

# God Is Inescapable

by Alan Redpath

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*Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the inescapability of God and the urgent need for repentance in light of moral and spiritual decline.*

**Duration:** 54:46

**Scripture:** Amos 3:2, Amos 4:6, Amos 4:12, Amos 5:4, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Character Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of outward religious practices without true inward devotion. He emphasizes that this message from the book of Amos is not just ancient history, but relevant to the present day. The speaker discusses the spiritual state of a country and individuals who have experienced material prosperity but are morally degenerate and spiritually bankrupt. He highlights the inescapable nature of God and the need for individuals to prepare to meet Him. The sermon also touches on the importance of hearing and applying the word of God in one's life.

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## Transcript

Dr. Alan Redpath entitled this address, Our God is Inescapable, a word of prayer together. We thank thee dear Lord for the word of challenge, the solemn word which our hearts have heard from thee in song. We ask that none of us may find a repentance that is too late.

Today, if ye hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Grant, O Lord, tonight that thy word may find entrance, may bring us all to Calvary's cross, where alone we can find peace and life. Help us to turn to thee with all our hearts, to seek thee most earnestly, for we know that if we do, we shall surely find thee.

We pray that tonight thou wilt touch my lips with thy power, touch our ears that we may not only listen but hear, and touch our whole lives that they might be yielded utterly to do the will of God. We ask it only for the glory of Jesus Christ to do the will of God. We ask it only for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. You will pardon me if I just say one personal word before I begin to preach to you. It's a great joy to be here this evening for reasons which you already heard.

I want to thank you so much for your prayers and for all that they have meant to me personally. And to say to you most sincerely that never a day passes in our home but that Mr. and Mrs. Alford are remembered personally by my wife and myself in prayer, asking that God may really pour his Spirit upon this ministry. I

think perhaps I might say that I know more than most people do what's involved in the metropolitan downtown church responsibility.

I've had some of it in my lifetime, and I know what it takes out of a man that drains him dry. I do pray that Dr. Alford may go from strength to strength. He can only do that if he has the prayers and love of his people.

And I trust that he will consciously and increasingly be conscious of that very thing from this church. So it's a great joy to be in this pulpit, but at the same time I come to you, I don't know about my colleagues here on the team, who are not here tonight but will be here tomorrow, with a sense of fear and trembling. Dr. Alford and myself have a mutual friend, you may know him.

His name is Mr. Lindsay Glegg, and he used to tell a story of, in the wartime in Britain, at a certain country church, they were having what we call a strawberry and cream tea. I'd have to explain that to you, but I don't know what the American revised version of that is, but that's what we call it anyway. And in the garden, you see, lots of people were gathering for this tea, but as they came in--it was during the war--and as they came into the gate, they found a notice up which said, owing to the crisis, prunes will be served instead.

Well now, I have a deep feeling in my heart that you get the strawberries every week in this church, and I have a very real sense in which the prunes are coming instead. But at least, if I may say so, that prunes are good missionaries, and they penetrate the interior and do good, so I trust that they'll be real good as the outcome of this convention this week. We're all very much in need of your prayers as we face the responsibility of the ministry of the Word of God.

Would you then open your Bible with me tonight at the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Amos and verse 12. Amos 4 and verse 12. Therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

That text suggests to me a number of things, but perhaps more than anything there stands out in my mind this supreme thing, that God is absolutely inescapable. Isn't I who will have the last word with my maker, but it is he who insists on having the last word with me. The ultimate fact in relation to all of our lives, beyond all possible human dispute or solution, is that every one of us must give an account of himself to God.

I think we ought to be tremendously concerned about that, especially in view of the days in which we're living. Time is not on our side, and every one of us here this evening must give an account of himself to God. As we look around us on this world, we see some things that are absolutely incredible.

If the history of 1967 is ever written, I think there are two words which would be significant, which would highlight it. The one word would be progress. It was a tremendous year of progress.

Some things happened in 1967 for the first time in history. Heart transplants, for instance, with more or less and varying degrees of success. The first time in history two spaceships were linked in outer space.

