

I. Prayer

- A. The events of these days shows us like never before that people need the Lord. The world without Christ is in a perilous condition.
- B. Our world is now in a state of war. We can talk and analyze and point the finger of blame.
- C. I however, would like to pray. Let us pray.
 1. Almighty God. We come to you today with hurting hearts and hopeful spirits. You look down upon our world, and you see oceans of people in fear, in pain, and desperately in need of you and of your salvation. You see a world at war, both spiritually and militarily.
 2. Today, we pray to you, Lord God, for peace in Ukraine. Overrule the the hearts of those bent on violence and grasping. Stop the aggressors, and cause them to lay down their arms.
 3. We pray for your powerful protection over every church there. Protect our brothers and sisters. Protect the pastors and their families. Watch over the missionaries, and our own Alliance international workers. Provide for them. Bless them, even in these days of brutality.
 4. We know we are in a great spiritual warfare. That old serpent, the devil, comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. Push him back, Father, with your mighty hand. Win the victory.
 5. Lord, end the bloodshed. Restore the sovereignty of a free people. Come to their aid. Do miracles of grace. Guide our leaders, both political and military. And guide our spiritual leaders too.
 6. Above all, in Ukraine, in Russia, and everywhere, grant that men and women, boys and girls, will come to see their desperate need for the Savior. And then let them hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and find that Savior in him.
 7. In whose name we pray. Amen.

II. Introduction

- A. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine. Left to its self, history always gets worse. Cultures always degenerate. They always devolve. Always moves toward increasing violence, and abuse, perversion, and pain.
- B. "War is the natural state of man," said one philosopher four hundred years ago (Thomas Hobbes, 1600s).
 1. He was right then, and he's right today.
 2. We are at war on the outside because we are at war on the inside.
 3. We are at war on the inside because we are a race of sinners by nature and practice. (James 4:1)
- C. The only force on earth and in heaven that can reverse the chaos of sin is the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- D. And the only force on earth and in heaven that will turn around a whole nation, a whole continent, and even the whole world, is mass salvations, which we call revival.
- E. Today is part five, and my final part (maybe, I think) in this series on Revival.
- F. My talk today... vIt's Time to Gear Up
- G. Suit up. Prepare. Get ready.
- H. Gear up for what? **It's time to gear up to stand up for Christ and the gospel in an increasingly hostile world.**
- I. Here is how we're defining revival:
 1. **Revival is a sudden, unusual, and intense work of God in the Church.**
In revival, God purifies, awakens, and mobilizes his own people.
The awakening in the Church results in a cleansing of culture and in unusually large numbers of people coming to faith in Christ.
- J. I'm saying that it's time to gear up — meaning we need to arm ourselves spiritually to stand up for Christ and the gospel in an increasingly hostile world.
- K. I'd like to use as a case study in revival a familiar biblical account. It's the account of how God brought revival to an extremely hostile culture. And the way he geared up his church was, let's just say, very fishy.

III. An Increasingly Hostile Culture

- A. God told one of his prophets to go to one of the most evil-saturated cultures of his day.
- B. The culture was Assyria. The city is Nineveh. And the prophet was Jonah.
 1. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." (Jonah 1:2)
- C. If you know the story, Jonah didn't want to go. Why?
 1. Because Nineveh, the capitol of the Assyrians, had a nickname.
 2. Nineveh was called "that bloody city" (Nahum 3:1) and they were shoving their wickedness in God's face.
- D. The Assyrians were a brutal nation. Harsh, despotic, and cruel. One known for hanging his enemies on posts, flaying them, and lining city walls with their skins. Another kine is shown in ancient drawings hacking apart the captured enemy alive, dismembering hands and feet. Yet another king bragged about creating so much blood that his horses waded through it like a river.
- E. Truly "the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage" (Nahum 3:1) full of "countless dead bodies" (3:3).
- F. The cruelty of the Assyrians was matched by the cruelty of their gods. About 5,000 of them. The main god was Ashur, who pretty much had no personality.
- G. The Assyrians came against God's people multiple times. If Israel had a nemesis during the day of Jonah, it was the Assyrians.
- H. When God sent Jonah there to preach the gospel, God could not have picked a more brutal, combative, militant, and dangerous place.
- I. And yet God looked beneath the overwhelming wickedness of these people and saw their desperate need of salvation. So he sent the gospel packaged in a prophet named Jonah.

