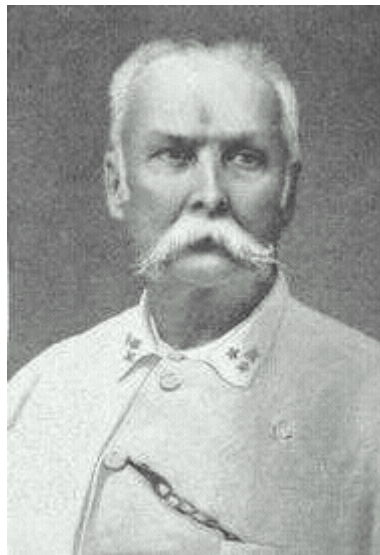




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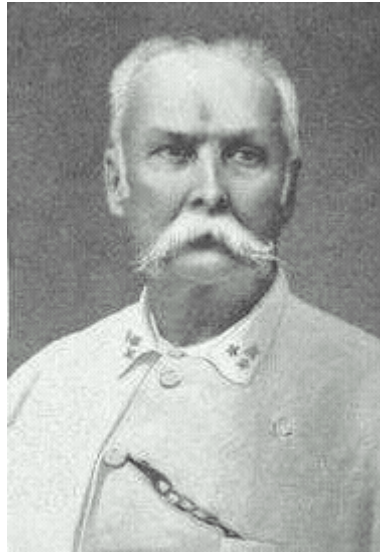
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The Lesson of "A Message to Garcia"

By Don Hooser

God is looking for a few good men and women. Will you be ready to carry a message for Him?



"A MESSAGE TO GARCIA." This phrase has had special meaning for multiple millions of people all over the world. It has become synonymous with certain noble qualities of character.

"A Message to Garcia" is the title of an article written on February 22, 1899, and subsequently translated into almost all written languages. The author was Elbert Hubbard, the famous speaker, writer and publisher who died in 1915 on board the famous ship *Lusitania* when it was sunk by a German torpedo.

Hubbard hurriedly wrote the article in one evening for *The Fra*, one of two magazines that he published. No one was more surprised than he at the immense popularity of what he called "this literary trifle." By 1913, over 40 million copies had been published, which, at that time, was more than any literary venture had ever attained in the lifetime of an author. It has been reprinted in many formats--article, pamphlet, booklet, etc.

A true human interest story with an extraordinary achievement inspired Hubbard to write about the scarcity of and high demand for certain valuable qualities of character. Those qualities can be summed up as dependability and dedication to fulfill whatever task or responsibility a person is assigned to fulfill. The "mission impossible" accomplished by a young lieutenant in the United States Army, Andrew Summers Rowan, was the inspiration for the article.

Dependability and dedication to fulfill whatever task or responsibility a person is assigned to fulfill are valuable qualities of character.

When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, U.S. President McKinley knew he needed to quickly secure the cooperation of General Garcia, the leader of

the revolutionary forces in Cuba. The President needed to send a message to General Garcia, but Garcia was somewhere among the mountainous jungles of Cuba--no one knew where. A man made of the right stuff was needed for the difficult and dangerous task of staying alive long enough to find Garcia and deliver the message.

The chief of the Bureau of Military Intelligence proposed Lieutenant Rowan. He said, "Rowan will find Garcia for you, if anybody can." McKinley sent him at once on the mission, alone and unguarded. When Rowan landed on the island of Cuba in secret, Cuban patriots met him and furnished him with native guides. After overcoming numerous obstacles, he finally reached Garcia, and incredibly, he made it back safely to the United States.

Happily, the trip involved many fortuitous circumstances. It seems God's blessings were on this mission. But that doesn't diminish the heroism of Rowan. If it was not for his courage, resourcefulness and sheer determination, he would not have gotten very far, much less accomplished the entire mission.



In "A Message to Garcia," Hubbard wrote, "How the 'fellow by the name of Rowan' took the letter, sealed it over his heart, in four days landed by night off the coast of Cuba from an open boat, disappeared into the jungle, and in three weeks came out on the other side of the Island, having traversed a hostile

country on foot and delivered his letter to Garcia--are things I have no special desire now to tell in detail." Then, Hubbard explained, here was a rare man who had the ingredients for success that are needed everywhere.

