

Heed the Warnings of Grace

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is not what lies behind us, and it is not what lies ahead of us that really counts. What is important lies within us.

The price of success often comes through failure. As Christians, we all have within us the necessary characteristics to develop into very effective people, to do what we have to do in our lives.

One of the great things in life is God-given ability. What's more, our ability is one of our greatest responsibilities. The average person does not know the extent of his potential ability.

Because these things are true, it is so important that both the water of the Word and the Holy Spirit fertilize the seed of our potential within. That way, it can spiritually germinate to become what God intended: the ability of the Word of God in our thought processes. Then we can fully live in our God-given ability, revealing the nature of God in life.

## Chapter One

# GOD ALWAYS FINDS A VOICE

The Lord Jesus Christ had no place to lay His head. Because those who dwell in darkness hate the light, people on the earth did everything they could to entrap Him and nail Him to the old rugged Cross.

Even though many Christians may not desire to hear the full counsel of God, God wants to speak to us. When He speaks, we are accountable to hear what He says. Then, once we have heard, we are responsible to speak for God.

It is an amazing story how God speaks through men and women. Many Christians will go into eternity and may never once allow God to speak to them through His precious Book and the Holy Spirit, and they may never allow God to speak through them.

God spoke through Abraham—an amazing thing, considering he was from Ur of the Chaldeans in a heathen religion. God called him,

Abraham heard, and he became the father of our faith, “a friend of God.”

### God Speaks through Moses

Isn't it wonderful that God would speak to Israel through Moses? God chose a man who had spent eighty years in preparation, in a sense—including forty years hiding in the back of the desert. As far as we know, Moses had no communication with God until the burning bush incident, in Exodus 3.

After killing an Egyptian soldier in a fit of anger, Moses knew that Pharaoh had rejected him. Even his own people rejected him. That is why he stayed away for forty long years. It took the burning bush and God speaking out of the burning bush to finally get Moses' attention.

God said, “I want to speak to My people through a man, and the man that I want to use will be you, Moses! I know that you think you have an impediment in your speech, and I know you don't want to speak to others. You don't think you are qualified, but you are going to speak for Me.”

### David and Solomon: Hearts after God

One of the sweetest psalmists who ever lived

was King David, and he shared so much with us. It is a glorious thing that God spoke not just to David, but He spoke so beautifully through David.

When David said, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10), God did it. God heard him and God did what David asked of Him. David said, “Give me the joy of life once again so that I can teach transgressors about Your ways and see sinners converted” (Psalm 51:13)—and God did.

God spoke through Solomon—even after Solomon failed miserably. He had poor physical health, his back was permanently bent over, and he had only two or three teeth left. Though he had been extremely handsome and was the wisest man in the Old Testament, now he was suffering tremendously, and he could not sleep at night.

Solomon recognized after all that the most important thing in life is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). After Solomon had failed, God allowed him to write two more books in the Old Testament: Proverbs and the Song of Solomon.

## God's Cries for Repentance

God used Ezekiel to speak to a people who had received and rejected repeated warnings from God. Now, as they faced military takeover in the fifth cycle of national discipline, Ezekiel would cry out by the river Chebar and show the people of Israel their future.

God also spoke through Jonah, though Jonah did not want to obey God. Through the years, people have misunderstood this prophet, and many believe that he was simply reluctant and disobedient.

In fact, according to "isagogics," which is a study of the historical frame of reference, Jonah did not want to witness in Nineveh because of the way they had treated their enemies—killing babies by taking knives and flaying their skin, and cheering as they did so.

A great patriarch of Israel, Jonah was not just a godly man but a very patriotic one. Still, he was afraid and could not trust God for His plan, fearing the people would rise up again as enemies to Israel. But when God miraculously won Nineveh, it was through this one man speaking by the Holy Spirit. God spoke through this man, Jonah.

## God's Patience: The Mystery of Eternity

Notice how so many of God's spokesmen were not "qualified," in terms of their spirituality. And yet, God would get the glory, God's grace would be sufficient, and God's patience would win out. How patient He is!

The patience of God is the mystery of eternity. I appreciate it deeply, and I have tremendous gratitude for His patience. Yet, I believe that I will never fully understand God's patience.

God spoke through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew with his background as a crooked tax collector, and John Mark, whom Paul did not consider spiritual (Acts 15:37-39). Still, God used them to write two of the Gospels.

