only then will they draw the sword.

Our nation is in crisis, and people are open to hearing what God has to say to them in the midst of their confusion and fear. We need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that you and I can speak the word of God to them—the word that is right for this critical hour; the word that will cut to their hearts, not cut off their ears.

As Christians, we have a lot to say that the world needs to hear. People need to know that God is sovereign and Jesus is Lord—now more than ever.

But let's determine not to speak too quickly. Before we draw the sword, let us first stand in awe.

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