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America's Battle Cry: "IN GOD WE TRUST"

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On September 11, 2001, desensitized violence vented its fury, inflicting tragedy upon United States soil. The initial shock of such material devastation and human loss penetrated the hearts of us Americans with as much velocity as the jets we viewed on television, penetrating the towering edifices. Experts marveled at the detailed implementation of the terrorists' catastrophic plan. Destruction of this magnitude, however, could not have been orchestrated by mere man alone, but by a source further behind the scenes — the thief of life himself, who "comes to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

In light of the attack on America, some Christians may be wondering, *Is the devil winning?* My own question sounds out much louder in response: *If he's never won before, why think that he's winning NOW?* "THIS IS WAR!" was declared by the president against terrorism, September 2001; greater still, "THIS IS WAR!" was declared by God against the *author* of terrorism hundreds of years ago — and God won that war through the cross and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. True, battles still flare from an infuriated foe refusing to admit defeat. (The World Trade Center and Pentagon were targets of his rage.) However, despite his infamy, throughout history the devil's evil deeds have backfired. They have aroused the Almighty God Who loves and delights in a people that acknowledge Him, and Who despises the enemy's onslaught against them. The devil's schemes repeatedly have been foiled by the power of our omnipotent God moving on behalf of those who stand for right and seek Divine intervention.

This time will prove to be no different.

With the situation at hand in our country, I boldly proclaim THE answer from God to sustain us, to keep us free of fear, to give us confidence that personal victory is ours:

Jesus is Lord!

Greater is *He* that is in me than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). He is the *Most High*, higher than any other power (Eph. 1:20,21). *All* authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). Yes, Jesus is Lord. Happy is the people whose God is the Lord; blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord (Ps. 144:15; Jer. 17:7).

"In God We Trust" has been imprinted for years upon our money — may it become imprinted upon our hearts at this time. That very phrase we so casually have tossed onto the supermarket counter and passed into the hands of our children for an allowance is today America's battle cry. "In God We Trust" is also our greatest weapon. Faith in God is both our defensive and offensive weapon; it is "a shield...with which [we] can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16) and it is a force with which we can move mountains (Mark 11:22,23). *This is the victory* that overcomes the world, even *our faith* (1 John 5:4).

Again, men may fight men in war. No decent person likes war; but sometimes it simply must be, for the safety and welfare of us, our friends, and our children. Our real battle, however, is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of evil (Eph. 6:12). So how do we battle invisible assailants? How do we fight the good fight of faith? How do we march forward spiritually for the well-being of both America and our personal lives? Believers need a strategy. The Holy Bible provides it. The Holy Spirit affirms it. *As soldiers of Jesus Christ and as Americans in time of war, we strategically need to pray, overcome fear, and give in love to aid others.*



PRAY

Though the tragedy that occurred recently was not directed specifically at Christians, it was triggered by the same hate that came against the first disciples. Acts 12:1,2 says, “About that time Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword.” The death of James was an act of violence — not one committed against thousands, but a violent act nonetheless. Seeing that this pleased the Jews, Herod arrested Peter. It looked like Peter would end up as James had. But something was different now: *The church was praying*. Acts 12:5 states, “But earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” God then sent an angel to supernaturally deliver Peter. He escaped death by the mighty hand of God, which moved on his behalf as a result of prayer.

No desire on the disciples’ part could enable them to go back and undo the tragic death of James (just as we have no control over the killings of the past few weeks). They could only find comfort and encouragement from God concerning it. But they *could* do something about Peter. The Church was on its toes — or, rather, on its knees. It was now praying, and prayer paid off.

God wants the Church today to be alert and on its toes; He wants it active and on its knees. It’s a time of prayer.

I am sure that you have prayed recently for America, the survivors, the victims’ families, President Bush, other leaders of the nation, the military,.... Realizing this, I am not just trying to motivate you to pray, but to encourage you *in* your praying. I want us all to have unshakable confidence as we pray for America:

- **CONFIDENCE** in the willingness and ability of God, knowing that He will hear us and answer all our requests that are according to His will (1 John 5:14,15).
- **CONFIDENCE** at the throne of grace, knowing that God will give us mercy and grace to help in time of need, which this surely is (Heb. 4:16).
- **CONFIDENCE** when we draw near to Him in faith, knowing that He exists and will reward those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).
- **CONFIDENCE** as we pray in the Holy Spirit, knowing that He intercedes according to the will of God, though we ourselves do not know how we should be praying (Rom. 8:26,27).
- **CONFIDENCE** as we humble ourselves and turn from our wicked ways, knowing that God will heal our land (2 Chron. 7:14).
- **CONFIDENCE** to not quit but keep praying fervently, knowing that our prayers have power for change, as Elijah’s prayers possessed (James 5:16,17).

Yes, this is a time for Christians to pray confidently to God. It is a time for the backslider and sinner to begin praying, too. Prayers of repentance, prayers acknowledging Jesus as one’s Lord and Savior, are to flood heaven’s gates. The mass of prayers across this land from those who turn to Him for forgiveness should be of such loud volume, nothing but the rejoicing of heaven’s angels in response could drown it out. As always, we believers must pray for revival — the harvest is ripe and souls are ready more than ever to come to the Lord.

