

## ***Hurricane Katrina – What God’s People Would Do Now***

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Was hurricane Katrina an “act of God” to wake up America – and especially New Orleans and the Gulf coast? Are you praying for the evacuees? What are you actively *doing* about the problem? Would you have ever prayed for Sodom, or Babylon? You’ll be surprised who did!

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*This is early September and Hurricane Katrina has come and wreaked her terrible blow on much of the Southeast coastline, as you all know. The biggest game in town in its aftermath, as I prepare this, is “the blame-game”. But what is YOUR responsibility as a child of God?*

Was Katrina a mere fluke of nature – or was it God’s punishment on a sinful area, as some claim? Everyone calls these kinds of disasters – “acts of God”. *Are they?* Either way, what should a Christian’s response be, according to scripture?

**What have we done so far, dear Christian?** How do we *feel* about it? What are we *doing* about it? What would Jesus be saying and doing right now? ***How is Jesus working in you in the aftermath?*** Are we praying for the victims? Are we sending financial help? Or have we done nothing at all?

I’ve prepared this sermon as a wakeup call also to ME. *I* fall short way too many times of what the ideal is, and I needed this study myself, and hope you can gain from it as well. I hope it will cause you to take action in the areas we’ll be discussing, if you haven’t already. Many Christians are helping tremendously – and some just shake their heads, doing nothing but judging and criticizing.

Are we praying that we *as a nation* learn what lessons we need to learn from all of this? Are we striving to hear God’s message through all the calamity, through all the noise and the confusion around this disaster? *Is God even in our thoughts enough during all this turmoil?*

***Are we praying for those people – that they can start over, that they can find their missing children and loved ones, that they can feel some hope?*** Are you taking concrete steps to help hope happen? Or do you feel – like some few do, **not** my opinion, to be sure – that we should *not* pray for people on whom has come the wrath of God? I hasten to say again, I’m *not* of that opinion as I’ll demonstrate by scripture.

I know **people who use a few verses in the book of Jeremiah** and a couple in the New Testament even to “prove” that we should not be praying for people “of the world”. I hope today to explain those verses in context – and, help each of you hearing this to examine your own hearts, attitudes and beliefs – and check to see if they square with what Master Jesus *really* is teaching us.

I want this sermon today to be very to the point and hopefully get us all thinking. I want this to be God’s words to us, so I will use scripture a lot, the words of God, to get us thinking like He thinks.

***For those of you in far away lands, my brothers and sisters in KENYA for example, though I’m talking about a catastrophe in America, you can apply the principles to your own situations that you face in your countries.*** So for those of you in Nairobi and Kitale, I have not forgotten you. But certainly East Africa has seen more than its own share of indescribable catastrophes. Who can forget the famines in Somalia and Biafra or the Sudan? Who can forget the 850,000 or more who

were butchered by tribalism in Rwanda? I know a pastor in Kitale, Kenya who speaks out regularly against tribalism. So our brethren in East Africa and around the globe know catastrophe undoubtedly in so many ways we have not yet experienced in America. ***No doubt they could teach us a thing or two about what it means to be without, to have hardship and how to get on with life – in spite of little or no water, food, power, no car, or supplies.*** I can almost see the smiles on their faces now, as they can’t imagine Americans even knowing the meaning of the word “hardship”. Many of them have *never* had running water. Some have never had electricity. We complain if the power is out for a few hours, or if the water stops for a day or two.

But still, we have to admit that the gulf coast was hit hard. Block after block of homes in Loveland, MS were simply splintered! Katrina *was* something else. Many of us are being cleansed of wrong priorities and wrong values. **We realize in the end, Jesus was right: “life does NOT consist of the abundance of things which we possess” (Luke 12:15). Our lives are not about the kind of house we have, or the kind of car we drive, or the kind of job we hold – and that becomes painfully clear when all those are swept away in a moment.** That becomes clear as we see people simply trying to find their son, locate their aging dad; people trying to keep relationships together, or even just find mere vestiges of those relationships – a scrapbook, family albums, a special wedding ring.... and on and on.

