



Prophetic Observer

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Keeping Time On God's Prophetic Clock

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An Open Letter To President Vladimir Putin

Pastor Larry Spargimino, Ph.D.

Dear President Vladimir Putin:

The world has heard that you are threatening to use nuclear weapons in the war against Ukraine. The news headlines show that many nations are taking you seriously. Headlines such as, “USA Stockpiles Anti-Radiation Drugs,” “Biden Warns of Nuclear Armageddon,” “Putin Isolated in Bunker,” “Gas Panic: Putin blowing up nuke in Black Sea would release killer poisonous gas cloud & trigger tsunamis, warns top professor.” In this latter report, we read that “the explosion could trigger a toxic cloud of killer hydrogen sulfide ... The sea is unique due to a high concentration of hydrogen sulfide.”

When the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Krill congratulated you on your 70th birthday, the Patriarch said, “God put you in power.” May I respectfully ask, sir, what god is that? Certainly not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” What god will raise “a toxic cloud of killer hydrogen sulfide” that will destroy innocent civilians?

I have been following the war in Ukraine since it started. I know, Mr. Putin, that some groups in America claim that the death toll has been deliberately doctored by globalists to arouse people against Russian nationalism, yet the abundant testimony of observers and Christian aid workers on the ground, plus numerous satellite photos, leads me to believe that the wanton destruction of property and the targeting of civilians is real. The attack on a maternity hospital, the use of cluster munitions and thermobaric bombs that suck oxygen out of lungs and the testimony of refugees who have escaped to Poland and elsewhere testify to the “scorched-earth” policy you are following.

Mr. Putin, some of the reports that I have read said you are ill. I don't know exactly what kind of illness that might be, but sir, even if you live to be 110 you will have to stand before the Judge Of All The Earth and give an account of your murderous

deeds. You will not be able to hide on the day of judgment. Our Heavenly Father's bolts of lightning are far more accurate than any missile Russian scientists have created. There will be no escape unless you repent of your sins and flee the wrath to come by accepting Jesus into your heart and begging for mercy for the grief and mayhem you have caused.

The Holy Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit and given as a witness to the entire world says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). In the original language the word “confess” means to agree with God. Confession of sins means “no excuses.” You either agree with God that you have sinned, or the confession is not true confession. Good intentions mean nothing to our holy God. Uzzah put out his hand to steady the ark of the covenant which was being transported in a way not prescribed by Almighty God. Uzzah meant well, but his disobedience brought sudden death on him (2 Sam. 6:7).

I know that at a pro-war rally in March of 2022 justifying the Russian invasion of Ukraine, you said, “Words from the Holy Bible come to my head: “There is no greater love than if someone gives his soul for his friends,”” your paraphrase of John 15:13.

You and I, Mr. Putin, and millions of Christians are grieved by the moral degeneracy in the West. One of America's great Christian scholars, Dr. Michael Brown, a Messianic Jew who loves Jesus, Yeshua, and a man filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, believes that you are motivated by spiritual beliefs more than the expansion of NATO. He cites the speech you gave on September 19, 2013, in which you stated:

“We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually redirecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities:

national, cultural, religious and even sexual ... The excesses of political correctness have reached the point where people are seriously talking about registering political parties whose aim is to promote pedophilia. People in many European countries are embarrassed or afraid to talk about their religious affiliations ...”

Mr. President, I sincerely wish that our own President, Joe Biden, and the political party he represents, would have the same sentiments that you express in this speech.

I know, and believe, Mr. Putin, you are a very moral man and you claim that you are deeply grieved by the sins and evil deeds of all too many people in the West. Yet the Holy Bible informs us quite clearly that morality will never get anyone into heaven. Good works and noble sentiments such as you express are, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). God is so holy that even our repentance needs to be repented of.

There are those who manifest the “form of godliness,” but have never experienced its power (2 Tim. 3:5). These are they of whom the Lord Jesus spoke when He said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name, have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:22-23). Or, in the words of Numbers 32:23, “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

As a minister of the Gospel, I believe it is my solemn duty to inform you that you are in danger of hellfire, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44-48). You are putting your faith in a mere ecclesiastical body made up of a cadre of so-called “holy men” and prelates who have no regard for the authority of sacred Scripture, a group of men where vestments and candles and ceremonies dazzle the eyes of men but are of no esteem in the eyes of the Almighty and can never thwart the wrath of God.

The Eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Name above every Name, said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

As you well know, Mr. President, the scribes and the Pharisees were the holy men of ancient Israel, yet Jesus Christ affirms that our righteousness must exceed their righteousness. How is that possible? Where can unholy sinners like you and me, and every human being, whatever their gender, ethnicity or status in life, find such righteousness?

