

## Three Years Since September 11, 2001

This coming Saturday will mark the third anniversary of the attack of terrorism upon American soil that launched a world-wide war effort led by our president and this country. Between the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, and a rural field in Pennsylvania we had just over 3,000 casualties. Much ground has been obtained. Three-fourths of the leadership of al-Qaeda has either been captured or become a casualty themselves. In Iraq, they have not found the weapons of mass destruction en-mass, but they have found the capability and tell-tale signs of wrong doing in weaponry. Sadly, they have found no less than four hundred thousand graves of mutilated and tortured bodies of innocent people, victims of the now defunct Saddam Hussein regime. Much more ground needs to be claimed and for this victory we pray.

Charles Jones says, "I am learning" rather than "I have learned," because life is a learning process. If we get to the point where we think we have learned it all, we will cease to learn and grow. Therefore, let me share with you three principles we are learning since September 11, 2001.

### **I. Live prepared to die.**

I was walking out the door to go to chapel to speak to hundreds of teen-agers in Tallahassee, Florida, when the first plane hit. As I stood up to speak we received word that the second plane flew into the remaining tower in New York. The crowd was serious as I spoke of giving our all to Christ in view of the brevity of life and the need now in our country. We had a wonderful response and revival atmosphere.

I couldn't fly back to Houston. I had to drive a rent-a-car. As I drove back home I was happy to be in the center of the will of God. Everyone remembers where they were on 9-11. The one thing we are certain of is that life is not certain. *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that"* (James 4:14, 15). In light of this fact, we should live prepared to die. *"...Prepare to meet thy God..."* (Amos 4:12).

### **II. Pray with power.**

God's Word says, *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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"* (II Chronicles 7:14). In the past three years we have done some introspection, but it is time to keep searching, turning from any wicked way and pray. Pray with power! The Bible says, *"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly..."* (James 5:17). In Greek the phrase "pray earnestly" is from the Greek word "proseuche," which is translated, *a place set apart or suited for the offering of prayer; a place in the open air where the Jews were wont to pray, outside the cities, where they had no synagogue; such places were situated upon the bank of a stream or the shore of a sea, where there was a supply of water for washing the hands before prayer.* In the ancient custom of washing of hands we are reminded of Psalm 24:3, 4, which says, *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart."* Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for counting on their outward cleansing to the neglect of inward cleansing, but the symbolism of the cleansing of the hands is very important. In America we need to be mindful that "praying earnestly" means being right with God inwardly so that our outward world may be effectually affected. *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16). "Effectual fervent" is from the Greek word: "energeo" which means *to put forth power*. If you will notice the similarity in this Greek word and our word "energy," which comes from this root word, we understand it is the prayer coupled with power that changes the course of history and is inextricably connected with God's sovereignty and destiny.

### **III. Trust in God.**

It is embedded upon our currency and 9-11 has helped inscribe it upon our hearts. "I was really down," said John Garvey, who teaches religion at Xavier School in New York City. "I had the 'whys.'" But then, he continued, that a student whose father, a firefighter, had died in the conflagration came to see him. The boy had recently had an encounter with the members of his father's engine company, and they had filled him with immense pride in who he was and where he came from, and then this confidence communicated itself to his despairing teacher. "My presumption was, I had to take care of this boy, swallow my grief and be there for him. But he reminded me," said Garvey, in wonderment and gratitude, "that we had to go, do, act, stop the 'what ifs and deal with what is.' He was the voice of hope, love, and caring." After reading this, I was impressed with the statement of God to Moses, "*And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD*" (Exodus 10:2). God is the great "I AM THAT I AM." We can get past our past and deal with whatever tomorrow holds because God is more than the "what is," He is the "I Am."

One of the great preachers from the Victorian era, Dr. A.C. Dixon said, "A dear friend of mine who was quite a lover of the chase, told me the following story: 'Rising early one morning,' he said, 'I heard the baying of a score of deerhounds in pursuit of their quarry. Looking away to a broad, open field in front of me, I saw a young fawn making its way across, and giving signs, moreover, that its race was well-nigh run. Reaching the rails of the enclosure, it leaped over and crouched within ten feet from where I stood. A moment later two of the hounds came over, when the fawn ran in my direction and pushed its head between my legs. I lifted the little thing to my breast, and, swinging round and round, fought off the dogs. I felt, just then, that all the dogs in the West could not, and should not capture that fawn after its weakness had appealed to my strength.' So is it, when human helplessness appeals to Almighty God."

*"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works"* (Psalm 73:28).

Let us continue to pray for loved ones of 9-11 and the loved ones of Afghanistan and Iraqi wars still smarting under the loss of a child, parent or friend. And let us not forget to pray for our troops.

- Pastor Pope -

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