- J. But Jonah was disobedient. He was disobedient because of his complete lack of concern for the lost thousands of Nineveh. Nineveh was engulfed in spiritual darkness. It was threatened by destruction. But Jonah didn't care. Jonah's apathy and stone cold heart was a tragedy.
 - 1. And I submit to you that the same indifference is no less of a tragedy today.
 - 2. Every Christian knows that there is an eternal destiny of darkness and doom for the lost. We know that sinners are hellbound. Yet there is an appalling lack of concern in the hearts of Christians. We may look from a distance and condemn Jonah for his hard heart, and yet we are apparently just as unconcerned as him.
 - 3. Even worse we sin against more light than Jonah because Christ had not yet come to earth in Jonas day. He had not yet died on the cross. Has not yet been raised from the dead. He's not yet ascended into glory.
 - 4. Do not look down on Jonah. We have a greater call with greater evidence and greater promises than Jonah ever had, and yet we Christians display even more unconcern than him.
- K. So God had to make Jonah willing. He was ready—he knew the Word and knew the Gospel. He was probably an old man at this time. But he just wasn't willing. So God made him willing.
 - 1. God put Jonah in washing machine with an extra bleach bleach cycle. An extra spin cycle too.
 - 2. Until he repented and declared salvation is of the Lord. And then God knocked any remaining superiority out of him through a living parable. God made Jonah see what he really was. He made him a pile of throw up on the beach. That's what you really are, apart from God's salvation. Jonah was ready to deliver that salvation to the Ninevites.
- L. And this is my first reason today why it's time to gear up:
 - 1. **We need to gear up because God revives a ready church.**
 - 2. It could be that the reason there has been no major, national revival in our nation in three lifetimes (for 165 years) — it could be there's no revival because we're not ready for it.
 - 3. We as Christians—we as the Western Church—we are not vessels fit for the Master's use (2 Timothy 2:21). We unleash our inner Jonah, and soften the desperate plight of our unsaved friends, and excuse our lack of prayer and care for their salvation.
 - 4. We are not ready until we are willing, so what will it take to make us willing?
 - 5. A war maybe? The loss of our comforts and security? The death of freedom?
 - 6. When God knocks at the doors of our hearts, he starts gently. But he will knock harder and harder until he gets our attention. I fear that's still a long way off for our nation. But what about you? How hard must he knock?

IV. The World Today

- A. We live in Nineveh. But it is a more sophisticated Nineveh. It is a decadent culture that masks its decadence. It is a polished veneer of human enlightenment covering over the spirit and hostility of Nineveh.
- B. Here is the most defining place in Scripture on the spirit and philosophy of our age:
 - 1. *Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."* (Psalm 2:1-3)
- C. The next verse says the all the nations in the world conspiring together against God doesn't make him nervous one little bit. In fact, God laughs at them.
- D. But something jumped out at me I hadn't seen before.
- E. Notice what the world, the nations, the unbelievers say about God and his truth:
 - 1. **Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.**
- F. That is what the world spirit wants to do with Christians. Make no mistake.
- G. The world isn't out there saying a polite no thanks you to Christianity. They want us broken in pieces. They want the rule and reign of God shattered. They might not say it, but they think it. If they could, they won't just say no to Christianity, they would eradicate it, and all the Christians too.
 - a) **We need to gear up because our culture is no friend of Jesus Christ or his salvation.**
 - 2. Why the rise in atheism? Why the rise in immorality?
 - 3. Those two go together. One you cast off God, you can't help but cast off moral restraint.
 - 4. Julian Huxley, an atheist said, **"The sense of spiritual relief which comes from the rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous."**
 - 5. His brother, Aldous Huxley, who wrote *Brave New World*, took his brother's atheism to its logical conclusion.
 - a) **"I had motives for not wanting the world to have a [divine] meaning... For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation... We objected to the [Christian] morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom."**
 - 6. You've heard that Marx said **"Religion is the opiate of the people..."**
 - 7. I'm telling you today that **"Atheism is the opiate of the immoral."** Atheism creates relativism which gives people an excuse for anything.
 - a) We are living through Culture Wars. And we are living through a Sexual Revolution. And we are living through an age of Anxiety and Nihilism and Armed Conflict because we are living in an age that is violently rejecting the rule and reign of King Jesus.
- H. The world has never been a friend of Christ. They crucified him. They hated Christ then and they hate him today.

V. Christianophobia

- A. In 2015, research was done on the hatred of Christians in America. They called it **Christianophobia**. They asked Americans who where not religious to give their unedited opinions on conservative, Bible-believing Christians. Here are some of those comments: [I warn you, raise your shields; this is unpleasant.]

