

Call To Prayer

by Doug Small

This sermon emphasizes the importance of a national solemn assembly, highlighting the need for repentance, deep contrition, and a redirection towards God's destiny for individuals, churches, and the nation. It calls for a recognition of sin, a discerning process, and a commitment to seek God's face, turn from wicked ways, and fulfill the destiny God has ordained.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Joel 2:15, Isaiah 6:5, Nehemiah 8:9, Romans 2:4

Topics: "National Repentance", "Seeking God's Destiny"

Description

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Transcript

Let me say, I'm having a few technical issues and we tested this last night and it seemed to be fine, but so I'm going to have to turn myself off here to create, to stop the sound looping. Dan, let me just say to you that I am so grateful and so appreciative to you for doing this and, and your, your heart and your desire for the nation and the group of people that you lined up for this weekend is a stellar, is a stellar group. I got a note today from Kevin Jessup, and as you know, and I think you're talking about this this week, the return that's taking place in Washington on September 26th, which before COVID, they were hoping that they would have a million people for a day of prayer.

Then got a call today from the Billy Graham people and they are promoting, of course, the Franklin Graham March. It's going to start at the Lincoln Memorial, it'll be less than two miles, it has seven stops along the way. It's not a preaching meeting, it's Franklin praying and he's going to take a prayer walk through Washington, DC, and he's inviting people in the nation to come along and walk with him and pray with him along the way.

And one of these is the return, the other one is, I think it's called Washington March 2020, and you can easily find these on the web. But this effort, Dan, that you are involved in is no less stellar than, than these, this call to prayer, this mobilization of, of intercessors to, to pray. Tonight, during my time, I want to see if I could, if I could lay out what I call the seven elements of a solemn assembly.

And so we'll stop and pray along the way, but I'm going to use a visual for that. And I'm going to quickly flip to that, to that visual. And Dan, if it gets tiring, you can switch me back, but, but I want to explain a bit about the solemn assembly and why the solemn assembly is important and the spiritual dynamics of a solemn assembly, and maybe a bit about where we are, we are as a, as a, as a nation.

And so let me see if I can go to my trusty little PowerPoint and let's see if you can see it here. Is that coming up? It doesn't look like it's coming up. So the best of worlds, sometimes the best of things don't work.

Let me say one more time, if I can share this and, and I'm so sorry, there it is. There it is. I'm pretty sure it will come up.

It will come up this time. The great passage for prayer and spiritual renewal in the nation is 2 Chronicles 7, 714. And almost all of us know, and we're, we're weary of it.

I don't think we understand the power of the, of the passage. And I'll come back to that in just, in just a moment. There are, there are five things in the Old Testament that defile the land and they defile the land to such a degree that God packs up his glory and leaves.

And that's what we don't want to happen. This is called the abomination of a land. So God just says, look, I give up.

The greatest judgment of all is the silence of God, the abandonment of God. When you read Romans chapter one, and God gave them up and God gave them over and gave them up, those are, that's judicial language. It is like a stop order by the court.

It's like an injunction by the court. It's like a moral behavioral barricade. And God puts that barricade up and the culture runs the barricade.

And he puts that culture up and they run the barricade. We've already violated the law of holiness, the law of righteousness. And so he puts another barricade up.

He gives us over the first line and that's grace. And then we run that barricade and then he gives us over. That's grace again.

And then finally, as Hosea said, for three and yet for four. Five things cause God to pack up his glory and leave a land. The shedding of innocent blood.

And when we talk about it, just think about the abortions. Think about the murder rates, 16, 17,000 homicides every year. A great majority of them, not even assault.

It's a random thing. Another shooting in the city last night. We say.

And the second is the treatment of the dead. The way we treat death itself. The way we fail to respect death and therefore the way we fail to respect a life.

Even the despised criminal was to be properly buried in the Old Testament. And thus you have this idea of the sacredness of the body. And that extends in so many different directions.

The third thing that defiled the land was the breakdown of the family. Through the proliferation of divorce and with it, sexual infidelity. The fourth thing was sexual deviance, specifically homosexuality.

And with that, a gender identity confusion that always leads to social disorder. And then the fifth thing was idolatry or idolatrous altars and worship sites. Paganism and its priests.

It's manifest in our culture as pluralism. The rejection of our exclusive covenant with God and our own distinctive Christian, Protestant Christian history. There are two perspectives that confuse us today.

Number one, we've lost the concept of corporate sin. The idea that nations sin and there's a ledger for nation. The idea that families sin and God traces sin through the generations.

