

Preparing for Christ's Return

Dear Friends,

The dooms day clock has struck twelve midnight. The question of when World War III, with its nuclear holocaust will begin is on the minds of many. The where is becoming clearer daily as events in the Ukraine heat up with Russian aggressor Putin increasing his threats of nuclear warfare.

As these events unfold, I must remember the words of Jesus given in Matthew 24:6-8. *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains."*

It seems these birth pains are everywhere. The other night I had Dan who lives near by knock on my door. He asked me, "What in the world is going on? I was attacked by a mentally ill man recently. I am seeing more and more people as I walk the streets who are angry, mentally disturbed or intoxicated. The news is becoming increasingly upsetting. Violence is everywhere." After listening to Dan, I shared how I had found hope and peace in the resurrected Christ.

Jesus in describing such a time like this in Matthew 24:10-12, *"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold."*

Throughout the scriptures in reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ we are told to hang on. It won't be long, and He will be returning. "The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen" (I Peter 4:7-11).

Let's take another look at I Peter 4:7-11 and see what it says we must do to get ready for the return of Christ. First it says we must be clear minded and self-controlled so that we can pray. A powerful prayer life is critical if we are going to remain steadfast and stand firm in the love, power, and presence of the Living God.

Second, we must strive to “love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” Third, this love must not only be in word, but also in deed. This means we must “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” Fourth in the realization that “the end of all things is near” we need to start using our talents and gifts “to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” This means feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, lonely, and imprisoned (see Matthew 25:31-46) and working to preserve creation for Revelation 11:18 says that when the seventh trumpet is blown, God will destroy “those who destroy the earth.”

We see that the fifth way we are told in I Peter 4:7-11 to prepare for our Savior’s return is to watch what we say for, “if anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (vs. 11). Then finally we are told that when we serve in these last days such service is to be done with the strength God provides.

As we pray and serve our risen Lord in these last days we must say, “*‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:12-13).

It may seem hard to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions as you wait for the blessed hope of Jesus Christ. Never forget that God’s delay is not God’s denial for Hebrews 10:35-39 tells us, “*So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. And ‘But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.’ But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.*”

God’s invitation in II Chronicles 7:14 is an invitation to experience the glorious freedom provided to those He refers to as My people. The phrase “My people” now includes all who declare “Jesus is Lord,” and “*believe that God raised Him from the dead*” (Romans 10:9). Such a declaration and belief must be followed by decisive action in order to be creditable.

It is this necessary action which is spelled out for us in II Chronicles 7:14 when it says, *“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.”*

The question is, where are God’s people who will grieve for America? Where are those who are called by the name of the Lord who will humble themselves to the point, they are broken over the sins of God’s church and our nation?

In America, the land of the free and the home of the self-righteous, it is so easy for those who call themselves people of God to remain indifferent and not pray as the earth and everything in it is destroyed in the name of economic development. Blinded by the god of Get materialism that has given birth to greed, many now refer to God as “my God” not because they love and adore Him, but because they desire to possess Him in order that He might bless their self-centered lifestyles. The term “my God” is now interpreted in the same way one would say my land, my house, my shoes. Something else to own and control!

God turns this way of thinking upside down when He says, “If My people.” He is making it clear that He is in control. The time has come for those whom religion has saved as a basis for self-righteousness is to humble themselves, pray, seek the face of God and turn from their wicked ways.

This invitation is extremely difficult to receive for those who believe they have no wickedness to turn from. For the most part they are nice people who are blind to the needs of others, including the groaning of creation. They see no correlation between their materialistic lifestyles and issues like global warming and social injustice. Yet God’s reference to all of us as “My people” offers us hope. We are still His people in spite of ourselves and our sins because of His love manifested through the sending of His Son Jesus Christ. Our hope continues to exist if we will but positively respond by humbling ourselves, praying, seeking the face of God and turning from our wicked self-centered ways. Such action on our part, through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, results in God hearing from heaven, forgiving our sin and healing our land.

