

# Preparation to Meet God

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of preparing to meet God, either as a friend or an enemy, and the consequences of trying to live without God.*

**Duration:** 34:59

**Scripture:** Revelation 20:12

**Topics:** "Judgment Day", "Repentance"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared to meet God, highlighting the need for forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ to be ready for the ultimate judgment. It warns of the consequences of living without God and the significance of turning back to Him. The message stresses the two possible ways of meeting God - as a friend or as an enemy, urging listeners to seek forgiveness and cleansing through Jesus to be prepared for that encounter.

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## Transcript

On the 15th of July to the 21st, we're going to be having our junior high school camp. And we do have some openings. And I'd like to just mention that years ago, back in ancient history, when I was still in high school, someone had, well, the pastor called me at the church and he said, a lady in the church has sponsored someone to go to summer camp.

And so why don't you go? Well, I'd heard of the summer camps, but I wasn't really interested. I was interested in Corona Del Mar, the beach, and surfing, and football, and so forth and so. But yet, I thought, well, it doesn't cost anything and it's free.

I'll go ahead and go. So that camping experience revolutionized my life. Excuse me, this crazy stuff, it affects my emotions.

I'm going to get tougher as the days go by. But it affects me emotionally and I just, I feel like a sissy. And so, but at any rate, it was there that God called me to the ministry and it just made such a difference in my whole life.

And I just thank God for that week that I spent at summer camp where the Lord really met me in a very powerful way. Someone had given a scholarship and that's how I was able to go. And, you know, we've got this junior high school camp coming up.

And if you have a child in junior high school, I would say, if you'd like to see a transformed child, I would encourage you to send them on up to this camp. It is revolutionary for the young people to get up there and get in that kind of an environment where there's just this strong spiritual emphasis, study of the word, and just a great time fellowshiping and all together. So I would highly encourage you to do that.

Well, let's turn now in our Bibles to the book of Psalm. Psalm 88 is the one we're going to be reading this morning. I'll read the first and the outnumbered verses.

We ask you to join together as you read the even-numbered verses. And shall we stand as we read Psalm 86? Eighty-six. And it is 86.

We sang 88, come thou almighty King, but this will be 86. Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am holy.

O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

For thou, Lord, art good. Ready to forgive. Plenteous in mercy unto them that call upon thee.

Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord.

Neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great and doest wondrous things.

Thou art God alone. Teach me thy way, O Lord. I will walk in thy truth.

Unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord, my God, with all my heart. And I will glorify thy name forevermore.

For great is thy mercy toward me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul and have not set thee before them. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me. Give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. Show me a token for good, that they that hate me may see it and be ashamed.

Because thou, Lord, hast helped me and comforted me. Notice in verse 5. For thou, Lord, art good, ready to forgive, plenteous in mercy unto all of them that call upon thee. Verse 8. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works.

Verse 10. For thou art great, you do wondrous things, thou art God alone. Verse 15.

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, gracious, longsuffering, plenteous in mercy and truth. Let's pray. Father, we come to you because you are indeed a gracious, loving, kind, heavenly Father, interested and concerned in our welfare.

And Lord, you said to cast all of our cares upon you because you care for us. Thank you, Lord, for caring for us, for watching over us, for being so attentive, Lord, to us and to our needs. And we call upon you

today, Lord, that you would just minister again to your people.

We've gathered for that purpose, that you might speak to us through your word. And so give us now ears to hear what the Spirit would say to the church this day. And we thank you, Father, in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Well, in our journey through the Bible, we've come to the book of Amos, this prophet who was a fig, just a fig picker until the Lord called him to prophesy.

And an interesting prophet. He was from Tekoa, but God called him to go up to the northern kingdom of Israel for his prophecies. And so we'll be looking at Amos tonight and be studying the prophecies.

We'll be looking at the first five chapters in Amos this evening. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the fourth chapter, verses 11 and 12. And there the prophet declares, the Lord declares, I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were a firebrand plucked out of the burning.

