

Tears Before the Altar

by E.A. Johnston

America is struggling to survive due to its national sin, but prayer, repentance, and a genuine hunger for God can bring about a national awakening and revival.

Duration: 26:08

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:4-5, Jeremiah 1:9-10, Joel 2:12-18, Jonah 3:5-10

Topics: "Tears"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the struggles and trials that people in America are currently facing. He compares the difficulties of life to the challenges that ducklings face in surviving in a predator-filled lake. The preacher believes that God is angry with America due to its moral decay, corrupt politicians, and immoral entertainment. He references the story of Achan in the Bible to illustrate how the sins of one person can affect an entire nation. The sermon concludes with a call for repentance and a reminder of God's mercy and willingness to bless those who turn to Him.

Transcript

There's a little lake in my neighborhood where I take my daily walks and on that lake is a lot of wildlife that's fun to look at. There are geese and turtles, fish and frogs. Occasionally I see a mama duck with her newborn babies and each day I will count them to see how many there are left because it's hard for little ducklings to survive.

I will count 12 little fluffy ducklings swimming close to their mama. Then the next few days there were only 10 little ducklings. Two died off.

Then a week goes by and the 10 turned to nine and the nine turned to eight. Then after a while the eight dwindled down to six and after a few days another little duckling is missing and finally only five end up surviving. They die off for different reasons.

Some are not strong enough to make it on the harsh elements of life on the lake. Some are eaten by predators like hawks or otters but one thing I've noticed about the little ducklings on that lake it is a struggle to survive and I look around today at life in America and it's a struggle to survive. Almost everyone I talk to is going through some trial.

They are hemmed up and pressed in on all sides with no way to turn. It is as if God has shaken the nation of America from a land of plenty to a land of pain. At least it seems that way to me at times since so many people are hurting right now.

What is going on in our country? Why have the good times for so many become the hard times? Is God speaking to the people of America today in these difficult days? You know we don't hear much preaching today about the doctrine of national sin where God looks upon a nation and is grieved by that nation's wickedness and flagrant sins. The sins of a nation will come up before a holy God as seen in the Old Testament as when the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was heard by God. He saw that their wickedness was great and their sin was very grievous to him.

God judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their national sin. God not only was grieved by the sins of the pagan nations but the Jewish nation ended up grieving the heart of God when they forsook him and went after other gods. God in his mercy sent his prophets time and time again to call his people to repentance and to return to him.

In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, God was grieved over the national sins of the Jewish nation who had turned their backs on God and had ceased to walk before him in lies of obedience and who had begun to serve other gods. This is seen in the book of Jeremiah chapter 25 verses 4 through 7. Listen carefully to the solemn warnings of an offended creator as he addresses the Jewish nation. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants and the prophets rising early and sending them but ye have not hearkened nor inclined your ear to hear.

They said turn ye again now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your doings and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers forever and ever and go not after other gods to serve them and to worship them and to provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands and I will do you no hurt yet ye have not hearkened unto me saith the Lord that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. America as a nation has provoked God to anger with the works of her hands hand stained with the blood of the unborn hand stained with calling sexual perversion normal hand stained with violence and murder in the streets hand stained with public nudity and moral indecency hand stained with corrupt politicians and dishonest corporate businesses hand stained with a nation that has an insatiable appetite for immoral entertainment and God is angry with America as she clenches her fists and shakes them defiantly in the face of the almighty. America's cup of iniquity is near full.

God sent an invading army from the north to the nation of Judah because of her national sins. God gave the prophet Jeremiah a vision of this coming catastrophe to his rebellious people. He showed Jeremiah a giant boiling pot seething with God's displeasure as it is tipped in their direction eventually spilling its contents of God's judgment upon his disobedient people.

Listen to this terrible scene as found in the book of Jeremiah in chapter 1 verses 13 and 14 as read from the amplified version about the vision that Jeremiah was shown by God. And the word of the Lord came to me the second time saying what do you see and I said I see a boiling pot and the face of it is tipped away from the north its mouth about to pour forth on the south Judea and the Lord said to me out of the north the evil which the prophets had foretold as the result of national sin shall disclose itself and break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. Notice how God described his reasons for bringing this terrible calamity upon all the inhabitants of the land as the result of national sin because all the people would suffer for the sins of the nation.

I am reminded of Achan and his wedge of gold. We see clearly in the story of Achan that because of his sin the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. They suffered corporately for Achan's sin for they suffered defeat in their very next battle against the Amorites.

When Israel's appointed leader Joshua inquired of God why they had suffered such an agonizing defeat at the hands of their enemies God replied to Joshua Israel hath sinned and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them for they have even taken of the accursed thing and have also stolen and dissembled also and they have put it among their own stuff therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies but turn their backs before their enemies because they were accursed neither will I be with you anymore except you destroy the accursed thing from among you. In other words God was telling Joshua that the reason they suffered defeat was because every one of them was to be held accountable for this one man's sin that Achan's sin was a corporate sin a national sin so when God showed Jeremiah the seething pot of judgment already tipped and leaning toward them God said it was the result of national sin. Today in America there is a similar seething pot of judgment already tipped toward our nation and its contents are ready to spill out God's wrath and displeasure upon this land and its people because of our national sin.

