

Living in Light of Judgment Day

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to awaken from spiritual slumber and engage in impactful, sacrificial ministry to reach the lost and needy. It challenges believers to move beyond routine religious activities and focus on fulfilling the Great Commission by being a light in the darkness, showing mercy, and sharing the Gospel. The speaker urges listeners to stay alert to the spiritual battle, recognizing the enemy's tactics and the urgency of the mission to turn the world upside down for Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 58:6, Ephesians 6:10, Matthew 25:31, Revelation 12:7, John 14:12

Topics: "Awakening from Spiritual Slumber", "Fulfilling the Great Commission"

Description

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Transcript

Well, let's pray. Father, please help us. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Man, you know, in days of old, some folks came to Thessalonica and they said those guys that turned the world upside down, they've come here. And I'm thinking, okay, I go to Long Island. What are we doing there? What's happening? And you know, we can get so swallowed up by sight and routine and tradition and expectation.

What I mean by this is we go to our jobs, or you stay at home with your children and you raise them, and we have to make the prayer meeting on Wednesday or Friday or whenever that is, and we're trying to make it to the service. Perhaps we're trying to not be on our cell phone before we get in our Bibles in the morning. And you can go a year and then three and ten and fifteen, and you can look up one day and wonder, wait, life has gone by pretty fast.

I'm going to be 55. We all think we're 25, right? I'm going to be 55. Life just... it's gone.

And what are we doing? I mean, when you really think about what is the objective? What is the goal? Is it... I recognize we have to focus on families. I recognize that we have churches and we have a lot of one another's in Scripture and we have to dwell together. But where are we going? I mean, when I think about

Long Island and I thought about flying from Texas and coming here, what are we doing? We're having conferences.

Oh, there's lots of conferences. People go to conferences. And when they go to one conference, they begin to plan to go to the next conference.

Is this a book that's all about conferences? Is this book really just about if we use the right homeschool curriculum? And I recognize we have to look into those things. I recognize making it on time to the service on Sunday. There's aspects of that that are very important.

But where are we headed? I mean, I don't know. What churches are represented here? Where are you all from? We've got a lot of different churches represented here. But think about it.

Think about the church. Brethren, sometimes we need to stop and just recognize something. You all know about the spiritual armor that's described to us in Ephesians 6. You know you go through there and you have the different armor, and then you come to the end and we are to be praying.

And then the Apostle says, to this end, keep alert. And you know when he started that? When you go back up a number of verses there, he is saying you need to do everything possible to stand. And he says, we are wrestling against these angelic forces, cosmic powers.

And you know, sometimes we need to simply step back and recognize this isn't just piling the family in a van and trying to make it on time. I mean, something is happening. Do you all realize? I know, this year, not only do I turn 55, this year I also spiritually turn 30 years old.

Do you remember the stock you came from? Sometimes we get saved for so long and we forget how lost we were. How lost our families were. How lost our friends were.

The guys we went to high school with. We went to college with. That we work with.

You know, you can get to where it's almost like we do this church thing. And yes, we have to refine our doctrines and we're going to hear the preaching and we're going to do the systematic theology and we're going to try to get all these things right. But you ever step back and you look at what's happening in Scripture? Yes, there's an importance about how you raise your children and making it to the prayer meeting on time.

Yes, there's realities here about getting our doctrine right. Obviously, those are essential things. But those are not ends in themselves.

What you have is an apostle of God telling us under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, we have to do everything to stand. Because I'll tell you, whether it's cell phones or whatever other distractions come, we get distracted, we get swept away and we have all sorts of cares and we have the things of this world and they come in and they strangle us and they distract us. And you talk about the eye.

The eye. Where is it? The multiplicities of this world that we get caught up with. And if you remember, brethren, what's happening there in Revelation 12, you have this picture.

And we know there was war in heaven. And you see that there is this dragon. This red dragon.

And we know who it is because he's spelled out in detail there. And he swept a third of the angels. Some people have these crazy ideas about demons, but we know what they are.