Tremendous progress. Tremendous achievement. For the first time in history a soft landing was made on the moon, and signals of reactions sent down to the earth.

I don't know whether you knew it or not, but for the first time in history, in 1967, a dog was beheaded, and its head put on another dog, and the other dog lived with two heads. It was quite an achievement. What a year of progress, but supremely beyond progress.

It was a year of pressures, rapidly mounting pressures. I've seen some of them at first hand. I've been in Calcutta three months ago and saw 50,000 communists with hammer and sickle flags demanding the overthrow of the government of the Bengal state.

It was really electric. Worth my life to take a photograph of it, and then to go down to Somalia, and to see a cultural building in the Somali Republic being erected, the tallest building in the city, and written in English down the side of it, long lived the friendship between Red China and Somali Republic. To find two Chinese workmen for every Somali worker, working from seven o'clock in the morning till seven at night, with only a brief hour for lunch.

Working like anything, no such thing as strikes or lockouts, but working because they were committed to a cause which they thought demanded sacrifice. To travel in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, just a few miles from Vietnam, and to sense the tremendous tensions and pressures of it all. Everywhere in the world in 1967 there was an increasing mounting tide of pressure.

Progress, yes, on the one hand, but pressure. And I wonder, as I think probably you wonder, where is it all getting us to? Are we going to land into the tragedy of a third world war? Steadily, inevitably, in the last 10-15 years we've been moving nearer and nearer. We're almost over the precipice.

We wonder just when it'll break out. Something far more disastrous than the last world war. The bomb that exploded in Hiroshima would be just like a puff of steam compared with an outburst, an outleash of nuclear energy.

Something that would disintegrate the globe. Something that would wipe out civilization as we know it. I wonder, are we moving inevitably toward that? Is that what this world, in its proud boast of freedom, in its boast of God being unnecessary to modern life, is that the thing to which we're moving in these days? The trouble is that we only live for the present.

We don't think much about the future, or future generations, and we don't think much about the past. Suppose we say that people who have lived some time ago would have a lot better off than we are. And people who are going to live after us will be a lot worse off.

But the thing that matters is just today. And yet, over and over again, history repeats itself. The Bible stands as a warning to us of things that have happened in the past that'll happen again.

Inevitable principles of the judgment of God upon humanity. Amos has a good deal to say about that. But let me just ask you this question.

What do you think it is that's brought us to the brink of what we are, where we are, in this world today? Well, I would say that there are three words that would describe the trend of events that have led us, at least in Western civilization, to the brink of disaster. One of them would be material prosperity. Now, of course, I come from a little country that was once called Great Britain.

There's nothing great about it now. Forty years ago, it was the greatest power in the world. It had the greatest empire in the world.

But things were happening in the soul of Great Britain then at an alarming rate. And it ended with the Second World War. And from out of that world war, that little country emerged bankrupt, beaten, though actually, physically, supposed to be on the victorious side nevertheless.

It arrived with an empire in shreds, with a commonwealth that doesn't mean a thing, a country which now is pulling out from all its obligations, reducing its civil defense to a point of absurdity, a country which is absolutely, completely, and hopelessly bankrupt, and, I believe, which will never recover again its former influence in world affairs. Material prosperity, which was existing in British life, has gone. And over the last decade and more, increasingly, the country is absolutely powerless to see its way through because, I believe, the judgment of God is upon that land.

America has seen material prosperity. She's got the power that Britain had, got the leadership that Britain had. She finds herself now in a position of authority in the world and prosperity.

Yet, is there anybody in America who isn't fearful? One of the best sellers in this country is How to Overcome Fear by Dale Carnegie. The whole country is gripped with a sense of fear of what may happen. Behind all that is a material prosperity and something eaten, eating into the soul of the country, exactly what happened in Britain, which, if she's not careful, is going to lead to the same judgment of God.

The judgment of World War II came upon the mightiest empire the world had known for some years, and it came out of the world bankrupt. Is the judgment of World War III to do the same for the greatest country in the world today? Material prosperity. The second word that has led us to the brink is moral degeneracy.

