

## Ready for Any Occasion

By Al Felder

*“<sup>24</sup>And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. <sup>25</sup>And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. <sup>26</sup>Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither.” (Exodus 10:24-26)*

God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go so that they may serve Him. Pharaoh was very reluctant to let Israel go. In fact, God had to bring ten plagues against Egypt before Pharaoh would allow the Israelites to go. Over the course of this time period there were several exchanges between Moses and Pharaoh. During these exchanges there were four compromises that Pharaoh tried to get Moses to make. Pharaoh tried to get Israel to serve God in the land, then Pharaoh tried to get them to stay close to the land, next Pharaoh tried to get them to leave their children behind, and finally Pharaoh tried to get them to leave their livestock behind.

It is Moses' response to this last request that we would like to focus on this morning. Moses basically told Pharaoh that they were taking all that they had because they didn't know what they might need in order to serve God. Moses was going to make sure that he and the children of Israel were prepared to serve God no matter what the circumstances were. In order to do that they needed to make sure that they had everything with them. All the members of their family, all of their possessions, and all of their belongings - everything was to be included in their service to God.

You know, you and I can learn a very valuable lesson from this passage of scripture. In our service to God we must include everything. There is absolutely nothing that we can hold back. You see, that's what it takes to serve God faithfully. Just as Moses and the children of Israel didn't know what all they would need to serve God, we don't know from day to day what situations we may face. We must include everything in our service to God in order to be prepared. I'd like to discuss some things with you that will help us be "Ready for Any Occasion."

In reading the Bible we find so many great and wonderful examples of faithful service unto God. We read of individuals who faced very great and trying circumstances in their lives, and they were able to persevere. One of the greatest examples that fits our topic well is Esther.

Esther was one of the Jews still living in captivity. Instead of being captive by the Babylonians, they were now the captives of the Persians. Esther through a series of events was selected to be the Queen of Xerxes, the Persian king. After she became Queen, a plot to kill all of the Jews was uncovered by Esther's uncle. Her uncle went to her, and spoke the following

words. *“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Esther 4:14) Esther’s uncle was pleading with her to use her position to save the Jews. The Bible informs us that she did exactly that, and the enemies of the Jews were the ones destroyed.

Esther probably never thought that she would be in the situation that she was in. In her wildest dreams she probably never thought that she would be the queen of the most powerful ruler in the world at that time. Furthermore, she probably never thought that being in that position would allow her to save her people. Her uncle opened her mind to the possibility that all of these unlikely events could have brought her to this moment where she could use all that she had to serve the Lord and save His people. Esther is just one of many examples we can find in the Bible of a person who was ready for any occasion.

The fact of the matter is that we don’t always know what we are going to face in life from day to day. We never know what challenges or struggles may await us. We don’t know what opportunities may arise through which we can serve God. We don’t know what trials or persecutions we may face. Despite all of these unknowns, we have God’s word full of accounts of individuals who faced the same things we face and were successful. In order to be like them there are some things that we must do.

As we begin to consider these things there is one thing we must keep in mind. *“<sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:11, 12) Do you know what God is telling us? We are at war! We are in a constant battle against wickedness!

The reality is that it doesn’t always feel that way to us. There are times when all is well and life is good. We get focused on the here and now and we become short sighted. We don’t think about the spiritual battle that is always going on around us, and we get caught off guard. God is trying to warn us against this very thing in this passage, and He is telling us what we must do in order to avoid this downfall.

One thing that we can do to be ready for any occasion is pray. As we consider this point, I’d like to look at some words that David was inspired to write. You know David is a wonderful example of both sides of this issue. Who could ever forget his heroic stand against the great giant Goliath? Likewise, who could ever forget his tragic failure in taking another man’s wife?

During David’s time of success he prayed. *“<sup>16</sup>As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. <sup>17</sup>Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.”* (Psalm 55:16, 17) David realized the need to pray continually. All throughout the day he saw the need for prayer.

In the New Testament we find the same teachings. <sup>17</sup>*Pray without ceasing.* <sup>18</sup>*In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18) *Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* (Ephesians 6:18) Prayer is to be a constant part of our life. Every day in every situation we are to pray.

Prayer is a vital part of our relationship with God. It is how we communicate with Him. Basically, prayer is a conversation that we have with God. Can you image a relationship in which there was no communication? What do you think would happen to a marriage in which the husband and wife never talked to one another? It would be hard to image that relationship lasting very long. If we don't pray to God, the result will be the same with our relationship with Him.

What do we pray about? Well, we can thank God for all of His blessings. We can pray for one another. We can pray about things that are bothering us. We can pray where ever whenever.

Why is this so important? David answered this question for us. *Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.* (Psalm 55:10) David is talking about the wicked. He notices that they never stop. They are always up to no good.

Do you think that the Devil takes a day off from being wicked? Does he ever say that he needs a break? Can you imagine the Devil saying that he's not going to tempt any Christians today? No! He's driven! He's always at it! David realized this truth and that is why he prayed.