***GOD, FAMILY, LOVED ONES, PEOPLE - - in a word, RELATIONSHIPS – is what becomes clearly most important in times like these.***

**And all the while, too many *could* be missing the biggest relationship of all that has to be rekindled: the relationship with the true God** of the universe, God Almighty and the relationship with His Son, our King and master, Jesus Christ. ***This is the time when the whole NATION, all of us – need to be looking up to God for answers, help and mercy. HE is the answer and the source of every single thing we need going forward. HE can bless us if we turn to him as a nation, begging His kindness and mercy and even forgiveness on the WHOLE nation—rather than pointing self-righteously at one area of the country, perhaps some even assuming that part of the country is somehow more wicked than most. We’ll address that in more detail in a minute.***

**I believe there will be some good things come out of this horrific disaster.** God’s people could be cleansed of biases and prejudices and opinions that are plain *wrong*. ***We’re starting to see more and more on the news examples that show there are still plenty of selfless and good people in our country.***

There will be other good things come out of this. Our unprepared country can use this time to become better prepared for catastrophes – something city, state and federal governments can learn from, as well as the average man and woman on the street. I certainly hope YOU are using this as a lesson for YOU to be better prepared for catastrophes – *especially spiritually*, but also physically. But ultimately our safety, protection and help is from God. I’ll give a sermon soon, probably titled something like “*Are you Prepared for the End time?*” But there ARE spiritual *and* physical things we should have in place, if we’re being given some time.

A big well known city – known for its partying spirit, its excesses at Mardi Gras, voodoo, topless bars and Cajun cuisine and world famous places to eat out at... ***is gone*** for the time being. It has a chance to ***rebuild into something superior***, better and cleaner than what it ever was, if we’ve learned some lessons – or it can go the other way and zoom into even more excesses than it was known for

before. I have been in New Orleans on business twice, for several days each time. As a son of God, I personally did not feel comfortable with much of what surrounded us while we were there.

**But still, having said that, I’ve heard estimates, I hope inflated, that one million plus people could be homeless!** Several *hundred thousand* could be displaced for *months* or years. Hundreds of people don’t know where various children are. Some have missing parents, grandparents. Toddlers have been separated from their moms. Thousands of homes are literally still under water. Hundreds more other homes have simply disappeared - - blown apart by 140-150 mph winds. And hundreds will be found dead – probably not the 10,000 the mayor estimated, but certainly hundreds. A real disaster!

A lot of press given to the BAD examples – the looters – and those who have shot at police or helicopters. It is true, we’ve heard about roving gangs, and women and girls raped in the Superdome or convention center. We’ve heard about the whiners and complainers. ***But then again, how pleasant would you and I have been in the same situation – without water, without a bed, without medicines, without food, without changes of clothes, or running water, no flush toilets, no phones, no electricity, no car, and perhaps separated from loved ones, and no way of hearing from them!?***

I hope to God we would have been better examples, but **let’s not rush to judgment**, not having walked in their shoes. And yes, we can even wonder why people didn’t leave when urged to leave – and now many of them are dead or homeless.

But in spite of all that, when you have 1 MILLION homeless, ***there have also been countless people who have been courageous, giving of themselves. These people need to be remembered, will be praised by God, and have their reward!*** There have also been countless victims who *have* waited patiently, have gotten down to cleaning up and getting back to the world of the living. But as usual, the news has largely focused on the *negative* news. **I’m glad that we’re being shown more lately of the many, many examples of people who are grateful for help, who are coping, who are helping even though their own home is gone.**

**Credit should be given where credit is due.** MANY are being very generous right now – of their time, their lives, their homes, their wallets. For every depressing story there are stories that LIFT the HEART! **80% of the New Orleans police force also lost *their* own homes – but most of them are out there trying to help the best they can, without communication, without cars, without a way to be supervised.** Yes, it’s true that *some* policemen left their posts. Probably many of them were trying to be sure their own families were safe. **Let’s not be so harsh**, unless we know all the circumstances – and only GOD knows that. And what of the many, many others who are working 20 hour days, often at risk to their own lives and health? Doctors, nurses, relief workers – working tirelessly, pushing past fatigue, to save lives, bind wounds, disinfect open sores? What about the *incredible* example of the Salvation Army, who *are* visiting the sick, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry? I heard one religious organization is cooking 500,000 meals a day!

