

CALLING A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

Text: Joel 1:13-20

Key Word: Assembly

Key Thought: God Is Calling Out for a Solemn Assembly

There are many cases in the Bible when God dealt with individuals and especially with their sin. There are also many cases when the LORD dealt with national sin as well as corporate sins of certain churches/synagogues, cities.

When John wrote to the seven churches, five of them were guilty of corporate sins.

Ephesus - Had forsaken its first love

Pergamum - Tolerated false teaching (non-Christian rituals, sexual immorality)

Thyatira - Tolerated those who committed adultery with a false teacher

Sardis - Deadness and incomplete works

Laodicea - Lukewarmness and security in material things

*** In Neil Anderson and Charles Mylander's book titled "*Setting Your Church Free*" they speak of poison within the body of Christ (suspicion, gossip, dissension, divisiveness and rebellion) which they name as corporate sins. They liken these sins to garbage. They also liken demons to flies. They expose the fact that these flies (demons) feed on such garbage. The devil stirs up a spirit of independence that causes division. People rise up questioning the motives of those in leadership.

They go on to mention prayerlessness, apathy and disobeying the Great Commission. They also highlight leaders who look the other way when scandalous sins occur among their members (i.e. - fornication, adultery, divorce & remarriage, abortion, homosexual behaviour, lying, misuse of finances). ***

Who Was God Calling unto a Solemn Assembly?

I. THE PRIESTS (Joel 1:13)

II. THE ELDERS (Joel 1:14c)

III. THE NATION (Joel 1:14d)

I. THE PRIESTS (Joel 1:13)

God begins with His leadership before moving to the people.

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

I Corinthians 4:2

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded: and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

Luke 12:48b

God requires His leadership to be worthy of their calling. Any who turn aside thinking that the master is delaying His coming and begin to beat the servants of the Lord and eat drink and get drunk will be cut into pieces and assigned a place with the unbelievers (Luke 12:45,46). God is calling His ministers to allow Him to search their hearts and bring to light that which is hidden. Pastoral leadership must be very careful not to fall into the snares of the enemy. We must walk an exemplary life so no accusation can be brought forward that would bring shame to God and His people.

“We shunned the sensational and spectacular for solid spiritual growth and were especially cautious regarding guest speakers to avoid the unscrupulous. We did not desire to grow by excitement at the expense of integrity while preaching a message of spiritual growth and development.”

Dr. Daryl Merrill, Sr.
Christian Life Church
Mt. Prospect, Illinois, Sr. Pastor
Christian Life College, President Emeritus, Chairman of the Board

As difficult as these things may appear, we the spiritual leadership of the church must be constantly on our guard against anything that will bring opportunity for slander to gain its slimy foot in the kingdom of God. Nothing and no one is exempt from the searching eyes of the Lord. Many churches have got to get back to what God has designed them to be.

We have for too long had the wrong kind of preachers creating the wrong kind of Christians by declaring the wrong kind of message driven by the wrong kind of motives. It's time for the priests to repent. Every day that passes by is an opportunity lost forever in time.

I. THE PRIESTS (Joel 1:13)(Contd.)

The O.T. priests were called upon to be mediators between God and man. They were given strict commandments and statutes to abide by if they were to stand before the Lord on behalf of the people. They were called upon to deal with the **external** duties of their religion by performing the daily sacrifices, ceremonial washings and proclaim to the people to follow special diets and days. The prophets on the other hand were called upon to deal with **internals**.

“The priest’s main job was to preserve the past and protect the status quo. But the prophet’s job was to interpret the present in the light of the past and then give guidance that would help guarantee the future.”

“The Integrity Crisis”
Warren Wiersbe
p. 63

Joel was called upon by God to declare a message to the priests to move toward an internal searching (much like the work of the laver) before performing their daily duties. They were to humble themselves by putting on sackcloth and mourning all through the night before the altar of the LORD (Joel 1:13).

They were to call the people to fast and gather for a sacred assembly (Joel 1:14) in order to declare their sincerity and humility before the LORD. But this call had to go well beyond the ears and hearts of the priests.

II. THE ELDERS (Joel 1:14c)

*“Be dressed and ready for service and keep your lamps burning,
36. Like men waiting for their master to return from a banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.”*

Luke 12:35,36

The elders played an important role in Israel. They were highly respected and sought after during times when guidance when needed. They sat at the gates of the city and carefully watched and guarded what entered and exited the city’s main routes.

When the elders began to let down the standards of the city, it was not long before disaster, drought and destruction encompassed the walls of the city. They were gifted with a unique discernment to know what was right and what was wrong. They made their decisions not simply based upon the present but also what it would do in the future.

II. THE ELDERS (Joel 1:14c)(Contd.)

“What we tolerate today, we will embrace tomorrow.”

Unknown

Elders have a keen eye for deciphering the future based upon the present changes.

“If I were to ask you to describe in one word the present situation of the church as you see it, what word would you select?

Revival? I doubt it, but I wish it were true!

Renewal? Perhaps in some ministries; but for the most part, its *‘business as usual.’*

Reassessment? Yes, a lot of studies are going on, and we hope they will be useful.

Ruin? Not as long as God is on the throne and there are people willing to listen and obey!

After a good deal of thought, I’ve come to the conclusion that the one word that best describes the Evangelical church situation today is **reproach**, and I have a feeling that many people agree me . . . Scandal seems to be the order of our day . . . we are facing an **integrity crisis**. Not only is the **conduct** of the church in question, but so is the very **character** of the church.

