

ARE WE PREPARED?

II Chronicles 16:9—For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

Luke 17:20-21—Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you [in your midst].”

Luke 18:1-8—Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Avenge me of my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’”

Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

Shall we pray:

Our Father, we want to come to You and thank You for the conference and for the brother's exhortation to us. We want to draw close to You in this time. We do pray that in a true separation before You that we might see our situation and find our hearts linked up with Yours as You are about to change the epoch in these days. We thank You for every heart, every person here, young and old—some with much experience of You and some just entering in. We thank You that Your kingdom is such that by Your gospel You allow us to push in by the multitudes into Your saving kingdom and discover our wonderful Lord. May it be that all of us sense the nearness of Your presence, so near, even at the doors and coming for us. Do help us, Lord, to sense and be taught by Your Holy Spirit, who brings to us the depths of God and teaches us these things and produces in us that blessed hope that spurs us forward to purify ourselves even as He is pure. We commit this time into Your hands, asking for Your help and Your light, even refresh us as many have travelled here, going through rain and difficulties. Do bless them for their coming. Now open our hearts and minds to know more of Your will. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

GOD IS LOOKING FOR THE FINAL LINK

God is looking for a link. I keep looking for that in the Bible and I cannot find exactly those words. What a wonderful thought! The kingdom of God is at hand; things are so very close. The Scripture on the brochure is “look up, your redemption draws nigh.” It is time that we started looking up because of all the things we see around us. The Son of Man is at the door. There is this vital final linkage on earth that brings about the return of our Lord. This is a great mystery.

We know that no one knows the day or hour of the Lord's return, not even the angels, but only the Father in heaven. We do not know when He is going to come back, and His return will be a sovereign act. But somehow He desires it to be linked up with something that happens on earth. We know that He can do anything, whatever He wants, however He wants. We know our God is Sovereign, but isn't it interesting how down through history, He wants to have human, sanctified, righteous vessels, involved in these epoch changes.

God is looking for a link. There is another epoch to be changed. We have been in this age of grace. And even though the kingdom of heaven has been on earth, it has been here in a mystery. The Pharisees asked: "When is this kingdom coming; we do not see it." How blind the Pharisees were; they were standing in front of the King but they could not see the kingdom. He said, "In this time the kingdom will not be manifested as one day soon it will be. Don't say there it is; here it is! There is the link." Jesus said, "Behold the kingdom of God is in your midst."

I think we can apply that today and say that even though we are living in this kingdom mystery, it is here, but it is observable only to those who have eyes of faith and they see where two or three are gathered in His precious name, there He is in the midst. The kingdom is here, but it is in a mystery. One day it will be fully manifested. But there needs to be this vessel, this final linkage for Him to be satisfied in order to return. All things are now ready.

There are many signs governing His return in the Gospels, Revelation, Thessalonians; there are many places in which we see signs of the King's soon return. But this vital link He is looking for is not a sign or event but a people. He is not satisfied just with the lightning that is shooting through the sky and then the Son of Man comes. No, He is looking for a bride, this ready vessel.

I will be sharing on this matter of John the Baptist, but it is not so we can gain the history of this man. Peter said in his second epistle as he shares and brings to remembrance of the soon return of our Lord: "I want you to consider how we should live in holiness, in godliness, as we await and hasten the coming of the day of God." Here again we come against this tremendous mystery. Even though the sovereignty of God will decide when Jesus will come back to this earth, isn't it amazing there is a hastening that can be produced by this epoch-changing ready link, this vessel that will hasten His return. What manner of holy conduct and godliness should we be living as we are waiting for Him to come?

This link is a corporate vessel as we will hear more about in the days ahead. But here is the real issue: If we are going to see this wonderful transition and this epoch change, without the Righteous One, the Messiah coming back to restore His kingdom, we will not see much righteousness in our days. We need His return; our nation needs His return; this world needs His return. It is absolutely necessary.