The Holy Bible, the unchanging Word of God, tells us that this righteousness is in Jesus Christ, and that through simple faith in Jesus Christ, this righteousness can be imputed to us. The Jews of old never found that righteousness,

but believing Gentiles did. “The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness” (Rom. 9:30-31).

Mr. Putin, it is not too late to embrace the Savior and not too late to put your wholehearted faith in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood will wash away your sins and will provide you with a full remission of sins. God holds no one in double jeopardy. God does not expect double payment for your sins. Jesus has already paid for your sins. His death is sufficient for every human being that has ever lived, but efficient only for those who believe in His name. If you believe in Him you will never have to pay for your sins. They have already been paid for, and that holds true for all eternity.

When Jesus Christ was on the cross He prayed for His tormentors, and then made excuses for them: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34). I believe, Mr. Putin, that you do not know what you are doing. From the very beginning of this war, Russian troops have fared very poorly. And, like those people in that angry crowd in Jerusalem long ago, you don’t know what you are doing. Russia is losing face. You have not been able to turn the tide against the Ukrainians, and you really don’t know what to do. The use of nuclear weapons looks promising. Many Russians are fed up with this war and they want out. Some Russian leaders are putting the pressure on you. They want a victory. The only possibility of victory is the use of nuclear weapons. Your back is against the wall. What will you do?

My dear Vladimir, just look at human history – one war after another. Nothing has ever really been solved. People have died. Cities have been destroyed. Mothers have mourned the deaths of their husbands and sons. And what will the world think of you when the pictures start coming out – pictures of little children, their bodies blackened like charcoal from nuclear blasts. People with huge tumors on their necks and bodies. The same could happen even to the people of your great nation. What a tragedy! Even your friends in Beijing and Pyongyang will scorn you.

Annihilationists and cult members will keep on teaching that there is no hell. “God wouldn’t do such a thing,” they will say. Others will boast, “Hell is just a figment of the imagination,” but you Mr. President, will know the truth, the truth of everlasting fire and woe. For your own sake, swallow your pride. Go to the negotiating table. Russia is a huge country. How is it wise to expand this war to the point that even Russia will be harmed for the sake of a small stretch of land?

— Respectfully yours, Pastor Larry Spargimino, Ph.D.
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When Winning Is Not Enough – Part II

Pastor Larry Spargimino, Ph.D.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5).

These words from the Father are His endorsement of the Son’s words. The scene presents Moses and Elijah, who were key instruments of Divine revelation in the Old Testament. The Father’s words, however, tell us whose words really count.

The Sermon on the Mount consists of three whole chapters – Matthew 5-7 – of Jesus’ teaching. Though many have shied away from these chapters because they seem to present some interpretive problems, I believe they provide some important secrets that, once understood, will help those living in the shadow of the Rapture live a God-honoring and effective life. As usual, the Lord Jesus Christ shares some amazing insights into human nature, plus insights that will help us deal with some issues in human relations.

“Agree with Thine Adversary Quickly”

Social scientists have often commented that we are living in “the age of litigation.” Get into an argument and before you know it, the other party says, “I’ll see you in court.” Issues that could have been settled in a friendly matter now turn into a lawsuit. Why? Because people are insisting they are right and they want what’s due them, no matter how long it takes.

Jesus has a different idea. “Agree with thine adversary quickly,” we read in Matthew 5:25, “whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.” The emphasis in these words is not on proving that you are right, but on resolving the issue quickly. Make solving your disagreement quickly your goal. If you don’t, you could end up in jail.

We’ve all seen arbitration-based reality court shows like “Judge Judy” who adjudicates real-life, small-claims disputes. As each party makes appeal to the judge, her eyes begin to gleam. She soon has an insight that no one had ever seen. Before you know it, the party who thought he was sure to win ends up looking like a criminal.

Surprise. This is what Jesus is talking about. Try to win and you may lose. Jesus is giving good advice. The website

fightingforyou.com says a person can often pay a smaller penalty for their offense by seeking an out-of-court settlement rather than seeking to win by bringing the issue to court. Such settlements are time and money-savers because they halt the dispute process. For the average person the mere prospect of going to court can be intimidating.

Turn the Other Cheek

We live in a fight-back, talk-back, cuss-back world. Today it is even shoot back. I am a strong supporter of our Second Amendment, but guns are for self-defense of life, limb and property. On all too many occasions, even a road rage incident ends up with someone shot. The Second Amendment was not intended to help us resolve petty squabbles.

In Matthew 5:39 Jesus taught the people and said, “But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

First, let’s look at the words “that ye resist not evil.”

