

It Is Written

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"Ready For Every Good Deed"

By Heath Rogers

The apostle Paul told Titus to "remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed" (Titus 3:1). There are several reasons why you and I need to be ready for every good deed.

1. There is a shortage both of good works and of people who do them. There are plenty of people doing bad things. This world has been characterized by sin and evil since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. There is always a need for good people who will do good deeds. If we do not perform the good works God has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:10), who will?

2. If we aren't ready, we won't see the opportunities to do good works. How many times have opportunities passed us by because we weren't prepared? Some people excuse their lack of involvement by saying, "I don't know how," or, "I never have the opportunity." The opportunities exist, we just have to find them. Paul asked the Colossians to pray "for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned" (Col. 4:3).

3. Readiness is a state of mind. Christians are to live in a watchful, alert state. Jesus said, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (Matt. 24:42-44). We are to be on the alert always, not only for the Lord's return, but also for opportunities to do good.

Are you and I ready for every good deed?

Miracles: The Power of Satan or the Finger of God?

By Clarence R. Johnson

In Matthew 9:32-34, Matthew records, "As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.'"

Glancing back over the last few chapters, Matthew has told us of the cleansing of a leper, the healing of the paralyzed servant of a Roman centurion, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law who was sick with a high fever, the calming of a storm at sea, the freeing of two demon-possessed men who had been extremely wild and dangerous before Jesus freed them from demon-possession, the raising of a girl from the dead, the healing of the woman who had had a flow of blood for 12 years, the healing of two blind men, and numerous others who came to Him — and now this freeing of the mute who had been demon-possessed. No wonder the multitudes marveled "It was never seen like this in Israel!"

But even in the light of Jesus' marvelous accomplishments, He always had His detractors. "The Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.'"

Luke 11:14-23 shows that still others came, asking for a sign from heaven. Indeed, after all the miracles He had worked in the immediate setting, what else could He have done to prove He came from heaven?

In fact, as He defended Himself against the charge of using Satanic powers He reasoned that Satan certainly would not cast out demons. To do so would be to work against himself. Not only that, but the sons of the Pharisees — perhaps a reference to their disciples — also cast out demons, or at least claimed to do so. By whose power did they seek to overcome Satan? The only logical conclusion — the necessary inference — was that Jesus was operating by the power of God, and the logical application of that realization was that the very reign of God Himself was evident in Jesus' ministry: "If I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

Finally, Jesus further illustrates this principle with a parable. The only one who can throw a strong man out of his palace is an even stronger man than the first. Likewise, the only one who could cast demons out of their dwelling place would be someone who possesses a power greater than even the prince of the demons. Only the power of God would suffice. Jesus did it with "the finger of God."

What To Do When the Country Is Falling Apart

By Gardner Hall

The prophet Habakkuk was overwhelmed with anxiety about two things: (1) The injustice in his country (1:1-4) and (2) the resulting destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (1:5-2:1). However, when the prophet turned to the Lord in prayer, his confidence grew to the point that he could rejoice in the Lord whatever happened (3:17-28). The final verse of the book, a statement from one of David's Psalms (18:33), is compelling. "Yahweh my Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like those of a deer and enables me to walk on mountain heights!" (HCSB).

The reference is probably to an animal like the Palestine mountain gazelle. Their hoofs have sharp edges and the undersides are concave, enabling them to climb seemingly impassible cliffs and thus view the world, as it were, from above the fray. That's the idea here! God gave the prophet feet like those of a deer, the spiritual traction to climb into the spiritual realms and view the rise and fall of the nations with a compliant detachment.

God's followers today are often overwhelmed with the same type of anxiety: (1) The injustices in our countries and (2) their growing weakness. Rather than wanting us to fall into depression when being bombarded with news about the evils in our nation, God invites us through the prophet to pray to him and rise above the fray into the heavenly realms. A focus on him and eternity helps us avoid the despair that comes from a this-worldly focus. "Yahweh my Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like those of a deer and enables me to walk on mountain heights!" (Idea from my dad, Sewell Hall.)

To Help Us Pray More and Better

By Bill Crews

To help us pray more than we do, and better than we do, we need:

1. A greater sense of God's presence, Psalm 139:7-12; Acts 17:27 — we speak to those who are present.
2. A greater love for God, Matthew 22:36-37; 1 John 5:3 — we want to talk to those we love.
3. A more diligent study of the Word of God, Psalm 1:1-2 — the more we listen to God, the more we have to say to Him.
4. A greater faith in the efficacy of prayer, Matthew 7:7-8; James 5:16-17 — faith leads to prayer, and we must pray in faith, James 1:5-6; Mark 11:24.
5. A deeper sense of our own sins, weaknesses, limitations and needs, James 5:13; 1 John 1:9; James 4:2-3 — arrogant, self-sufficient, self-righteous, impenitent people are not praying people.
6. More gratitude for God's abundant blessings, James 1:17; Acts 17:24-25 — grateful people give thanks.
7. A greater awareness of our utter dependency upon God, Acts 17:28; Job 12:30 — this will lead us to be lowly, submissive, petitioning people.