And it multiplies like something that's off course, an error that's off course. The further it goes without correction, the more off course it is until finally there has to be an intervention of God. Cities sin, entities, corporations sin, churches sin, and God judges them.

So pervasive is the concept of individualism, even in the church, that sin has become a completely privatized concept. And so we don't understand, solemn assembly, that we come together not just for our own sins, but for the sins of the city, for the sins of the state, for the sins of the nation, for the things that have created an abomination in the land. The second thing that I think confuses our perspective today is holiness as a Christian ideal.

It is now so pervasively eroded by an aberrant view of grace, what Bonhoeffer called cheap grace, grace without a connection to discipleship. Sin is now tacitly accepted. It's not treated as a serious affront to God.

We have allowed the love of God to eclipse the truth of God, to muzzle the truth of God. And we dare not do that, nor do we want to have truth eclipse the love of God. And truth and love both point to the unique holiness of God, the claim that he has upon our life, the desire to make us holy, righteous, and to make us by extension whole.

We don't differentiate between sins. We don't fail to see that there are egregious sins. We don't fail to see that there are sins that are an abomination.

And while it's true that one sin, no matter how deceptively innocent or innocuous it may appear, that sin is toxic and deadly, all sins are not in the same category. All sins are not the same. There are sins that are more egregious, more strategically destructive, and like an aggressive cancer, radical action is necessary to save the whole.

And that's where we are as a nation. And that's why we need a solemn assembly. We need a national solemn assembly.

We need solemn assemblies at the state level, county level. We need solemn assemblies in our cities. Our churches need solemn assemblies.

And our families, our families need solemn assemblies as well. Israel had a number of specifically called solemn assemblies. There were eight to 12 of these solemn assemblies in the Old Testament.

They were called usually by a king. At least six of them were called by a king. They were called often by a prophet, and they were called occasionally by a priest.

Moses functioned in the priestly and prophetic mode. Ezra was a priest, along with Nehemiah, who functioned in a governor's role. They called a solemn assembly.

Some people see Acts 2, Acts 1 and 2 as a solemn assembly. It's the response of the church to Rome's crucifixion of Jesus. In other words, when the whole world, the superpower of the world rejected Christ and put him on the cross, and Jesus appeared to them for 40 days and then left the earth, disappearing in the cloud of glory.

He sent them to the upper room, and for 10 days, seven to 10 days, they waited before God. They considered what had happened. They considered what their response should be, what their message should be.

Into that solemn assembly, the Holy Spirit rumbled, and you know that's the day we call Pentecost. The prophet, the priest, the king calls a solemn assembly. The three branches of our government are based on the judicial branch, the court, the judges on the office of the prophet.

Will they call a solemn assembly? What's the chance that the Supreme Court will kneel before Jesus Christ and repent? All nine justices, and call the nation back to God. I'd say less than zero. And then the Congress is based on the priestly or representative office.

What's the chance that Nancy Pelosi will call the Congress to prayer, to kneel before God, to repent, to affirm Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the historic roots of our nation? There's just, there's little chance of that. There may be a chance that this president will be at the September 26th event. There may be a chance.

He has indicated a willingness to consider that, and he has been the most vocal president in my lifetime on godly issues, righteous issues. And I know that that's a contradiction to his own life and to his own lifestyle. It isn't, however, to his history and connection to the Hebrides revival.

There are times that God raises up Osiris, as all of us have heard him called, and as Netanyahu has called him. And he may yet have the impart with Christ that we want him to have in the Lincoln bedroom. But right now, he has become a righteous advocate and a voice, and he may well, he may well add his voice calling for a national solemn assembly in September.

But I've got better news for you even than that. There's a wild card in Scripture. What happens, what happens when the prophetic office, the kingly office, the executive branch, the priestly office, the representative branch, none of them will move a nation back towards God.

This is the wild card of 2 Chronicles 7 14. If my people, if my people who are called by my name, who identify openly with me, will do four things, then I will hear from heaven. I'll silence heaven and listen to them.

I will give them a hearing in my heavenly courtroom, and I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land. This glorious, wonderful wild card is a provision of grace in Scripture. It is a bottom-up movement of people who began to cry out to God and ask God for intervention into the life of the nation.

Why would we want a solemn assembly? Here's why you have a solemn assembly. Because there is a sense that a city, that a nation is reaping what it has sown, that judgment is looming over the land, and we must fulfill our mission as intercessors and as an intercessory community to stand in the gap. You hold a

solemn assembly because of a sense that judgment is imminent or it is already present, and that the crisis may deepen, and that even among God's people there's compromise, and it is critical that we redirect our lives.