Rowan immediately set out to do what he was asked to do and he did it. There were no excuses or foot-dragging. He didn't demand that someone furnish him with detailed plans of how to accomplish this assignment. He didn't hesitate. He didn't waste time. He didn't give up, although there were plenty of temptations to do so. He stayed focused on his goal, partly because he saw how it fit with a much larger goal. He was tough and tenacious.

Due partially to Rowan's success, the United States won the Spanish-American War. As a result, Spain ceded Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands and Guam to the United States, and abandoned all claims to Cuba (which became independent in 1902).

Rowan, by then Colonel Rowan, was decorated for his achievement by the Commander of the United States Army, who said, "I regard this achievement as one of the most hazardous and heroic deeds in military warfare." The forward of the booklet says, "This was undoubtedly true, but it is for his fine moral character, rather than for his military prowess, that Lieutenant Andrew Summers Rowan will always be remembered."

In his booklet, Hubbard goes on to lament the deplorable lack of men and women like Lieutenant Rowan--people who are willing to take on responsibilities and see them through to the end; people who don't need someone to look over their shoulders to keep them on track; people with a strong work ethic; people who get the job done, done right, and right on time.

It's interesting that the Scriptures teach the need for the qualities that Hubbard was praising--dependability, perseverance, a strong work ethic, etc. (The Bible is filled with practical

teaching for everyday life.)

The Bible also expresses feelings similar to Hubbard's frustrations: "As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy man to those who send him" (Proverbs 10:26).

"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint" (Proverbs 25:19). "He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence" (Proverbs 26:6).

Likewise, the Bible also praises the dependable messenger: "Like the cold of snow in time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters" (Proverbs 25:13).

Elbert Hubbard was right. It's as if every factory and every office has signs posted saying, "Wanted: Men and women like Lieutenant Rowan."

God is calling people to be His messengers today. The assignment Jesus Christ gave His disciples applies to all those God is calling to be part of His Church: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The entire 10th chapter of the book of Matthew is Christ's admonition to be messengers with faith, zeal, courage and self-sacrifice.

*God is calling
people to be His
messengers today:
"Go into all the
world and preach
the gospel to every
creature."*

Messengers that God can rely on are rare and will be richly rewarded, as illustrated in the parable of the talents: "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matthew 25:21).

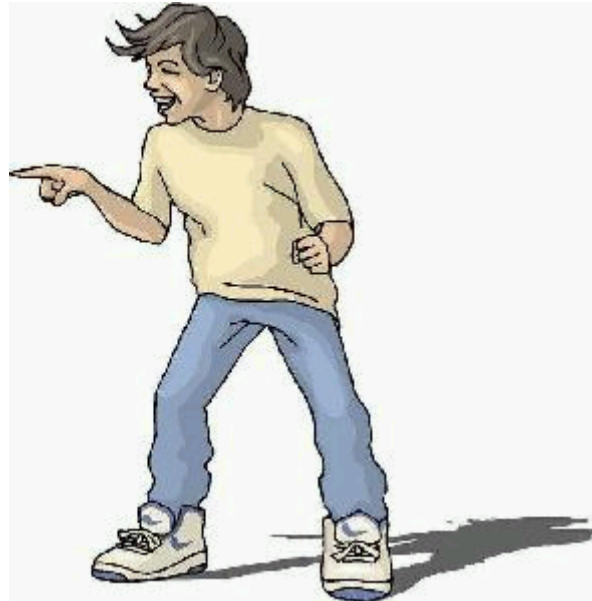
Why has "A Message to Garcia" been reprinted over and over again? Often, huge quantities were ordered to distribute to others. Heads of corporations, military units, government agencies, etc., have distributed the booklets in hopes that they would motivate the readers to emulate the character of Lieutenant Rowan. And for over a century millions of readers have purchased, read, enjoyed and been inspired by "A Message to Garcia."