They are fallen angels. And a third of them. Satan was cast down to this earth along with his angels.

That's what it says. It says that a third of the stars further up in that passage. And you know what it says? It says that there is this woman.

Now, it's heavily symbol-laden. This woman. It's like she's robed in the sun.

The moon under her feet. She wears a crown with 12 stars in it. This woman gives birth to Christ.

This woman has other offspring. And they're spelled out for us, brethren. It's us.

This woman is a picture of the people of God through the ages. Those offspring are specifically said to be those who keep the commandments of God and who hold to the testimony of Jesus Christ. They're us.

And you know what's so significant about that? It's that those are the ones that He has made war against. And it says He pursues that woman. But you know what? We've got God on our side and God is always helping the woman.

Gives her wings to fly off into the wilderness and be nourished. That time, times, and half a time, or 1,260 days or 42 months, very symbol-laden. But that's got to do with now.

That is where we find ourselves now. That is this dispensation. We have an enemy who has made war against us and we can fall asleep to that reality.

That apostle comes along in Ephesians and he says you need to stay alert. You need to stay awake. And I think about coming here to this part of the country, and I recognize this.

We can't live on the dust of the first great awakening, the second great awakening. We can't live on the past. And if you go back and you look at those times in history, do you know what was happening? What was happening? Did everybody just sharpen and hone their theology within their four walls? Is that what happened back then? What was happening in those two great awakenings? I'll tell you what was happening.

People were learning good doctrine, but they were going out those doors and they were taking these people up and down the streets. And sometimes we can forget. That guy, I just saw lights go by that window right there.

Those people out there, they are going to perish and they are going to die in their sins. And a lot of times it's because we're good hyper-Calvinists and we've got this idea that God is going to save His elect and it doesn't matter what we do. But I'll tell you, you go to the pages of Scripture and what you found is there was people who took the Great Commission seriously and they turned the world upside down.

And Paul says, they will not call on a Christ that they don't believe in. And they will not believe on Him unless what? You know what it says. What does it say? Unless what? Unless they hear.

And they're not going to hear unless somebody goes to preach. Unless somebody takes that message. And if somebody's going to take that message, somebody needs to be sent.

And listen, we have to recognize, we have to come back. I come back to this reality all the time. I want to emphasize this to my own thoughts and to the church there at home.

Listen, we just have to wake up to the reality. You full well know this. The politicians are not proclaiming Christ.

And your school systems are not proclaiming Christ. It doesn't happen. There is no other institution that is out there, whether it's created by God specifically in the pages of Scripture or not.

There's no other institution out there that's had it entrusted to them to take the Gospel out to this world and to seek to turn the world upside down. It hasn't. And as I thought about coming here, I'll tell you, one of the things that I really want to encourage you is you've got to look beyond making it to prayer meeting, making it to Bible study, making it to Sunday service, and then kind of having your family in order.

Because the Scriptures go beyond that. Brethren, I just want us to think about something. I want us to think about judgment day.

Judgment day is coming. Let's look at it. I know you know these passages, but Matthew 25.

Now here's the interesting thing. We get three perspectives on the second coming of Christ. And I know you know these.

And you know the first one. Parable of the Ten Virgins. The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish. Five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them.

But the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight, there was a cry, Here is the bridegroom.

Come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose up, trimmed their lamps, and the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying, Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.

While they were going to buy, the bridegroom came. Those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Now, I don't know what all your eschatologies look like, but I'll tell you this, it should resemble this.

That when Christ comes, if you're not ready, the door is shut. And it's over. That's it.

Now here's the thing. No matter how you interpret all these virgins sleeping, it doesn't mean that the five genuine... I think the idea there is that He came after a long time. He came in an hour that wasn't expected.

I think that's what you want to do with it. Not that those who are genuine fall asleep. Because when you look at the third picture of the coming judgment that begins in verse 31, these people are anything but asleep.

Right? Let's look over there. When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne and before Him will be gathered all the nations. Now this isn't science fiction.