Why do you hold a solemn assembly? Because of fresh revelation from the Word of God, that we've ignored some aspect of the Word of God, that we've gotten out of balance, that we've now rediscovered something, and we must change, and because of a sense that our change, that our prayer will make a difference far beyond us. So what is a solemn assembly? Well, it is the urgent call of all people to come together to repent. Something has gone wrong, and change begins with us.

It is an urgent call to humble ourselves, to be broken before God, to remember that God resists the proud. It is an urgent call to seek God's face, not merely His hand, but in openness and transparency before God, to see ourselves and to see God more clearly, and to be moved to our face before this God. Why? What is a solemn assembly? It is a call to fast and pray, and to demonstrate that our greatest hunger is spiritual.

It's a call to turn from wicked ways and to change our very lifestyle. What is a solemn assembly supposed to do? Well, it takes us back to the pattern of Scripture, to the hearing of God's Word, and in a solemn assembly, there's a lot of God's Word that's read aloud to a group. It is a call to remove all things, all practices from our lives that might be displeasing to God, frustrating to His purposes.

Anything in our life, our home, our church, that we have control, we want to put out is the purging of the leaven. It's a call to worship God with all of our heart. It's a call for everyone to renew a solemn covenant with God that's been in some way broken, and this is the means by which we facilitate this group's desire, this family's desire, this church's desire, this prayer group's desire, this nation's desire to be a more effective instrument in the hand of God and to fulfill our institutional mission.

Now, I want you to pay special attention now because this is the heart of what I want to say to you. There's seven critical elements here. Number one, a solemn assembly, particularly the Old Testament, was often triggered by some precipitating event, something they interpreted to be the judgment or intervention of God or the withdrawal of His grace or failure upon our life.

When you hear the moderns talk about climate control, they talk about a climate that's completely under our control. We control the planet Earth and all of its calamities, and we can make all these calamities go away by paying attention to the Earth, and what you hear dancing behind it is Gaia worship, is Mother Earth. When you read the Revelation, it becomes clear that you see a climate completely out of control and yet fully under the control of God because the climate aberration that you see in the book of Revelation are in fact judgments of God upon the people of the Earth for their failure to live in righteous ways.

The Bible says in Romans that the Earth itself is groaning and travailing. The Spirit is groaning and travailing. We're the only ones that are not groaning and travailing, and we should join our voice praying for God to intervene and to set us back on a right path.

So when a drought occurred or fire or storm or crop failure, the people would search their hearts and say, is there any connection between what's happening in our environment, in our circumstances, and our own righteousness, our own prayer? When an uncommon calamity came, and we've seen a couple of those, Katrina and Andrew and earthquakes, they would do the same thing. When a financial crisis came, Haggai talked about earning money only to put it into a bag with holes. Bank collapse, and we've seen bank

collapse just a few years ago or near bank collapse, and it was a bank collapse that triggered the third great awakening.

And when there's human-caused tragedy like war or the threat of war, national security, 9-1-1 was one of those. Or when there is a pandemic of some kind, think about it. Since the year 2000, we have had a natural-caused calamity, 9-1-1.

We've had a banking financial crisis, 2008, and now we have a global pandemic unlike we have ever seen before. And yet and yet we are not considering the fact that these may be messages from God that we are to repent and examine our heart and ask if we are living the kind of lives that are commensurate with biblical calls to righteousness and holiness. So whatever this event is, it is an interruption to life as normal.

And sometimes it was localized, sometimes it's national. What we're living in is international. But there is some encounter that proves overwhelming, and it is supposed to instinctively move our eyes toward heaven to begin to pray and cry out to God.

And this is the amazing thing, isn't it? That in 9-1-1, there was a little bit of prayer. In the banking crisis of 2008, there was a little bit of prayer. And in the pandemic, there's just been a little bit of prayer, but there's been no brokenness, no soul-searching, no national call, no get on our knees, no God have mercy on us, no brokenness before God.

And so Joel said, and you've already heard Pastor Visor reference this passage, blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify them, assemble the elders, gather the children, gather the nursing mothers, cancel the weddings. Nothing was more important in Jewish culture than a wedding, but cancel the wedding. Let the priests and ministers weep, let them mourn between the porch and the altar, and let them say, spare your people.

We are on the edge of even greater judgment. Don't give your heritage to reproach that the nation should rule over us, God. Saying, where is their God? More of you, more of the pastors that I know, more leaders that I've ever heard in my lifetime are saying, this could be the end.

