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WATCHMAN ON THE WALL

by Jonathan

ARE YOU A PREACHER OR A PIMP, A WATCHMAN OR A WIMP?

“So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul” (Ezekiel 33:7-9).

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jeremiah 1:5-9).

I believe the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ stands today at the crossroads of spiritual purging and separation- and in fact, has already started.

We witness covetous Christians who readily embrace the so-called “prosperity gospel” (worst of all, it is cleverly and subtly cloaked in spirituality) as promoted by certain puppet preachers who are more interested in their own popularity, financial livelihood and reputation than concern for the spiritual development of their flock. These preachers might have been better called as hirelings and spiritual pimps and they are wolves in sheep’s clothing. They have no convictions and discernment, they stand for nothing. They cannot preach the whole counsel of God’s Word for fear of threatening the means of their livelihood.

Then we have the so-called “Christian” rock and roll groups, claiming they are communicating the gospel in the language of our youth. But the question really is, “What kind of a gospel?” The Apostle Paul declared, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8-9). If you will notice, what Paul said in verse eight, he reiterated in verse nine. What more need we say? Only it is not merely the words of a great man, but the Lord’s chosen vessel!

WHERE ARE THE WATCHMEN AMONGST THOSE IN THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY TODAY?

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11-16).

As clearly outlined in Ephesians 4, God ordained the fivefold ministry in His Body, namely, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for a specific task. While each of these have their respective roles, it must be recognize that their calling comes directly from God- “There was a man sent from God,

whose name was John” (John 1:6). Unfortunately, what we have today are self-appointed “prophets and evangelists” who claim “new or extra-Biblical revelation” and who undermine, advertently or even inadvertently, the authority of the Word of God. Who are they? They are the Charismatic leaders (I would quickly add that there are some faithful, Godly individuals in this movement who are mightily used of God though), television talk show hosts, “Christian” rock singers, “Christian” psychologists, counselors and seminar professionals in Bible colleges and churches.

Just as the prophets of old who also generally serve as watchmen of their generations, my cry is that God will raise up individuals within the fivefold ministry who will preach what “thus saith the Lord”. Of course, some of these will fulfill the specific role of teachers; some others, pastors and yet others, evangelists, prophets and apostles; but in whatever capacity of their ministry and calling, I plead that they will all be men enough to stand up and deliver the Word with no uncertain sound- “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

“WOE IS UNTO ME IF I PREACH NOT”

“ ...woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Given the “easy believism” Christianity of our day, who would dare question that not many people are drawn and incorporated in the church? However, may I remind you, my friend, that successful indoctrination, response slips, decision cards and church membership drives are really beside the point. I ask you: How many in the Church have genuinely repented and are born again? Although the enemy’s price is high, it is alarming that millions are falling prey to it- through compromise! I pray that God help us know that it is not some half gospel that should be preached, but “this gospel” (according to Matthew 24:14)- the unadulterated and uncompromising Word. Indeed, preachers need to preach about hell again- and warn people to flee from the judgment to come. Of course, we need to also preach about heaven, the love and the mercy of God- as long as the love of God is not elevated above His justice and holy hatred of sin, that is. Lest we forget, the message of repentance is a major characteristic of the ministry of Jesus, “ ...Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17); “ ...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). But what kinds of messages are dominating the pulpits and the printed page today? We hear that a poor self-esteem, and not sin, is our root problem. Instead of preaching holiness and sanctification, we are coming up with this psychological substitute called “inner healing”.

If preachers today tell their congregations that social drinking is not proper and that watching movies would grossly hinder spiritual growth and witness, they would probably be looked and despised upon as those “wearing strait-jackets” with a “holier-than-thou” attitude. Am I suggesting a legalistic, Puritanical, self-righteous man-made list of rules and orders? God forbid a million times! To be absolutely certain, abstinence from those activities cannot and will not merit you any special favours from God (God will not glory in the flesh anyway!); but you will have the potential to walk in the power of holiness and experience the fruits of prayer. Somehow, allow me to say that if you do not “see” the filth that is portrayed in today’s picture houses, it is very likely that you are either blind spiritually or else do not understand the all-consuming holiness of God! Furthermore, you may be indirectly supporting the often-ungodly lives of the many personalities in the movie industry, whenever the revenue generated is translated into their incomes. My precious Christian friend, there are multitudinous hosts of seducing spirits and the spirit of the world in many of these seemingly-harmless activities and pursuits, such as dances, entertainment, parties and social drinking- they are all “accursed” and are scheduled for eternal destruction. Believe me, “friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). Perhaps, let me ask you an uncomfortable, sober but much-needed self-searching question, “If you seem to enjoy these activities and pursuits more than seeking the face of God in prayer and in the reading of His Word, I really wonder if heaven would be miserable for you, if you ever do get there by the grace and mercy of God?” I know I have been somewhat

strong in my statements for some of you reading this, but I want to impress you that we are living in perilous times such as the world has never known before!

If ever there was a time for a “watchman on the wall”, it is now. Moreover, this watchman (who should be a member of the fivefold ministry) must persist in attacking sin even when he has experienced defeats and failures in his own life and ministry. Why do I say this? And wouldn’t he be a hypocrite in such a case?

Not necessarily so, though. You see, God uses men “of like passions as we are”, even as Elijah was such as one whose experiences of struggles, stumblings and temptations made them realize the utter helplessness and ungodliness of their flesh and causes them to totally depend on God and His Holy Spirit. Even as the fire of God’s holiness and His utter hatred of sin have dealt with their own personal lives to where they were brought to a place of contrition and humility, they then live crucified lives to where their overcoming victory is now in Christ and Christ alone (and no longer in themselves or in their spiritual accomplishments)!

And like David, after his confession of sin, they should now cry, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit” (Psalm 51:12). But this is not all! God further enables them to “teach transgressors [His] ways; and sinners shall be converted unto [Him]” (Psalm 51:13). What a wonderful God of grace who works through men, as frailty as we are! In some small measure, I think I am beginning to learn the truth of Jesus’ words when He said, “Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins (or anyone, for that matter), which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47). How I love this beautiful application of redeeming grace!

Also, I am reminded of Isaiah’s vision of God’s glory (Isaiah 6). Seeing the Lord high and lifted up in His Holy Presence, Isaiah was acutely made aware of his state of unworthiness and he cried, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Then through God’s forgiveness and restoration, he was gloriously purged and he went forth speaking His message. Hence, like Isaiah, our preachers must fall on their faces and weep over their sins and that of God’s people. Beloved, we may be tempted to contemplate on a less painful and less uncomfortable way of confronting sin but God forbid! Repentance is still the only key and there is no other way! And it must begin with the Body of Christ, the house of God, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Will you do this in loving obedience to His Word today?

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(This article was written in the early 1990s. The message is still as relevant now as it was back then.)