Yet have you not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, because I will do this unto thee. Prepare to meet thy God.

This morning, the purpose of our gathering has been to meet with God. And some of you have been looking forward to this time. You've come with expectancy and excitement because it's wonderful to meet with the eternal God, the creator of our universe and everything that is in it.

And he's promised that he would meet with us here today. For he said, if two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be with them in the midst. And so it's good to know that the Lord is with us here today because we do qualify numerically.

If the people really actually thought that Jesus was going to make an appearance at our service this morning, could we have put in an announcement in the paper that Jesus has promised to personally appear on Sunday morning at Calvary Chapel? You can be sure we wouldn't be able to have room even in the block to meet the people who would like to have a personal meeting and encounter with Jesus. But that's exactly what Jesus said, where two or three would gather in my name, I would be there in the midst of them. Matthew tells us in 1530 that great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame and blind and dumb and maimed, and many others, and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them, insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, and the lame walking, and the blind able to see.

And they glorified the God of Israel, and so I've got exciting news for you today. Jesus is here this morning, and he wants to meet with you, and he wants to meet the need in your life today. And if you'll just open your heart to him, you'll find that he will touch you, and he will minister to you in a very special way today.

But the nation of Israel had turned its back upon God, and God was seeking to warn them of the danger of trying to live a life apart from trusting in God. And to leave God out of their lives was just an inviting disaster. It's as though God was saying, if you don't want me, then I will allow you to see what it is like living without my protection and living without my help and without my presence.

And you can begin to experience the national calamities that come when a nation forgets their God. In verse 6 of Amos here, he said that God allowed food shortages, yet he said, you have not returned to me.

So verse 7, he said that he allowed drought in one area, floods in another, sort of national disasters, but he said, yet you didn't turn to me.

And in verse 9, he had allowed the crop failures, and yet they did not return to him. In verse 10, he allowed them to be defeated before their enemies, and still they did not return to him. And he allowed the pestilence to come upon them, the viruses, the sexually transmitted diseases, plagues, and still they didn't turn to him.

He had overthrown some of them as Sodom and Gomorrah, and still they did not return to him. Back in verse 2, he warned them that without his protection, there would come a day when the enemy would lead them away with fish hooks. The northern kingdom of Israel, shortly after Amos' prophecy, was conquered by the Assyrians, and the Assyrians were extremely cruel.

In fact, history records them as just being heartless, cruel people. When they would capture a city, they would often maim the inhabitants of the city. They would cut off their ears, they would cut off their noses, they would do atrocious things.

And when they would lead them as captives back to Assyria, they would put fish hooks through their lips, and they would draw them with these fish hooks through their lips. And so, even as the prophet said, you know, that God would allow that they would be led away with fish hooks, and it literally came to pass. Now, in the text prepared to meet thy God, there are several assumptions that are in the text itself.

First of all, that God does exist. Now, this should be very obvious to all of you. For the heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth displays His handiwork.

And the Bible tells us that every day, they speak to us. Every night, they're talking to us. It's a universal language.

There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. God speaks to us through His creation, which testifies of His existence. It is absolutely ridiculous and stupid to look at the human body and to think that the human body was not marvelously designed.

That it just came about through millions of years of fortuitous occurrences of accidental circumstances, which is one of the favorite phrases of the evolutionists. Everything came into existence as a result of fortuitous occurrences of accidental circumstances. They use those kinds of words, trusting you won't understand what they're saying, because they don't.

I mean, it is ridiculous to think that you are the product of an accident, or a multitude of accidents through millions of years, and that your ability to see, your ability to eat and to digest food, I mean, the marvels of the human body, they demand an intelligent creator. And He is your God, but He may not be the Lord of your life. You can't help Him being God.

You can't change that. What you do have control of, of whether or not you yield to Him as the Lord of your life, but that's what He wants to be, not just God. He is God overall.