God has sent his prophets to America in the form of preachers who have called church and nation to repentance but we have not heeded their call to fall upon our faces and turn from our wicked ways and seek the face of God. It is high time in America to do this very thing the hour preceding judgment is quickly running out and because of the late hour there tends it a sense of urgency before destruction. Humiliation on the part of the people of God in desperate prayer can make all the difference between annihilation and blessing.

The same God who sends judgment can also send blessings to his people if they turn and earnestly seek him through prayer and supplication. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a national spiritual awakening whereby God pours out his plentiful effusions of divine grace and thousands are swept into the kingdom of God through salvation. How much more glorious is that than a national judgment upon us whereby many are swept to their deaths and destruction because of national sin.

Prayer can influence the heart of God for he is compassionate and long-suffering, slow to anger and long on mercy. Moses pleaded with God on behalf of the sinning Israelites. Moses reminded God of his long-suffering and mercy and his divine attributes that he could not destroy his people because of what he had already done for them by delivering them from the bondage of Egypt.

Moses interceded on behalf of the sinning people and God heard his bold prayer. Moses kept the entire nation from being annihilated. Don't underestimate the power of prayer.

Jesus said we could move mountains if we pray. I am reminded of a painting in a Spanish art gallery. In the painting a farmer who is in the position of prayer has laid down his farm implements and has taken off his straw hat and he's kneeling in his field.

In the distance is a village with a church steeple and a bell tower and it's obvious that the bell has just been rung calling the village to a time of prayer. And if you look closely at that painting in the distance is an angel who has just picked up the reins of the team of mule and the plow and that angel is turning a fresh furrow in the ground while the village prays. And at the bottom of this old painting is a brass plate with three words in Spanish and in English the words read no time lost.

You see friends when man prays that's when God goes to work. No time is lost when we are on our knees. The prayers of the people can move the heart of the Almighty.

There is an example of this in scripture in the book of Joel. You see the book of Joel is a book of judgment and the timetable was up for the people of God. The problem with Israel in the time of Joel was that they had begun to dilute the purity of their worship of God.

Their worship had become polluted. The Israelites also angered God by turning from being fully relying upon Yahweh to act on their behalf and they had begun to place their trust in pagan fertility cults and had introduced this evil into their assemblies. God was angry with the Jews and he sent his prophet Joel to call the people back to return to the true and living Lord.

But the people were slow to respond so God sent a terrible judgment upon them and their land in the form of a severe locust invasion and a drought which destroyed their crops and ruined their land. God was displaying to the Jews his sovereignty over creation in sending a severe judgment and later in withdrawing it in answer to their prayers. It was the religious leaders who heeded the warnings of the prophet Joel and these ministers led the people of God in a time of solemn assembly calling the nation back to God.

The priests of the Lord wept between the porch and the altar and their tears of brokenness and repentance moved the heart of God from judgment to blessings. Listen to this profound passage of scripture found in Joel chapter 2 verses 12 through 18 as these leaders were the ones who humbled themselves and interceded for the people of God and God paid attention to their heart cries and he saw their tears which fell between the porch and the altar. Listen to the solemnity of the hour in which the people of God cried out to him in true humiliation.

Therefore also now saith the Lord turn ye even to me with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning and rend your heart and not your garments and turn unto the Lord your God for he is gracious and merciful slow to anger and of great kindness and repenteth him of the evil who knoweth if he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God blow the trumpet and Zion sanctify a fast call a solemn assembly gather the people sanctify the congregation assemble the elders gather the children and those that suck the breast let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber and the bride out of her closet let the priests the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar and let them say spare that people oh Lord and give not thy heritage to reproach that the heathen should rule over them wherefore should they say among the people where is their God then will the Lord be jealous for his land and pity his people you see friends the carpets in our sanctuaries stand as indictments against us they are dry from the lack of tears our carpets are not stained with the agonized tears of a broken-hearted people who are desperate for God to heal our land it is high time for Mr.

Amen and Mr.