Just as some people point to the many *bad* examples as proof we must be at the very end of this age – there are people doing what Jesus said to do: giving, giving, giving. *Even children and teens:* I read a story of a couple of young sisters in Tillamook, Oregon who asked their dad if he could help them coordinate some food relief and the whole town got into the spirit of donating fruit, bread, drinking water,

***Now I speak pointedly to my audience. Some of you may not like this. Some people who call themselves Christian excuse their inaction by saying very judgmental things like:***

- pointing to the bad examples of looters who were looting way more than food and water
- condemning the lack of judgment of those who stayed after being warned to leave
- some even conclude this is God’s punishment on what they deem to be a very wicked city and these people feel it would be wrong to interfere with God’s action!
- Others feel this is just one more big case of people demanding handouts; the welfare mentality

I hope, if you feel that way, that *you* won’t be tested with the same stresses these people are under. Up to *one million* potentially homeless. If it ends up being only HALF that figure – *half* a million – it’s still an *unprecedented* catastrophe. Let’s praise the *good* that people are doing, let’s let ourselves be *inspired* by those walking the Master’s walk – rather than finding fault with people and the systems where they’ve failed.

**Is this a wake-up call from God?** I think we should leave that decision to God, but I think it would be prudent to at least be aware that God did warn His people that if He is not pleased with the nation, that more and more things would progressively go wrong. So it IS entirely possible that God is trying to get our attention that some things need some spiritual attention in this country, but *not* isolated to the gulf coast, as I’ll show you. **I think the balance to convey is that IF this is truly an “act of God” – then it’s a warning for the whole nation.** You should some time read the entire chapter of **Deuteronomy 28**, to see the warnings God has for the whole nation, if we don’t turn our hearts back to Him fully and completely.

I feel – since God is aware of all things and controls the weather – that God is beginning a series of events that are happening every faster and more frequently, with ever greater intensity, to *get our attention* as a *nation*, not just a region here and there.

**I believe God is warning ALL of us, everyone,** to pray more, clean up our lives, look to HIM more and stand up for righteousness and truth – or else we will see more and more so-called “natural disasters” happening. If we don’t listen, God will begin to send these kinds of things to all corners of the country to give this nation the chance to once more be His people in thought, word and deed.

If there is any basis for what I’ve just said, **we could see in the next decade more and more natural disasters**, catastrophic hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, hail, droughts, famines, disease epidemics – increasing in frequency and severity – as God tries to get our nation’s attention.

***In any case let each of us hearing this, be strengthening our own relationship with our Maker - one-on-one*** – with *much* more prayer, *much* more Bible study, *much* more repentance and fasting, and *much more* obedience and good deeds of service to all around us. Much more being a LIGHT, and much less being a self-righteous bullhorn!

**But did this happen because New Orleans and the Mississippi coast is somehow more evil than the rest of the country?** Brethren, I plead - please don’t! *Don’t even go there!* That’s being *judgmental*, when the lesson is for *all* of us to look up to God for answers and direction! Listen carefully to the words of Christ Himself when He realized some of the people of His day were thinking judgmentally.

**Luke 13:1-5** “There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, **"Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things?** 3 I tell you, no; but unless **you** repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; **but unless you repent you** will all likewise perish."

*Today our Lord would ask, "Do you think the people of New Orleans are worse sinners than all other Americans because they suffered such things? I tell you 'no', but unless you repent you will likewise perish." HIS EMPHASIS: DON'T LOOK AT THEM as if THEY are the problem. Just get your own act with God straightened out! If you have pointed the finger at New Orleans, and they're so-called evils, learn the lesson: we should each focus on our own need to repent as Jesus said! Even righteous DANIEL repented for his own sins when asking God to be merciful to the entire nation (Daniel 9:1-19).*

When confronted by a man born blind from birth, once again the natural tendency was to wonder why God was punishing this man. What had he done?

**John 9:2-4** “And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, *who sinned*, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 Jesus answered, "*Neither* this man nor his parents sinned, **but that the works of God should be revealed in him**".

*It is CLEAR to me that Katrina is bringing out the very worst – and the very best – in our country and our countrymen. Some groups like Salvation Army are **living** the description of what Jesus said His people would be doing for others who needed them. Whatever you think of the Salvation Army, at this moment they are doing a ton to help people. Dear Christian, don't remain on the sidelines. At LEAST give generously a donation to Salvation Army or Red Cross or other groups that can help and use your dollars – if you can't physically help out. (Please be turning to Luke 6)*

*Some OTHER Christians can sometimes be some of the most calloused and judgmental... sometimes. If you see yourself, repent – and remember to let GOD do any judging HE feels is necessary – but don't forget that GOD IS LOVE, and LOVE is one of the biggest hallmarks of those who are truly HIS. But instead, I hear some condemnation of the people of New Orleans going on, and I feel called to say – KNOCK IT OFF! Who made YOU the judge of your neighbor? There are sins going on in every town, city, and state in the country!*