If we continue like we are with the rioting and the polarization, this could be the end of the nation as we know it. And Joel says, you stop everything. Everything is stopped.

Everything is canceled. And there's days of prayer and crying out to God until we hear from God. And this is what we pray.

This is what we rely on. If my people called by my name, if my people, which are called by my name, they willingly, openly, without shame, identify with me. If they will humble themselves, and the word here actually is repent.

And if they will pray, and the Hebrew word there is palau, it means to represent others. In this case, we would represent the nation. We would stand before God in behalf of the nation or a church or something else and seek my face, not merely my hand, and turn from their wicked ways, demonstrating a desire for truth and righteousness.

Then I'll hear from heaven. I'll answer them. I'll forgive them, justify, reconcile, restore, and I will heal their land.

I will heal their living places. And here's what I want you to do. If you're watching this and you can see the screen, I want you to join with me in a prayer.

And you may want to pray everything that's on the screen. And you may want to pray just the gold response or the brown response. Let me begin.

Lord, to whatever extent I have failed, I have failed to openly identify with you, that I have withdrawn the broader edge of my witness, that I have been silent for fear that my Christian faith might cost me a promotion or even popularity. To whatever extent I failed to openly identify with you, I now repent. And then read this with me.

To whatever degree I failed to acknowledge the redemptive, kingly dimension of the name of Jesus, for that I repent. I say, Lord, I say, there is no other name. Pray this with me.

May I say it publicly. May I wear your name as an adornment, as your bride partner. May I come to understand the power and privilege of your name.

There is no other name. So we pray, let kings and nations acknowledge the name of Jesus. Let sinners and saints cling to the name of Jesus.

Pray it with me right now. Pray the gold with me. I will boldly, more consistently, more openly declare, I am a follower of Jesus.

I am one of his children. I am a disciple. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So Lord, may we, your church, be bolder in our witness. Pray this with me. May we, your people, not be silent.

We pray in view of the war, the virtual, veritable war against the name of Jesus by America, by its courts, that you would intervene. Pray it with me. That you would perform signs and wonders around the name for your glory to demonstrate that Jesus is not dead.

Jesus is alive. Christianity is not a philosophy. This is the faith of a living Lord.

We pray that we would live as representatives of the name, not sidestepping the culture war in which the name is permitted only in a profane manner, but forbidden when it's used in a sacred way. Lord, we pray, manifest yourself as alive in this nation. So I want you to see it again.

If my people, who are called by my name, will pray and they will humble themselves. The Hebrew text says humble, but the Greek Septuagint says repent. What if it's both? You see, humility is the disposition of the heart, but repentance is the action.

So pray this with me. Pray this with me. Lord, first we bow our hearts.

We recognize who we're standing before. Maybe we should pray. We pray that we would recognize who we're standing before.

And we want to be purposely reverent, intentionally bent before you. So pray it with me. We bow, we bend, we demonstrate our subordination and your supremacy.

We confess our sin and your holiness, our frailty, and your transcendence. We repent, Lord. We weep that our culture, including the church culture, has lost appropriate reverence of you.

Pray with me. We fear the deadly consequences of such disdain for you, especially in view of our national sins. We know, we should know, there are consequences to nations, to nations for sins.

And we fear for the nation. We fear for our sons and daughters. We fear for the generations to come.

And we repent. We are so sorry that we have allowed the escalation of scandalous sins in our nation and even in our churches and in our families with so few tears and so little prophetic outcry. We repent for our complicity.

We repent for our silence and for our complicity by our silence, for quietly going along, for feeling that our little voice, our little candle was no match for the darkness and hiding it. We repent for renaming sin. We repent for allowing love, confused love, that did not want to offend, to muzzle truth.

We pray, give us tough love, a truer love, so profound and like you, so laser like, that it loves the sinner without affirming sin. We repent for times when we ourselves have not lived truth, for living in an era in which the church is so compromised that there is little difference between us and the world. And more sadly, that such differences are no longer expected.

We are a cheap grace culture, content with superficial conversion and deeply resistant to discipleship. We repent to whatever extent our soldiering spirit has grown flabby and our capacity to mobilize has been compromised. We pray, Lord, forgive us, grace us with the ability and the power to change.

We know that your grace not only empowers repentance, but it also transforms. It makes weak men strong. It removes intimidation.

It emboldens. That grace took a ragtag band of wimpy disciples and made them fearless at Pentecost. God, we pray, do it again.

Do it again. Do it in our generation, Lord. Do it with us, God.