I don't need to talk to you about that. You know it all. Perhaps you didn't know that in Britain last year, between Christmas and New Year, no less than 600 million pounds, that is 1,500 million dollars, was consumed in alcohol.

In one week. And that in a country which is only a population of 50 million people. And I read in U.S. News and World Report that a major crime is committed in this country every 14 seconds, moral degeneracy.

Nothing's right, nothing's wrong nowadays, no standards, they've all been swept away. Well, it's just too bad if you're found out when you're doing something that people think is wrong. But there's no standard of right and wrong.

Everything's permitted in certain situations. Every aspect of sexual immorality outside the marriage tie is not only permitted, but often condoned by the leaders of the church today. Moral degeneracy.

Which has eaten into the heart of Britain and America, leading us to the brink. Of disaster. And the third thing is spiritual bankruptcy.

Spiritual bankruptcy. Material prosperity. Moral degeneracy.

Spiritual bankruptcy. Oh, that's one of the greatest tragedies in our little land today, that the scarcely a voice raised anywhere in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that commands authority, and will say, thus saith the Lord. Oh, don't let me paint too black a picture.

Thank God for men here and there in our land who are faithful to the truth, who are preaching the full gospel, and who are desperately concerned for the days in which we live. But the trend generally is a country that has spiritually lost its way, bankrupt. And I suspect very largely it would be true to say that that

is the same in this dear land of ours in America.

Thank the Lord for men such as Billy Graham, and your pastor, and many more, who stand for all the word of God to declare it furiously. But the fact of the matter is, not that the church has lost contact with this generation. That's bad enough.

But the fact of the matter is that, generally speaking, the church has lost contact with God. That's the trouble. Not that we have cut ourselves off from the world at large.

That's true. But the deeper thing, the bigger thing, the more serious thing, is that somehow we've lost our way to heaven. We don't get through to the throne.

We don't sense the power of God. Somehow heaven's closed to us these days. Now that's the situation.

Let's be brave enough to face it. That has led us to the brink of tragedy. We're not there yet, but we might be any moment.

That's why in my heart there's a tremendous sense of urgency which has deepened through the travels I've had in this past year and more. But we were speaking about Amos. At least we began to.

What's that got to do with him? Everything. Everything, as we shall see in a minute. For we want to draw tonight from the lessons of history and apply them to that situation in the world today, in your life and mine.

A nation is merely made up of people, millions of people. And the course of a nation is often a reflection of the course of its population, the people who live in it. Material prosperity, moral degeneracy, spiritual bankruptcy.

That's the landslide which takes place not only at country, but in the life of an individual. Just before I left Buddhist Church in Chicago some years ago, something happened after one of our morning services that has left an indelible impression upon my mind. A gentleman came up to me, very obviously moved by what he'd heard in the service.

Obviously a wealthy man, by the way in which he was dressed. And he said this to me, 20 years ago every word that you said this morning was real in my life. And I knew it in my experience.

Oh, but he said, I am in charge of a great big business. I have 300 men under me. I have to leave the house every morning before six to get them all on the road.

And I'm at it morning, noon, and night. I never get back home till after nine. It's been an enormous success, he said.

I'm a millionaire now. But I shall never forget the statement with which he closed his comment to me. I'll quote it if I may exactly.

I'm a millionaire now, but my God, what a price I've paid. Material prosperity, moral degeneracy, spiritual bankruptcy. That's the landslide.

The landslide of an individual. The landslide of masses of people in America today. The landslide of a nation.

And to that situation Amos addresses himself. Just let me put you in the picture a bit. What sort of man do you think he was? Well, I'll tell you this much.

He wasn't a university graduate. As a matter of fact, he's a very interesting man to me. He hadn't any technical training at all.

No varsity touch about him. Bit crude in things he said. Matter of fact, he referred to the women who lived in his time in luxury as a herd of cattle.