Can't alter that. But He isn't Lord overall. There are many people who rebel against the Lordship of God in their lives.

The psalmist said, it is He that has made us, not we ourselves. You're not a self-made man. And He is your God, and He is blessed forevermore.

One day you're going to meet Him, and that's what our text really tells us, that He does exist, and one day you're going to meet with Him. Prepare to meet your God. And you'll meet with Him as a friend or as an enemy.

And the third thing the text tells us is that it is not wise to meet Him unprepared. That it is important that you prepare yourself, that realizing one day you're going to meet with God. Now the purpose that God tells us that He allowed these national calamities to come upon Israel was to wake them up from the fact that they were drifting from Him, and to turn them back to God.

Let them see the consequences of trying to live without God in your life. The disasters that came upon them personally came upon them nationally. Like it or not, recognize it or not, they needed the protection of God upon their land.

And the same with us. Like it or not, we need God's protection on the land. Believe it or not, we need God to watch over us.

Righteousness, the Bible said, exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. It makes us wonder just what will it take to wake us up to the fact that we need God. As a nation, we need to trust in God.

We used to put it on our coins and all, in God we trust. If it is still there, it is almost a mockery because we've learned to trust in the coin itself rather than in God. Sometimes I think that America is saying to God, you don't want me in your schools, you don't want me in your public life, and so you say that you don't need me, and so I'll just pull out and see how you can do on your own.

And I'll remove my hand of protection from you. And thus, God allowed our nation to be defeated in our war in Vietnam. And the Lord could say, because, and even then, you did not return to me.

He allowed 9-11 to occur, and he said, but you didn't return to me. So I allowed Katrina and the destruction on the East Coast, and you did not return to me. And thus, I allowed tornadoes to rip up your mid-nation during this last winter, and you did not turn to me.

It just makes you wonder, what will it take to turn our nation back to God, to wake us up to the fact that we do need God in our national life? How many more tragedies will it take before we turn our hearts back to God? America needs to repent and turn to God. God said to Israel, I've allowed all of these things to befall you, and still you would not return to me. Therefore, prepare to meet your God.

This is not meeting him on a friendly terms, but here we are this morning, and we have the opportunity today of meeting with him on good terms, friendly terms. But on this occasion, where God is warning, prepare to meet your God, is to meet him as the judge and as the one who is going to bring righteous judgment upon your life and upon our world. In the book of Hebrews, we are told, it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.

In the next chapter, Amos will declare, verse 18, Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? For the day of the Lord will be darkness, not light. It is as if a man was trying to flee from a lion, and a bear met him, or he fled into the house for safety, and he leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light, even very dark? No brightness in it? The

prophet is saying, you can't escape meeting with God.

One day, you're going to meet him. If you try to flee from the lion, a bear will meet you. If you flee into the house, lean against the wall, a serpent will bite you.

You can't escape God. He's going to meet you one way or the other. There's no escaping.

There are two ways that you can meet with God. One is as a friend, and the other is as an enemy. When you see evil men and evil programs prevailing, my one consolation is this.

One day, sooner or later, they're going to have to face God, and they will meet God. Meet him as a friend or as a foe. Those who meet him as an enemy will be as those that the book of Hebrews tells us, that God will be calling for certain fearful looking forward of the judgment and the fiery indignation by which he will devour his adversaries.

Nahum the prophet said in chapter 1, God is jealous, and the Lord will take vengeance. The Lord is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries.

He will reserve wrath for his enemies. Verse 6, who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire. The rocks are thrown down by him.

The prophet Zephaniah wrote in chapter 1, Neither their silver nor gold will be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. But the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy, for he shall make speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land. Zephaniah goes on to say in chapter 3, verse 8, Therefore, wait upon me, saith the Lord, until that day that I rise up to the prey.

I am determined to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour out my indignation, even all of my fierce anger, for the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. Some people say, well, that's the God of the Old Testament, and I really don't like the God of the Old Testament. I like the God of the New Testament, the God of love and tenderness and kindness.