Forgive us. Make us credible witnesses. Make us proof, living examples of your sin-breaking, liberating power of grace, of dynamic grace.

Let others see our hunger for holiness, our tender hearts, our openness about our own frailty, our deep dependence upon you, and may they follow our godly examples. Cleanse us, God. Unshackle us from any debilitating habit.

Free us from the weights that beset us. Break covenants that bind us in any way to evil. Light our fire again and let there come over us a pristine purity that ushers in a new spiritual springtime.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray. The word pray here is palau in Hebrew. It means to represent another.

It means to stand before God in behalf of another. It is the idea of coming before God as in a courtroom. It is the idea of intercession.

And so having humbled ourselves and having repented, we are now more capable of standing between God and others. So let's pray this. God, we stand as advocates.

We stand as extensions of heaven. We reach out to others as priestly intercessors in behalf of those who do not know you, for some who may not want to know you, for leaders, for cultural influencers, and as intercessors. We plead for our nation.

We pray for those who are the blind purveyors of darkness, who are themselves victims and they do not even know it. We take a position in your behalf, God, in behalf of righteousness, in behalf of godliness. We take a position in behalf of the wounded, the children that have never held a Bible right here in America, never heard the story right here in America.

We take a position through prayer at places where sin is openly celebrated, in behalf of homes where your name is not honored, towards churches where revival fires have gone out, in the homes of seniors lacking care, in the places where singles live who lack companionship, youth lacking fathers, latchkey kids whose moms, despite their best efforts, will run short of food this month. We take a position in their behalf. We reach out in prayer to the homeless, to the addicted, to the abused, to the kid who today will take his initiation in a gang.

We weep, we weep for this nation. We take a position in courtrooms where your name is on the wall but your principles, the very foundation of our laws, are not allowed. In Congress, in the White House, in state houses, in governor's mansions, God have mercy on us.

We intercede. We ask you to come to America. Save us.

Turn the nation around for your glory and for your honor. If my people will seek my face, pray this with me. God, we know it's so easy to seek your hand.

We do it all the time. It's so easy to plead for intervention. It's so easy for us to ask you to this or that, all the while ignoring you.

We seek your face. We genuinely ask for grace, to seek a renewed relationship with you, not merely for your hand of intervention, not merely for your help, not just for your deliverance, not to make things better, but for a relationship with you, the relationship that we've ignored and the one that we often ignore every day because we're in too much of a hurry to stop and pray. Put us, put in us, in this nation, a desire to again know you, to want intimate connection with you, one that's personal, one that's authentic, one that's not merely utilitarian.

Help us, Lord, to want you, not for what you could do for us, but for who you are, for what you stand for, for what you want to make us and for what you want to enable us to stand for. Transform us as we behold your face in prayer. Change us into your likeness.

If my people, if my people will turn from their wicked ways, pray this with me. Lord, we've repented with our lips, now give us the grace to repent with our lives, with our hands, with our feet, with our deeds, with our habit. Let our ways please you.

Let others see the change in our attitudes and our actions and take note. Let our lives demonstrate the deep work that you're doing in our hearts. Change us, God.

Break our sinful chain. Make us more saints than sinners. We renounce our own wicked ways.

Help us demonstrate a love for you, a love for righteousness, a love for holiness. We pray that we would turn not only from our sin, but unto you. In fact, help us to run to you, to openly love you, to loudly praise you, to boldly proclaim your name and declare our allegiance, our allegiance to you.

It is not enough for us to be free from sin. We pray that we would also be free to, free to follow, free to worship, free to witness, free to pray, free to pray fervently, fervently free. And even now, wherever in our inner man we are not free, we pray, Lord, liberate us, change us.

If my people do these things, then I will hear. Stop just for a moment and just freely, just say, God, we thank you that you hear us. We thank you that you answer us when we pray.

We thank you that we can depend upon your word. We thank you that you are faithful just to forgive us our sins. We thank you that the weakest among us, the frailest of the faithful can pray and you will answer.

We thank you that your mercy endures forever, that your faithfulness is like the never ending waves of the ocean. You are a good and dependable God, the same yesterday, today, and forever. You never change and you've changed our nation before and you can do it again.

And for that, we pray. If my people do these things, I'll hear and I'll forgive. And so, Lord, we've prayed and we've asked you for forgiveness and we've prayed for grace to live an overcoming life, one that's evidentiary of great grace.

And so now, based on your word, we receive your promise of forgiveness. We revel in it. We savor in the sweetness of forgiveness.

Thank you, Lord, for forgiving us. And as we freely receive, help us to freely give. We pray for grace to forgive our trespassers, even those who offend you, oppose your kingdom and seek to harm us.