LINKED TO GOD BY PRAYER

Before we start talking about the link, I want us to consider this matter of being linked to Him ourselves. I want to talk about this in a simple way concerning this matter of prayer as it is presented in this parable in Luke 18. What does it mean to be linked up to Him?

Luke 18:8 says: "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

THE CONDITION OF THE KINGDOM BEFORE HIS RETURN

Here's a question the Lord posed to His disciple, and I suggest to you this is not a rhetorical question. Neither is He trying to evoke self-pity by saying, "When I come back will anyone be here for Me?" No, our Lord is not like that. Neither is this question one that can be answered glibly, "Oh sure, sure I will be here." I say that because if we see the context of this parable, it actually comes at the end of an extensive section that is talking about the days of the return of the Son of Man. And He is posing a deep question to them after giving them a sober assessment of the condition of things just before His return. In chapter 17, when the Pharisees asked Him about the kingdom, He said this kingdom is not observable. Then He goes on to talk to His own disciples as we see in Luke 17:22 about the days of the coming of the Son of Man. He talks to them about some very sobering things—what the condition of the kingdom will be like.

He talks about the days of the coming of the Son of Man being like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. When we hear these things, for me I often translate it into this: "The condition of the world and the things going on are really going to be bad when He comes." But Jesus' burden here is not about the condition of the world; He is talking about the condition of the kingdom just before His return. That is a sobering and powerful thought.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven. Since the announcement of John and Jesus' coming to earth, the kingdom of heaven has come to earth. There is a great conflict going on during the time from His first coming till His second coming; for the kingdom of heaven is coming in through great spiritual conflict. Those who are entering the kingdom are doing so through violence.

However, in this kingdom, as it is outwardly viewed, we see not only wheat but tares. Some people say that the wheat is the kingdom but the tares are not. No, that is not what Jesus said. The kingdom of heaven is like wheat and tares. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven hidden in a loaf. The kingdom of heaven is like that tree that was planted but was growing screwy and has birds sitting on it. The kingdom of heaven is some kind of mixed mish-mosh of the real and the outward, the professing and the true-hearted, real faith and outward membership. That is what He is talking about when He is talking about the kingdom before His return and the condition it will be in. The kingdom of heaven is the outward and visible view of things which includes, of course, real saints, and also includes, unfortunately, professing saints who are not really Christians but who do Christian things and go to Christian events. There are even some Christian churches which are not Christian but are involved in Christian activities or Christian missions. They are Christian in name but a whole lot of leaven is in there.

Perhaps the kingdom also includes the outward view of Israel, the Jews. Who are the real Jews? Jews of faith? All Jews genealogically? What is involved here? In that day when Jesus was talking to the people, He was speaking to Jews who all thought they were part of the kingdom. He said, "Now you really want to know what the kingdom looks like? When the seed gets scattered, only one out of four produces something. Despite the different ground and all the things that happen, strangely life gets choked out or burnt up or the enemy snatches things away." That is what goes on in the great conflict of this kingdom. There are great forces at work, both good and evil, and just before His return, the assessment outwardly looks rather grim.

As Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven in the last days, we read this in Matthew 24: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended [Isn't that terrible? Kingdom people offended?], and will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (vv. 9-13).

There will be some sorting out in this kingdom. When the Lord comes, the wheat will be separated from the chaff. There will be the great casting of the net, and the bad is thrown out while the righteous will rejoice. That day is coming. But what do we do with wheat and tares? The Lord says, "Leave it alone, the Lord will prove what is real and what is not."

The first problem of the kingdom is that we cannot just go around saying who is in and who is out. There is something deeper going on. We know just before His return things will look like what we are reading.

AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH AND LOT

When we read Luke 17:25, He mentions and clarifies for us some things that seem to be awfully contemporary. He says, "As it was in the days of Noah so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man." Just before the coming of the Son of Man it will be as in the days of Noah. It is interesting that He put it that way. He did not say "as it was in the days before the flood" because as bad as things were, God looked down and saw righteous Noah. There is your link, the faithful one, the one praying, the one crying out. But what were the rest doing? They were eating, drinking, and marrying. You will probably say: "What is so bad about that. It sounds like today. Aren't we supposed to eat, drink and get married?" Here is the point. In the days of Noah, even in the kingdom, though Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, warned of the coming judgment and exhorted the men to get in the boat before it was too late, they all laughed at him. "Let's go out for a good meal first; let's get married and make a million dollars, then we will get in your boat, Noah." The problem is not that they were eating and drinking, but they had no conscience whatever. They mocked Noah, the preacher of righteousness, but that was God's testimony at that time. Noah spoke the truth but the rest did not heed. Their consciences were seared. They were men of flesh with the intention of their hearts being evil continually. God said, "My Spirit will not strive with flesh any longer." Noah told mankind of this and mankind ignored it. One day, the door shut, the rain came, it was all over, and just like that people learned the truth. As it was in the days of Noah so it will be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.

Then in Luke 17 He says, "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" (vv. 18-29).

The days of Lot seem to have a contemporary application to us. As Peter puts it in II Peter, even though Lot dwelt in Sodom, he was vexed and oppressed because these men were unprincipled. These men were completely corrupt and perverted in their lusts and they despised authority. What is Lot doing there? Why is Lot so caught in the thorns of worldliness, care and deceitfulness of riches, and the fact that it is a better plain down there, a better pasture for his animals, and he is liable to make more money in Sodom. So he was there and he

was vexed day and night. Before God could bring down the judgment, He had to extricate Lot by angelic intervention, and then He sent the rains of fire down. So will it be. I do not know, but this is striking to me as a picture of what is happening in the kingdom as it appears in these days. There are so many Christians in whom you can just see the thorns of cares and riches. They are caught; they are part of it. Thick as thieves in Sodom. What a disaster if judgment came and they were not extricated somehow! Part of our intercession, as it was with Abraham, should be to ask God that if there be any righteous men, deliver them and save them, speak to them and say, "Get you out from this place and be separated before destruction." But such is the condition. It should be sobering when Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"

LOSING OUR SELF-LIFE

As He continues, He talks about in the day where there are those who know or feel they are in the kingdom: "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left" (vv. 33-36).

What is He saying? There will be many so-called Christians who never laid their lives down for the Lord. They never took up the cross, and they preserved their lives. When things get bad, we all get in this mode of self-preservation. I do not care what happens to my city; I am going to survive. We build a little moat around our house and make sure we have cable and all the basic necessities. Somehow we are going to survive. We are survivors but not laid-down-lifers. Then the surprising day comes when suddenly in the field, one is taken and one is left; at the mill, one is taken and one is left. What has happened? You preserved your life and now you have lost it. It is a very sobering picture.

It so bothered the disciples when they heard what Jesus said: "Just before the coming of the Son of Man, it will be like the days of Noah; there will be a sudden rain. Just as it was in the days of Lot, there will be a sudden fire. Just as it was with these self-preserving Christians, there will be a taking away suddenly and some are left." This statement of Jesus was so strong that it forced its way onto the minds of the disciples and they asked Him this interesting question in Luke 17:37: "Where, Lord? Where is this going to happen? What field? Jerusalem? Judea? Babylon? Where is this sudden judgment going to come to?" Sometimes the disciples were geographically limited in their understanding of spiritual things, but I think Jesus basically said: "Look up! Do you see those vultures gathering? They are gathering over all that is corrupt and they are going to come down to have a meal very soon." So it is hard for us to judge when all of this is going to happen. Nobody can say if we are at the nadir of things or things will get worse. Let's look up and see that our redemption is drawing nigh; never mind those vultures. Whatever is corrupting here on earth has nothing to do with you. Now I know some versions say eagles. But we know from Matthew 24 that it is a corpse, not a body; therefore, this is a body that is a corpse in decay. In Hebrew I think they have the same word for eagle and vulture. However, eagles like live bait, and vultures like stuff already rotted. I believe these are vultures that gather overhead for the feast of rottenness that is going on upon this earth.

THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

We will consider this question the Lord asks: “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” I believe the answer to this is in the parable in Luke 18. Jesus is basically saying, “Heed this parable.” What is going on in these last days? I do not know if your Bible version has a title for this parable but I want to give it my own title. I know the proper English says this is the parable of the importunate widow. I suppose it means a very stubborn widow. We know women can be that way, but it is all about her and her persistence which paid off in the end. So we can call this the parable of the importunate, persistent, stubborn widow. Some actually call it the parable of the unjust judge because Jesus said, “Hear what the unjust judge said.” But if you look deeper and get to the end of the parable, you see what Jesus is driving at. Yes, He is talking about praying and not fainting, but here is what the parable is really about. This is the parable of the unceasing cry of the elect for righteousness.

Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily” (vv. 6-8a).

THE WIDOW IS GOD’S ELECT IN THE LAST DAYS

I believe the point is quite obvious when you look at it. Do you know who that widow is? It is God's elect in the last days. They have no other recourse except to cry to heaven for righteousness. The judges are unjust. She cannot go to the guy unless she bribes him. He is not interested in justice anymore, so things have decayed around her. She has only one recourse—persistence, crying out. This is a parable of the elect crying out. I believe this has something to do with the return of the Lord because in the last section it says that He will avenge them speedily. When the elect cry out day and night with one voice and one cry, there is an effect upon the Lord that makes Him answer speedily.

I do believe we are at a juncture in our nation which is going through an identity crisis. From our founding in a strange sort of way by God’s providence, we have been blessed with leaders and people of moral character and Judeo-Christian understanding of things that have been a blessed foundation for this country. Just before the turn into the 1900s a woman wrote the poem, “America! America! God shed His grace on thee.” God has shed His grace on this country and continues to do so by His mercies. However, I wonder if we can pray that prayer anymore. Our country is at such a state of fluidity and moral deconstruction and the foundation seemingly being shaken in so many ways. Will the judges judge justly? Will the executive branch execute with moral fiber and conviction? How about our Senate and Congress? We are in this challenging time where these things are up in the air, and we may be coming to that moment, which most nations are already in, when those who are truly the elect and sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus, are in the minority of opinion and are crying out unto heaven day and night. I wonder if our prayer should not be changed from “God shed His grace on thee” to the prayer of Daniel when he prayed on behalf of all the captives in Babylon and said, “Unto You, Lord, belong righteousness but onto us open shame as it is this day” (9:7). *Unto us open shame as it is this day.*

Many people have decided to come to the United States to find the kingdom of God. Of course, they did not come for money or success or family. Many thought this was paradise but have found that paradise is being shaken. We have for a long time as Christians been lazy and not crying out, and now we find ourselves in a bit of a fool's paradise. I do not know what the majority of opinion is anymore; it is impossible to find out. The polls tell us this and that but who are these people doing the polls. We may be in a whole new era where we no longer have just justice, and we may have to find recourse in heaven as we have never known before. That is just a picture of our country, and I keep looking in the Bible for our country. I have heard various theories, tucked deeply somewhere in Jeremiah. So I do not know how much the United States has to do with the eternal purpose of God. However, one thing it does make us aware of who live in this isolated paradise, and that is the kingdom is in compromise.

I am a pretty optimistic person. I like to smile a lot and hope for the best. But when I travel to different places and I hear and see what is going on in the church today, it deeply grieves my heart—the unrighteousness and the things that are going on in the name of Jesus. There is a corruption and mixture, a compromise that is happening in these days. I do not want to swing out at mega churches or big groups or things like that. Rather, I am looking at us when I see our kingdom condition. I look for certain things.