You and I are going to be in this group. We can't run. We can't escape from this.

Every one of us are moving in a line towards this very moment. No matter how you run, no matter how you diverge to the right or left, you're going to be here. And He's going to separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, come, you who are blessed by My Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

I hope we can all recognize we want to be in this group. We don't want to be in the other. The other is to be undone forever.

For I was hungry and you gave Me food. See, these are the five wise virgins right here. It's all the same.

Those on His right. Those that are wise. Those in the parable of the talents who traded well, didn't dig in the ground and hide what the Lord gave them.

See, here's the question. There are people who hide what has been given to them even though they darken the doors of church buildings. See, we need to ask ourselves this.

I was hungry and you fed Me. And you know how He goes on here. I was thirsty, you gave Me to drink.

I was a stranger, you welcomed Me. I was naked, you clothed Me. I was sick, you visited Me.

I was in prison, you came to Me. The righteous are going to answer Him saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, feed You thirsty, give You drink? When did we see a stranger welcome You naked, clothe You? When did we see You sicker in prison, visit You? The King will answer them truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, My brothers, you did it to Me. And you have to believe that just as well included here is those who are His little ones that are yet to be brought in when we go out and find them where they are.

The strange sheep. Here's the question. I mean, here's the observation that I would make.

And I'm going to follow it with a question. The observation is He didn't say, congratulations, you were a Calvinist. I'm really glad.

I'm happy for you. You made it. You found a reformed church there somewhere in New England, Long Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut.

He doesn't say that you home-schooled Me, right? He doesn't say those things. Look what's happening. This is judgment day.

Do you recognize that judgment day is a day when we are judged by our works? And you know, there are people who want to hide behind the imputed righteousness of Christ. Well, that's a good hiding place. But if you hide there, and you neglect these verses and say they don't matter, that righteousness of Christ

covers my nakedness irregardless of what my life looks like, you are not reading your Bibles right.

The reality is where that imputed righteousness of Christ exists, you know them. You know it. It's got to be.

Those who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, those who are counted righteous because of the obedience of Christ, because of the obedience of one, they are also the people that don't continue in sin. How can we who have died to it still live in it? This is the argument of Romans 5 and 6. But you can see right here what characterizes this group. They're not just a people who no longer walk in sin.

The sin has been replaced by what did Christ give Himself up for? A people of His own possession, zealous of good works. He specifically says, by much good works, you prove to be My disciples. That's how you prove it.

And you have to look at the character, the nature of the things that He's looking for on judgment day. And a lot of the things are not what we put the high priority on. Well, we want to make it to the Bible study and to do our systematic theology and make sure we understand election properly.

You understand what I'm saying. I'm not knocking that. There are many things that obviously we want right in our lives that are not in this list.

But when the Lord Himself says, on judgment day, here are some of the chief things I am going to call you out on, we should sit up and take notice. Now, here's the question. Does this characterize your life? I mean, that's the reality.

Is the lives of you, you people, this is what needs to characterize our church. And I'll tell you, this is the very material, this is the stuff that turns the world upside down. When you have a people who, yes, they want to know this book inside and out, but they are moved by it and they are moved by the love that Christ has for them, and they go looking for the hungry.

And you can spiritualize these things because Jesus says, man does not live by bread alone. You want to know the best food to give a man so that he might live. It is to take the Word of God to the people who sit in the darkness.

And it is for you to do it. As I said before, there is no other institution designed to do this. It is to us that the commission has been given.

It is to us. These are Christians. All those on the right are the people of Christ.

And he's saying, I was in prison. You know what? If you're going to take these things seriously, you ought to be able to get to the end of your life and say, Lord, I didn't do this perfectly, but I've been in the prisons and I've been in the places where there's strangers and I've been where the people are sick, whether that be physical or spiritual. I've gone to where the sick people are and I've gone to where the hungry people are and I've gone to where the thirsty people are and I've gone to where the naked people are.

Those that didn't have a covering for their spiritual nakedness. And I went there and I didn't do it perfectly. I know there were times I was cold.

