**Soul-Searching**

We live in perilous times. The danger is in some ways as severe as in WW2, where Europe faced the neo-paganism of the Nazis, and all of western civilization was in danger. The current danger is not from a military invasion (yet), but of internal decay, moral rot, and the rise of a different kind of paganism. The US and Europe are facing destruction by uncontrolled and overwhelming immigration of people who desire the benefits of our society, but no desire to become the kind of people that made it possible. We are also being flooded by violent Venezuelan gangs, Islamic terrorists, and Chinese spies. Over 35,000 Chinese people, mostly single men, are known to have entered the country just this year. How did they get permission to leave Communist China?

Some people will give up and say it is impossible to recover from this, that God’s judgment is upon us, and there is no hope for recovery. This may be true, but we must not take such despair or hopelessness merely from what we see around us. For the first several years of WW2 it looked like the Nazi advance was utterly unstoppable and their victory assured. But God not only raised up a man, Winston Churchill, who could rally the spirits of the English to resist, but there was a man named Rees Howells who was used in intercession against Hitler and the Nazi forces. He and a group of people in his Bible college prayed all through the war against the Nazi perils and for the Allies, and it was those prayers that allowed the miraculous success of the Dunkirk evacuation, and the deliverance of Britain from a Nazi land invasion, and the Battle of Britain in the air, and D-Day, and many other major events of the war, as well as the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. They were motivated not just for their own deliverance, but that the way would be open for the gospel to go forth to the nations.

I would highly recommend the book “Rees Howells, Intercessor”, by Norman Grubb. Just $9.14 on Amazon.

Recently I taught a lesson called “Praying for a Dying Nation”, which is very similar to this lesson, and I keep coming back to 2 Chron. 7:14 – “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

We need to turn from our wicked ways. It is easy to see the wickedness of society (abortion, murders, rapes, drag queen readings at libraries for kids, …), but 2 Chron. 7:14 is addressed to God’s people. I recently said that I have no wicked ways that I am aware of – by this I meant that I try to confess sins as soon as I recognize them, and to live washed by the Blood. But the significant phrase is “that I am aware of”. Perhaps there is wickedness that I should be aware of and am not.

I don’t want to point the finger at this or other churches, but I think we can all agree that the “American church” is not all that it should be. We think all is well because we have fancy buildings, large gathering areas with coffee bars and kids playgrounds and video games, an abundance of small groups to cater to our hobby interests, because we have record numbers of baptisms, etc. Some “churches” have become support groups for the LGBT movement, and proudly employ them as church ministers. In many churches there appears to be a great emphasis on the external programs and properties (now called church “campuses”). Support groups may be dedicated to special interests like single mothers, divorcees, young people, addictions, etc. Some of this is evil, some neutral, and some OK, but what of our central mission, to advance the kingdom of God and see people saved?

We cannot repent for other people, but we can pray and intercede, that the Holy Spirit would bring them to repentance. Perhaps as we do that we should begin by searching for real but unrecognized wickedness in our own lives. I know some people are crippled by the fear that there is some unconfessed sin that God will condemn them for, so I am not advocating for endless introspection. But we should be examining ourselves to make sure we are not being careless or ignoring real sins.

2 Cor. 13:5 – “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.”

There is a healthy introspection that examines oneself so we do not delude ourselves that “everything is fine” if it is not. We want to yield to the word of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit so we are living in truth and fulfilling all his purpose for us as individuals.

Let this be the sincere cry of our hearts: Ps. 139:23-24 - **"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”** How vain, to try hiding our sins from an omniscient God! We should sincerely want God to search our hearts. Of course this is a figure of speech – he is already knows what is in our hearts without “searching”. What we really mean is, “God, show me what is in my own heart that is not right. Give me not just recognition of it, but conviction, and then repentance to truly resolve it. Cleanse me and wash me from it with the blood of Christ, that I may be pleasing in your sight. Then let me live free from that sin, and determined to walk in the light you have given.”

The Bible talks about “secret sins” – not just sins that we are trying to hide from other people, but sins that are a secret to ourselves, things we should be aware of but are not.

Ps. 19:12-13 – “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptious sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

Ps. 90:8 – “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”

Job 13:23 – “How many are mine iniquities and my sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.”

Oftentimes the Lord uses the Bible itself to reveal our sins to us.

Heb. 4:12 – “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

What do we do when we become aware of personal sins? Repent, turn from them, cry out for mercy and to place those sins under the blood of Christ. Cry out for a true and permanent cleansing, and restoration.

Ps. 51:2-3, 9-12 – “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. … Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine inquities. **Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free spirit.”**

We should be praying for revival in this country and the world, but first of all in our own hearts.

Ps. 80:19 – “Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

Ps. 85:6-9 – “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.”

We might be tempted to think there is nothing we can do, because we are just a very small group in a large country, and completely insignificant in the grand scheme of things. But that could be said about any church, no matter how large. We are responsible for our own lives and this particular church, and I believe that if we and other Christians like us take a personal initiative to humble ourselves, to pray and to seek God’s face, and then turn from our wicked ways, then God will hear our prayers and multiply that influence. It is somewhat like voting. People say their individual vote doesn’t change anything, but if nobody voted it would change everything. Likewise with repentance and crying for mercy – don’t claim the insignificance of only being one person or one small church. Let us all do our part by making our own prayers, seekings, and repentances, and trust that God will also move other people to do the same, and that together our influence will deliver this nation from disaster.

Sunday school teaching notes are available at: [**https://h**](https://h)**owardslackteachings.com**