**Now let's hear what God says to us through His God-breathed words—the holy Scripture**, and I'm going to address the issues of *some* who feel we should *not* pray for people in the world, or should not interfere with what they see as the punishment of God on what they judge to be a very evil city. I hope we can get past that and *still* help, whether your opinions on that are true or not. **Here's what your LORD and Savior says:**

**Luke 6:30-38** “**Give to everyone who asks of you.** [Any ambiguity there?] And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31 **And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.**

*If you had no food, no water, no bed – no matter WHY you have no food or water or bed – what would you hope people would do to help YOU? **Now go do it for them.***

*If you were penniless, what would you pray would happen for **you**? Now you go make it happen in whatever little or big way you can.*

*If you were in this mess, would you want people judging and condemning you in any way? Then let’s be sure we’re not judging and condemning. That’s what “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” means!*

*You may think, “but I don’t know if they would help ME in the same situation. I don’t know if they’d even appreciate the help or not”? Let’s read more of what our Christ says to us.*

**32 "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.**

*Now you might be tempted to think – “but we can’t be stupid around people who may try to rob you or are shooting at you”. Jesus keeps it simple. Some – I hope just a few and not the many -- claim they aren’t going to be overly generous because so many seem unthankful and even evil – shooting at police officers, at rescue helicopters... so they have an excuse not to help what they’ve deemed to be undeserving people. The rest of verse 35 says – **QUOTING OUR MASTER:***

**“For HE [GOD] is kind to the unthankful and evil. [read that again! GOD IS KIND EVEN TO THE UNKIND, EVEN TO UNTHANKFUL INGRATES! That’s what He’s like. If we are to be His children, we are to be like our Father! ] 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”**

*Then Jesus goes on to warn us against a judgmental attitude, of which there has been a lot!*

**Luke 6:37-38 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. *For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*"**

*You want mercy? Show mercy. You want to be cut a lot of slack – then cut them a lot of slack. The measuring rod we use will be the same measuring standards used on us!*

*I’ve just read a fine piece sent to me by a brother in central Washington called “A Sabbath Morning companion”, and it was written by a Leonard Cacchio. He mentions how God says He is aware when a sparrow falls from heaven. God does not prevent the sparrow falling, but is aware of it. If God is aware of a sparrow falling, surely God was aware of the 32 nursing home residents whom they’ve found dead. Surely God is aware of the orphaned children trying to find their parents. Are the parents in Houston, or a shelter in Mississippi, or dead?*

**2 Corinthians 5:20** reminds us that we are Ambassadors for Christ, our king and God. Rather than find ourselves self-righteously criticizing the whiners, looters, complainers and bandits – let’s not forget: up to ONE MILLION homeless! MOST of whom are NOT complaining, whining or looting.

In such times, *do those people see Christ in us at work?* If we can’t physically be down there helping out, are we at least contributing as much as we can financially? Are we willing to pray FOR our nation? And if you somehow think you shouldn’t be praying for our nation – please listen to the end, for I will absolutely PROVE we are to be! I wrote an article 3 years ago on this subject, and we’ll get into that.

What *did* Jesus say? If you give so much as *a cup of water* to these little ones in Jesus’ name – as if coming from Christ Himself – He would remember that, and honor **you (Mark 9:41; Matt. 10:42)**. These are the things that *show* we are “people of God”, that we are children of the Highest.

Because that is what God would do - - that is what God does: He sends rain on the just and the unjust. On the good and the evil. Remember? **Luke 6:35-36** – “For He is KIND to the *unthankful* and the evil. *Therefore be merciful*, for your Father in heaven is merciful.”

**ARE some unthankful, ungrateful? SURE! Help them, anyway!**

**ARE some shooting at helicopters? SURE! Thank God there are still helicopter pilots willing to do it, anyway! Pray our Lord protect and bless them.**

**Will some take advantage of our good will? SURE! Let’s show good will anyway!**

**Are some acting like you’re even the “enemy” and some are even shooting? SURE! Let’s LOVE our enemy anyway!**

**And thus let’s show we *are* the people of God!**

**God WARNS us *not* to be like those “who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!’” (Isaiah 65:5) -- for they are smoke in His nostrils!**

**Now, WHEN we do our good deeds, let’s do them quietly – without fanfare. SO MANY ARE helping out quietly.**

For example, I know there are over 700 Salvation Army workers ON THE SITE itself helping out! 700! I don’t know who they are, but GOD does. That’s not even including hundreds more nationwide helping from afar.