Second, in order to be ready for any occasion we must study the word of God. As we think once again about the spiritual battle that we are engaged in, God has given us weapons in order for us to be successful. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.* (Ephesians 6:13) As you continue to read the verses that follow, you will find that all of the weapons God has given us have their basis in His word. In other words, we have to read and study His word in order to possess these weapons and be able to use them.

During the time that the Apostle Paul was inspired to write this passage of scripture, the Roman Empire was the world power. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded an observation he made about the Roman army. He said, "Every soldier is every day exercised, and that with diligence, as if it were in time of war, which is the reason why they bear the fatigues of battle so easily." (The Wars of the Jews, III.5.1) Josephus noticed that the Roman soldiers always carried their weapons with them, even in times of peace. They were skilled and trained in the use of their weapons and it was this preparation that made them the world power that they were, but Rome did eventually fall.

What happened to Rome's mighty army? Historians have noted several factors that led to the demise of the great Roman army. The discipline was relaxed. The soldiers didn't train as hard, and they were not as prepared for the fatigues of battle. The soldiers began to complain about the weapons that were battle tested and had led to their success. As a result, the emperors allowed them to get by with less. These changes brought about their defeat. They were unprepared when the enemy came.

God has given us the weapons we need to be successful in His word. *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15) The Bible is the greatest resource you will ever have. It is life's handbook, but it takes skill to use it. The only way that you can gain that skill is with practice. You practice by studying it daily.

The Bible can provide you with instructions for any situation. It is unlike any book in existence. It does not matter whether you are young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, or any such thing. The Bible has the answer for any situation. Once you learn how to use it, you can apply it to your life.

God doesn't want us to just be hearers of the word. *"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."* (Romans 2:13) God expects me and you to study His word, and then live by its teachings. This will affect all of our life. The church, our family, our work, everything will be affected by our obedience to God's word. The evidence will be seen in our actions.

The elders of a church in Texas took a poll of their congregation. They found that 90% of the people were for singing and 10% were against, 78% were for weekly communion and 22% were against, 49% were for Sunday evening services and 51% were against, 39% were for gospel meetings and 61% were against, 20% were for giving generously to the Lord and 80% were against, and 15% were for visiting the sick and 85% were against. Why, that sounds horrible! What a sad state for a congregation to exist.

Oh, wait a minute, I didn't tell you how this poll was conducted. The elders didn't ask the members their opinions on these matters nor what the Bible taught on these subjects. The elders conducted their poll by counting who actually did these things. Our actions will always speak louder than our words.

Third, we must use our talents for the Lord in order to be ready for any occasion. There is no better passage of scripture to address this point than the parable of the talents told by Christ in Matthew 25. In the parable, a rich man gives five talents to one servant, two talents to another, and one to the last. Then, the rich man left to travel to another country. Upon his return he discovered that the servant with the five talents doubled what he had received as did the servant with the two talents, but the servant with the one talent took and hid it out of fear. This displeased the rich man. *"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there*

*shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matthew 25:30) The servant's failure to use the talent he had received from his master caused him to be lost.

The fact of the matter is that God has given each and every one of us abilities which we are to use for Him. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul likens the church to a physical body. The body has many parts and each one is needed in order for the body to function properly. The church has many members and each one is needed so that it can function properly.

Each and every one of you who is a member of the Lord's church has a talent, and the church needs you to use that talent in order for it to be complete. Unfortunately, the tendency is for people to think that they don't have much to offer. They look at others around them and they don't believe that they have as many talents as other people do, or that their talents are as good as other peoples. <sup>17</sup>*If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?* <sup>18</sup>*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*" (1 Corinthians 12:17, 18) Not everyone is going to have the same talents, but each talent is needed for the body to be whole.

If we all had the exact same talents, the body would not be whole. You can take any one of us this morning and for every talent that we possess, we also possess weaknesses. In our physical bodies the heart is important, but the heart can't do everything that needs to be done. It needs the other members functioning and working together. The same is true of the church. We need all of our talents working together because there are some things that we cannot do individually, but when we work together as a whole great things can be accomplished.

Everything belongs to God. <sup>1</sup>*The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein.* <sup>2</sup>*For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*" (Psalm 24:1, 2) God is the author and creator of all that exists. Everything that exists belongs to Him. While in this life we are stewards of His belongings, therefore, everything that we have is to be used for Him.

In closing, I would like to share a poem with you entitled *I Met the Strangest Man*.

"I met the strangest man.

He said he believes the Bible is the Word of God, but he never reads it.

He said the church would be more effective if more of its members were really dedicated, but he isn't.

He said he knows that church assemblies are times for edification and praise, but he rarely attends.

He said the younger generation needs stronger spiritual values and more visible spiritual leadership from adults, but he shows no spiritual values in his life and won't get involved with the young folk.

He complained that the local church is not doing the work the Lord intended it to do, but he refuses to help in any way.

He said he believes that God hears and answers prayers, but he does not pray.

He said he knows the Lord is coming again, but he lives as if the world will never end.

He was a strange man indeed, but he was not alone.”

This man will never be ready for any occasion. Will you?