Here are Hubbard's concluding statements: "Anything such a man asks shall be granted. He is wanted in every city, town and village--in every office, shop, store and factory. The world cries out for such; he is needed and needed badly--the man who can CARRY A MESSAGE TO GARCIA."

Sticks and Stones

By Jada A. Howell

We often use our words as weapons. We forget how seemingly harmless phrases can carry a hurtful meaning.



THE OLD ADAGE, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," may be good in theory, but in real life it doesn't work.

"Stupid!"

"Why aren't you more like..."

"What were you thinking?"

Ever heard these cutting words used in reference to you? Ever remember using them against someone else? We may think we are motivating people to better behavior. But we are not using our words in love to instruct. No one enjoys being insulted whether or not the verbal jab is intended.

Recently, I attended a meeting of my mothers' group. My daughter and her friend were playing with two little girls. They all played together for about fifteen minutes when suddenly there was dissension in the ranks. My daughter and her friend wanted to play "hide-and-seek," while the other two did not. I heard my daughter's voice from a few feet away.

"You're driving me nuts!"

*This act of
rudeness... was this
how God sees me?
Was I a headstrong
child wounding
others with my
words?*

I whirled around and directed my sternest, "How could you? Stop that right now!" gaze at her. I immediately asked her where she had heard those words and instructed her, in no uncertain

terms, that she should not say them to her friends.

After we discussed why we shouldn't insult others, I sent her on her way again to play. Then the realization struck me that I was chastising her for something I had done myself just recently.

The week before had been unbearably hot. As temperatures soared, the sticky and oppressive July weather magnified my frustration at being cooped up in a house for many days with an energetic three-year-old and our newest arrival, only ten weeks old. My patience and tolerance ebbed to an all-time low.

I glimpsed a reflection of myself in my daughter's words and attitude. I also glimpsed something else. This act of rudeness...was this how God sees me? Was I a headstrong child wounding others with my words?



God's Word speaks about words which hurt. "Rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Proverbs 12:18 NRSV). Two things stand out in this verse. *Rash* denotes haste or not thinking of what we say. And *sword thrusts* convey piercing or cutting into something. We can cut and destroy with our words.

Imagine a piece of cold, hard steel jabbed through our skin into our inner bodies. This word picture of the piercing of a sword aptly describes how purposefully cutting words can tear and destroy.

My daughter's actions started me thinking of how my words should be chosen more carefully. God wants us to choose our words wisely. Children are so impressionable. One instance of discouraging feedback may stay with a child the rest of his life.

God provides a tremendous service to us through our children. He allows us to see how He views us each and every day. We can recognize our own shortcomings and the flaws we need to overcome. What a truly wonderful gift!

The next time you hear someone use cutting words realize you have most likely acted in a similar manner, either to your own child, your spouse or a friend. Let's set a better example. Let's think before we speak.

My Name Is Gossip

By Janet Treadway

Words impact us either positively or negatively. "THINK" before you speak.



*My name is Gossip.
I have no respect for justice.
I maim without killing.
I break hearts and ruin lives.
I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.*

*The more I am quoted the more I am believed.
I flourish at every level of society.
My victims are helpless.
They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.*

*To track me down is impossible.
The harder you try, the more elusive I become.
I am nobody's friend.
Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.
I topple governments and ruin marriages.
I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartache and indigestion.
I spawn suspicion and generate grief.*

*I make innocent people cry in their pillows.
Even my name hisses.*

I AM CALLED GOSSIP.

T HIS VERY EYE-OPENING POEM from an unknown author, says a lot about the

damage done through gossip. What about the famous phrase we all have heard: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"? Though it may be a useful attitude to take when insulted by others, in our hearts, we know this is not true. Somehow reciting those words does not take the hurt away.

Words do tremendous damage. Unless you've been a victim of violent crime or a major illness or something else catastrophic, your deepest pains have probably come from hurtful words.

Words have great power

Words have great power. God created the world using words--"Let there be light"--and there was light. Human beings also create through words. They produce great novels that move us, and music that warms our hearts. Writers put much thought into the right selection of words so their books or songs will sell.