I know I speak for myself and for the rest of you. I am very thankful that the Lord has given most of us children to raise up. But I wonder where those kids are now. If our life was such a light, why are our kids choosing that halfway light or whatever it is they have chosen? Thank God, some of you have young children. You still have time to raise them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. But still, there is tragedy. There are some sad stories among our own children. When we look about the kingdom in our own midst, do we really see that exclusive allegiance to Jesus in seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness?

WHERE ARE THE YOUNG ONES WHO ARE BEING RAISED UP BY THE LORD?

Then I want to ask a third question: Where are those servants of God who have given up all to serve the Lord? I am very thankful for our brother Stephen. The Lord has given him an amazing longevity and clarity of mind and a burden in his heart. And our dear brother Lance keeps coming across the pond every year and speaking to us. Thank God for that. But where are those brothers that God is raising up right now? Where are those younger ones—full-hearted, fully given to the Lord who know their avocation; but do they know their vocation? Where are they? Such is the state of disrepair in the kingdom. God forbid if lightning struck in this place and killed the first three rows here; we will be dead ducks. I cannot believe that even in the end days that God does not want to raise up workers who understand God's eternal purpose, who have a true vision of what is going on. I am thankful for many who go out even with a limited knowledge and preach the gospel and try to build the kingdom with their best machination. But how about those who really see what is going on?

I believe this is a time where the kingdom is in need of that final link, and that final link is a widow who realizes her only recourse is the Righteous One in heaven, a church that has begun to cry out and be cast upon the Lord for His mercy and righteousness in these days.

It is interesting that whenever the church does in any measure really come together with a single cry that the Lord seems to hear them on one level or another. What does it mean to cry

for righteousness, to find justice against the adversary, to be avenged? What do these things mean? In this parable, the widow is crying out because obviously someone did her wrong, and she cannot seem to get justice so she comes before this unjust judge. But what does that mean for us? The Lord may answer in several ways, but we are hoping for the highest answer.

THE ONES CRYING OUT FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

There are lesser answers and one is this: when we realize the situation and we see the injustice in this world and we begin to cry out, God does do miraculous miracles of deliverance and provision even for the people who are in great distress. Across the world right now, there are Christians who are being persecuted and dying for the Lord. They are crying out. The Syrian Christians are crying out for help because these rebels who are going in and attacking Assad, are bent on killing Christians along the way, and they are crying out for help. It is amazing that when the church gets together and prays in one accord for deliverance for these people, the Lord seems to provide a hedge about these people and provides for them in the most difficult of circumstances. All over the Middle East now there are some persecuted and even tortured Christians crying out for righteousness. The Lord is sending in ravens as provision. Somehow some of them have escaped and others are martyred. It is a difficult time in much of the world. The Far East is not as bright as the government CCTV would have us believe. There are a lot of difficult things going on. People are being persecuted. Folks are being snatched out of their homes, and nobody even knows why. There is a cry of righteousness that goes up. Do we hear it?

Sometimes the Lord makes miraculous provisions and other times the Lord will bring about a revival. We know in the history of the church there have been times when the church has been so distressed and has come to the end of themselves and realized their only recourse was an open heaven and God coming down in righteousness. They so prayed that the Lord decided in His mercy to bring revival to a country that was in sore need. I do not know what needs to happen here in the United States for us to get in sore need, but I think a revival could be an immediate solution to so much of what is going on. And sometimes the Lord does answer in that way.

THE GREATEST PRAYER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS FOR THE LORD TO COME BACK

However, I think the point of this parable is actually something along this line. The greatest prayer for righteousness is not just to be avenged of the injustices we have gone through and for the persecutions we have endured, but the greatest prayer of righteousness is asking for the Righteous One to come back. This is the only way that this righteous cry will truly be answered. Anything short of that, whether revival or an immediate deliverance, is only a temporary solution. Our world is in great need of the King to come back and establish righteousness in this world as was His intention all along. All we see cannot be satisfied. Your heart cannot be satisfied. Your family cannot be satisfied. Your job, position, your life will not have its fullness until our Lord Jesus comes back. He is the Righteous One. Until He comes with His scepter of righteousness, everything else is just warm-ups. Thank God we have been blessed in so many ways; but I wonder sometimes how long we will wait before we cry out.