There were times I was lazy. I know that, Lord. But you ought to be able to look at your life and say something about this resonates and reflects.

We are at war. And I'll tell you, Satan does not get all too troubled over Calvinism or the fact that you have John Owen on your shelf. You know what it is that he resists.

He wants to damn you. He wants to destroy you. He wants to pursue you.

He wants to fight you. He wants to resist you. And this is just amazing.

This is amazing. God could wipe him out in a second. God could just cut him off.

I mean, it could be all over today. But it's not. And you know why it's not? For one simple reason.

God is determined to win this victory through us. Through weak. I mean, we get sick.

I was thinking about your grandfather. My eyes are getting worse by the day. My hearing, my eyes, my memory.

How long can you preach if you can't remember anything? We are weak and we're all getting older. And God is determined to win this victory. And it's us that He is determined.

Have you ever read there, Ephesians 6? We stand here by His might. His might. The power of God, the energy of God as it works in and through us.

You know what happens? We go forth on our weakness. And His strength just shines through our weakness. That's what Scripture teaches.

I mean, listen, if the Apostle Paul came in here, you know the Apostle Paul probably would not be invited to a lot of the conferences that people are invited to today. Why? There wasn't a whole lot of esteem put on his preaching. He seemed to be a weak man.

And you know how he talked to the Corinthians. He probably would not have made the circuit. And yet, this is the guy who's turning the world upside down in all of his weakness.

And it's for us to follow in that path. This is our day. Paul's gone.

What's going to keep the people from perishing? Don't be hyper-Calvinistic. Don't fall for that lie. People come to believe in the Christ you believe in if they hear about Him.

If somebody goes to them and says, let me tell you about repentance and remission of sin. Let me tell you about this Christ. You see, our Lord said, people don't need a physician unless they're sick.

We need to show people they're in trouble. You know as well as I do. Maybe you don't.

I mean, but if you go up and down these streets and you go talk to these people, 99 out of 100 are going to tell you they're good enough. They're good people. They're okay.

They are deceived. And in very short years, they're going to be lost forever. And Paul is saying, somebody's got to go tell them.

Paul could look at his own kinsmen and say, I could be accursed and cut off from Christ for them. But you know what happens? We get desensitized. We just float through this world.

Oh, we've got to make it to the church service on time. You know what? Better to come 20 minutes late. I used to have this happen.

There was a season in our church, we start each year with a week of prayer and fasting. There was one year, a number of us really felt burdened to pray that God would give us evangelists. That's in the Bible.

You don't have to be afraid of that. Jesus gives gifts to men. And however you want to categorize that, I recognize this.

There are some people that God has really gifted to go after souls and be soul winners. When we prayed for that, within a few short months, we had a handful of these young zealots. And I remember one of them.

He'd pull in. Yes, he'd pull in 20 minutes late. He had this tiny little car and you hardly know how he could fit that many people in there.

The doors would open and it was like people just kept falling out. And he was late because he'd go around and rouse these guys out of bed that he went to high school with and get them to come. Yeah, be 20 minutes late.

If that's the reason, brethren, we are called to be the lights in this world. And we're not called to shine just in here. We've got to impact.

Listen, who are the people who have turned the world upside down? I'll tell you somebody who really interests some of us elders at our church is the circuit riders. Anybody ever studied some of the circuit riders? You know what was pretty amazing about those guys? Largely, which two denominations did they come from? Methodists and Baptists. Typically, Presbyterians, Congregationalists.

They were very slow. They had to set up their schools first. They had to thoroughly train their men first while the Baptists and the Methodists, they were cutting the edge out there.

You ever read about those guys? A lot of them decided not to get married. They lived on very little money. A lot of them got sick out there.

They'd ride around in the winter and they died young. If you read about the fruit that came from those guys, you see, it's always the radicals. It's always the nuts.