We listen and communicate words every day that either lift us up or bring us down. Powerful, positive words can offer great healing while negative words contain great destructive power that tears down. Whenever you talk negatively about people or listen to someone else talk negatively about others, you unleash that harmful power.

So how do you use this power of words with others? Do your words lift and inspire or do they destroy a person? Are they words of truth? Can even truth hurt? If someone paid you ten cents for every kind word you said about people, and collected five cents for every unkind word, would you be rich or poor?

Gossip and slander ruin reputations and families, break up marriages, separate friends, destroy communities and, yes, even divide churches. Knowing gossip is so destructive, why do we do it?

Why do we gossip?

We gossip to feel good about ourselves. We get an ego boost from others' sins and mistakes. To gossip makes us feel superior over the person that we are talking about.

We also gossip to draw people into our own hurt and anger. We want others to side with us so we must tell our side of the story. Then our friends repeat the story to their friends and on and on it goes. Even if you say the truth, it does not justify unnecessarily passing on hurtful information about someone.

What feelings does gossip produce?

Depending upon whether you are the gossiper or the one being gossiped about, gossip produces emotions of excitement, pain or guilt.

Excitement from gossip comes from human nature wanting to hear dirt on others and repeating it. Look at all the tabloids sold at the grocery counters. They are filled with smut and dirt about the rich and famous. It seems it's fun to read and listen to gossip about others. What is the latest on Tom Cruise? Is he or is he not? In Proverbs 20:19 it says,

Words have great power. God created the world using words--"Let there

"He who goes about gossiping reveals secrets; therefore, do not associate *be light*"--and there with one who speaks foolishly" (RSV throughout). We should realize that *was light.* participating in negative conversations harms us spiritually, creating confusion that can lead to deception.

Pain from gossip comes when we are on the receiving end of the gossip trail. Speaking ill of others is particularly bad because words, once uttered, can never be recalled. It's like the rabbi pointed out in this story:

There was a man in a small town in Eastern Europe who went around slandering a rabbi. One day, feeling bad about what he had done, he went to the rabbi to ask for forgiveness.

"Take a pillow," said the rabbi, "cut it up and shake out the feathers." The man did as he was told and then he returned to the rabbi to get forgiveness. "First," said the rabbi, "go collect all the feathers."

"But that's impossible," said the man. "They've gone everywhere."

"It's as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover all the feathers," said the rabbi.

President Reagan's first Labor Secretary, Raymond Donovan, resigned from his post after numerous rumors that he'd done wrong. After spending more than a million dollars in legal fees to defend himself, Donovan was cleared of all charges. Coming out of the courtroom to talk to reporters, he asked, "Where do I go to get my reputation back?"

Gossip also hurts the gossiper. According to psychiatrist Antonio Wood, when you speak ill of someone, you alienate yourself from that person. The more negative your comments, the more distant you will feel from him or her. Say bad things about many people and your words will separate you from them.

Guilt comes when we know in our hearts that it is wrong to slander and talk about someone behind their back. Have you ever tried to look the person in the eye after you have talked about them behind their back?

Guilt also comes when you did not follow the biblical principal in Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."

Gossip for a moment may be fun, but in the end it will only produce hurt, guilt and pain. So how can we avoid gossip?

How can you avoid the pitfalls of gossip?

Seek cleansing from God so you'll have the power to resist talking negatively about others. Take a look at the attitudes you hold and the comments you make. Examine why you are tempted to speak negatively, and pray for God to give you the strength to confront and overcome those temptations. Ask God to purify your mind. Confess the times you've gossiped or criticized in the past, and invite God to transform you. Release any pride or fear that is

obstructing you from making the changes you would like, and be open to God's correction and guidance.

Ask the person spreading the negativity to pray for the person about whom he or she is talking.

Pray for people you have hurt--either purposely or inadvertently--by speaking negatively about them. Ask God to heal them. Also, pray for people who have hurt you in the past through their negative words about you. Forgive them and ask God to let them be aware of His loving presence with them.