Well, that's not very tactful, to say the least of it. But that's how he spoke. He didn't care two straws for anybody.

His language was uncouth. He hadn't any oratory. There wasn't any refinement about it.

As a matter of fact, all he did himself was to look after cattle. But one day God laid his hands upon this man. Doesn't God find his messengers in strange places? Doesn't he choose and select extraordinary people? And he thrust this man with uncouth, unprepared, untrained man into the nation to which he spoke.

And there was no question but in the mind of everybody, he was God's man for the hour. As a matter of fact, everything that he said would happen, did happen. And we've the testimony of history to prove the truth of everything he spoke in prophecy.

Because 50 years later, everything took place. He lived about 750 years before Christ. And at a time when Israel as a kingdom were divided, if you can picture them in your mind, Israel up in the north, Judah in the south.

And I suppose you might liken this man Amos to John the Baptist in the New Testament. The man, the same sort of uncouth personality, uneducated. And yet speaking with tremendous dynamic and power.

His ministry was, as you know, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And this man Amos began to preach. On the western border of Israel was the Mediterranean Sea.

Away up in the northeast was Damascus, and down in the southwest was Gaza. And up in the north was Tyre. And Amos began speaking, preaching to people beyond the borders of his own country.

Damascus he accused of cruelty. Gaza of slavery. Edom of an unforgiving spirit.

Ammon of cruelty. Moab of hatred. And oh my word, they all threw up their hats and cheered.

He was a wonderful preacher, as long as he didn't come too near home. As long as he preached to other people, he was marvelous. Everybody listened to him.

But there was a moment when he took the word of God like a sword, and he drove its way into the heart of his own people. And he wasn't a bit popular. And then he found how unpopular he was.

Now you know today, if you can preach from a pulpit or from radio about Russia and condemn communism, oh, you're popular. You'll rake in thousands of dollars if you do that. But once you get your message hitting right home, it begins to hurt.

And what did Amos say when he hit home? Because I'm interested to find that his message supremely was directed to God's people. And beloved, the key to today's situation is here, in the church. It isn't with an unbelieving world.

Don't let's be horrified and raise our eyebrows at moral standards. That's what God expects from people who don't know Christ. God hasn't any problem with the world.

You say it's a terrible place. It is. But Jesus took a little handful of people, and looking at them between the eyes, he's those, the one who loved him, the man who'd left all to follow him.

And he said, be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. God's not got no problem with the devil.

We think he's very powerful. That is, assuming he hasn't kidded us into believing that it doesn't exist. We think he's very powerful.

He? Very powerful. Far too powerful for any of us. But he's second.

For at the cross, Jesus stripped from himself principalities and powers, and made his show of them openly. He's got no problem with Satan. May I say this very quietly to you? For the burden of it hits me very deeply.

God's problem is not with his enemies, but with his friends. It's a terrible thing, but it's true. His problem is with his people.

All to get them adjusted to living continually, seven days a week, in the center of the will of God. That's God's problem. Now, you see, you read Amos' prophecy for yourself sometime, and you'll find that he was preaching to a nation, listen, which had no material prosperity.

Wealth and resources, which was in the grip of moral degeneracy, and which was spiritually bankrupt. All these three things, which have led Western civilization to the awful plight of this century, were in existence there in Israel at that time. There was wealth and luxury, because that country had extended a border.

And there was moral degeneracy, corruption of every kind. There was the outward form of worship and religion and show, but no inward reality, no power. Therefore, somehow this message from this book takes on a new meaning to me, as I think of that.

Because it isn't just ancient history, it's right up to date. What has God to say to that situation? What does a man of God say to a country like that? How does he address people? What does he say to them? My task is just to tell you that, what God would say to us tonight, individually. It's all so simple, straightforward and direct.

What does God say to a country, to an individual life, to a man and woman, who has no material prosperity, but who has experienced moral degeneracy, and who is spiritually bankrupt, in whose life spiritual horizons have grown so dim, which, once real, are now so dim that they're almost non-existent. The sort of person who finds himself saying with Job, Oh, that I were as in months past. The sort of person who says with John Newton, Where is the blessedness that once I knew, when first I saw the Lord? Where is that soul-refreshing view of Jesus and his word? Well, what did Amos say? He said this, first of all, to remind those people that privilege, privilege brings responsibility.