This may come as a shock to some, but we are even to hit our knees for the salvation of the terrorists, who obviously do not have Christ in their hearts. The fruit from their lives prove they don’t. We are to pray for them to be saved. These would not be prayers spoken in vain. *No soul on the earth is immune from the grace of God.* Sin may abound in the terrorists’ lives, but through their acceptance of Jesus Christ, grace would abound much more — just as it has for you and for me, who were once sinners ourselves, serving the same devil and heading towards the same hell.

The prayer closet is a place where we can help others, but it is also where our own peace and joy is revived. Isaiah 56:7 speaks of those who will be made *joyful* in God’s house of prayer. Philippians 4:6,7 promises the *peace* of God, which passes all understanding, to those who get rid of anxiety by praying. “Peace and joy even in times of trouble?” you might ask. Yes, the kingdom of God is *always* righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). No bomb, no fire, no threat of danger can plunder the kingdom. **What God has established is securely in place — unreachable, untouchable by evil.** We are in God’s kingdom. The devil cannot rob us of our peace and joy. They have been given to us by our King to experience every day of our lives, no matter what may come our way.

OVERCOME FEAR

The introduction to Psalm 57 in my Bible reads, “To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Mikdam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.” Saul was hunting David down, to kill him. Psalm 57 has to do with a time “when [David] fled from Saul, *in the cave*.” David hid out in a cave. But, according to the psalm, the cave is not what made him feel safe. **The cave was not his refuge; his real refuge was God.** He wrote, “O God, be merciful to me, for *in thee my soul takes refuge*; in the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by” (Psalm 57:1).



Besides destroying lives, property, and businesses in select locations, the terrorists wanted to bring destruction to *all* Americans — the destruction of our inner peace. Part of the terrorists' plan, naturally, was to terror-ize us — to make us afraid. They wanted to immobilize us, to paralyze us, to keep us from moving on with a normal life, to make us feel like "hiding in a cave." (Granted, some decisions we now make may be different than they would have been just a few short weeks ago, but that does not have to be because of fear. As always, we merely should try to walk in wisdom.) To give in to terrorization is to accept what the Bible calls "the spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7). The spirit of fear (and it *is* a spirit) is not from God, and it is not something He wants us to have. In President Bush's address to Congress on September 20, he accurately stated, "Freedom and fear are at war...Freedom and fear have always been at war — and we know God is not neutral between them." God is for freedom; God opposes the spirit of fear. The spirit He has given us is a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). I don't know about you, but I'll take what God has to give, over what the devil attempts to put in us, any day of the week!

Unfortunately, like it or not, fear is a battle we all face. How can we overcome fear that tries to grip our hearts? *By making "In God We Trust" our battle cry against it! By running into the arms of God! By making the Lord our refuge, as David did!* Psalm 91 promises, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.' For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler...*You will not fear the terror.*" It goes on to promise, "A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you" (Psalm 91:7-10).

When we truthfully say, "In God We Trust," when we make Him our refuge and fortress, the Bible says that we will not fear the terror. We will not be afraid of the devil.

But the devil is not the only one we are not to be afraid of; we should not be afraid of God. The collapsing of buildings and burning of flesh were not actions caused by the hand of an angry God. They were not even "allowed" to happen by a passive, yet "ticked-off," God. *The tragedies were not judgments of God upon the United States!* Sure, sin exists in our country. But America's spiritual condition is not even close to that of Sodom and Gomorrah's. Scores of good churches, ministries, charities, and righteous believers in Christ with a heart to follow their Lord and spread the Gospel fill this land. God would never strike a nation whose founders acknowledged Him and now thousands of their descendants follow suit. Not only that, America is known, and rightly so, as a giving nation. Ours is a giving God, and a people who act as in His character shall be blessed. The Bible says, "Give and it shall be given to you," not "give and your life and possessions will be taken away from you."

God is not mad at us. God is not against us. God is for us. We need to believe that, for then we wholeheartedly can trust in Him to help us.



Joey

And Who better to have on our side! Our God is an awesome God. My little boy, Joey, understands that, at least to a certain degree. For an elementary school assignment, he was supposed to create a short adventure story about a bear named Paddington, then illustrate it. He drew the bear in the World Trade Center, with a jet zooming its way. In his story, Paddington held out his hand and stopped the plane before it rammed the building. Later, my son thought this was too unrealistic; so he added Bamm-Bamm from *The Flintstones*. *Now when the jet approached, Bamm-Bamm swung his club and went BAMM, BAMM!, bashing it to pieces.* No harm befell the World Trade Center or the little bear inside it.

If only it had happened that way in real life. If only a Bamm-Bamm could protect us 24 hours a day in the future. But we do not need a Bamm-Bamm; it is "In God We Trust." Joey said to me, "God is like Bamm-Bamm. He is between us and the devil, like Bamm-Bamm was between Paddington and the plane. God has power. If the devil tries to hurt us, God will get him!"