But let me read you something out of the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the God of the New Testament, concerning Jesus, Seeing it as a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those that trouble you, and you who are troubled, rest with us. For when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon those that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

Revelation 6, 12 I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became black, the moon became as blood, the stars of heaven fell to the earth even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together.

Every mountain and island were moved out of their places. The kings of the earth and the great men, the rich men, the chief captains, the mighty men, every bondman, every free man, hid themselves in dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, Hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of his wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand? Again in Revelation 14, 9 The third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast in his image and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. And they will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever.

For they have no rest, day or night, who worship the beast in his image or whosoever receives the mark of his name. So prepare to meet your God. But you say, what can I do to prepare to meet God? Well, the most important thing in preparation is to make sure that your sins are forgiven.

Paul the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians, Be not deceived, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you, but you have been washed, you've been sanctified, you're justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. So it doesn't matter what you were, what are you today? Have you been justified through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God? God has made only one provision whereby your sins can be forgiven.

And that is through the death of his son, Jesus Christ. For God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him. We rightly sing, what can wash away my sin? And we respond, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. There are two coming judgments and you will be facing one or the other. To the believers, Paul wrote, we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ that we might receive the things done in our bodies according to what we have done, whether it is good or evil.

If you are a child of God, you're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ at the time of the resurrection of the church. And you're going to give an account to him of your life. Your works will be judged.

What will be the basis of the judgment is what motivated your works. You might be doing the right thing but not have the right motivation. And that will be meaningless when you stand before the Lord because that's the thing he's interested in.

Not so much of what I did but why I did it. And I will be rewarded or I'll have the loss of rewards according to the motivation that prompted the works that I did. The second judgment will take place later on.

It'll be the great white throne judgment of God, and the Bible speaks about that great white throne judgment of God. All of the dead, small and great, who have not received Jesus Christ will have to stand before God's judgment seat. And we read in Revelation, I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God.

The books were opened. Another book was opened, which was the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.

Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. One day you're going to stand before the God of the universe, either prepared or unprepared, and that is all dependent upon you.

The prophet is saying, prepare to meet your God.

The question today is, are you prepared? If the appointment would come today, and you would be standing before God this afternoon, would you be prepared to meet with God? Is there unforgiven sin in your life that would disqualify you from spending eternity with Him? Preparation is important. Preparation is necessary. You don't dare meet Him without, first of all, taking the necessary preparation by receiving Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that He is offering to you today.

He loves you so much He was willing to take your sin. God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him. So, it's going to happen.

Can't avoid it. One day you're going to meet Him. But the important thing, will you be prepared when that day comes? Father, we ask that you will speak to our hearts today.

And may we indeed, Lord, take the necessary preparation to meet with you when that day does come and our appointment is called and we have to stand before you. Lord, may we not stand in our own righteousness, in our own works. But Lord, may we be able to stand before you washed and cleansed from our sins through the work of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Our Lord and Savior. So, Father, speak now to those that are not prepared. And may, Lord, they determine in their heart that they're going to prepare themselves to meet you by receiving the forgiveness and the cleansing of sin that you so freely offered to us because of your love.

We ask this, Father, in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today to help you to be prepared.

And so, if in your heart you can't really say, well, I'm prepared to meet God. Should He call me today? I'm prepared to meet Him. If you can't say that, then I would encourage you.

Come on down and just say, pray for me. I realize I'm not really prepared. I want to be.

And they'll be glad to pray for you. And God will be glad to prepare you by forgiving you your sins and washing you and making you white as snow through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. So, may the Lord be with you.

May He bless you. May He just cause you to draw close to Him and experience His love and the power of His Spirit working in your life so that when that moment comes, when you are going to be meeting Him, you will be prepared. The Lord bless thee.

The Lord bless thee. And keep thee. And keep thee.

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace. God bless you.

Amen.

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