

Rise Up, O Church of God!

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By Dave Butts

I will always remember November 11, 1997. It was a holiday, so my family and I went to Indianapolis to relax and to do some shopping. After a full day, we went to the airport to pick up some relatives and drive them back to Terre Haute. My mother's brother was waiting there for us. He had driven to the airport to give us the news that my mother had suffered a major stroke earlier that day. Suddenly, getting back home was an urgent matter. We drove quickly home and went straight to the hospital.

Certain things in life can bring a sense of urgency. It may be as mundane as hunger or thirst, or a crisis such as a medical emergency. When circumstances move together to create that urgency, suddenly everything changes. The normal things we do are laid aside and we focus all our attention on fulfilling that which has created the tension or crisis in our life. Urgency causes shifts in priorities and activities. Previously important activities fade into the background.

The Time Is Short

I believe God is calling the Church to a new sense of urgency. It is time to lay aside the normal routine. In one sense, this is the way the Church has been called to live at all times. In another way, this sense of urgency is for God's people today.

The Bible teaches much about time and the Christian's wise use of it. One of the clearest teachings in Scripture regarding time is that it is limited for humans. We only have a

relatively short time to live on this planet. Therefore, it is important that we “make the most of every opportunity.” Consider these passages:

“We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope” (1 Chronicles 29:15).

“You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath” (Psalm 39:5).

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Time is considered a gift from God and is intended to be used in a way that brings glory to Him. Ponder these texts:

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

“Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16).

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5).

Sometimes this shortness of time is expressed in relationship to the coming of the Lord to bring all time to an end: *“What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn as if they did not; those who are happy as if they were not; those who buy something as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:29-31).*

Urgency in the Bible is sometimes connected to both the completion of a task and a passion that connects one to God. I believe the following passage speaks strongly to us today of that situation: *"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch"* (Isaiah 62:1). Isaiah had begun to sense God's heart for his people. Through drawing near in prayer, the prophet's heart was lining up with God's heart. Many times the Lord had revealed His unfailing love for Israel and His desire for His people to return to Him. Isaiah began to pray the Lord's agenda...and it was a prayer of passion and urgency.

Making God's Passion Our Own

It is time today for the people of God to begin to hear God's heart...so that we may pray with passion about that which God is passionate about. As we draw near to Him in prayer and in His Word, it becomes apparent that there are two things today that ought to bring a strong sense of urgency to the Church: 1) the revival of the Church, and 2) the completion of the task of world evangelization.

God earnestly desires a Bride for His Son who is pure and spotless, and without blemish. This certainly will require a massive change on the part of the Church that could only happen through Heaven-sent revival. This Bride is to be comprised of people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. The revival of the Church and resulting completion of the task of world evangelization come from the very passions of God and require us to take up this task with urgency.

It is time for the Church to begin to pray with the urgency and passion of Isaiah. This time, we pray for the new Zion, the new Jerusalem...the people of God. Like the prophet of old, we too say, "I cannot remain silent. I will not stop praying for her until her righteousness shines like the dawn, and her salvation blazes like a burning torch" (Isaiah 62:1). We must

lay aside lesser things. The call is for today. It is a call for the people of God to urgently pray the heart of God for our generation.

“Rise up, O Church of God!
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and mind and
soul and strength
To serve the King of Kings.”
–William P. Merrill

–Dave Butts (1953-2022) was the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries, and the author of multiple books, articles and resources on prayer. Some of his books are [Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God](#), [The Giving Church](#), and [Prayer Ministry Volunteer Handbook](#) co-authored with his wife, Kim.

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