

Don't Waste The Recession! – Part Two

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The challenge for all of us in this brief two part series is that we not waste the recession. We need to understand that we will waste the recession if we failed to hear what God is saying to us as individuals, as a nation, and as a church. It is truly amazing to me when I hear people saying that God is not doing very much today like He did in time past and that He certainly is not saying anything to us in these modern times. It is as if they think God has gone on an extended vacation. Rest assured of this one thing - God is not silent! He is speaking in loud and clear terms. It is as if He is writing messages across the sky in box car size letters. The question is - are we interested in listening to what He is saying? The current recession is undeniably God's way of talking to us.

I. GOD'S PLAN, WILL, AND PURPOSE INVOLVES HEARING GOD'S VOICE:

God wants us to know that no matter how difficult times may get, He has promised to sustain everyone who places their trust in Him and who desire to hear His voice in all matters. According to Isaiah 30:21, Isaiah gave a bold, confident message to the children of Israel that reminded them of the importance of hearing God's voice. The amazing thing about the verse is that it was delivered at a time when the nation was under judgment and in absolute ruin. They were on the brink of total destruction; yet, God was willing to speak to them and show them the way out. Amazingly, the people refused to listen to what God was saying. They had more important matters to attend to. According to the context, the people declared that they had come up with a better plan. The result was disastrous.

Isaiah 30:18 makes an astounding statement. God says that he would allow Israel to try their own plan, but in the mean time, He will be willing to wait for them to return to Him after there plan has failed. As expected, their planned failed. Immediately after this failure, God repeats His initial offer: "Listen to me. I know the way out. Open your ears and I will speak. Listen to my voice and I will direct you". I believe this message is the same for us today. We will never survive unless we are willing to know, recognize, and hear His voice.

II. GOD'S DESIRE IS FOR ALL OF US TO KNOW AND HEAR AND OBEY HIS VOICE:

Sadly, few people today recognize that God is speaking loud and clear. Others believe that every voice that pops up in their minds is the voice of God. The most popular term in Christian circles today is, "God told me..." We must keep in mind that God's primary means of speaking to us today is through His Word.

God's Word makes it clear just how desperately God desires to speak to us. In the Old Testament, when God had something to say, He gathered the people together; fathers, mothers, children, and grandparents. They were all there (See Deuteronomy 5:4 and 4:36). God knew if they were going to survive in the wilderness, they would need to hear His voice.

One of the many things that set God apart from the other gods was the fact that He could speak. He was alive. In Deuteronomy 5:24, just after having expressed a desire to hear the voice of God, the people suddenly and unexpectedly are disturbed about the possibility of God speaking to them. In fact, they sent elders to Moses to discuss the matter (Deuteronomy 5:25, 26). Why would they be so anxious to hear God's voice one minute and yet dread hearing His voice the next? They had heard the voice of God and lived; yet now, they believe if God speaks to them, they will die. According to Deuteronomy 5:27, they were so afraid that they sent Moses to hear God's voice on their behalf. They wanted Moses to tell them what God was saying. Why the change of heart?

The answer is obvious. Scripture makes it clear that one of the first things God does when He speaks to us is to reveal secret, hidden, pet sins in our lives (see Hebrews 4:12). Before He will ever direct us, He must first cleanse us. Israel was not in any frame of mind to be cleansed by the voice of God. This basic truth is so important throughout Scripture that Stephen mentioned this exact account just before he was stoned to death in Acts 7:43. In his sermon, Stephen declared that Israel was playing the hypocrite. Their public lives were very different from their private lives. Their private lives would be exposed if they continued to hear God's voice; therefore, they rejected it.

III. GOD'S VOICE ALWAYS SPEAKS CLEANSING BEFORE IT SPEAKS DIRECTION:

We want God to give us direction; we want him to tell us about our investments; how to keep our businesses open; keep our retirement funds from dwindling, and a host of other things, but few really want God to speak a Word of cleansing. God desires to deal with our temper, our grudges, our unforgiving spirit, and every other secret, hidden sin.

Finally, in Deuteronomy 5:30, Moses speaks a word to all those who may have divided loyalties when he said, "Go to your tents". In other words, go and do your own thing if you want to. The sad part of the account is that they did exactly that. They refused to hear God's voice and ended up wandering in the wilderness for more than forty years. How sad! It didn't have to be like that.

IV. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION:

According to Deuteronomy 5:31-33, God continued to speak to Moses personally, although others had refused to hear God's voice. The meaning of that truth is clear for us today. God has a remnant of people today, who are willing to hear and obey the voice of God. For those who do hear that still, small voice, they will never be caught in a panic, no matter what may come their way.

"Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself: but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and he will show you things to come." (John 16:13)

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (1 Timothy 1:7)

Don't waste the recession by missing God's voice. No matter what happens and no matter what comes our way, this is not a time to retreat. It is a time to move full speed ahead.