It's always the people who are thinking outside the box. Oh, it's easy to think well, we have to go to Bible study, we have to go to the prayer meeting, we have to make it to Sunday service, and then do it all over again the next week. Brethren, is that why we meet together? So we can just do it again next week? It's to equip the brethren for the work of the ministry.

It's to equip us to pour our lives out. Have you ever read true and undefiled religion? In the sight of God, what does such religion look like? Can anybody think? Yeah, there's definitely realities about purity, living an undefiled life. But think widows and orphans.

I want you to see something. These realities of judgment day, true and undefiled religion, this shows up in the Old Testament just as well. It was expected of God's people then just as well.

Look at Isaiah 58. Undoubtedly, some of you are familiar with this. But Isaiah 58, and one of the primary... Listen, when you go feed the hungry and you give drink to the thirsty, and you clothe the naked, and you

visit the needy, and you keep an eye out for the widow and the orphan, and when you're giving yourself to these things, you saw in Matthew 25, it gives promise for judgment day.

I want you to hear some of the other promises that are attached with this. Isaiah 58. And of course, we have a picture here.

We'll just go through the majority of the chapter. Cry aloud. Do not hold back.

Lift up your voice like a trumpet. Now you ought to catch that. This is something that God wants trumpeted.

Not set in a quiet little corner somewhere. Isaiah, trumpet this truth. Okay, what truth? Declare to My people their transgression.

To the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily. Okay, you see what you have here? You have a religious people.

You have the people of God. You have the people who are seeking Him in a sense, and yet there's a sin in their life that God wants trumpeted. I have a feeling that this works really well for our day and age, especially among reformed folks.

They seek Me daily. Delight to know My ways. And if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God, they ask of Me righteous judgments.

They delight to draw near to God. You see that. As if they were a nation that did righteousness.

They have this appearance like all is well. Like that they're not forsaking the judgment of their God. They delight to draw near to God.

Why have we fasted and you see it not? You see what's happening. They're doing their religious activities, and yet they have a sense that God is not really drawing near. That God is not really blessing.

That God is really not owning what they're doing. Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure. This is the issue.

Can I tell you something? If you're going to go to a prison, and you're going to visit the imprisoned, it takes sacrifice. If you're going to pour yourself out for strangers, if you're going to go to where the hungry are, but is it anything other than we were told? Jesus said, follow Me. And He called us each to deny ourselves.

Now listen, you have to remember that this is the same Savior that came and turned water into wine. He says, speaking of this money thing, I mean, if you go to Luke's account, store up money bags for yourself. This day you will be with Me in paradise.

I mean, look, we have paradise ahead of us. But we've been called for sin. Seasoned to walk as our Lord walked.

To pour ourselves out. To give ourselves and deny ourselves. These people are seeking their own pleasure, and I'll tell you, as Americans, the pleasures abound.

And that's one of the things about this social media and the cell phone thing. It's this pleasure. They say it's like a drug.

You've got to satisfy this. You press all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight, to hit with a wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Not when it's selfish and people are just seeking their own pleasure. Is such the fast that I choose a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed? Spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast? A day acceptable to the Lord? I mean, when you go through these religious motions, but you're missing the weightier matters.

Is not this the fast I choose? To loose the bonds of wickedness. This enemy that we have. You ever read that this is a present evil age? The world lies in the power of the evil one.

You've read, following the prince of the power of the air. That's what the world does. They are in chains of wickedness all around us.

You tell me, right here in Long Island, what do you think the percentage of real, genuine, true Christians is? It's not high. Those people, they are in shackles. And it's not as though we're strangers to this.

We came from that stock. We remember our former ways. Do you remember when the chains fell off and you were free? You know how that happened? You were exposed to the Gospel.

In your darkness and in your slavery, somehow, through some means, God brought the Gospel into your eyeballs or into your ears. And you were set free. People are in bondage.

But this is the fast that He calls us to. To undo those straps, that yoke. Let the oppressed go free.

To break every yoke. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry? We have the living bread. Is it not to share it with the hungry? Are you going to know the remedy that can save a person from eternal destruction and you're just going to go and homeschool your family and get that right? You should do that.