Give us grace to love them with the love that you've loved us. May we return good for evil. May we not come under the awful power of the evil one and his orbit, absorbed in a dislike of them as much as they may dislike us and dislike you.

We pray, set us free to orbit your grace and your love. Forgive us, free us, and keep us free for your glory, we pray. May we live as dead men who cannot be offended, who will not be baited, who do not react, who do not react to the darkness.

If my people, I'll hear, I'll forgive, I'll heal their land. So Father, we pray, heal our land, heal our living places, heal our homes, our churches, our cities, our nation, heal our schools and our neighborhoods, heal our work and play places. Sanctify us, sanctify our culture.

It is no accident that you shut virtually everything down. It is no accident that you've shut down sports arenas and you've shut down theaters, you've shut everything down, and you've called us back to yourself. It's no accident that you've done that.

We pray, heal our land, heal our play places, heal our bodies, so wracked with cancer and deadly maladies, many so sick with COVID-19. Heal us God, heal our souls, new psychological illness that emerge with regularity. Heal us, heal our environment.

No one seems to believe that godliness and ecology are connected, but we know according to scripture that there is a synergy, a spiritual connection between the land and the spiritual nature and condition of the people who live on that land. Heal our land as you heal us and you bring us back to righteousness. Now, I want to show you, I want to show you an astounding movement here.

There is this precipitating event and that brings a culture to the discovery of their limitations. I mean, you remember, you'll never forget the faces of the people running from the falling towers and suddenly invincibility, how could this happen in America, is gone. The failure of banks, discovery of our limitations, COVID-19, the discovery of our medical limitations.

Some kind of event brings us to the point where we discover our human frailty and there's a shared desperation and then there should be a discerning process and this is what I talked about earlier. Is this the hand of God? Is this the finger of God? Is this an indication? Have we sinned as a nation? Do we need to repent as a nation? And out of that comes deep contrition. That's an attitude and out of that comes new direction.

We begin to behave in different ways, in biblical ways. Our language cleans up. Our homes become more stable.

We stop being a throwaway culture. We stop destroying our young and euthanizing our old. Our habits change.

Our entertainment desires change and then we come back to destiny. Our destiny as families, the destiny of a church. It's not God's will for us to amble through Sunday after Sunday with three songs and offering in a sermon.

Every church has a destiny. It has a mission. It has a calling, but sin obscures that.

Lukewarmness obscures that. Every family has a destiny. There's a destiny upon your family.

There's something that God is calling you to do and of course a great part of that is the raising and launching of godly children who encourage one another onward in the mission that God has called them to, the various callings upon their life. There's destiny upon a nation as well. A precipitating event, the discovery of our frailty, our limitation.

You can't do this with an attaboy. We'll roll up our sleeves and we'll go out this and we'll overcome this. There has to be the inclusion of God, the invitation of God to join the national conversation and then the sense of desperation, the need of God and then the discerning process that leads to repentance and a willingness to redirect our lives, reconsecrate our lives, reconsecrate the nation, the church, the city and then we touch destiny.

Destiny is what God has called us to be. That's incarnational. That's transformational.

Destiny is what God has called us to do. That's vocational. That's task and at any point in this process, this can break down.

You can discover your limitations and fail to share desperation or discern what God might be saying or to repent and then the whole process breaks down and you start all over with another precipitating event. I think we've had three precipitating events since the year 2000 and we have still not found ourselves

moving along this chart. We've really not even reached the point of shared desperation.

We certainly haven't reached the point of discerning a discerning process where churches come together or cities come together and they discern what is God saying to us. September 26 will be one of those moments in which there is a discerning process. What are you saying to us, God? This weekend is one of those moments where we are attempting to discern together.

What are you saying to us, God? What is your message to us? So here's the discovery moment. God, we stand in a moment in which we realize we are no match for the present dilemma. We have been far too self-reliant and too little dependent upon you and we need you and not merely your hand and we confess that without you, we are empty believers, woefully inadequate for the task in this present moment.

We cannot do what you have called us to do alone. We cannot be what you want us to be without renewing our relationship with you at the altar of sacrifice. And so help us to discover what you are saying to us.

We are fighting against unseen forces that no mere human can subdue. Our solutions have failed us. We don't have a solution.

Our formulas won't work. Our programs are inadequate. Our cisterns are dry.

We need resources. We need spiritual power, wisdom, and discernment. We've tried too often to do divine work with human skill.