Listen to him. Chapter 3, verse 2. You only have I known, said the Lord, of all the families of the earth. Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Again, in chapter 4, verse 6. I have given you want of bread, yet you have not returned unto me. I have ruined your crop. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, yet have you not returned unto me.

I have slain your young men with the sword, yet have you not returned unto me. I have plucked you out of the fire as a brand out of the burning, yet have you not returned unto me. Don't you think those words could be spoken to this nation tonight? Just supposing Amos was here, just supposing, just supposing, instead of speaking to Israel, he was speaking to America.

He wouldn't have to change that language very much. I have given you want of bread. I've spoiled your harvest.

I've brought you plague and illness. I have sent the cream of your youth into battle. I've plucked you as a firebrand out of the burning, yet have you not returned unto me.

Saith the Lord. In the back of my mind very vividly, there is a memory which makes me feel quite nostalgic. Your pastor will recognize this.

During the years of the last world war, I stood at a place very near the banks of the River Thames in London, in Richmond, and preached the gospel every Sunday night. I have never before or since known such listening as I had in those days. Such responsiveness, such eagerness to hear the word.

As bombs rained down night after night, as London was blitzed, and as lives were lost, how ready people were to hear and to respond. Oh, but when it was all over, I remember the days of Dunkirk. I remember when Britain was on her knees and almost out completely.

I remember all that. But we were delivered like a firebrand from the burning, but our deliverance was followed by a slide away from God altogether. My good friend Lindsay Glegg tells me that 85% of the population of London used to go to church.

Now it's only 4%. Just think of that. Ah, in this nation today you have an open Bible, a freedom to worship, a country of inestimable privilege.

I don't have any country in all the world which has enjoyed such a privilege as you have. It's been blanketed, has America, as no other nation in the world has, with the gospel of over 20 years. Never has anybody preached to so many people in such a short time as has Billy Graham.

But the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility. In spite of God's warning, in spite of his judgment, and all that has been said to this nation in the past years, in spite of it all, he finds a people whose heart is unrepentant and to whom he has one thing to say, prepare to meet thy God. Let me look at something else, which is this.

This message of Amos was not merely that privilege brings responsibility, but responsibility necessarily involves judgment. That God must act. He is not willing that any should pass, but he must act.

Finally, he must act. He must judge. It's inevitable.

There is no escaping it. It's bound to come. I read here in the closing verses of the book, chapter 9, I saw the Lord standing upon the altar, and listen, though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them.

Though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out. The message of Amos is this, that where there is neglected privilege and neglected responsibility, God must inevitably judge.

And though a man, as it were, hide himself in hell, though he may try to get up to heaven, though he may hide himself in the depths of the sea, God will bring him down or bring him up, and one day make him recognize that the last word is with God. And what with us? Prepare to meet thy God. But the thing that hits me most of all here is this remarkable.

The fact that God makes it perfectly plain that he will give a warning to that nation before disaster strikes. And what is the warning? It's in the 11th verse of chapter 8. You go and tell that people that the first thing that's going to happen to them, the first sign that judgment is upon them, is that I will send them a famine of hearing the word of God. What do you think that means? Does it mean that God wouldn't speak anymore? No, it doesn't mean that.

It doesn't mean that he would send that. He doesn't say that he would send a famine of the word, but a famine of hearing the word of God. And that's a totally different thing.

It means to say that he will give so much of judgment upon his people that they'll become incapable of understanding what he said and of what he has to say. Oh, what a terrific judgment that is upon a people. When God speaks, they can't obey.

When God commands, there's no response. When God opens heaven and speaks with his voice, they can't recognize the voice of authority. The first judgment that was to strike that country, before it was to know catastrophe and disaster and invasion, was a famine of hearing the word of God.