You need to educate your children. You need to protect your children. You need to lead your children to the Lord.

But while your neighbor next door, are you just going to drive and you're going to drive past all the houses to get to the church building? Why? To hear the sermon. Why? So that your theology can simply be a little bit honed and a little bit better. And then what? So you can win a debate somewhere on Facebook or something and you go away and you drive home and then the next week you do it all over again and the next thing you look up and it's 30 years later and that's what you've done your whole life and nobody's reached.

The world isn't turned upside down. There's not that in your life that smells of those circuit riders who broke forth and said, yes, there is a place to deny ourselves, deny our wallets. Are your churches sending forth missionaries? Are you reaching the neighborhoods? We have people in our churches that are thinking outside the box.

How can we reach people? How can we go? How can we get there? I mean, the truth is we need to stay alert. That's what Paul says as he's speaking to those Ephesians and he says, listen, you need to pray.

You need to be on your knees and in that way you need to stay alert.

It's much like it was in the Garden of Gethsemane that day. You remember how it was? Jesus is saying, could you not watch and pray with Me? And there they are sleeping. They're sleeping.

He's over there. He's wrestling. He's under this temptation.

Satan has tempted them all along not to go to the cross. You bow down to Me, I'll give it all to you without going to the cross. And these kingdoms, great kingdoms are moving.

The devil is moving. He's put it in Judas' heart to betray him. Angel comes down and ministers to him.

These things are happening. Christ is sweating, as it were, great drops of blood right on the eve of doing the very pinnacle work of redemption. If He doesn't succeed, these guys perish.

And they're sleeping. And you know what? That's what happens to us a lot of times. We're sleeping.

And you can sleep in the church. And you can sleep under good theology. And you can sleep under good preaching.

And we just sleep. And the world just rushes past us. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house? When you see the naked to cover Him.

And you see, this is a Christianity that has eyes that's looking for need. The Lord walks through this world. He had a way of finding the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the lepers, the demon-possessed.

You ever notice? He had a knack for finding them. Oh yeah. He showed up at meals at a Pharisee's house.

But He also showed up at meals at tax collectors' houses. But one of the things that I want you to see is this. Verse 8, Then shall your light break forth like the dawn.

Your healing shall spring up speedily. Your righteousness shall go before you. Now, I mean, we could probably take a long time in sermons to just talk about what that is.

But I would ask you this. Does something resonate with that that sounds good and desirable? I'll tell you, God is never stingy about His promises. You ever notice that? I'll never leave you or forsake you.

Wait a second. You gave that promise to Joshua. You see, He's not stingy about those things.

He gives a promise of good back there. Those promises are yes and amen in the Lord. Take these in its fullness.

Your light shall break forth like the dawn. Do we want churches that are... You remember what is said of John the Baptist? He was a burning and shining light. Anybody want to be part of a church that resembles that? I do.

Well, here's the promise. Your healing shall spring up speedily. Do you get people in your church that need healing? We do.

I need healing. Lots of times. Your righteousness shall go before you.

That's almost like a reputation. It precedes you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Wow. The glory of the Lord. I want that! Then you shall call and the Lord will answer.

You shall cry and He will say, Here I am. Do you want prayer meetings like that? Where you get down and you begin to plead with the Lord to give you something. And the Lord says, Here I am.

It's like you are a people who have shown mercy. You've poured yourself out for the needy. You've sought to release the chained.

And then you go to your knees and you pray. He says, I'm going to say, Here I am. You say, Wait, we know the doctrine of omnipresence.

He's everywhere. Oh, you have to know what this means. This means, I'm here to answer your prayer.

I'm here to give you what you're asking. I'm here to help you. I mean, this goes right along with the way Jesus, as He was getting ready to leave in John 14, 15, 16, He taught us to pray.

I'll tell you, if we're giving ourselves to these kind of things, we go to the Lord in prayer. This is a promise. You're going to get answers.