Pray for God to give you wisdom so you can resist being pulled into negative conversations. When someone approaches you and begins talking negatively about someone, try to determine the speaker's motivation and encourage accountability by asking questions such as: "Is this something I need to hear about?" "Who told you this information?" "Have you spoken to those people who are directly involved with this situation?" and "Before you share any further, what are you expecting from me?"

Use powerful positive words to heal when confronted with destructive, negative words. Respond to gossip or criticism with encouraging words about the person being talked about, and ask the person spreading the negativity to pray for the person about whom he or she is talking.

Be proactive and speak positively about others. Use the power of your words to build up and to encourage. Of course, you shouldn't build up someone who is practicing evil--in such a case, it is better just to remain quiet. But be on the lookout for good.

Think. Subscribe to a simple formula, "THINK," before speaking of any person or subject that is perhaps controversial. If what you were going to say doesn't pass the following tests, don't say it.

T--Is it true?

H--Is it helpful?

I--Is it inspiring?

N--Is it necessary?

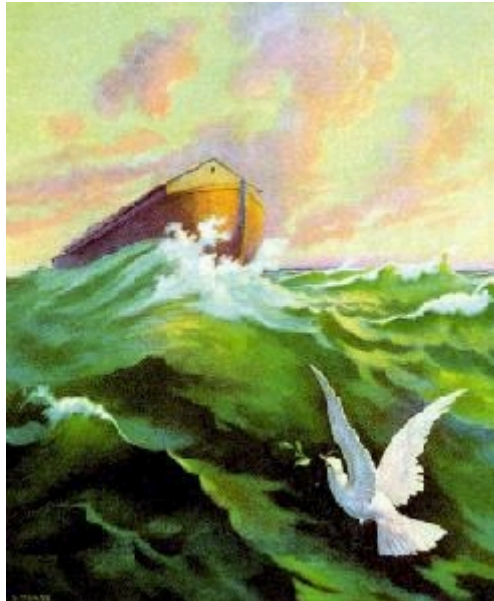
K--Is it kind?

Perhaps Paul put it best when he said, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8). By doing this gossip will be stopped. Let us all strive to use the power of our words for healing.

Perseverance: Staying With It to the End

By John Pentlin

Jesus Christ is waiting to say "Well done!" to all His faithful servants who endure life's trials.



WE'VE ALL READ OR HEARD THE STORY of Noah and the ark, and how people laughed at and ridiculed him for building a huge boat in the middle of the desert. He listened to their insults for over one hundred years. But, he never gave up or turned his back on God. He was given a job to do, and he didn't quit until it was completed. He showed a tremendous amount of perseverance to do what he did.

Perseverance. What is it? It's a fruit that we are going to need to be part of God's Kingdom. In fact, it's a command from God. In Revelation 3:7-8 and 10, God commands us to persevere. This is what He is expecting of us. How do we do it? We can't of and by ourselves. We have to have God's spirit living and working in us. That's the only way we can endure.

Perseverance is one of the seven keys to success discovered by Herbert W. Armstrong, who studied the successful people of the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the principles of the Bible. He found that without perseverance you can't be successful. Perseverance is needed for our spiritual success as well as our success in human life.

A person who has perseverance endures no matter what the trials or how much suffering or grief he or she has to go through. It's from the root word meaning "to remain under." What does that mean? It means a man would be willing to remain under trials, if necessary, and to follow God's way. By enduring such trials, he honors God and learns lessons the trials may teach.

In Romans 5:1-2 we find, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also

Perseverance is when you keep

we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We stand not because we are human and are tough and wise, but because we have the grace of God. We have the Spirit of God. Our hope is in the Kingdom of God.

coming back, and you don't give up. You keep trying, you keep knocking and, finally, the door will open.

In verse 3 of Romans 5 we read, "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance." It means going through the mental anguish and struggle, which sometimes includes the physical struggle of "hanging in there." It's a fruit that grows out of trials, though it doesn't seem to grow in good times. It's a willingness to stay strong through those trials.

In verses 4 and 5, we read, "And perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint; because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Satan wants to know what it will take for us to give up. He is roaring about trying to find out what it will take to shake us loose from the tree of life.