It seemed that they would accept this, to take it as an evidence that now God was moving in. My dear friend, I almost ask with fear and trembling a certainty in my heart, do you think we are facing that today? I see every evidence of it. There's a great difference between listening to the word and hearing the word.

Charles Finney said that when revival breaks out, real Holy Spirit revival, truths to which our mind has listened, but which have never stirred our conscience, become alive. And the one thing that matters is that we should obey truth. In other words, that our listening should be carried out into obedience.

Do you remember the words of the Apostle Paul? With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. Do you think that was some awful immorality in his life? I'm sure it wasn't. Pharisee of the Pharisee, touching the righteousness of the law blameless.

What does he mean then? With his mind renewed by the Spirit of God, with my mind I serve the law of God. But he said, somehow I never get it into my feet. It never takes place in my life.

And putting it in 20th century New York language, I would say it's something like this. With my mind after a Sunday service, I say to myself, I'm never going to yield to that temptation again, but with my flesh I go on doing it. With my mind I say, well now I think I ought to be applying for missionary service, but I never put my pen to paper.

With my mind I go dig it up at half past six, or six o'clock, and have my quiet time regularly. But with my flesh I turn over and say I'm tired and go on sleeping. There's a lapse, a desperate lapse, between what goes on in here and what goes on in here.

And listen, the only, the only way in which your Christian faith is valid is the amount of it that's expressed in your hands and your feet in action. What gets into your body? He that doeth the will of God, not thinks about it, not discusses it, not talks it over, not debates it, but does it, abides forever. The Lord Jesus once asked the question to which I have never found an answer.

Have you? Why call he me Lord and do not the things that I say? Any answer to that? Not everyone that saith to me Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of God, the will of my Father, which is in him. Is there a famine of hearing the word of God? Can't help thinking that there is. Failure to translate what I hear into action.

Why is it there are about five women on the missionary field, mission field to every man? I mentioned this morning one of my most vivid recollections of speaking to about 30 Sudan interior missionaries in Somali Republic, among them your own Dave and Grace Asbach, two lovely people, 30, that's all, that's all they've got. Little handful of people, but absolutely sold out. And I thought of that young married couple.

Oh, they wouldn't say so, but what it's cost them to get to the mission field. They never think about clothing, don't care about that. He has never a day off to take his wife to a nice restaurant, there isn't one anyway.

They sweat it out in a temperature that's unbelievable, but I've never seen a couple in my life so absolutely happy, knowing an exhilaration in doing the will of God. They've got one thing they live for and one only, it's to see men and women come to Christ. I went over the Sudan border, don't tell the government I did, but I did.

Went over the Sudan border once last year. 350,000 Sudanese chucked out of Egypt, simply because they're not Muslims. Thrown into Central African Republic, Kenya, for no other offence than the fact they haven't got a Muslim faith.

And I saw 35,000 of them living in absolute destitution with nothing to wear except the clothes on the back. All of them speak English. Many of them accountants, doctors, bankers, lawyers.

Utterly, utterly poverty stricken. Thrown out by NASA. Into that situation, the Africa Inland Mission had sent, are you listening, two women.

There hadn't any men. There hadn't any men. Two women.

And they lived in a house which was built in three weeks by my son-in-law and his father. No sanitation, no shopping. Just two women among 35,000 refugees.

Talk to them about sacrifice, they wouldn't understand. They would say what a privilege to be here in the will of God. But it cost them.

They had heard the word and the debate. But why only two? Do you think it's right? I find it very hard to believe that it could be. A famine of hearing the word.

Oh my, you've gone out from this church time and time again. Impressed, tired, moved by all the power and authority of the word of God. But it hasn't got translated into your hands, your feet, your body.

And Satan has all taken away the seed from a famine of hearing the word of God. And that's upon us today at the first mark of impending judgment and doom. But I want to go just one step further, if I may, before I finish.

Very briefly, to tell you this. That while judgment is inevitable, the character of judgment can be altered. Oh, yes, God doesn't change his mind, but he changes his attitude toward us as we change our attitude toward him.