What glorious freedom this provides for the children of God. The walls of pride, self-righteousness, self-centeredness, and religiosity have fallen! *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you...”* (Ephesians 1:18). It is a hope that will cause you to love your neighbor as you love yourself. It is a hope that will result in you being a powerful prayer warrior.

Jesus declares that those whom God refers to as “My people” are in actuality to be “salt and light” in our culture. (Matt. 5:13-16) This penetrating, illuminating effect results in a personal recycling of thoughts, words and actions that result in a transformed lifestyle of revolutionary actions for good. Jesus Christ makes this possible as Paul declared in II Cor. 5:17 “If anyone be in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come.”

This coming of the new is what all of creation is groaning for. As II Chron. 7:14 says, the healing of the land is the direct result of the people of God humbling themselves by declaring that they have to always consider how their lifestyles have directly affected all of creation; praying for God’s forgiveness and seeking God’s face for direct actions, that must be taken to allow healing to flow from us rather than hurt. This means daily turning from “our wicked ways” and seeking the love and light of Christ to flow in us and through us as we earnestly pray during these last days.

Let us pray for this is not a time for us to live in fear. God has promised He will never leave us nor forsake us” (Deuteronomy 6:8).

Knowing that the Lord of hosts will never leave us, let us trust God for the victory that He provided through our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As the New Testament points out, there is a spiritual battle under way which requires each of us to put on the full armor of God. (See Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Timothy 2:1-5, I Timothy 6:12). Clothed in the full armor of God and equipped with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, we are then able to intercede in prayer, assured of victory.

This victorious intercession is possible because of the victory Jesus Christ has provided through His death and resurrection. In fact, our only right to come to God is because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

It is for that reason we pray in His name for He has told us in John 14:12-14 the following: “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.”

Please engage in intercessory prayer during these last days for New Life Evangelistic Center, the hurting and homeless and the sick and despairing. Please intercede for our cities, our nation, and those in need around the world. Let your prayers be birthed from compassion.

Compassion flowing from the heart of Jesus drives us to our knees as we hear of school shootings, rape, murder, war, environment destruction and broken lives. Prayer birthed in the compassion of Jesus moves us among those in need, enabling us to experience that need in the depths of our souls. It causes us to obey our Lord’s command when He says, “Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest field.” Please pray for additional NLEC workers to come forth at this time. As we see the magnitude of need around us, let us cry out with the prophet, “*My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city*” (Lamentations 2:11).

Compassion causes me to ask what would happen if I became desperate enough in these last days to wrestle with God in prayer over the pain of this generation of youth whom Satan has ravaged? As I hear story after story about the terrible things people are doing to each other, I find myself asking what will be the result if I engaged in the spiritual warfare necessary to see people set free from satanic chains that hold them in bondage?

I can’t help but recall how Fifty-Five years ago people began to intercede for a generation of youth who had fallen into the pits of drugs, sex and despair. As they interceded in earnest prayer, the Jesus movement came forth and tens of thousands of young people turned to Jesus Christ. The same thing can happen now prior to Christ’s return if we begin to intercede with the compassion that flows from the heart of Jesus.

The question is, are your knees dirty? Will Jesus find you praying when He returns? Prayer is communion with God. It acknowledges the ever-present reality of the Living God. Prayer is a privilege that, as we engage in it, our relationship with God grows. Prayer is not an option for we are commanded in the Scriptures to pray. In I Thessalonians 5:17 we are told to *“Pray without ceasing.”* In Colossians 4:2 we are told to, *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”* I Chronicles 16: 11-12 declares, *“Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.”*

To wrestle in prayer means to engage in prayer in an agonizing way with an intense desire. Colossians 4:12 says, *“Always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”* New Testament believers not only devoted themselves to but also agonized in prayer with intense desires. The needs we are facing in these last days are no less significant. As you pray earnestly, know that as you wrestle in prayer, Christ’s power is working powerfully in you.

Please continue to pray earnestly for New Life Evangelistic Center’s financial needs, the NLEC staff and for the needs of the multitudes who come to us daily. Let us believe God for a mighty outpouring of His Spirit that will result in a great and mighty awakening prior to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Rice". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Larry Rice