

[FOR THE ATTENTION OF MINISTERS, PCC MEMBERS, ELDERS AND BIBLE STUDY LEADERS.]

THIS ARTICLE IS CIRCULATING AROUND THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES THROUGHOUT THE UK. YOUR ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AT THE TIME, AS WELL AS THE ONE BY THE BISHOP OF CHELMSFORD, BOTH QUOTED ON PAGE FOUR. THANK YOU.]

Wartime Miracles and a National Scandal

The World War II testimonies of six of the most senior figures including Eisenhower, Churchill and leading military officers, reveal God's protection of the Nation in response to prayer and faithfulness. If they could see the state of the Nation today, what might they wish us to know?

There is an old story of two spiders, one the mother and the other her son. The story goes that mother spider made a lovely home in her web and she suspended this web from a single strand hanging from a tree branch far above. One day, her son paid a visit. As he surveyed her home he noticed this single strand seemingly ascending into empty space. Thinking it useless he cut it and to his horror the whole web fell and was destroyed.

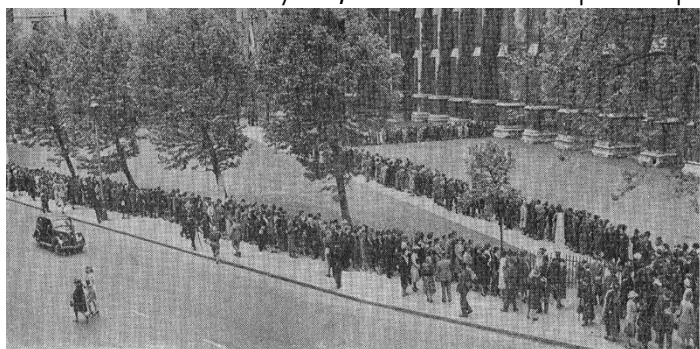
THE THREAD OF FAITH

The spiritual lesson behind this story is very simple. Many people today look back upon the wartime generation and regard their faithful belief in Almighty God as something really strange and peculiar. As a minister I have often heard comments like "Oh Granny and Grandad went to church every Sunday. I don't know why". Or "Granny read her Bible every day. How boring that must have been!" They might occasionally add "We have no interest in anything like that, being religious is a waste of time." It is this kind of attitude which has led many people today to cut the thread of faith in God which supported previous generations and now to their horror the whole structure of our society has collapsed in a myriad of social and moral problems. That thread, that faith in God; that Hope in Him, that Eternal Light which could never be extinguished, is precisely what kept previous generations going, through war and bloodshed. Today's generation has largely dismissed this faith as being unimportant and we see the ruinous results all around.

It is often said that the past is like another country with regard to belief and behaviour and I am reminded of this truth time and again as I study the attitudes of those who experienced wartime. As a minister for over thirty years I have immersed myself in researching wartime events from both World Wars. I have personally talked to those who served in the trenches during the First World War and I have talked to numerous ex-service personnel from the Second World War. It has been a unique privilege to have been able to do this and I can say with total conviction that an underlying faith in Almighty God was absolutely integral to keeping people in this country strong and keeping them going. They believed that God was real and in turn they witnessed profound examples of God being at work in this world of chaos which men have made.

DUNKIRK & DIVINE INTERVENTION

An example of just how strong and how widespread this belief in God really was, can be seen in the response of people, when King George VI called for a National Prayer Day at the time of the Dunkirk crisis. In May 1940 when France had fallen and the British Army was trapped at Dunkirk where they were to be annihilated, King George 6th called for a National Day of Prayer to plead for Divine Intervention. So widespread and so deep was faith in God that literally millions of people flocked into churches to pray. The



special service held in Westminster Abbey was so inundated that there is a famous photograph showing a queue a quarter of a mile long as people desperately tried to get in to pray. That's how important and how widespread faith

was in that generation. They knew God was real and they knew He could be petitioned through heartfelt prayer. Immediately after that Day of Prayer a great calm suddenly descended on the English Channel, the like of which hadn't been seen for a generation, enabling hundreds of tiny boats to sail across and rescue 335,000 soldiers.

History shows that the faith of that generation was regularly rewarded. Only those who study the events of the Second World War can fully appreciate just how close we came to losing the war and losing our freedom. The facts show that at numerous crisis points when it seemed all was lost, the people of this nation witnessed God's Hand at work, changing what should have been the natural outcome of an event into a deliverance.

