

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Preparing For COVID-19

By Micky Galloway

Amos 4:6-13, *“And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmer-worm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have overthrown (cities) among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; (and) because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth – Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name.”*

In times of crisis, there are valuable lessons to be learned. With long lines in stores and what appears to be “panic buying” in view of the dangers of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), people are terrified and making preparations for what is called a Pandemic (an infectious disease that is contagious and spreads throughout the world). There is however, a greater concern that has plagued mankind since the beginning ... SIN. While we research for a cure and prevention to COVID-19, God has provided the solution we so desperately need to resolve the problem with sin (Rom. 3:23-26)! Wouldn't it be marvelous if all were seeking salvation from sin as much as they are shopping for products at Costco?

In Amos 4:12, God said to His people, *“Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; (and) because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”* They had failed to respond to God's chastisements to get them to repent. He had sent famine upon them (verse 6), drought (verses 7-8), pestilence (verses 9-10), and even wars (verses 10-11); *“yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah”* (verses 6, 8-11). The time of God's patience had expired, opportunity was no more, therefore they must prepare to meet God's wrath.

We often sing a song taken from the words of the prophet, *“Prepare To Meet Thy God,”* written by James Henry Stanley (1869-1954), as an invitation song encouraging someone to make the necessary preparations to meet God in judgment. The song is said to be from a sermon by J.F. Haley, presented in July 1909. Originally, there were four verses.

The words of the song are quite sobering:

The first verse is an invitation. “Careless soul, why will you linger, Wand'ring from the fold of God? Hear you not the invitation? O prepare to meet thy God.” One who is careless is one who doesn't consider the consequences. Lot is an example of such a man. Without considering the consequences he pitched his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:12). All Lot could see was the well-watered plain of the Jordan. He then moved into the city (Gen. 14:12). He was told that this wicked city was to be destroyed (Gen. 19:13). The angels urged Lot to *“hurry”* out of the city saying, *“Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city but he lingered”* (Gen. 19:15-16 NKJV). What carelessness! Even then, the angels took him by the hand and *“brought them forth, and set him without the city.”* Knowing the awful consequences of sin, why do we linger? Will you not hear the invitation, to urgently leave sin and its awful

consequences? Jesus said, ***“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*** (Matt. 11:28). John wrote, ***“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come”*** (Rev. 22:17).

The second verse is a provoking question. “Why so thoughtless are you standing While the fleeting years go by, And your life is spent in folly? O prepare to meet thy God.” How can we stand idly by, as if we had a perpetual lease on life while the years go passing by? James said, ***“What is your life? For ye are a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”*** (Jas. 4:14). The Psalmist said, ***“The days of our years are threescore years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years; yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; for it is soon gone, and we fly away”*** (Psa. 90:10). We might live seventy or eighty years, yet life is soon gone. The song under consideration expresses that some spend their life in “folly.” Webster defines “folly” as a “lack of good sense or normal prudence and foresight.” How foolish to spend a lifetime sowing to the Devil, and then praying for a crop failure. With certainty we are warned, ***“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life”*** (Gal. 6:7-8). The wisdom writer declared, ***“fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”*** (Eccl. 12:13-14).

The third verse issues an earnest plea. “Hear you not the earnest pleadings Of your friends that wish you well? And perhaps before tomorrow You’ll be called to meet your God.” Your friends who care for your soul, plead (beg) with you to obey the gospel. The apostles who had been given the ***“word of reconciliation”*** pleaded on behalf of Christ that those who would hear the saving gospel would be ***“reconciled to God”*** (2 Cor. 5:19-20). In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul emphasizes the urgency of obedience, ***“Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*** Felix, known as a corrupt and evil man, heard Paul preaching about ***“righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come”*** (Acts 24:25). Though he was ***“terrified,”*** he answered, ***“Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.”*** Perhaps we do not realize the pressing importance of our obedience. The rich fool of Luke 12:16-20 thought he had prepared for ***“many years”*** (vs. 19). But God said unto him, ***“Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee ...”*** (vs. 20). He did not have a tomorrow! He was called to meet God today!

The fourth verse gives a stern warning. “If you spurn the invitation Till the Spirit shall depart, Then you’ll see your sad condition, Unprepared to meet thy God.” To “spurn” is more than to reject! It is to reject with disdain or contempt (Webster). This was the reaction of the Jews to the teaching of Jesus that resulted in His crucifixion. When the message of remission of sins (Acts 13:38) was preached in Antioch of Pisidia many of ***“the Jews were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul and blasphemed.”*** Paul said, ***“It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”*** (Acts 13:45-46). They had pushed away, repudiated, rejected, and refused the gospel (cf. Thayer). Certainly, the time will come when it will be too late. ***“It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this (cometh) judgment”*** (Heb. 9:27). Then, we would give a thousand lifetimes to have just one more opportunity to obey the gospel. “Then, you’ll see your sad condition, unprepared to meet thy God.”

The chorus: “Careless soul, O heed the warning, For your life will soon be gone; O how sad to face the judgment, Unprepared to meet thy God.” Yes, we are to appeal to sinners on the basis of the love of God and the sacrifice of Christ. Paul said, ***“But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Rom. 5:8). Yet the same writer said, ***“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men”*** (2 Cor. 5:11 KJV). The word ***“terror”*** (phobos) suggests fright, even panic.

Yes, the multitudes are panic driven to purchase items deemed necessary to prepare for COVID-19. Yet, have no consciousness of the devastating and eternal consequences of sin. Let us plead with those who are lost to be terrified of facing the judgment “unprepared to meet thy God.” – ***Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin***, March 15, 2020. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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