God spoke through Saul of Tarsus who became gloriously saved while he was persecuting Christians. Responsible for killing many believers, Saul was picked by God right out of the midst of the Jewish people, and his name was changed to Paul. Much of the New Testament was recorded through this apostle. Though the canon of Scripture is complete, God is speaking until this very hour, continuing to raise up men who will speak faithfully for Him.

## Chapter Two

# GOD'S CONTROVERSIES WITH HIS PEOPLE

In the book of Jeremiah, God had several major controversies with Israel (Jeremiah 3:12, 13 and 22). He cried out as He said, "Turn ye backsliders. Turn ye backsliders. Your back is toward Me. I want you to turn to Me." After all they had gone through, and after all the ways God ministered His mercy and grace toward them, the people of Israel turned their backs on their God. Once again, God had a controversy with His people.

The Lord said, "Return, My people. Hear the word of the Lord and return." But Israel did not do it.

Then He said, "The day of Jacob's trouble is coming"—the last half of the Tribulation Period when God will pour out His wrath upon the earth (see Jeremiah 30:7)—and He said, "It is coming; turn to Me before it is too late."

## Silence in Heaven

I have often thought of the account in Revelation 8:1, when, for thirty solid minutes, heaven will be silent. I cannot imagine what that will be like. Heaven has never been silent; yet, because of the terrible events that will come upon the earth, for thirty consecutive minutes there will not be one sound from heaven. The earth will become the object of God's wrath because of people's wickedness and refusal to accept Christ.

Silence. The voices of ministering angels will be hushed. The voices of the twenty-four elders surrounding the throne will also be hushed. Even the precious Trinity will be totally silent for thirty minutes. I can't begin to imagine what that will be like.

Heaven will be silent because of the people for whom the Savior died. Jesus Christ paid for their sins, to buy them back if they would come. But they would not. As a result, many will die in their sins, terrified and yet rebellious, though they still had to go through the last half of the Tribulation Period.

Consider the hailstones that will weigh over three hundred pounds per stone. Darkness will cover the earth so that no one will be able to see

his hand in front of his face. All the water will turn into blood. Still, people will curse God, and they will continue to curse Him. This is a picture of the terrible results of the fallen human race.

### A Terrible Price to Pay

We do not know God's timetable. We have no idea when the Rapture will take place. But in this beautiful national salutation to Israel in Jeremiah 3, God begs people to hear the Word of God. Then, He warns them of the time of "Jacob's trouble," the Great Tribulation.

Not only does God warn Israel as a nation, but in Jeremiah 9:10-21, God talks to mothers and fathers and gives them a tremendous domestic challenge. The Lord said, "I have a controversy with you. I told you to teach your children morning, noon, and night—when you would get up, when you would walk in the way, and when you would lie down. But you did not do it."

"Furthermore," He said, "because you would not do it, your children are rebellious, and they will not hear. Therefore, I will let the enemy come in, and your children will be killed on the streets, in front of your houses," and they were. That happened, all because parents would

not honor the domestic challenge to teach their children.

Then in Hosea 4:1 and 12:2, and Jeremiah 25:31, God addresses individuals, saying, "I have a controversy with every individual in this nation. My controversy is that you do not respect Me. You will not listen to Me. You hear, but you do your own thing."

And they said, "When did we not hear thee?"

"Oh," He said, "you have not heard Me."

And they said, "But we have heard You!"

He said, "No, you haven't. You have not obeyed Me, and that means you have not heard Me." What an amazing principle.

Then the Word of God came to King Zedekiah. This king saw his children killed in cold blood by the enemy, right in front of his eyes. All of them were killed. Not one of them lived. Then the king of Babylon took Zedekiah, bound him in chains, and gouged his eyes out (Jeremiah 39:6-7).

Oh, the terrible price of sin. The price of turning a deaf ear to our Creator, to our Redeemer, to our Lord is so serious. That is why in the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Jeremiah the people said, "Jeremiah, do you have a

message for us from the Lord?" But God would not change His mind. Captivity was coming for Israel (Jeremiah 37:17).

Close your eyes for one solid minute and consider the souls that are going to hell. Try to imagine their faces. For every second that passes by, say "It's too late!" as another soul falls into eternal darkness. When I did this recently, only thirty-five seconds had gone by when I thought I had been counting for eternity. "Too late!"\*

"I have no message for you," said God through Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 38:2-3, God's message did not change. "I have no message because you have renounced Me in your heart, you are not sincere, and it is too late."

It is quite a thing as we begin to see what happened in Jeremiah 7:8-20. God had enough of Israel's wickedness, and, in so many words, He said, "I have had enough, and I am not going to take your rebellion any more."