I don't know how it is with you or what your expectations are. Mine are that when we come together and pray in our prayer meetings, that God is going to answer the things that we ask for. That's my expectation.

That's why I believe it's absolutely so important. You know, when somebody joins our church, I usually ask them to do one thing. Please make every effort to come to the prayer meeting.

I don't feel like I have to convince people to come to the 11 a.m. service. Just please come to the prayer meeting. But I know this, if you've got churches that are seeking to reach those in the darkness, and you're taking that light and you're shining it there, and you're seeking to clothe those that are naked, and you seek out the hungry and the strangers and the imprisoned and the sick, if you're going after them and you're looking for the widow and you're looking for the orphan, if this is what characterizes your Christianity, it's got to be the individuals in the churches.

The church, what's that? That's pretty ambiguous. It's made up of people. God's people.

God's called out ones. We each have to be reflecting this. He'll call.

The Lord will answer. It says, if you take away the yoke from your midst, pointing a finger, speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry, satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness. The land might be dark, and the northeast is dark, but you'll be like a lighthouse on a dark shore, sending that beam out.

That's the promise. Your gloom will be as noonday. I mean, the darkest will be like 12 noon.

The Lord will guide you continually, satisfy your desire in scorched places. It means when everything around is scorched and dry and barren. You'll be like the Jews of old.

The manna will fall. The rock will give forth water. You'll have supernatural abundance to make your bones strong.

You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations.

You shall be called the repairer of the breach and the restorer of streets to dwell. And I like that. A repairer of the breach means when a wall's breached, it's broken.

It's got a hole in it. It's fallen down in places. And God says He'll use you to be a restorer of the breaches.

Jim Elliott long ago, if you read Elliott, he didn't just look and find fault with others. You really get a feeling he was often looking in the mirror. He didn't want to be ordinary.

We're so utterly ordinary. So commonplace while we profess to know a power the 20th century does not reckon with, but we are harmless and therefore unharmed. We're spiritual pacifists, non-militants, conscientious objectors in this battle to the death with principalities and powers in high places.

Meekness must be had for contact with men, but brash, outspoken boldness is required to take part in the comradeship of the cross. We're sideliners, coaching and criticizing the real wrestlers while content to sit by and leave the enemies of God unchallenged. The world cannot hate us.

We're too much like its own. Oh, that God would make us dangerous. Do you know what it is that Satan fears? He fears God.

But if you think about those promises, those are promises that God shows up. You're going to call? Here I am. He fears that.

He fears people who can pray and God shows up. He fears people who take the gospel out there and people get saved. He fears that because you know what that is.

That is the strong man having his goods ripped out of his hands. And he does not give up his goods without fury. You know, one of the things that says there repeatedly in Revelation 12 is he is furious with the woman.

He is furious and he knows his time is short. And he's been cast down to the earth. That's where we are.

We are where he is. He operates here. I often think about just a couple years back Ruby and I, we had lunch with a brother who regularly goes into Iran.

Several years back, he spoke at our fellowship conference. He said, you think with me here, that's dark. That's dark.

That's dangerous. That takes denial. Now, he goes in.

He covertly goes in. Undercover of going into the country for academic pursuits, which he actually does have a degree in. And he can go in there.

And he ministers to the underground church. Ruby and I had him across the table from us. He said that he visited a pastor.

And he said for some reason he already had an unusual fear. He was hearing stories. This pastor told him about the woeful condition of the underground church.

How different Christians had disappeared, not been heard of again. Some they knew had been martyred. Others were turning their back on Christ.

Others were fleeing the country and going to the West. Very discouraging situation at that time. He said that as he was wrapping up his meeting with this pastor, the pastor said, I'd like to pray for you.

And as the pastor was praying for him, he specifically mentioned something about protecting the man I'm telling you about, who was talking to me and my wife. The pastor was praying for him. Asked God to protect him.

He said that didn't comfort him. That smote him with fear. Like why is he praying that? Why was that necessary to pray that? When he walked out of the pastor's house, he said it was well known.