Let's have faith in the Lord to protect us. Fear is quenched when we believe and proclaim, "The Lord is my strength and my shield" (Psalm 28:7).

GIVE IN LOVE

The hearts of all of us have gone out to the hurting. Countless numbers of Americans have reached out in tears to those in need, by giving blood, assistance, or finances. The display of love has been a non-stop flow. It has reminded me of the unity and tender caring we witnessed in Oklahoma following the Oklahoma City bombings a few years ago.

Giving with a heart of love is a necessity at this time. We believers especially, who have the God of love inside us, should be comforting and encouraging anyone we come across that needs it. You probably are doing this already, but a reminder can never hurt. A gently prodding to continue reaching out in love is good to hear, too.



I specifically want to address ministers now. Minister, you regularly have fed people the Word and done your best to help them get their needs met. No doubt, you will continue to do it at this time and in the future. You certainly don't need me to tell you to do that. It is on my heart, however, to encourage you in your giving of love to others. I recognize the position God has placed you in and the potential of what He can do through you. You are a servant of God, but a servant that is in front of people. You are not a silent worker in the background. You are a leader. Sure, a lot of Americans look to those in political office for courage and strength. (I thank God President Bush is a leader who openly admits that he turns to the Lord for guidance and help. He ended his address to Congress by saying, "May God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America.") But the people of God also need to hear from men and women seasoned in ministry, who are appointed, called, and ordained by Him to deliver His messages to them. **You have a great responsibility in this hour.** As you stand strong in the Lord, God's people will stand strong. As you reveal a tender, caring heart, God's people will develop such a heart. As you speak words of comfort, faith, and encouragement, God's people will feed on them and be able to provide nourishment themselves to others. Like priest, like people. Like shepherd, like sheep.

Minister, your position in leadership can mean the difference between a church that buckles under in depression, fear, discouragement, and worry or one that rises up and continues forward as before in faith, joy, confidence, and peace. Great as it is, your responsibility is not a heavy load to bear, however. It is more like a backpack a soldier carries. It is the load, the yoke, the cross Jesus has assigned to you as a minister. And He has instructed you to take *His* yoke upon you, for His yoke is *easy* and His burden is *light* (Matt. 11).

Perhaps you too have struggled with fear, worry, etc.. I encourage you to keep meditating on God's promises and speaking His Word throughout the day, as you faithfully have done many times before. Become more deeply convinced in your own mind that God is a good God who will never leave us nor forsake us. Then as you step into the pulpit or minister in letters or one-on-one, the people will hear something vital they need to hear, from someone who knows that he knows that he knows he is preaching truth. They will grab hold of the Word and not let go — because they believe with you, their leader, that it is true. **"In God We Trust" will be one their lips, as it is on yours.**

In conclusion to all, let me cover the biggie: What about the days ahead? Americans have been warned that the elimination of terrorism throughout the world will be a slow, lengthy process. We have been told its end will not come overnight. **The battle may be long, but, friend, our God isn't going anywhere.** He isn't leaving. He is right here with us and is planning on staying put. The same powerful, loving God who was with us yesterday is still with us today and will be with us through every tomorrow. That's why we can praise Him today and tomorrow, just as we did yesterday. *We can rejoice in Him.* We can dance before Him, we can sing to Him, we can shout praises to Him, as we always have. For He is with us. We are not alone in all this. Philippians 4:5,5 says, "Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS...*The Lord is at hand.*"

No wonder it is "In God We Trust" — for He alone is the God who is near, the God who loves us, the God who hears our prayers and answers from heaven.

Pam

Dear friend,

*I had left New York on Monday, September 10th, just one day before everything happened there. **Being a native New Yorker, as well as someone who loves America, this attack stirred me.** I confessed to God that I was angry. He told me that He was angry too. He instructed me to send out a tape entitled "Holy Anger," which I had preached several years ago.*

***While we are to love everyone and not hate any race or any religious group of people, we are to hate the works of the devil.** It is alright to be angry but sin not (Eph. 4:26). Jesus gave us the right to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). We have even been given spiritual weapons from God for the destroying of the works of the devil.*

*I am challenging you to be the good soldier of Christ you are called to be. I am asking you to step up your prayer life, your Bible reading, your praise and worship, and your church attendance. **Be part of God's answer to the devil's attack.** Be strong in the Lord and do great exploits for Him. Tap into the life of God and learn to overcome evil with good. Have a "holy anger" against the devil, as you grow in your love for the Lord. Pick up your cross and wake up to the cause of Christ. In the words of a great hymn: "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war — with the cross of Jesus going on before."*

***What the devil meant for evil God will work for good (Gen. 50:20).** Remember, when the enemy comes in like a flood, God will raise up a standard. Be God's standard through which He will flood the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God.*

***Thank you for your financial gifts into Woodson Ministries.** With them we will continue to take God's Word throughout this great country. God bless you, and God bless America.*

Woody