We've tried to carry on a holy mission with soul hands. We failed. Not merely the nations around us have failed.

It is you, God, we need. We need your grace upon our life. Here's stage three.

To break our hearts. Bring us to a place of deep dependence. We confess our inadequacy.

We acknowledge our frailty. We submit to your sovereignty. We ask, don't bring us merely to the place of exasperation.

Bring us to a place of deep yearning for you. Not just for your help, but for you. We repent of being casual over eternal issues.

We repent of dry eyes and smooth knees, of prayer that's more talk than tears. Give us the grace to move beyond prayer, to cry out to you like we've never done before. Here's stage four, discernment.

We cautiously ask you, show us our condition. Give us an Isaiah 6 moment. Why are we failing at the task, at least here in America? What has gone wrong with the harvest? Why is the church so lukewarm? Before you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, lead us into honest self-examination in the light of the scripture.

Let the prophet speak again. Bring a cultural change to us, to the church, to the nation. Help us to see again a clear vision of what you want us to be, your representative people, holy, and what you want us to do, to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so we ask you for the grace to weep. We pray that you'd help us weep for the murdered babies, for 40, 50, 60 years of public school education without a Bible, for rising teen suicide, pregnancies, drug

addiction, for an increasingly hostile and violent society, for our shamelessness, for the loss of our ability to bless each sin, for the loss of our knowledge that anything is sin anymore, for the plague of pornography, a symbol of our emptiness, a longing for satisfying love. We weep over the hollowness of commitment and displaced children, wounded by the divorce of their parents.

We weep over the absence of fathers, godly men who would dare to be boldly Christ-like. We weep over the moral vacuum of our nation, the silence, if not the absence of godly leaders in government who have the moral courage to call us back to our roots. We weep over the rewriting of history, to script out the existence of Christ and the influence of God in the Bible in early American history.

We weep over the lie. We weep over the loss of a creator God and the replacement of a godly philosophy called evolution that reduces our value by making us a product of chance when we're a special creation of God. We weep over the banning of the Bible, the repression of Christian speech.

We weep over the rise of cultists and astrologists, over the concept of pluralism when Christ himself is the only way. We weep over the spirit of deception that grows more powerful each day, and its tentacles threaten the church itself. We weep over the demise of the traditional family.

We weep over homosexuals and lesbians whose pain is manifest in anger at those who remind them that the scripture calls their behavior sin. We weep over those who have innocently and not so innocently contracted AIDS. We weep over what might have been, over what was at one time, over what is now surely and certainly threatened unless God sends a national revival.

We weep over America, many nations, divided, bitterly torn, without a shared consensus of values, no longer obedient to God, no longer willing to hear, submit to, listen, or obey his word. We weep. We weep, God, break our hearts, help us to weep, and we pray, spare your people.

We are the salt and light, and if there's decay and darkness, we have to accept the blame. We've failed. We've not been the people of God that we need to be.

Judgment has to begin at the house of the Lord. It's the church that must repent of the condition of the nation, and we pray that we will not be a reproach, and the nations will not reign over us. We pray that we will not say, they will not say, where is their God? We pray for a church in danger of becoming a reproach.

We pray for a Christian people more influenced by the world than we are ourselves, influencers, and now we come to deep contrition. Break our hearts, God, with a recognition that we've sinned, with a recognition that we've failed you, and help us not to cover, help us not to conceal, help us to ruthlessly deal with our own sin at the shadow, at the foot of the cross, the very shadow of the cross. May we be deeply aware that we've fallen short of your glory.

Change us. Change the church. Change the nation, we pray.

Rend our hearts before you, God. Now we come to new direction. Direct us, God.

Renew us. Fill us with the Holy Spirit. Help us to redefine our relationship with you as a representative people, as the people of God.

Make us hungry for private, personal encounters with you. Help us to rekindle our passion for the lost. Make holiness more than a buzzword.

Bring integrity and authenticity back to us, back to your people, and now we come to destiny. First, let's pray for personal destiny. Destiny.

God, you called me. Pray that. Help me to fulfill my destiny.

So you have a destiny on you. Sin cripples. It obscures the glory of God, the light of God's grace through you.

It keeps you from hearing God clearly. It binds you to practices that keep you from walking in full, free obedience to him. And so the first thing that has to happen in your life, in my life, is repentance has to clear those obstacles away so I can pray, God, let me fulfill my destiny.

Don't let me die with promise in me. Let me have something to lay at your feet. If I've spent my life in another way, then God, give me 70 years in seven, Lord.