The Iranian government comes in black cars. They'll pull up by a Christian. They'll throw them in that car.

And oftentimes the people are never heard from again. And he said he came out of that pastor's house and he was smitten with fear. And he was walking down the street.

He said he kept looking over his shoulder. He thought certain. He said he was just gripped in an unnatural way with this fear.

He said, in a moment, suddenly his eyes were opened. You remember how it was with Elisha and Elisha's servant? Their eyes were opened. And they could see into the spiritual realm that those that are for us are greater than those against us.

His eyes were opened just for a moment. He said he saw angels hovering about two feet off the ground all around him. He said none of them were looking at him.

He said they totally encircled him going outward, crowd of them all the way around. He said every one of them was looking away from him as though they were looking to the horizons. He said they were up on top of the buildings.

He said there was like an overpass somewhere. They were up there. He said he saw it just for a moment and then it was gone.

But he's able to describe it. And he said it was like they were all watching. They were watching.

And they were looking away from him. They were surrounding him, but they were watching. Their eyes were on the horizons.

And you think about this. We have an apostle inspired of God who comes along and says, Christians, you better stay alert. We have an enemy.

This enemy is not indiscriminate. He doesn't march through Long Island just destroying everything in his path. Scripture says that he has one specific people in his target.

It is those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus Christ. His enemy is very singular. His fury is very focused.

And it is intent. And his time is short. And if he can't damn you, I'll tell you he wants to.

If you go and look at the history, especially with the Germans, you look at stories about the Germans and the British and the Americans and the Germans, there are many times when mercy was shown. And yes, you can even find stories where we showed mercy to the Japanese and they showed mercy to us. But we have an enemy.

It knows no mercy. He spares none. He wants to damn you.

He wants to take your children to hell. He wants to destroy you to the uttermost. And he looks for every possibility to do that.

And if he can't damn you, the second best thing he can do is just lull you to sleep. He does not fear your Calvinism. He fears the living God.

He fears when God arises. And you know the kind of people that God works through? The kind of people that are ever so weak, but hear these promises? Hear Christ saying, go and make disciples. Lo, I am with you to the end of the age.

I'm with you. You go. But Lord, we're weak.

Oh, I feel it. Prone to wander. Lord, I feel it.

Help, oh God, this weak endeavor. I feel it. But they were just as weak back then as we are.

You ever looked at Peter and Thomas and James and John? They're made of the same stuff. But they came down out of that upper room in the power of the Spirit of God. And they went forth.

Yes, and a lot of them lost their lives. But they turned the world upside down. In all their weakness, they turned the world upside down.

We need people in our churches that are thinking crazy thoughts. Like how can we get into the prisons? How can we start an orphanage? You say, oh, the government won't allow it. Government's against us.

You have God with you. Go do the impossible. We serve the God of the impossible.

We pray to the God Who has expressly set Himself forth in Scripture as able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond what we ask or think. I would say this, go forth in the power of God. Seek to be a people who in that day, the Lord says, I sat in the darkness on Long Island and you brought the light to me.

Lord, when did we do that? Be that people. I sat there in prison and you came to me. I was a stranger.

I was a stranger to God and to His people. And you came and you found me. You want to be that people because those are the people on the right hand side.

You want to be those people. Let your great doctrine lead you to take it out and share it and spread it. Don't keep it to yourselves.

You see, if you keep it to yourself, you're like the parable there that we didn't give a whole lot of time to in Matthew 25. You're like the guy who buries what he's been given in the ground. And when the Lord comes, it's not enough that you had the talent.

You have to go trade with it. Go trade with what God's given you, brethren. Go trade.

We have an enemy. This battle, it's real. Hell is real.

Eternal torment is real. Men are being damned righteously because of their sins. But there's a Savior and you know who He is.

And they don't. They don't know what they've done. You know what they've done.

They've raised their fist against the Almighty and it's an infinite crime. And they're not good. They're not good.

And they don't know it. Because they're in the dark and they're ignorant. But you know.

Father, I pray, please help us. We do pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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