

Teaching E-mail 56

It's Time For The Righteous To Take A Stand (Part 2)

"And Jesus died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15)

(December 3, 2011)

Introduction

In our previous Teaching E-mail we discussed how the Spirit of Christ used Jonathan Edwards' sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, to bring many to repentance in the mid-1700s. Later in this email you'll learn about one of Edwards' contemporaries, George Whitefield, and his effect on the Great Awakening. Whitefield's down-to-earth style appealed to the common man. He often preached outdoors, beyond the confines of the normal religious establishment—on one occasion addressing over 30,000 people using only the powerful voice God gave him! His popularity and effectiveness, however, aroused animosity from many of the clergy, who feared lost tithe revenue.

The spiritual and moral decadence now plaguing this nation follows a pattern recalled by history. For example, having survived the devastating first World War, people in the "Roaring 20s" wallowed in self-pursuit, riotous debauchery and profligate spending. Sound familiar? Yet during that period which preceded the economic collapse of the Great Depression, God raised up voices to lead people to repentance. Sadly, relatively few had ears to hear, looking instead to the government and the New Deal in which to misplace their trust. Has anything changed?

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards;

*not many were influential;
not many were of noble birth"*
(1 Corinthians 1:26).

The Hellenist notion that only the accomplished and learned are used by God to minister was heavily propagated by Emperor Constantine in the early 4th century. And once the world slipped into the Dark Ages of illiteracy and ecclesiastic political control, the clergy class found itself ever-more deeply entrenched in positions of influence. Most of today's clergy are seminary-trained, steeped in Bible knowledge and the rhetoric that equips them to sermonize in a boldly entertaining manner. Yet as Scripture makes clear, those our God uses to represent Him have far different attributes.

Our Lord recruits those who are humble of heart, who depend on His grace and power, who stay repentant. Their whole way of life is totally committed to Him. As Paul reiterates, that way of life is a pattern set apart from the world's values and ways—a way of living that's readily seen by those around that person and is an example that others can emulate (see Hebrews 13:7).

Today's Hellenist-influenced clergy don't routinely interact with those in their congregation throughout the week. Thus they can't reproduce a Kingdom way of life through daily example to those for whom they're responsible. Beyond the *lack of interpersonal role-modeling*, many men in particular who occupy pews are *intimidated* by their professionally-trained clergyman. They're often reluc-

tant to intentionally pursue how Father would use their own lives in devoted Kingdom service. Hindered by fear of failure and feeling ill-prepared, *you* may be among those who can't believe that Father wants to use your life to extend His kingdom and bring Him praise! Man's worldly criteria for ministering have replaced God's approved character essentials.

We encourage you to study the life of Gladys Aylward, a humble yet spiritually stalwart 20th century missionary to China. Deemed unsuitable by mission agencies, her drive to reach the lost propelled her to make her own way by land to Asia. This "weak, unqualified parlor maid" was used by God to lead a multitude of children to safety during the Japanese invasion of China. *"The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Right after we sent our last Teaching E-mail, Mike was encouraged by the late David Wilkerson's latest letter, *A Passion for Christ*. In it he writes, *"In every dark and evil age a person rose up with fervent desire to obey and to fulfill His work."* Today we believe that Father purposes to raise up those with singleness of heart and spirit in the name of Jesus. But first they must free themselves from clergy intimidation that leaves them feeling unworthy and unqualified.

We've previously written about the need for biblical apostles, prophets and evangelists who will equip followers of Jesus through the unity of His Spirit to make Him known to an unbelieving world (see **Teaching E-mail 54**. *Isn't It Time That Jesus BE Your Lord?*; and, **The Way of the Lord 20**. *Your Relationship With Your Lord Jesus*). The heart motive in each of these Spirit-empowered anointings is a person

filled with love who is wholly committed to *obey God's Word* and *fulfill His purposes*. Because of that devotion, this individual can be used by our Lord to operate beyond a local faith community and minister in various other locales.

Right now in the middle of such overwhelming spiritual and moral darkness, our God would use those He has anointed as apostle, prophet or evangelist to bring this nation to repentance. You may be one He wants to use. It's all based on the intensity of your love for Him and your willingness to obey no matter what the cost.

Consider our forefathers in the faith: Jonathan and David turned the tide of war by their devotion to the God of Israel. Abraham became a father of all nations because of his obedience and trust in that same God. Noah by faith spent a century obediently constructing an ark of safety for his family. And what wonderful change spread across pagan Nineveh when the reluctant Jonah finally arrived to tell them to repent!

You won't be able to see yourself as a beloved slave and friend of Jesus until you're convicted enough to take a stand for His name's sake. It's after you've taken your stand that you're able to perceive what He can do through you. Your loving trust prompts an obedience by which our Lord's power is released. If that hasn't been your joyous experience, then it's your time!

"If My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land"

(2 Chronicles 7:14).

We've noted before that this nation is not in an *economic* crisis, but rather in a *spiritual and moral* one. As mentioned earlier, such widespread lawlessness has overtaken this nation in centuries past. God then raised up men and women of conviction whose holy fear of Him and earnest desire to see His Kingdom extended on earth overrode all other considerations. Again we'd like you to ponder some timely quotes from the book *Forged in Faith* by Rod Gragg (New York: Howard Books, 2010).

By 1740, "**prosperity, security, and the distractions** of a progressive culture had dulled Christianity in the Colonies... and the American people had grown lukewarm in their faith." In England, young George Whitefield "earned national celebrity for his preaching. **His fellow ministers welcomed him initially but came to resent his fervent, emotional style and his insistence that a 'new birth' in Christ was required for salvation.** They also complained that the 'motley throngs' attracted to his preaching **crowded out regular worshippers and siphoned donations** that could have gone to the local church...

