

A New “Religious Fervor”

Bryan Gibson

Let's go back in time to September 10th, 2001, just one day before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. With perhaps a few exceptions, political leaders were not asking for the nation's prayers. The name of God was rarely mentioned in public. Signs expressing our dependence on God were hard to find. People were not flocking to religious services. Eternity was not the uppermost thought in most people's minds.

No doubt about it, a lot has changed since that fateful day. The President has spoken often of the need for prayer. Governors and mayors throughout this land have echoed this call. And people have responded to these calls, judging by the many prayer services that have been held. We've all noticed the signs in front of people's houses, in some way expressing our dependence on God in this critical hour. Church buildings have been filled the last two Sundays. People are thinking more seriously about eternity than ever before. What was important to people before doesn't seem so important now, and vice versa.

We certainly don't want to criticize this “religious fervor,” but it does raise a couple of questions. First, where was this “religious fervor” before? Does it take a tragedy for us to get interested in God? Didn't we need God before the terrorists struck? Secondly, how long will this fervor last? When this matter is settled, however long that takes, and our lives are back to “normal,” will God continue to be a topic of daily conversation? Will people still be looking to Him for help? Will people still be thinking soberly about eternity? Will material things still take a backseat to spiritual things?

We would do well to remember the admonition given in Psalms 62:8: “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” Did you catch the key phrase—“at all times”? We need to trust God in times of war and in times of peace, in times of prosperity and in times of poverty, in times of joy and in times of sadness.

But what does it mean to trust God? Read carefully these words: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil” (Proverbs 3:5-7). Yes, trusting in God means praying to Him, but it also means turning our life over to Him and letting His word direct every area of our lives. In other words, we need to completely submit to His will. We need to quit doing what we want to do, and start doing what He wants us to do. It is only then that we can pray with confidence. “And whatever we ask we

receive from Him, **because we keep His commandments and do those things pleasing in His sight**" (1 John 3:22). This also enables us to live without fear. Who knows where and when the terrorists may strike again? But if we commit to doing His will, "we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6).

Here's hoping that this new "religious fervor" will last indefinitely, that all this religious "talk" will be turned into action, that people will quit trying to do it their way and start doing it the Lord's way, that more and more people will "turn to the Lord" and then "continue with the Lord" (Acts 11:21-23).