### **Matthew 6:1-4**

**"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them.**

Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. [*Toot your own horn and you blow your reward!*] 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do **not** sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 **that your charitable deed may be in secret**; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

*It's better your donations do NOT get publicized. It's better your name does NOT go on a park bench or inscribed in bricks in a city park.*

*Remember what our Lord said HE will say about this kind of thing when He returns:*

**Matthew 25:31-46**

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. **34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'**

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see **YOU hungry** and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**'

*Would YOU take a homeless disaster victim into your home? Would I?*

*We gotta think about our Teacher's words, don't we?*

*We have so many excuses why we wouldn't, why we shouldn't – they could rob us, they could take advantage of us, they might be bad people, on and on... Let's continue with our King:*

41 **"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'**

44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.**' 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

*The Sheep were people who saw a need – and DID something about it. They didn't just pray about it, but DID something.*

*Our King says He takes personally what we do to fellow man, and how we treat one another. And please don't take the cop-out that Jesus was referring to helping out His "brethren" – not people in general. PE-LEEZ! He doesn't even refer just to brethren in verse 45, for example. And are we to be good only to whom we consider "God's people"?*

*If you feel your help should be reserved only for fellow church members, what kind of light is that? Again, let's let God's word guide us.*



Prayer is good. And even JUST prayer is more than many are doing. But prayer in a time like this is not enough. God wants to see us take action to back up our requests in prayers.

**James 2:15-17 TEV**

15 Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. 16 What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!"--if you don't give them the necessities of life? 17 So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead.”

**1 John 3:16-19**

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 ***But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?***

18 My little children, ***let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed*** and in truth.”

**Isaiah 58:6-9**

6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness,  
To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?

7 ***Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;***

***When you see the naked, that you cover him,  
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?***

8 THEN your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily,  
And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

9 **Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;**

You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'

**"If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,**

*It's time for the finger pointing to stop – and let's get down to the business of helping.*

**Galatians 6:9-10** “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, **let us do good TO ALL**, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

*Notice we are to “do good to ALL”. I’ll soon post a sermon about our responsibility to the Poor and less fortunate. There are just countless scriptures about being generous to the needy and poor. God’s true people are heeding those scriptures right now.*

*I gotta ask you this: let’s say this was indeed a wake-up call from God, a swat across the behind to stop the rampant sins of our people, what should our attitude be in that case – IF that were indeed the case? And I hasten to add, to me that’s God’s call to make...*

*Beware of the PHARISEE in many of us – to be aloof, and separate. That is what “Pharisee” means – “Separated ones”. They felt they shouldn’t hang around too long around the low-lives around them. They loved looking down on others. Jesus condemned that attitude!*

***What do we read about Jesus? Here’s Jesus description of Himself in His own words:***

**Matthew 11:18-19** “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, '**Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!**' But wisdom is justified by her children.”

***He was called – by His own admission – “A FRIEND of SINNERS”** – even adulteresses and the demon possessed. Is this the Jesus, the son of God you know?*

***This is the Jesus I know—and love – because I know I am a sinner and He is a friend of repentant sinners, so I know I'm His friend too. I am in Him, and He is in me. I am His, and He is mine. I know I have accepted my Lord as my Savior, and He has accepted me, and He accepts you, and He will accept any repentant sinner.***

*If you are surfing the net and have happened upon this site, I urge you to kneel right now and ask Jesus to guide you into a relationship with Him, asking Him to forgive you totally and completely. And He does, and He will! And you be a friend even of sinners, as Jesus was, as Jesus is. Are you copying and imitating Him in those ways – or do you act more like a self-righteous Pharisee who has to distance himself or herself from the low-lives of the world?\*

*I am consciously trying to be more friendly with the so-called sinners of the world, for I am also a sinner, after all. In times past I've even been a “chief sinner”. But by the grace of God, I am changing, and so are many of you. By the grace of God, I'm covered by His gracious blood He gave for me, and for you, and for all who call out on His name. You can experience that grace too.*

*Let's continue reading.*

**Matthew 11:20-24** “Then He began to rebuke the cities **in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:** 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in SODOM, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

*Are you getting what He's saying here? The religious city of Capernaum – I've been in the remnant of the old synagogue there, stood right there – that city won't do as well in the judgment, for we are judged partly on what we are given. They had the very son of God in their midst and they didn't repent! And Sodom would have repented like Nineveh did, Jesus says, had they had the same opportunity!*

*That's an amazing statement! So don't be too hard on homosexuals and sodomites... your Lord was kinder to Sodom than to Capernaum! They also have a future when God opens their mind to see and understand His ways. Please be turning to Genesis 19.*

**WOULD YOU HAVE EVER PRAYED FOR SODOM?**

In fact, I have a tough question for you: Could you see yourself ever praying for a modern day SODOM to be spared – or does that seem like such a “way out” question to even ask?