1. I wish we could start feeding them to lions again, or burn them at the stake.
 2. So many Christians, so few lions.
 3. Kill them all, let their god sort them out.
 4. Scum, with apologies to scum everywhere.
 5. Line them up and shoot them.
 6. I want them all to die in a fire.
 7. I am only too well aware of their horrific attitudes and beliefs, and those are enough to make me see them as subhuman.
 8. Christianity is a disease that must be kept in check.
 9. They should be eradicated without hesitation or remorse. Their only purpose is to damage and inflict their fundamentalist virus onto everyone they come in contact with.
 10. The only good Christian is a dead Christian.
 - a) [So Many Christians, So Few Lions: Is there Christianophobia in the United States, by George Yancey and Davide A. Williamson.]
- B. These are not uneducated street punks. These are grown men and women mostly with Masters and Doctoral degrees occupying positions of influence and power. They run our universities, they control our news outlets, they win elections, and they chart the course for every major institution today.
1. Let us cast off the Christians. Let us utterly shatter the Christian worldview and all the Christians with it.
- C. There is, in the world today—and in many churches today—a thinly veiled irrational hatred of theologically conservative Christians.
1. Try standing up in a state University today and speaking up for Christ.
 2. You don't even have to do that. Just try making the case for traditional marriage, or for the nuclear family.
 3. Or just try suggesting that there is such a thing as truth, or a truth stays true. Or that two plus two equals four and always will.
 4. Or simply suggest that Jesus Christ really lived and died for our sins and rose again and that he's the only way to God. See where that gets you.
 5. Go on social media and say there is an objective basis for right and wrong. Say that morality isn't relative, it's absolute. Make the case that no one can break God's laws; we can only break ourselves against God's laws. See how long before your social media feed is shut down.
 6. And God help the brave Christian who brings up sexual morality. Our culture barely has any remaining concept of sexual morality, and whatever moral boundaries are left are crumbling down before our eyes.
 - a) Argue any position from the biblical playbook, and do it with the utmost respect and love, and you'll be kicked out of school and cancelled from the platform, and called a hater.
 - b) It's hard to find a free exchange of ideas in today's state-run universities, which, ironically, were created to be places for the free and healthy exchange of ideas.
 - c) Every deviant view is tolerated and embraced, while the traditional, biblical Christian worldview is shouted down, kicked out, and cancelled. Let us break their bonds in pieces. The pressures are enormous.
 7. So what do we do with this?
 - a) **It's time to gear up because our own faith will get crushed unless we pack on spiritual muscle and maturity.**
 8. Satan's Plan A is that you would never be born. His Plan B is that you would never be saved. His Plan C is that you would never grow to spiritual maturity. Because if he can get you to be a CHRINO (Christian in name only), you will be neutralized in the great spiritual conflict of the ages.
 9. So that's the plan he's working on you all the time. Wake up. Gear up. Rise up. Do not give in to Satan's pressures. Walk with the Lord. Grow in grace. Be his. Be all in.
 10. Because once you're all in you have your marching orders for the rest of your life:
 - a) **It's time to gear up because God loves lost people and urgently wants them found.**
- D. God loves lost people even if they rebel against him. Even if they shatter every moral law he ever dropped from heaven. Even if they look like and smell like a pile of throw up on the beach.
- E. He loves them today. He will love them tomorrow. He loved them yesterday.
- F. And that is why he loved Nineveh. And that is why he sent Jonah.

VI. Three Revivals

- A. And what did Jonah preach?
 1. *And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"* (Jonah 3:4)
- B. That's the central idea of his preaching. He didn't run around repeating that sentence over and over. No. Every preacher knows that your sermon needs a central idea. It's called the proposition. It's also called "the sermon in a sentence."
 1. So, my sermon in a sentence today:
 - a) **It's time to gear up to stand up for Christ and the Gospel in an increasingly hostile world... because God may just do something remarkable and send revival through us.**
- C. So here's Jonah's sermon in a sentence: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"
- D. This was a hellfire and brimstone sermon, and Jonah, who was ticked off, was the perfect guy to deliver it.
- E. He was preaching on the wrath of God. I can probably give you his expanded outline:
 1. **THE BASIS FOR JUDGMENT: The Evils of the People**