Certainly this is not an absolute prohibition, calling us to total non-resistance and total pacifism. Jesus’ whole ministry on Earth was one of resisting evil. He said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Jesus was resisting demons, Pharisaical legalism, spiritual ignorance and darkness. He condemned the Jews for their shallowness (Matt. 23) and forcibly threw the moneychangers out of the Temple (John 2:14-17).

Jesus said we are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). Salt resists putrefaction; light resists darkness. We certainly see this in Paul’s ministry. In Acts 26 Paul is telling King Agrippa about his dramatic meeting with Jesus on the Damascus Road and about God’s calling on his life. The apostle was called by Jesus to do what? Verse 18 tells us: “To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

In fact, we must all resist evil. The Apostle Paul described the Christian life as a wrestling match (Eph. 6:12). Paul wrote to Titus that a bishop must “hold fast the faithful

We must resist all evil. The Apostle Paul described the Christian life as a wrestling match (Eph. 6:1).

word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (1:9). This involves resisting evil with sound doctrine and teaching.

We all have a duty to resist evil. But the evil that Jesus is speaking about in Matthew 5:39 is “petty” evil. A slap in the face equals an insult. We all face those every day. Careless words from others. A complaining spirit. Don’t even give it a second thought. It means nothing. Let that person slap you on the other cheek. Insults of this sort need to slide off your soul like water slides off a duck’s back. In his *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol. 1, p. 281, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains that ...

It means that we must rid ourselves of the spirit of retaliation, of the desire to defend ourselves and to avenge ourselves for any injury or wrong that is done to us. Our Lord starts on the physical level. He imagines a man coming along, and, without any provocation, striking us on the right cheek. Immediately, the instinct is to hit back and punish him and to have vengeance. The moment I am hit, I want to retaliate.

Indeed, to be struck in the face is humiliating and insulting. Insults, however, can come in many forms. Especially for people who are easily insulted, insults are everywhere. A word, or even a look can be perceived as a slap in the face. Jesus has words for all of us: Let it pass. Don’t retaliate.

A slap in the face is not a major issue and you don’t have to fight back and win. This is good advice from Jesus. I can testify to that. There are some dear saints in churches who major in minors. There is some little insignificant thing that troubles them. That’s the slap in the face. They take it very seriously. They won’t let it go. It becomes a BIG issue with them.

“Let Him Have Thy Cloak Also”

In Matthew 5:40, Jesus follows with, “And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” This sounds something like “turn the other cheek.”

Jewish law permitted an opponent to sue for possession of an offender’s inner garment, a “coat,” which is similar to a long-sleeved shirt. It was typically a sleeved tunic that extended to the ankles and was made of wool or linen. The outer garment was a robe or a wrap (KJV “cloak”). It was much more essential since it provided necessary warmth and was also used by the poor as a blanket.

Based on texts such as Exodus 22:26-27 and Deuteronomy 24:12-13, texts that mandated returning a neighbor’s garment taken as a pledge before sundown when the temperature lowered, Jewish law stated that the outer garment was exempt from seizure by the courts, because that was too

severe a punishment and could lead to extreme misery, or even the death of the one from whom this coat was taken. Here Jesus is saying, if someone sues you and wants your shirt, give him your coat as well.

Going the Extra Mile

One of the most “troublesome” Scriptures in Jesus’ sermon is Matthew 5:41: “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain,” or “go with him two.”

The Roman occupation of Israel in Biblical times was very grievous to Jews. The Romans were polytheists who did not really understand Jewish religious sensibilities. They did not get along well, but Jews did not have much of a choice. Rome had a mighty army and they were calling the shots.

It was Roman practice that a Roman soldier on a journey could command a Jewish civilian to carry his weapons and his rucksack a mile. This was a case of the oppressor oppressing the oppressed and doing it with joy. Jews were insulted by this practice, but here comes Jesus with what might seem like outrageous advice: “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him the second mile.” I can imagine a Jew saying to Jesus, “You want me to carry the oppressor’s weapons and rucksack a second mile?” “That’s right,” Jesus would say, “Go a second mile.”

A very serious trend in our society – one that is also becoming more evident even among Christians – is that people are insisting on their own rights. Yet, Jesus Christ is the supreme example for all of us. He did not demand His personal rights. In fact, this is supposed to be our attitude. “Let this mind be in you,” we read in Philippians 2, verse 5, “which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” In other words, Jesus surrendered the prerogatives of Deity.

When Scripture says, “Let this mind be in you,” it doesn’t mean brain surgery or a brain transplant. Rather, God is telling us that this is how we ought to think. This is how we ought to deal with personality issues in church, in marriage and in the office.

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