



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: JULY 2022 *by Lee Shipp*

DEPLOYMENT

On any given day and throughout the day, my spirit has the most unusual stirrings.

There is an actual fear, not anxiety. There is a stirring, a happening within my spirit. Something is going on, not just inside of me, but in the world. My spirit begins to pray, but I am extremely distracted. I am pulled in several directions. Carnally, I am enticed away from prayer; however, something within me continues to be sober in prayer. I cannot explain this, but neither can I deny the authentic experience of intercession within me.

I have a sense of approaching calamity—a coming storm. Within me is a deep concern about what is about to happen. I cannot understand exactly what this sense of calamity is, but it is climatic in its nature, and I know it has to do with the END OF THE AGES.

The Body of Christ, the Church, is under attack from principalities and powers of hell. The schemes of Satan are destroying humanity. Demonic hatred is filling the hearts of many who are mad with rage. An angry devil who knows his time is short has waged an all-out war against the righteous.

In addition, I have had many people approach me to discuss recent nightmares or daymares, as they put it. These are not ordinary dreams they are having. They are convinced these dreams mean something. They feel warned by these dreams, convinced they are a message. They explain the dreams as futuristic, sci-fi, or apocalyptic in its nature. There are not many details in the dreams but enough to provide soberness regarding the fact that something is coming.

Furthermore, I have had several, not just a few, pastors notify me, “I am done. I cannot take it anymore. I am tired, weary, and unappreciated. I tend to believe the church would be better off without me.”

Many of these ministers are forsaken on the battlefield, deserted by associates who are too weary to continue. Feeling abandoned on the battlefield, many of these pastors are collapsing beneath the weight of anxiety, stress, depression, worthlessness, and so on. The rash decisions of associates bear upon the pastors and seem to squeeze them into blaming themselves for the restrictions and difficulties of the church. These pastors begin to consider quitting based on the decisions of associates who the Holy Spirit does not lead.

I have found that pastors (I work with many denominations) are either receiving mercy and grace to finish strong in this hour, running from their posts, or taking their heart out of the game and just performing a job. In the latter group, the pastors just performing a job are calloused to the need of

the people and the Lord.

Those who are wholly given to Christ, who seek Him and love Him dearly, are now set up as targets of the enemy's wrath. Satan is infusing their already heavy burdens with thoughts of fear, discouragement, temptation, and depression. He is after their faith, wanting to discourage them to give up in the middle of the fight.

Make no mistake about it, the war is on. The battle is underway; Satan's only hope is to wrest your words, bring instability to your emotions, and cause your mind to become weary. Therefore, the Lord urges you to be sober. *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith ...”* (1 Peter 5:8-9).

I understand this battle to keep a sober mind. I have found it very hard to pray, to enter the presence of God. I find myself distracted carnally by multiple things: silly, lustful, and fearful things. I find myself preaching a lot to myself. I recognize a consistent cry within my heart for an abundance of God's grace to get me through.

There is great excitement and expanding opportunity to serve the Lord in this hour, and at the same time, there is this uncanny urge to play it safe, to sit back and live to be unrecognizable. “Don't stir up the enemy. Lay low.” I hear within my mind. I want the easy way, but something is pushing me on the inside to be strong and suffer hardship.

DEPLOYMENT

In a soldier's training, there is a time of discipline, education, and familiarity. Discipline to the orders and the conditions of war. Education in the arena of

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proficiency in your duty and equipment. Familiarity with your weapons and your associates.

The military is determined to train you for engagement with the enemy. However, there are just some things military training cannot give you. It falls short from the actual experience of war. The military cannot reproduce the smell of blood, the burning phosphorus and sulfur, or the cries of the wounded. The military cannot reproduce the very real danger of being fired upon.

As the soldiers become proficient in their skills, there is a growing desire to put these skills to work. Familiar with the rush of war games, there is a weird obsession actually to engage an enemy – for real. The soldier wants to know, “Just how good am I?” An excitement sets into the men as they become proficient in their training– they are ready for war and to put their skills into action and fight the enemy.

THE CALL OF DUTY

When the call of duty is given, the soldier is deployed to the battle. The atmosphere changes. The demeanor of the officers change, soberness sets in. They board their ships and begin the sleepless journeys. They arrive at the theater of war. The smell of blood is in the air. The sounds of war are in the air. The percussion of explosions is felt. Fear sets in, soberness. The cries of the wounded are heard. Questions begin to settle upon their minds, “Will that be me crying soon?”

They are moved to the battle lines where they must now engage the enemy. They do so with soberness; this is real, this is not a war game, this is not paintballs and laser guns, this is not make-believe. They cannot run home. They must be proficient. Lives are depending on them. Their lives are depending on them to stay alert and sober.

They watch their brothers carried off the battlefield as they are led into the fight, a reminder that this is real and may very well be their fate. They are led into their foxholes and await the encounter.