**Gen 18:16-33** Abraham had just entertained the One who is called “God” and LORD here and most likely was the one who became Jesus Christ in the New Testament. After having a meal, here’s what it says next:

**Genesis 18:16-33** “Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” 20 **And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”** [Abraham could tell this was serious]

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. 23 And Abraham came near and said, [he’s about to confront God Himself!] “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 **Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it?** 25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

26 So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, **then I will spare ALL the place for their sakes.**”

WOW! GOD says He’s willing to spare SODOM itself if there were so-many righteous in it. *God changes not. If it weren’t for the elect, God’s chosen, there would no flesh be saved alive in the end time, but because you, dear Christian, know your God, God is indeed to going to spare this planet from being totally annihilated. The survival of the human race is depending largely on the fact that there are a people of God remaining active and vital on this planet.*

*Don’t ever feel you count for nothing. So GOD WOULD HAVE SPARED SODOM THE DEVASTATION it experienced, had there been enough righteous people left in it. ABRAHAM continues to haggle – all the way down to 10 righteous (verse 32).*

*Abraham was probably counting on Lot, Lot’s wife, his 2 single daughters, and his three married daughters and their husbands would have made 10, but the married kids and spouses did not take Lot seriously (Gen 19) and so there weren’t even 10 righteous believers.*

BUT HERE’S MY POINT: IN A WAY, ABRAHAM PRAYED FOR SODOM. And don’t forget that Abraham saved captured Sodomites in **Genesis 14:13-16**, as well as saving his nephew Lot. Would *you* and I have done that?

Abraham **ALSO** prayed for Abimelech, the king of Gerar (**Genesis 20:7**). For that matter, **CYRUS**, the Persian emperor, asked God’s people to pray for him (**Ezra 6:3,10**). Why not? Paul said we *should* definitely be praying **for kings (do you know any converted kings out there?)** and all in positions of authority (**1 Timothy 2:1-5**).

### **SHOULD WE PRAY FOR PEOPLE “of the WORLD”?**

When was the last time you prayed for your boss to be saved, or your neighbor to come to relationship with God?

#### **Here’s what PAUL said:**

**Romans 9:1-5** “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 **that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.** 3 **For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,** 4 **who are Israelites**, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, **Christ** came, *who is over all, the eternally blessed God*. Amen.

*As an aside, **do** note that Christ is Himself called **THE** eternally blessed God, over all! He is fully God, part of the **one** God who **only** can be worshiped. But the point of me reading this is in verse 3 – where Paul says he’d give up his salvation for the nation’s sake, if he could.*

**Rom. 10:1** “Brethren, my heart’s desire and **prayer to God for Israel** is that they may be saved”

WHEN did you and I last pray for OUR country? Those of you in Kenya – are YOU praying for an outpouring of God’s spirit in *your* country? We Americans, Canadians, Britons – are we praying our **nation** wakes up? Or do you think somehow we are not to be praying for the nation? **Paul** would disagree with you! **In Romans 9:3** He says he’s willing to give up his own salvation if that could mean all Israel could be saved!

Would *you* give up your salvation as Paul implies, would you give up your future, for the salvation of your countrymen? ***Don’t say you would, if you’re not regularly praying for your nation!***

### **What about Jeremiah?**

I know, I know. Some of you are thinking “but what about the verses in Jeremiah, where God specifically told **Jeremiah** NOT to pray for the people? Wouldn’t we be disobeying God’s word if we start praying for people of the world?” Let’s tackle that misunderstanding right now. I wrote a whole article for a church publication 3 years ago on this very topic.

There are 3 passages in Jeremiah where the prophet is told not to pray for the people of his day, at that time. Here they are:

**Jeremiah 11:14** "So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.

**Jeremiah 14:11-12** "Then the LORD said to me, "Do **not pray for this people, for their good**. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence."

The fact that Jeremiah has to be told more than once *not* to pray for them, implies he *was* praying, and had to be told more than once to *quit*. Seems clear enough, doesn't it, but let's understand.