2. **THE REASON FOR JUDGMENT: The Justice of God**
3. **THE RIGHTNESS OF JUDGMENT: The Retributive Justice of God**
4. **THE FORM OF JUDGMENT: The Wrath of God**
5. **THE SCOPE OF JUDGMENT: The Destruction of a Nation**
6. **THE FUTURE OF JUDGMENT: The Eternal Condemnation of God in Hell**
7. **THE MERCY IN JUDGMENT: The Love of God**
8. **THE SATISFACTION OF JUDGMENT: The Once for All Sacrifice of God**
9. **THE ESCAPE FROM JUDGMENT: Believe and Be Saved**

- F. And all of that an expansion of his proposition: Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.
- G. So there he is Jonah on the city wall, preaching to the soldiers.
1. He's in the north marketplace, preaching to the shoppers. He's in the south marketplace, preaching to the shoppers. He's outside a temple, preaching to the worshippers and to temple prostitutes. He's by a school, a university, a library, preaching to the students. He's at the chamber of commerce, preaching to the business people. He's by the palace, preaching to the king.
- H. His preaching is harsh. He's in your face. Turn or burn. Be ready to meet your maker. You're a sinner. You're a liar. You're a pervert. You've offended Almighty God. Your idols are nothings and you know it. You are seduced by Satan and infested by demons... The clock is ticking. Your time is running out. Your doom is just around the corner. Hell is forever. Prepare to meet your God. Turn to him. Cry out to him. Believe in him, and be saved. There is no hope apart from his grace.
1. Jonah's preaching was everything today's culture despises about Christians.
 2. The only Christianity today's culture will actually tolerate is a Christianity so soft Jesus wouldn't recognize it.
 3. Preach a message like Jonah's, and today's world won't stand for it., but neither will today's church.
 - a) You're a hater. You're too rigid. Too straight and narrow. Too hung up about sex. Love wins! Crucify him!
- I. So that now we have a dopey, smiley, clap-happy, truth-deficient, latte-sipping, ultra-tolerant, theologically clueless, Biblically illiterate, morally lax, spiritually weakened, skinny jeans wearing, faux-hawk sporting social club that knows nothing of the Cross of Christ, nothing of the deep things of Scripture, nothing of the call to holiness, and nothing of an all-out mission to save a lost and dying world— and they call it church.
- J. It's not church. It's a gathering of cowards. It's a gathering of unholy narcissists with a veneer of sanctification.
- K. Jesus, said, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."
- L. But the gates of hell are prevailing against the church precisely because we have slipped from the Rock of the shed blood of Christ.
- M. Instead, the church is letting the world define her.
- N. It's crazy. We cannot let the very people who have already decided to shatter the Christian message in pieces set the agenda for the Christian church. WHO CARES WHAT *THEY* THINK OF US?
1. **It's time to gear up because it is the Word of God, and the Word of God alone, that tells us who we are and gives us our marching orders.**
- O. Our hearts are held captive by our Savior and his words. If the world will spit on the Word of God, so be it.
- P. Let them shout. Let them demonstrate. Let them cancel us. Let them unfriend us. Let them throw us to the lions. We still win. "God's truth abideth still."
1. It is the people of God, saturated with the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, and preaching the gospel of God that kicks the devil in the gut and sends the demons running for the exits.
- Q. And that is exactly what happened when the prophet Jonah got in the face of the wicked king in Nineveh and told him... you've got forty days to get right with God, or you're done. Believe and be saved. And here comes revival.

VII. Revival

- A. "So the people of Nineveh believed in God." (Jonah 3:5)
- B. Epic sinners, forgiven by the same blood of the same lamb who washed us from our sins too.
- C. They believed. Then they fasted. They cried out to God. They repented of their sins. They turned from their wicked ways. All of this comes after they put their faith in God. The king even issued a decree:
 1. *So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes... Then God saw what they did, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.* (Jonah 3:5-10)
- D. God forgave them. When they turned from the evil and cried to the Lord, he had mercy on them. He extended his grace to them. God always does this. God always has mercy on those who come to him in humility and faith. God always restores the sinner. He delivers from the devil. He renews the mind. He changes the life.
- E. Nineveh, a city of a million people, goes down as perhaps the greatest revival in history. Oh Lord, send revival.

VIII. Conclusion

- A. One last thing. If Jonah were in today's church, he would be a great leader, except for one thing. He was courageous, godly, and respected. He was geared u theologically, ready to go biblically, and close to God prayer wise.
- B. He had put on the whole armor of God except for one piece.
- C. He didn't care about lost people.
- D. So God had him thrown overboard and swallowed into a living hell. Why? To remind him of what life was like for a person who felt out of sight and out of mind with God.
 1. **It's time to gear up now, before God resorts to drastic measures to mobilize us for Christ and the Gospel.**