Within their hearts and spirits is the stirring of fear. Their minds race back to their former lives. Their minds desperately seek the memories of peace. They combat their fears with the joyful memories they have only recently left: their wives, children, and jobs. Even the dreaded mess hall, barracks, and the shouting sergeants have become pleasant memories compared to this moment that war has called them. They think of their futures. They think of their life and the things they will do when they get out of here.

They know they should focus on what is before them, but their emotions take them back to a nicer day. A calm day of peace and no war. A day of practice that had no real consequences. When suddenly, fear slaps them back into reality. Waiting. Anticipation. Uncontrolled nerves. Who will fire first? These anticipation moments are disturbing as they are jolted back and forth from memories of ease to the sense of war and fear slapping them to wake up. There is no running away from this.

Some will try to leave. Some will go AWOL, leave their posts and attempt to run towards home, but home is an ocean away. There is no retreat here, no place to go but forward. Soon the battle will rage, and everyone will be focused and engaged. The peaceful memories of a former life will bleed into the smoke of affliction.

THE CHURCH IS BEING DEPLOYED

The latter illustration of war is how the Holy Spirit explained to me what is happening. I sense the war. We are being moved from the barracks to the theater of war. The fight is on; however, many are playing games and ignoring the real struggle that is upon our old world.

As soldiers would reminisce about the days of peace, picnics and dates, the fear would slap them back into reality. Likewise, my mind would race to other things, but the fear of the day would slap me into soberness; the Lord is coming, the Lord is coming. Play the man; you are in the battle, this is not practice. But I would dream, "Dear God, why can't we have the peaceful days the pastors enjoyed a generation ago. Why can't we have the ease of the barracks and pretend to be at war? Why can't we focus on church growth and bigger buildings, as our fathers did?" But then the Holy Spirit would stir within me, "Son, this is the day they all dreamed. But I have chosen you to serve me in this moment, not them."

You smell the spiritual battleground. You smell the blood, the burning sulfur. You feel the percussion of the exploding bombs. You cannot run home. You cannot go AWOL. You cannot quit. You cannot leave your post., this is the moment for which you were born. There is nowhere to go but forward.

JESUS IS CLOSE ENOUGH TO BE SEEN

Jesus sent His disciples on a mission. On their journey across the sea, the winds revolted against them. They were finding it very difficult to

do what Jesus had instructed. From a distance, Jesus saw them struggling. What did He do? *"And He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them: and ... He cometh unto them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by"* (Mark 6:48).

The phrase "would have passed them by" could be misleading. It may lead us to think that Jesus would have left them there to struggle. But not so. The phrase meant He wanted to pass by them. He wanted them to see Him. We know this for the text tells us that *"He cometh unto them ..."* He cared. He was not afraid of their difficulty. He is the solution. He is the victory, but they had to see Him!

When they saw Jesus walking on the sea in power and glory, they cried to Him. He rebuked their fear and got into the boat with them. Immediately the wind ceased, and they were captivated by the majesty of Jesus.

Jesus won the battle with the sea. He always wins. We must stop being occupied with the wind and look for Jesus walking upon the things you are struggling with most. Look unto Jesus and consider Him lest you become weary and faint in your minds (Hebrews 12). Jesus is there in the struggle. He is there when you are toiling. He is there – look up, look out and see Him. Let Him into the ship; the winds will calm, and the ride will be smooth.

As the disciples struggled to get their boat to the place Jesus commanded, we also struggle to get our ministries to the place Jesus is calling us. Our adversary will dispute every inch of our life and calling. Satan will raise every wind possible to keep us toiling and struggling: winds of accusation, winds of war, winds of peril, winds of betrayal.

Many are struggling to get their little boat to the other side, struggling to get their church somewhere. Why? Why do we have to struggle to do what Jesus has commanded? Why is the ministry so challenging? So you can see Jesus walking on what you cannot overpower. So you will long for grace. You have been held up to see Jesus, not to work harder. The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. It is not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord. We must fight the good fight of faith; the fight to see Jesus and let Him in our struggle.

FAITH TO FINISH

You don't need faith for where you've been; you need faith for where you are going! Faith has got you here, but now it must get you there! Your past is over; you no longer need faith for what was; it's done. You hold it in your hand. You touch it.

Now faith is. You don't need faith tomorrow or yesterday. Now faith is! Tell me, "Do you see Him? Do you see Jesus; right there where you are struggling most?" Don't tell me what you believe God can do tomorrow if you cannot believe Him to do it now.

There is an impossible possibility living inside of you, walking on the very waters you cannot cross. I am not asking what you were, but what will you be? I am not asking what you have done but what you will do? I am not asking where you have been, but where will you go?

The war is here. The only hope you have is knowing you are God's soldier. You are prepared. You are commissioned.

Tomorrow all your plans will change. If you have not dedicated your life to the Lord, how can you have peace you will come home from the war?

Once the atmosphere changes, you will see the people fall away (2 Thessalonians 2). You will watch them go AWOL. They will forfeit their futures for the decay of their past. They will forfeit the glory for the shame of being AWOL. They will long for Egypt.