What will shake us loose? Sickness? Losing our job? Money problems? We need to know that Satan will try anything and everything. We must keep our focus on God and "hang in there" and persevere to the end. It's going to take a lot of persevering to get us there.

In Hebrews, it talks about those who were tortured, mocked and scourged and put in prison, stoned, sawn in two, slain by the sword, destitute, afflicted and tormented. Yet, they never gave up. I don't think any of us have had to experience the things they had to endure. Although we have had to go through some really tough things, it doesn't compare with what they went through. We haven't had to endure to bloodshed yet. Our calling is like a race. It really is work. It requires endurance and patience and stick-to-it-iveness.

What does it take to endure? It takes faith. In James 1:2-4 it says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." The testing of our faith is what it comes down to. Do we really believe in what God says and what our purpose is? The testing of our faith develops perseverance. It is the foundation upon which our perseverance is built. Perseverance and faith go together.

Our calling is like a race. It really is work. It requires endurance and patience and stick-to-it-iveness.

Perseverance is when you keep coming back, and you don't give up. You keep trying, you keep knocking and, finally, the door will open. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said this, "Perseverance is a great element of success, if you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you're sure to wake up somebody." Sometimes we fail in life physically or spiritually, but we must never give up. We have to stay in there for the long haul. We have to have faith, courage, tenacity and stamina to keep

going.

Anticipation can help us persevere. The Feast of Tabernacles is a special celebration kept by Jesus Christ and kept by the United Church of God today. Before the Feast of Tabernacles, when my children were little, we used to make chains. You know, the type where you cut construction paper into rectangles, and then glue them together to make a chain? We'd make a long chain and then pull one link off every day to add to the anticipation and excitement as the time of the Feast drew near. We could persevere until the Feast--it was real--we could see it approaching. It is easier to persevere when you can see that fixed date. We don't know when

Christ will return, though, so it's harder for us to persevere until He does. We can't look at the calendar and know the date. And, we can't count the days until His return. Nevertheless, it's just as real.

In his commentary, William Barclay talks about perseverance and endurance. "For the Christian persecution and trouble are not the end; beyond lies the glory; and in the hope of that glory he can endure anything that life brings to him. It sometimes happens that a man has to undergo a painful operation or course of treatment; but he gladly accepts the pain and the discomfort because of the renewed health and strength which lie beyond. It is one of the basic facts of life that a man can endure anything so long as he has something to look forward to—and the Christian can look forward to the ultimate joy." Here is the recipe for endurance when life is hard and faith is difficult. We can stand up to things because of the greatness we can look forward to, because every trial is another test to strengthen and to purify our faith, and because at the end of it Jesus Christ is waiting to say, "Well done!" to all His faithful servants.



In Revelation 3:9-10, God promises to keep us from the tribulation if we endure to the end. To fight and win, we have to be equipped with perseverance that comes from God, that comes from faith. God wants to give us His Kingdom. We have endured. God's Church has experienced some very difficult times. We've lost brethren and loved ones. Still, we haven't given up. We've endured patiently. We need to be grateful that God has helped us to accomplish this. We've hung in there. We've had to take a personal stand and be convicted. We have a lot of scars that prove we've been through the battles. We've matured and we've grown.

We've worked too hard to get where we are to let it go. Our goal is just ahead of us. It's almost within reach. We don't know how much time we have left, but we don't want to throw all the time we have put into it away. Let's not give up. Let's continue to persevere.

Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

September 11, 2001--Where Do We Go From Here?

By Lonnie Johnson

ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, LIFE FOR ALL OF US CHANGED. It was a day that will forever be remembered. For the first time since 1865, we saw and felt the terror of war touch the heart of our nation's soil. For those old enough to remember, it was 60 years ago, on December 7, 1941, that the United States endured the horror of Pearl Harbor. More of our civilian citizens were killed in this single act of aggression on September 11, 2001, than in any other single act of war during our history. On this day, we were awakened to a new era in which our sense of security and safety in our own land was greatly altered.