I heard brother Sparks make a comment on this parable once, and he was speaking on verse 8 where it says he will avenge them speedily. He suggested that if that meant the Lord was going to come back soon just because of the prayers, He should have come back two thousand years ago. Brother Sparks suggested something that was intriguing to me. He said the problem is that the whole church is not yet in that one cry. When the church really comes to this true and known position and we all cry out to Him to please come back, this will be what will be answered speedily. Until we are convinced that there is no other recourse but the Lord in heaven, then we will find some way to get along. Man has an amazing capacity to adjust, doesn't he?

When you think of the story of Israel and how the taskmasters in Egypt kept saying more bricks, more bricks; then no straw, no straw. It got worse and worse, impossible and more impossible. Finally, they cried out, but we do not know how long it took before their cry came before the Lord. How long did it take for the Jews to stop saying, "We can take it; it's okay. The economy will turn around soon enough."

I would mention another Biblical example. How on earth could Lot continue in that city? How long do you stay in a city where everything around you is vile? I am not suggesting that we all flee the city, but there is a spiritual fleeing that the church needs to know more of if we would gather for this one cry. There has to be some final realization that whatever we have is not enough but we need the Lord. In the wonderful mystery of it, when we finally get so desperate and cry out with this one cry, "Oh God, avenge us. Oh God, send Thy Righteous One," we discover that we have joined with the multitudes who are already crying this cry. This is the cry of the link: "Oh, Righteous One, come back."

THERE IS A GREAT CRY GOING OUT BY THE PERSECUTED ONES

In many places all over the world this cry is already going up. Many places are very difficult. We know the blood of the martyrs is crying out from Revelation. We can imagine the blood of all the unborn children is crying out for vindication. All those children who are in slavery, in sex trafficking, are crying out and God hears their cry. All the saints who have gone before, who were witnesses and stood fast and faithful in their day, are crying out as a great cloud of witnesses, because they know what this world can be like when the Messiah returns with His kingdom. There is a great cry already being sounded. It may be that we are the last ones to enter in. I wonder what more it will take for us to realize how much He wants to come, but He is waiting for that cry. I know we can be worked up emotionally about these things, and sing Maranatha every time we go to a meeting, but I am talking about something that is stirring deep within our hearts, an awareness that this cry is not going to go away. In fact, the Lord Jesus is saying that He has given us this parable so we can learn that our position as the link is to be crying out for righteousness. When He hears this one cry from His elect, then He will answer speedily.

I want to end by challenging you to see what the Lord is really doing today. I painted a rather terrible sobering picture. There are great powers at work in this dispensation and powers of evil. The enemy is at work. He is like one of those great frightening tornadoes out in Oklahoma. He comes through. He even comes through churches and fellowships. His centripetal force is so strong it just spins people out in dissipation, disassembly and weakness.

He has got great power. There are great works of darkness that are going on as in the days of Lot and Sodom, and the days of Noah. There is a great outward scattering and destroying that the enemy is doing.

THE GREAT POWER OF GOD WORKING

Here is my challenge. Here is what I would like to ask: Do you feel the greater power of God within you overcoming all of the centripetal forces outwardly? Do you sense that gathering together by the Spirit of God that is working within us? It is our dear brother John who says in this context, "You know that the world lies in the wicked one, but you have overcome the world, even your faith. Greater is He who is within you than he who is in this world." Which of these forces do we concentrate on in the end? Is it those outward forces of dissipation, problems, corruption, compromise, all those things that make us so sad when we see them? Or do we sense this power within—this sanctifying power, this separating power, this preparing power, this readying power, this righteous power, this power to cry out, this power to be God's as we live in this world, to be for God all in all, to be whole-hearted for Him. What a testimony that is in this day! John says, "It is by that abiding life that is within you." How are we going to overcome? How do you overcome a tornado? By God's grace you stand in the eye abiding in His life. Do you sense that power? That is where we should be focusing.