For in chapter 5, verse 4, I read, Thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me and live. So even in the stern message of Amoris, there's a message of hope and assurance. If you want to avert disaster, says Amoris, and save yourself from doom, there is only one thing to do, it's to seek God.

And you'll find deliverance. Again, I come to the question that's been on my mind and heart, and perhaps yours. Are we facing disaster, World War III, obliteration of civilization? Are we? Well, what do you think is the answer from this prophecy? Let me speak to you as an individual.

You're a privileged person, privileged woman. You have an open Bible. You can hear the gospel, listen to the truth, sit under the sound of it.

But neglected responsibility involves judgment. If I fail to avail myself of the grace of God and deliverance of God, and fail to accept the truth of his word, then inevitably God must judge but see. What is that judgment? A famine of the hearing of the word, and followed by disaster and destruction, overthrow.

I want to say this to you with all the assurance in the authority of the word of God. When the famine of hearing the word of God ceases, God's hand of judgment is removed. If the famine of hearing the word of God among God's people, in God's church, in America, continues, nothing but catastrophe can confront us.

I believe disaster is only around the corner, unless the famine of hearing the word ceases. Well, but how can it cease? Well, I know somebody in the New Testament who knew material prosperity, and moral degeneracy, and spiritual bankruptcy, that there came a day in his life when he said, in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare. I will arise and go to my father and say unto him, I have sinned.

Get this, the road that leads a man to spiritual bankruptcy is thronged with multitudes of people. But I tell you, my friend, that the road that leads a Christian back to God is a lonely road. An unwanted road, because fools that we are, we say to ourselves the price is too big to pay.

Listen, it's not that we don't want God. We do, but we don't want the government of God. And God's not going to water down his terms to suit our convenience.

He will meet us on his own terms, and that means submission to his government. The famine of hearing the word of God. Oh yes, we want heaven, but we don't want the principles of heaven here and now.

If you are prepared to say to the Lord tonight, I'm wrong and you're right, without any reservation, without any dispute, at that very moment the famine of hearing the word of God ceases. When you take the place of a repentant sinner at Calvary. It was Dr. A. W. Tozer in Chicago who said, if you remove repentance

from the doctrine of the church, you're inviting another Pearl Harbor in spiritual warfare.

Repentance ought to be the constant act of the life of a child of God. There's a way back to God for all of us tonight from moral degeneracy, spiritual bankruptcy. Way back to God from the dark paths of sin.

But you know, it's getting back to the cross. That's where we've all got to get. And the hands of Jesus are crucified hands, nail-pierced hands.

Hence, he who says, come unto me and I will give you rest. But he also has to say, he will not come to me that you might have life. Well, some of you here have been along the road, the popular road of material prosperity.

Have known something of the down, downward, moral degeneracy of a life that has grown careless. And have known spiritual bankruptcy. But we're too proud to admit it.

But if we say to the Lord tonight, Lord, I know I've been that way. And the way back is awfully lonely. But it's the way where I say, I'm wrong and you're right.

I prepare to admit that to him. And I get back to the cross. At that very moment, I begin to hear the word.

And I begin to realize that the one thing that matters in life is that in my life and in my experience, the word of God should be obeyed. Shall we pray together? Just let's have one moment of quiet. Prepare to meet thy God.

He's going to have the last word with us. The character of that word, the form it will take depends upon our response to him. Oh, how often we've listened.

But how seldom we've heard. Lord Jesus, we pray thee tonight by thy grace, by the power of thy Holy Spirit. Thy word may live in our hearts.

And that as we leave this place, it may be that in our hearts we are saying, I must obey God. Forgive us, Lord, for the times when we've known the famine of the hearing of the word. Bring us back to the place of repentance, to the cross, to the cleansing forgiveness of the blood of Jesus.

How thankful we are that thy mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Oh, master, we pray that in thy grace and love, thou will tenderly meet with us and pardon our sin and draw us with the cords of love and make us responsive to all thy will. We ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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