For 19 centuries, the church has been telling the world to admit its sins, repent, and believe the gospel. Today, in the twilight of the 20th century, the world is telling the church to face up to her sins, repent, and start being that true Church of that gospel.”

“*The Integrity Crisis*”

Warren Wiersbe

Oliver -Nelson Books p. 15-17

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The elders had lived long enough to gain understanding and so they could apply wisdom to those who looked up to them. They had been chastened through time and trouble. They had proven the fact that they had put their hand to the plow and not looked back.

During the days of Moses the people had grown to a point that the work load became unbearable for one man to handle. He alone could not judge between the disputes and problems that arose. God gave him an answer to his problem.

“*Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you.*”

Deuteronomy 1:13

II. THE ELDERS (1:14c) (Contd.)

I believe that it is the hour for the elders of our generation to stand and declare the need to call a solemn assembly. It is season to cry out with a repentant heart. It is the day to wear sackcloth – not the wedding garment. The bride of Christ is not ready for our Groom to appear. That day of rejoicing is soon to come. **Now is the day to prepare ourselves.** Those who just wait will miss out on the day of rejoicing.

The elders need to warn the virgins to prepare oil for their lamps. Today is the day to buy oil (**Matthew 25:1-13**). Those who do not keep a close watch will be shut out when the call to attend the banquet is declared.

** Little Mary was at her first wedding and gaped at the entire ceremony. When it was over, she asked her mother, *"Why did the lady change her mind?"*

Her mother asked, *"What do you mean?"*

"Well, she went down the aisle with one man, and came back with another one."

Changing our mind is not always a bad thing. In fact, it's the essence of repentance. A definition of repentance I heard in college has stuck with me -- ***"a change of mind leading to a change of life."*** It's so true; before we can change our lives, we must first of all have a change of mind about what we have done.

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III. THE NATION (Joel 1:14d)

Both our priests and elders need to set an example for our nation to follow. We must begin in the church – but the change in the church must spread out to change our nation. God is beginning a work within His church that is long overdue.

“One of the church fathers said that the church was something like Noah’s ark: if it weren’t for the judgement on the outside, you could never stand the smell on the inside.”

“The Integrity Crisis”
Warren Wiersbe
p. 11

*** Some Christians seem to have missed the significance of *repentance* for the new life to which God calls his children. Grace not only offers pardon but also demands and produces transformation.

“But that wasn't the case with me,” protests someone. “I genuinely repented of my past when I came to Christ, but I just can't break away from pornography (or cursing or fornication or alcohol).”

That is distinctly possible. In order to defeat sin, however, one must go beyond remorse and sincere determination to turn away from evil. He or she must take an additional step of “burning the boats.”

When Julius Caesar landed on the shores of England with his well-armed legions, he simultaneously made a bold and decisive move to guarantee the success of his campaign. He marched his men to the edge of the Cliffs of Dover and ordered them to look down at the ships that had brought them across the channel. Every one of them was ablaze! General Caesar had cut off the possibility of a pull back. Now that his soldiers were unable to return to the continent, there was nothing left for them to do but advance and conquer. And that is precisely what they did. ***

Rubel Shelly

The Church needs become desperate for God. **A burden** must grip our hearts or else **a burning** will spread across our nation. Joel’s prophecy spread to **“all who live in the land.”** (Joel 1:14d). He was declaring a solemn assembly that would eventually encompass the entire nation. The Day of the LORD was near and the people needed to get ready. **There was no time for delay.** It is even more important today for time is running out.

III. THE NATION (1:14d)(Contd.)

Perhaps you have heard of Rembrandt (1606-1669), one of the greatest Dutch painters. Rembrandt, in a unique manner, was able to combine the skill of art and poetry to create a type of portraiture which had been untried. He gave his painting an air of mystery while combining action, drama and violent contrasts of light and dark. This is quite evident in "*The Night Watch*," painted in 1642, and possibly the climax of his work. With dramatic light affects, it is regarded as one of the world's finest paintings-- unified, unsurpassed and truly a great visual experience . . .

Yet, there were days when Rembrandt wished he was never born. Yes, he did marry a prominent Dutch girl and became wealthy as he built up a large art portfolio. But tragedy struck as his 3 young children died and his wife died 8 years after their marriage. Rembrandt withdrew from society and his popularity diminished. He made some poor financial decisions and could not pay his debtors. He married his housekeeper who helped protect his works from creditors. Alas, she died soon after, along with his son, Titus. When Rembrandt died, people had almost entirely forgotten him.

However, his last painting, "*The Prodigal Son*," depicts the true Rembrandt. It reveals a son, kneeling at the feet of the Father, crushed and repentant, seeking pardon for the life he had squandered. The Father extends a hand of love and forgiveness, while offering hope and consolation. **Rembrandt was this son.** He realized he was the lost son who had recklessly lavished the family fortunes away. The scene is sad, melancholy - yet tinged with an enigmatic aura of expectant hopefulness. Though considering himself a failure, Rembrandt sensed the Father's arm of mercy and grace embracing him.

This story of the Prodigal Son, taken from Luke Chapter 15 in the Bible, draws to a climax in verse 24, "*This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! So they began to celebrate.*" This verse is not limited to Rembrandt; it is open for fugitives like you and me, who come to a point in life where there is no other choice but to go Home and ask our Father for acceptance and renewal. Do you get the picture?

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It is time for our nation to return to God - One by One.

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Date: Feb 13/22

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30Am

Song: More of You (Jesus I am Thirsty) - D; Refiner's Fire - F

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II. THE ELDERS (Joel 1:14c) - *Luke 12:35,36; Deuteronomy 1:13; Matthew 25:1-13*

III. THE NATION (Joel 1:14d)