Let me be fully, wildly, crazily dedicated to you, not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the character of my life be as important as the practical work in my life. Let me glorify you with my life itself.

See, you created us to be with you. You called us to work for you. So, Lord, let our relationship being with you be as important as our vocation for you, as our work for you.

And then all of us are parts of families. We're parts of churches. We live in cities, states, and a nation.

And so let's pray for corporate destiny. God, you founded your church, our church. It was you that stopped the people, blessed this place by the river, by the railroad, by the interstate, that we call home.

This city, you birthed it. As for your church, we pray that we'll see it more than a building, more than a place we come for work. Help our church fulfill its destiny.

Renew our movement, our denominational movement, our fellowship, whatever you're in. Restore our wisdom. Fill our pastor and his peers with the Holy Spirit.

March through your church around the world with a mighty revival that renews the missional DNA of your body. So watch the movement again. Precipitating event, COVID-19, rioting in the street, a national election, the cry of socialism, all these things.

The discovery of our need for God. A sense of desperation. Oh, how deeply we need God.

A discerning process. Why isn't God protecting us? Why have we lost his blessing? Why is this happening to us and that happening to us? Why are our families coming apart? Why aren't kids behaving in this way? Why are our colleges and universities so godless? Why are our kids so confused about their sexuality? Why are we killing so many babies? What is wrong with us? Where have we gone wrong? Deep contrition, repentance before God, and then a willingness to change our direction. Repent and turn is the partnership, the pairing in the Old Testament.

Repentance is not just an attitude. It's an action where you turn away from sin and you turn back to God. And then we come into the destiny that God has for us.

At any point along the way, this can break down. I have never lived through a moment in American history. We've never had a moment, not in the last hundred years, where we've gone through this cycle.

The civil wars, the closest we've gone through this. The last really serious, Woodrow Wilson called the Solemn Assembly, but the last really serious Solemn Assembly was called by Abraham Lincoln. He recognized that the destiny of the nation was at stake because of the sin of slavery.

And he was willing to lead the nation through a civil war to deal with the sin of slavery, a sin that we sidestepped in the days of the founding fathers, 90 years earlier. We're now at another point where we are at a moment, a defining moment for our nation. And this is why we desperately need a solemn assembly.

Let me pray one more prayer with you. Father, I ask for the September 26th event. I ask for the gathering at the mall by Jonathan Kahn and Kevin Jessup, the return.

And I pray, Lord, at the same time for Franklin Graham's prayer walk. I pray for this call tomorrow and Sunday, that somewhere in the nation, someone going through Facebook or YouTube will pick this up, and one of the speakers, whoever it is, will offer a challenge. Because if that one person steps up and asks for a hearing in your courtroom and stands between you and the nation, it could be the spark in their city, in their family, that could begin the national spiritual awakening that we need.

God, don't let anybody discount themselves. This is the wild card. If my people, if somebody who represents, who's in my people, not ashamed of my name, will step forward and begin to pray, pull out, ask for a hearing in my courtroom, seek my face, turn from their wicked ways, humble themselves, repent.

They'll launch the process. They'll start the process. Remember, it began with one person in Israel.

It spread to a small group. They said, we can't stay in Babylon anymore. And they went to Jerusalem, and then it overflowed in the temple.

And that created the window, the space. See, what we need is for one person, one person to become so on fire, so touched of God, that it infects a small group, and then it overflows onto the Sunday morning crowd somewhere. And it creates a space, a window of inquiry, of searching.

And then it touches a city, and it touches a nation. Have you ever wondered what it would be like for Jesus to be the talk of the town? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live in a great awakening? Have you ever wondered what it would be like for God to begin to convict the most hardened people in your city? Have you ever wondered what it would be like for the Holy Spirit to show up? You know when the Holy Spirit shows up, it's more than winning a rational left-brain argument with somebody. The Spirit of God causes people to tremble.

The Bible says in Nehemiah, they trembled at the Word of God. So we've never seen that, where people tremble at the name of God. They tremble at the Word of God.

They tremble because they recognize something is happening. Something is happening in this room. Something is happening in this city.

They've never had that kind of moment. We pray for a God encounter for this nation, for the glory of God. You could be that catalyst.

You could be that person. You could be the Peggy Smith, Peggy and her sister, 82 and 84, sisters, one blind, one bent over, who began to pray and God swept across the Hebrides Islands. One person, one intercessor stepped up, if my people.

God's looking for a man. He's looking for a woman. Stand in that intercessory gap and begin the process, the process we talked about, we talked about tonight.

Dan, if you're there.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Sd5Y6sfx6JU.mp4>

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