You might remember that **MOSES** certainly prayed for the nation of Israel when God back then was willing to blot them out (**Numbers 16:41-50**). And God listened. When God allowed Israel to have a human king, saying they had rejected GOD from ruling over them, the people asked Samuel to please pray for them, and **Samuel said it would be a sin for him if he quit praying** for them (1 **Samuel 12:19-23**).

Keep your thumb there in Jeremiah, we'll come right back to it, but let's read the passage in Samuel: **1 Samuel 12:19-25** "And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

20 **Then Samuel said** to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. 21 And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. 22 For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. 23 Moreover, as for me, **far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you**; but I will teach you the good and the right way. 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

By Jeremiah's day, the wickedness had grown so great that Samuel's prophecy was about to happen.

So God *next* tells Jeremiah that even if Moses and Samuel themselves were interceding, it would go nowhere THIS time, for God had made up His mind.

**Jeremiah 15:1** "Then the LORD said to me, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth."

***This COULD NOT have been a command for God's people for all time, because we also see other prophets and apostles and even Jesus Himself all PRAYED FOR THE PEOPLE.*** Let's look at a few, but my main reason for going through all this is NOT for a doctrinal exercise – but to get us, the people of God, doing this: Praying FOR the nation, praying for our unconverted neighbors, praying we can be better lights than we've ever been. I preach to myself, too!

Even Jeremiah himself later adds this—straight from God's lips. **Would you ever pray for Babylon?** That's a weird question, you say?

**Jeremiah 29:4-8** “Thus says the **LORD** of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom **I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:**

5 Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters -- that you may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 *And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, **and pray to the LORD for it**; for in its peace you will have peace.*”

Some of you hearing this message today may unfortunately be among those taken into captivity during the coming days of Great Tribulation – and IF that ever happens to any of us, remember this verse. Pray for the city into which we may be taken captive. That would be hard to do. What is GOD saying: *PRAY FOR BABYLON!*

As an aside: **there is an end-time Babylon** which will take America and the modern day descendants of Israel captive someday – **that Babylon will be centered in EUROPE** – and when that times comes, remember this. That end time Babylon will *never* be rebuilt! But God clearly says Israel, taken captive by that Babylon, will be. The USA is *not* the end time Babylon, though it has absorbed many Babylonish ways. We’ll be taken captive BY the end-time Babylon; we’re not Babylon ourselves. The Babylon of the Bible is depicted in Revelation 17 and 18 as “THE whore”, the residence of every foul spirit.

God’s church, the people of God, is depicted as a *different woman* – NOT “The Whore” – in Revelation 12, and *that woman of Rev 12 is attacked* by Satan and Babylon, the whore of Rev 18. So it’s clear, that though the USA has many sins, and is called “Egypt and Sodom” in various places, *it is never called Babylon to the best of my knowledge*, but is taken captive BY Babylon of the end days.

**The end time Babylon is NOT Iraq, is NOT New York, is NOT the USA – but is probably going to be centered in the coming power house of Europe, allied with a powerful international church leader who will appear gentle as a lamb but will be truly evil, though appearing good.** Europe is not there yet, but watch—it will be the new powerhouse. At the same time China, Japan, India and the rest of Asia will also become a growing power-bloc, and the US and Britain will steadily, rapidly decline, probably within the coming decade or two.

*Let’s get back to the topic of praying for the unconverted, the uncalled, and the nation itself:*

After Jeremiah, **DANIEL** certainly did not understand the verses in Jeremiah to mean that he, Daniel, should not pray for his countrymen. **Most of Daniel 9, is all about praying that God forgive his countrymen** and let them return to Jerusalem. But what is particularly striking about Daniel’s prayer – and a lesson for you and me – is that when HE prayed for his countrymen, he **asked God’s mercy and pardon on HIMSELF as well**. His prayer was so humble: “WE have sinned”, he says over and over. Read it for yourself, especially how he concludes his prayer in **Daniel 9:16-19!** God was so moved by Daniel’s prayer that He dispatches **GABRIEL**, one of the cherubs who stands before the Almighty, to give Daniel the answer and a new prophecy!

**Ezekiel**, in the same captivity, prophesies that God puts a MARK—a good one – on His people who “sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done” around us (**Ezekiel 9:4**). Those who moved by hurricanes, coming massive earthquakes, many natural disasters as well as terrorist attacks – are

so moved that they pray and supplicate God to help them, to come back soon, to intervene, to be *merciful* to this nation! And *those* people, concerned enough to PRAY and weep, will be the ones spared!