"In the face of all the criticism, he remained supremely confident of his calling as an evangelist. **When pastors complained that his preaching made their members overly impassioned in the name of Christ, he cited it as evidence that many ministers needed to be born again.** 'The reason why congregations have been so dead,' he frankly pronounced, 'is because dead men preach to them.' ... 'I am sorry to see you here,' said an Anglican minister who encountered Whitefield on a city street. 'So is the devil,' Whitefield retorted."

He often preached open-air in America, and following preaching in Philadelphia, "**daily life in America's largest city was dra-**

matically altered... Whitefield saw the unprecedented response as the **work of God's Holy Spirit.**" (pp. 107-109, emphasis added)

What was "awakened" was a fervent hunger to know God and to live in ways that pleased Him!

"The Great Awakening left Colonial America awash in a **flood of faith.** 'Those awakened were much given to **reading in the Holy Scriptures** and other good books... The **subjects of discourse** almost always, when any of them were together, were the matters of religion and **great concerns of their souls!**'...[D]aily life throughout the Thirteen Colonies clearly reflected a **renewed biblical perspective.** The Great Awakening **transformed the hearts and minds** of the American people... Rich and poor alike enthusiastically read the Bible and Christian classics such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* **On the streets and in the fields, average Americans knowledgeably discussed various theological topics.**" (pp. 112-113, emphasis added)

As with today, many were those who were comfortable with a form of religion that emphasized intellectual teaching but demanded neither life change by the Spirit nor reliance on biblical truth.

"Despite the obvious benefits of the Great Awakening, **opposition to it continued...** More than a few **Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers** rejected its emotionalism, mass assemblies, and **emphasis on a personal 'born again' experience in Christ...** Revival supporters became known as 'New Lights.' Opponents were called 'Old Lights.' **Churches divided into New Light and Old Light congregations.** The revival also created broader distinctions within America's Protestant denominations. **Those who held to a belief in the authority of Scripture, the Trinity, the deity of**

Christ, and the need for a ‘new birth’ salvation experience would become known as Evangelicals... In response to the Great Awakening, many Old Lights began to refer to themselves as theological ‘Liberals’ and developed a distinctive identity within American Christianity." (p. 114, emphasis added)

Relinquishing the reins of control proved to be a step too far for most established clergy who feared shaking up the order of the day. In retaliation, these close-spirited individuals made sure the Bible believing faced stiff punishment.

"The Great Awakening also defined political distinctions in Colonial America. Many **Old Lights worried that the revival threatened the existing social order and political establishment.** Most troubling to them, a modern Colonial scholar would note, was **'the evangelical stress on a common humanity in which each soul, however humble, communed directly with God on the same equal plane as everyone else.'** Some Old Lights were convinced that the revival's **Bible-based teaching that everyone was equally valuable to God** encouraged 'republican and mobbish principles and practices.' In some places, **Old Light pastors encouraged sympathetic civil authorities to enact restrictions on revival activities and supporters.** Fearful of challenges to the established order, many Colonial officials were more than willing to comply. **Old Light sentiment persuaded the Connecticut legislature to pass a series of laws designed to repress the revival.** Itinerant ministers who preached without an invitation from established clergy could be **fined and expelled** from the colony. **Another law intended to discourage preaching by revival converts required ministers to have college degrees.** New Light pastors were **jailed** for officiating at weddings and were forbidden to conduct baptisms." (p. 115, emphasis added)

"The American Revolution would be a genuine quest for liberty that was **fueled, disciplined, and restrained by the rule of law**—the Higher Law of the Bible...The extraordinary revival that Edwards and Whitefield had helped launch left Colonial Americans with an **unprecedented unity**, a common appreciation for their **God-given, inalienable rights**, a motivation to **resist abusive authority**, and an established national conscienceness—all based on the **Judeo-Christian worldview.**" (p. 118, emphasis added)

Almost everywhere you look today people are protesting in the streets. Many are demonstrating against the greed that is bringing about the downfall of this nation's economy, but they don't know how to bring the greedy to repentance. We're praying for the day authentic followers of Christ come to their senses and realize they have the only Light that can save this nation. Isn't this the work of obedient trust our Father has commanded each of the children He has rescued in Christ: *"Open their eyes to **turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by trust in Me**"* (Acts 26:18,NKJV).

Too many of those who could be used by Father to change the sinful course of this nation are shrinking from their call and displeasing God (Hebrews 10:39). Jesus has called each and every one of His own to carry out His command:

*"Going [as you go], **disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all things I have commanded you. And I am with you all the days until the completion of the age**"* (Matthew 28:19,20, literal).

Have *you* been determined to fulfill the assignment of Jesus wherever He has planted you: making disciples and teaching them everything He commands, bringing them out of darkness through repentance so they too can love and serve Him as Lord? Ask yourself if *you* are living in the Light. To *belong* to the Light you must be full of light so that others can see Him in you (Luke 11:33-35).

You may be the apostle, prophet or evangelist the Lord needs at this time to go forth in His name. From His perspective you may be the one *available to serve*. Don't cut yourself short. If you knew our own life story, you'd realize that "wise and learned" certainly wouldn't describe us as a couple! Our Father told us that He recruited us because we were **repentant**, and that as long as we remained such He would continue to use us.

This is our prayer for you:

*"That **your love may abound** more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to **discern what is best** and may be **pure and blameless** until the day of Christ, **filled with the fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God"* (Philippians 1:9-11).