Whatever the enemy is throwing out, we need to be aware of his schemes and things. But the present effect on us effectually is what is preparing His bride. Do you hear when the Spirit speaks? Do you obey when the Word within you gives you a command? Are you linked up in a living way even now? Do you find yourself being joined with saints who are of the same like mind? That is the issue of the link. Or do you sense in yourself dissipation, "I have to get back. I have to come back to the Lord"? Or do you feel the strengthening of the Lord that is within? Who is going to win this tug-of-war anyway? Do you think Satan is going to win or do you think the Lord is going to win? Who is going to be cast out of heaven? Satan is. Who is going to overcome him? These hidden ones here upon earth who have no recourse except the Righteous One in heaven. They overcome by His blood, by their confession of it, and they love not their lives even unto death.

This is one last cry of recognizing what needs to happen in our lives. It is just this kind of awareness of the power within that is growing day by day that enables us to live in this world, however long the Lord wants us to. It will be wonderful if He comes back before the end of this conference, but meanwhile we need to be constituted in such a way inwardly that we know our brothers and sisters from other places are crying out the same cry as we are: "Lord Jesus, we will not take this anymore. This is injustice and is not right. People should not be dragged down into such a place. We feel the pain and we cry out to You, Lord, for righteousness. Only You can rend the heavens and come down and set things right. Oh Lord, how they need to be set right." So much is being done today so glibly, just like as in the days of Noah, despite all the warnings of righteousness and sure judgment to come.

MY PEOPLE WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME

Our gospel of the kingdom is a gospel that involves judgment and the establishment of righteousness. I will be speaking on John the Baptist who came in righteousness and laid the ax to the root of a whole nation of people who thought they were pretty good, certainly better than the rest. By the time John was through with them, they were in the water. That is where we need to start. It starts when God's people who are called by His name, humble ourselves and pray and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways, our own worldliness, and getting those thorns off our lives. Then God hears from heaven and forgives our sins, and heals the land. If revival comes that will be wonderful, but when Jesus comes, that will be glory.

As the hour draws to a close, the Lord is looking for that last stirring, that last prayer, that last request for righteousness. How wonderful it is to be in the kingdom where we pursue first the kingdom and His righteousness. How wonderful to be gathered with people who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Only in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus will that righteousness be fully satisfied. May The Lord help us as we study these various epoch-changing links and realize that He is looking for us to be linked up with Him and crying out to Him in prayer. This is the first position of the link. The epoch-changing link begins in prayer.

Let's pray:

Rise up oh man of God! Have done with lesser things that heart and soul and mind and strength be given to serve the king of Kings. Lord, we can get so absolutely involved in lesser things that we find ourselves not looking up to our redemption that has drawn so nigh and is even now at the door—so close. Lord, would you change our understanding of things. We are thankful for that which has been given us. We are thankful for this country in which we live. We no longer want to take for granted things which even now seem to be perhaps slipping away. We are not here to preserve a country but to pray for a kingdom to come. We pray, Lord, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Oh, hallowed be Thy name, Lord. Thank You, Father, for giving us this opportunity to gather and cry out together, as elect, as righteous ones, as a widow without recourse. You are our recourse. You are our hope. That blessed hope stirs us to pray and seek Your righteous way even while we live upon this earth. May every one of us be in some way a Noah who stands for righteousness and warns with the truth to those around who know nothing of these things. Grant us that when we fellowship together our eye is looking upward to the things you are about to do. Even so, we pray Your will will be done, in Jesus' name.