Wet Eyes to return to our churches in our land the hour is late and our timetable is fast running out before utter destruction comes to America it is time for us to fall on our faces in holy desperation and cry out to the only one who can save us it is time to rend our hearts and bend our knees to an offended creator and beseech him to forgive our sins and to heal our land it is time to seek the Lord this is a wake-up call to seek the face of God in America right now right now before it's too late for the boiling pot of his anger is ready to spill out upon us if we do not turn to him immediately with urgency and brokenness through fasting and prayer this solemn passage of scripture follows the prophecy of Joel that God is bringing a

desolation to his people in Joel chapter 1 verse 15 it

reads for the day of the Lord is at hand and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come America is ripe for judgment by an offended creator the church must call the people of God back to God like this passage found in Joel where the minister is weak between the porch and the altar on behalf of the people of God listen friends if the church will not defend his holy name then the Almighty must God will either pour out his blessings in revival to defend his holy name or he will pour out his wrath upon mankind to avenge his holy name it will either be a defending or avenging to show forth his glory and remind mankind he alone is the sovereign ruler of all but will the leaders of our churches sense the desperation of our hour and fall on their faces and weep between the porch and the

altar to avert a national calamity from an offended God for if we are willing to wet the floors and carpets of our sanctuaries with our tears then God will perhaps withhold the coming judgment on our land he did so to the Ninevites in the time of Jonah from the king down to the beast they robed themselves in sackcloth and ashes and sat in repentance before an offended being and God had pity upon them instead of wrath just about everyone I know is going through a personal trial right now either financial family wise or health wise God is allowing his remnant in the west to experience a period of brokenness before him to prepare and purify his bride to suffer persecution for his holy name in the days to come we will realize the aspect of Philippians 3 10 and know the fellowship of his

sufferings as persecution comes to the church in America but if we seek the face of God now and return to him through repentance we can be better prepared to suffer for him when the time comes wouldn't it be wonderful if a period of spiritual awakening and revival fell on the nation of America as God poured out his blessings of grace upon the people rather than pouring out his wrath a great blessing may come from his hands before the time of intense persecution appears but this blessing can only be gained by the people of God if we get serious with God and return to him with our whole hearts a national awakening could shake this country from coast to coast and usher in thousands into the kingdom of God in Wales in 1904 it was stated that over a hundred thousand people came to Christ

during the Welsh revival wouldn't it be glorious if that happened to America right now we need a divine intervention in America today let me share with you what happened when a group of pastors began to pray over their city in Scotland just a few years ago in Glasgow Scotland a pastor told me that he and some other ministers became grieved over the moral and spiritual condition of their city he told me that there used to be a city motto which for years was plastered all over town and banners and signs and the city motto was lord let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of thy word and praise in thy name that was the city of Glasgow's motto for decades then some ungodly civic leaders voted to change the city's motto and leave out the mention of God altogether the new city motto of

Glasgow became let Glasgow flourish and if you visit that city today you will see banners saying let Glasgow flourish but the old banner said lord let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of thy word and praising thy name and God had honored that sentiment through the years by blessing the city with spiritual outpourings through the preaching of men like D.L.

Moody but now the civic leaders took God's name away and my pastor friend from Glasgow told me that as soon as that happened crime began to increase the rate of teenage pregnancies increased immorality increased and wickedness increased to such a degree that it grieved the heart of some local pastors these men decided to do something about it so they began to gather on a regular basis to pray and seek God's

face to push back the darkness in their community my pastor friend told me that in a few months following their desperate prayers they began to see a spiritual change within their community crime decreased and wickedness decreased God had seen their tears and had answered their desperate prayers can we not do the same in America today if the people of God got right with God and sought

him through nights of desperate prayer why aren't we seeing spiritual blessings in America can it be due to the following story listen to this I was standing in line in my cap and gown to receive my Ph.D. diploma from seminary and next to me in line was a pastor from the south I asked him how often do you meet with the other local pastors in your city to pray for revival he looked at me strangely and answered the churches in my area don't need revival we are on the grow you see what he was saying was if your church campus is expanding and your numbers are growing who needs revival I submit to you that this is a picture of the church in America today self-sufficient with no real hunger for God his presence is absent from our sanctuaries but we don't seem to mind too much as long as success

follows our ministries heaven help us could it be that God is not sending revival to America because the people of God are relying upon our own abilities to grow our churches rather than relying and casting ourselves entirely upon him to build his church it is time to call a solemn assembly in our churches and fill our sanctuaries with penitent and broken hearts crying out to God for the sins of our land it is time for the ministers to weep between the porch and the altar on behalf of the people of God it is time for tears to soak the carpets of our sanctuaries and our sobs of repentance to reach the ear of the almighty this is our only hope the church in America is asleep in 1740 when God moved through New England it was called the great awakening revival has often been referred to as an

awakening at Gethsemane Jesus faced the crisis point of his earthly ministry and his disciples slept right through it today the church is in a crisis point and we are sleeping right through it we are sleeping the sleep of death and we must be shocked out of our sleep the church in America needs a shock to awaken her this will be done one way or the other either we burdened preachers will shock it and awaken it whether it calls to repentance or God will shock it through a national disaster so terrible and severe that it will shock us to the reality of the great need of the hour before us which will it be blessings or judgment repentance or pride pray that the pastors of this land will gather the members of their churches to a time of solemn assembly where they seek the face of God on

behalf of church and nation perhaps God will see our tears before the altar and relent and in his wrath remember mercy God is our only hope he is the blessed hope may God bless America

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