\*Read Don't Wait Until It's Too Late, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.

## Chapter Threë

# HEARKEN AND GIVE HEED TO GOD'S WORD

In Jeremiah 4:3, the Lord said to Israel, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Again He says, "You turned a deaf ear and you refused to hear."

Oh, there is such value in hearing about grace, and love, and mercy, and compassion. There is so much value in learning about soul winning, and discipleship, and evangelizing. There is so much value in hearing about God's kindness, patience, peace, confidence, and faith rest. The value of hearing God speak to your heart is absolutely priceless.

And yet, the Word of God says that the children of Israel loved their backslidden condition. They were contented in passivity and contented not to obey God. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so..." (Jeremiah 5:31).

They were contented to be the same.

Still, God pleaded with them and said, "I want you to get back to old paths." But they said, "We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16b). The Lord said, I have sent watchmen over you, and they are sounding out warnings, "...But they said, We will not hearken" (Jeremiah 6:17). Oh, perhaps they did not say it with their lips, but they said it with their lives.

People will never dare to say to Almighty God, "I will not do it." I have never heard a Christian say that. Though Israel did not say it, the Scriptures interpreted their behavior as, "We will not. We will not walk in Your ways." That is how the Holy Spirit interpreted their behavior.

Jeremiah was a man of the Book, a man of conviction, a man of compassion, a man of tears. He was called the weeping prophet. Probably he wept more for his nation, seeing little Ezra go by him in captivity in the fifth cycle of discipline and seeing the one that he loved so deeply, Ezra's father, who was their pastor, killed in cold blood in that fifth cycle of discipline.\*

### God Still Has a Plan

In spite of our rebellion, God still desires to speak to us. He said, "To whom should I speak?

To whom shall I give a warning?" They didn't want the warning. That is the way much of the world is today. People don't mind hearing God speak, but they do not want to hear a warning.

How many have left a church service murmuring to themselves, "I didn't get edified today. The pastor was legalistic. He gave us a 'warning' today. Can you imagine that?"

And God said, "Oh, who will let Me warn them? Who will let Me speak and heed My warning?" And then He went on to say, "They would not."

Despite all of this, God has a plan. The door of opportunity was still open for Israel, even at that late hour.

God still has a plan, and the plan is this: "I love you. And with lovingkindness I will draw thee. Again I will build thee, O virgin Israel" (see Jeremiah 31:3-4).

The second part of that plan is, "Call upon Me. I will still hear you. Call upon Me, and I will do great and mighty things that you have never seen before" (see Jeremiah 33:3).

### The Father Calls for His Children

In spite of all that He said, all the warnings of grace that He gave to His people, and though

so much time had passed, God never stopped loving His children. His heart was broken; all He wanted was for Israel to have faith in who He is and obey His Word from their hearts.

In the book of Revelation, the Spirit speaks seven times to the seven churches and tells us to hear what the Spirit is saying.

In John 7:37-38, Jesus spoke with a loud voice. In Revelation 1:15, His voice was as the sound of “many waters.” But in 1 Kings 19:12, He spoke in a “still, small voice.” He speaks to His people in so many different ways.

Our failure isn’t final with the Father. The door is open (Revelation 3:8), and He holds the keys of death and hell (Revelation 1:18). Today God is still building a New Testament Church and establishing a royal family. We are so grateful for all He is doing in our midst. We are very encouraged, very pleased, and very thankful to God. Let’s reveal our gratitude not by giving lip service to His warnings, but by responding to every word of God with our whole hearts.

\*For a thorough study of the historical frame of reference connecting Jeremiah with the writer of Psalm 119, read *Dealing with Stressful Times*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.

## CONCLUSION

A man of God must tell it all. I asked God years ago to help me always to preach the way it is, at any cost. A Spirit-filled pastor in a Finished Work ministry will not have a legalistic message. Though some people are careless and legislate in their messages, it is most likely that legalism is the viewpoint of the one who does not want to heed the warnings of loving grace.

Thank God, the door is open. God wrote those things in Jeremiah for our examples, for our learning (1 Corinthians 10:11). They were “admonitions”—warnings of grace. God has done these things aforetime so that we would take heed (1 Corinthians 10:11-12, Romans 15:4). That is why we can say that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, so that we can be furnished for good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Dear Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for being straight with us, for covering us when we fail yet always keeping us accountable to the truth.

Thank You that You love us so much, You will allow whatever is necessary to draw us to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.