We express sympathy and compassion for the many thousands who have lost father, mother, husband, wife, child, relative or close friend in the atrocities carried out by these few men. We cannot fathom the kind of hatred these men had in their hearts to be driven to such horrible acts of murder.

Where does our nation go from here? Our government has now launched a military campaign against those who have perpetrated this horrible and unjustified attack on our country. Where this will ultimately lead us in our relationship with the rest of the world, we can't fully know. We can and should pray for our national leaders to use wisdom, patience and discernment in dealing with these terrorists. Deal with them we must, but we cannot allow what they have done to our nation to cause us to have the same hatred in our hearts for them.

In the aftermath of these acts of terror, we saw a national response that some felt our nation was no longer capable of giving. We witnessed people of every race, religious and ethnic background, rallying together across our nation to respond to human needs with kindness and compassion. There is little doubt that God took notice of this outpouring of compassion and in His divine mercy brought about many miracles, some of which we may never know.

Some feel the current response and resolve of our citizens is only temporary and will not withstand the test of time. How long will this overwhelming public outcry for prayer and public show of spirituality go unchallenged by those who wish to remove God from the very fabric of our society? How long will racial tensions take a back seat to our national interests? How long will the selfishness of human nature remain tethered? Only time will tell.

Some have felt that these horrible acts of terrorism are the result of God removing His hand of divine protection from our nation because of our collective national sins. The sins of our nation are indeed appalling and pervasive. But could America yet repent? God will be the ultimate judge. God does want people to come to true repentance of sin, the transgression of His laws (1 John 3:4). As we read in 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4, God desires that all come to repentance and to the knowledge of the truth so that none should perish.

Where do you and I go from here? How do each of us individually respond to these acts of terror against our people? All of us wrestle with trying to understand why such a thing could happen in our nation. Can we say that this just happened to those whose lives were lost or forever changed and it doesn't affect me? I hope not.

Notice what Christ said in Luke 13:1-5 about those Galileans who perished at the hand of Pilate and those who perished when the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. Christ used these tragedies that took place during His time to implore those listening to repent of their own sins instead of trying to figure out who had the greatest sin. He was telling them to use this tragedy to examine their personal lives and how this ultimately affected their relationship with God. Should each of us use what happened on September 11 as an encouragement to examine our personal relationship with God? I believe that is the message Christ is telling us in Luke 13.

Romans 2:4 tells us it is the goodness (kindness) of God that leads us to repentance. Does our nation need repentance? Yes, it does. But our people can't repent without knowing what to repent of. Jonah preached repentance to the city of Nineveh and the people responded. We need modern-day Jonahs to bring the nation to the knowledge of repentance for our transgressions of God's laws. We need our religious leaders to cry aloud for repentance, tempered with the love and grace of God that will lead people to repentance.

The changing of our human nature, which is naturally against God (Romans 8:7), is at the heart of what God has always desired for mankind. This is repentance - turning from going the way of man to going the way of God. Repentance is a clarion call of the gospel message of Jesus Christ and the writings of the New Testament.

John the Baptist preached repentance as he prepared the way for Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:2, 8). From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ taught repentance as a part of the gospel message (Mark 1:14-15). For three and one half years, Jesus continued to preach repentance from sin (Mark 2:17; Luke 10:13; 15:7; 18:13-14). When the 12 apostles were sent out, they were to proclaim this same message of repentance (Mark 6:12). The commission given to His Church (Matthew 16:18) was to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47). This is the same commission the United Church of God is endeavoring to carry out in this end time.

Jesus Christ's motive for calling on all people to repent is because He loves them. He gave His very life that all could come to repentance and receive the gift of eternal life. God desires that no one should perish, but all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). God is faithful and has provided a way for all that have ever lived to have their opportunity to come to the knowledge of the truth, repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

In light of what we see happening in the world around us, seeing that the end of this age is drawing to a close, we need to be asking ourselves, what manner of person do I need to be in "holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11)? Where do we go from here? Let us go on from here, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2). We must use this national tragedy to inspire us to "walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:15-17). And His will is that all should come to repentance and not perish.