### **1 Timothy 2:1-5**

“Therefore I exhort first of all that **supplications, PRAYERS, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made FOR ALL MEN (for everybody!)**, 2 *for kings and all who are in authority*, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior**, 4 **who desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

*So, how are we doing, dear people of God? ARE you one with a mark from God on your spirit?*

Even JESUS Himself *wept* over Jerusalem, and said He wanted to “gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34).

When Jesus says in John 17:9 that He wasn’t, at that moment, praying for the world, it didn’t preclude the hundreds of times He did! Just at that moment in John 17, His prayer was for the disciples only. But we *know* Jesus prayed for people of the world countless times!

- How many people did Jesus *heal* who had God’s spirit? NONE. The spirit hadn’t come yet in Acts 2 .
- On the cross, as the people mocked and taunted our Savior, what does Jesus do? Once more He prays FOR those unconverted people, and implores His dear Abba, God in heaven, “Father, FORGIVE them [unconverted, violent murderers right below Him], for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). What clearer *example* could we have?
- Jesus also teaches us to pray for people, who are obviously unconverted, and people who are in fact our enemies:

### **Matthew 5:43-48**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

*This is pretty clear, isn’t it? Love, bless, do good even for those who may not appreciate you or your efforts. And then pray for those who treat you badly. Pray FOR them. “Praying for them” doesn’t mean pray that they die or get a terrible disease or something! (ha!) But praying FOR them IS what makes us stand out as lights and children of our Father in heaven.*

Continuing on with Jesus’ words:

**Matt 5:46-48** “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be [become]

perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (“Perfect” here means “fully mature, full grown”)

*In the wake of Katrina is a great time to be a light. It’s a great opportunity for church groups to be down there, for pastors to be encouraging their flock to do something. Like Jesus’ words to the goats and sheep – “You saw ME hungry – and DID something. You saw me naked – and DID something. You saw me homeless, a stranger in a new community – and took me in, you DID something.”*

Or are we going to just be like the negative example in the book of 1 John – where when we find out a need, we kindly say something TRITE and a CLICHÉ almost – “You’ll be in my prayers. I’ll pray for you.”

NO! They need food, they need water, they need a roof, they need a new life, they need Ambassadors for Christ showing God’s children DO something themselves, besides praying about a situation!

**STEPHEN** follows Christ’s perfect example and does something similar in **Acts 7:59-60**, when he does a supplication for his murderers, and prays to Jesus not to charge them with sin. Yes, here’s a great example of praying to Jesus, which is perfectly alright, since Jesus is also fully God, part of the one true God, and therefore Jesus can be worshipped and prayed to.

I hope by now it’s very clear. We are not to be part of the *ways* of this world, but we *are* commanded to live as lights in a dark world. If we left completely, where would be the light? A light is not needed where there are lots of other lights. A light – your life, my life, our sacrifices – a light is *most* needed where it is the *darkest*. That is why Jesus was called a ‘FRIEND of sinners’.

He did not come to call the righteous – or those who *thought* they were – but to call sinners to repentance and into union with God. The *sick need a physician*, He taught. Jesus is the physician. The sick includes you and me – and He has made us well spiritually – and so now let’s bring the light of His way into the darkened world and be servers and helpers.

We’re not of the world – but we pray for the world.

We don’t love the **WAYS** of the world – but we would give up our lives for its people.

We do not regularly practice the sins of the world – but we are merciful to the sinners.

(I said “regularly practice” for we all stumble and sin still from time to time)

**Let’s help every possible way we can** – like the sheep on Jesus’ right hand who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and were friends of the strangers, taking them in, if we possibly can. Or we find ways to help them find the help they need.

True help is rarely convenient, seldom easy. We have our own bills to pay. We have our own setbacks. But God’s people go above and beyond. . . or are you?

Every single day, pray for our leaders. Pray for your city, your nation. And pray that God be merciful to you and me as a central part of your prayer for the nation, taking our cues from Daniel. Pray “thy kingdom come”. Pray for your neighbors. And then back up those prayers with action to live the light, any way you can. To walk our talk, to back up our faith with works of service and good deeds to our neighbor. I preach to myself. I fall so far short so often too.



But this is a golden opportunity to be gentle lights, inspiring ambassadors, helpful servants, loving children of a merciful and loving Father. God bless you. Til next time.... This is Philip Shields, your brother and servant.

[www.LightontheRock.com](http://www.LightontheRock.com)

Philip W. Shields