MORE THAN HUMAN PLANNING

Recently I came across an article written by no less than the head of the British and American Planning Staff, the body responsible for planning D-Day and the liberation of Europe. He was in the unique position of knowing fully what was happening on the war front. His name was Lt General Sir Frederick Morgan and he wrote this article two years after the end of the war, as he looked back on events. These are his words;

"Miracles still happen. How many of them have we not seen enacted before our eyes in these past few years? There was Dunkirk and its flat calm sea. Who planned that? We saw no way out barring a miracle. Then came the miracle. Two years later, the British and American military convoy was sailing in order to land in North Africa. All the enemy submarines were on the lookout. A breath-taking moment came when a U-boat caught sight of the tall ship of one convoy. The rest of the convoy was obscured by a squall that appeared to be travelling along with our ships providing cover. The result was that the Nazi observer thought that what he saw was merely worthy of routine report. Then just as General Patton was due to land on the Casablanca beaches, open to the full Atlantic swell, at the very moment it seemed inevitable that the whole affair must be called off, the wind changed from on-shore to off-shore and let the small craft land successfully. There was surely more than human planning here too. Then there was the miracle of D-Day in 1944 with a last minute change in the weather. The history of other theatres of war tell of many similar happenings."

When you read the reflections of those who were in authority, individuals who had direct knowledge as to what really happened behind the scenes during the War, they all describe the same thing. An overwhelming sense of Divine Intervention at critical moments.

WE HAVE A GUARDIAN

Wartime Prime Minister, Winston Churchill is another example. He like Morgan knew everything that was going on. Towards the end of 1942 as the tide turned in the War he wrote,

"I sometimes have a feeling of interference. I want to stress that. I have a feeling sometimes that some Guiding Hand has interfered. I have a feeling that we have a Guardian because we have a great Cause and we shall have that Guardian so long as we serve that Cause faithfully."

ALTERED SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Then there is the testimony of Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding. He was the actual Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. He knew all too well what was really going on and how desperate things were. After the Battle was over he wrote,

"I pay homage to those gallant boys who gave their all so that our nation might live...but I say with absolute conviction, that I can trace the intervention of God, not only in the Battle itself, but in the events leading up to it. At the end of the Battle one had the feeling that there had been some special Divine Intervention to alter some sequence of events which would otherwise have occurred."

MALTA'S VERY PRESENT HELP

Or what about the account of General Sir William Dobbie who was Governor of Malta during its siege which began in 1940. It was absolutely vital that this outpost be held from the Germans because its capture was key to gaining control of the Mediterranean Sea. Looking back he wrote,

"God in His Mercy, answered our prayers and in the two years and more of the siege, His help was very obvious and very real.... God's protecting Hand was so much in evidence that on a number of occasions officers came up to me and said quite spontaneously 'Do you know sir, I think Someone up there (pointing upwards) has been helping us today.' Such conversations took place not once nor twice but a number of times." Dobbie was so overwhelmed with the sense of God's help during the siege that he later wrote a book about it entitled "A Very Present Help".

EISENHOWER'S ALMIGHTY AND MERCIFUL GOD

Then there is the testimony of General Eisenhower. Eisenhower was none other than the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces responsible for D Day and the ultimate liberation of Europe. Like the others I have quoted, he too held a unique position where he knew everything that was going on. In June 1952 as he reflected on the events of D Day he stated,

*"This day eight years ago, I made the most agonising decision of my life. I had to decide to postpone by at least 24 hours the most formidable array of fighting ships and of fighting men that was ever launched across the sea against a hostile shore. The consequences of that decision at that moment could not have been foreseen by anyone. **If there were nothing else in my life to prove the existence of an Almighty and merciful God, the events of the next 24 hours did it...**The greatest break in a terrible outlay of weather occurred the next day and allowed that great invasion to proceed, with losses far below those we had anticipated..."*

"THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING"

When the war in Europe ended in May 1945 with the surrender of Germany, Field Marshall Montgomery, Commander in Chief of the 21st Army Group sent a personal message to all the Troops under his command. In his position as Commander in Chief he too had knowledge about what had really gone on during the War. My uncle served under him and he passed onto me a copy of this personal message. The opening part of the message sent to all troops, goes like this;

"On this day of victory in Europe I feel I would like to speak to all who have served and fought with me during the last few years.... We all have a feeling of great joy and thankfulness that we have been preserved to see this day. We must remember to give praise and thankfulness where it is due. 'This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes'." (Psalm 118v23).

I have quoted from six highly intelligent and gifted individuals who held the most profound key positions during the Second World War. These people were the most informed and knowledgeable of any in the Country and as they reflected on events, they recognised that Almighty God had answered the prayers of the Nation as it pleaded for His Intervention. The wartime generation knew God was real, they knew He would listen to prayer offered in a spirit of humility and repentance, and in turn their faith was rewarded with deliverance.

FROM THE FOXHOLES OF LUXEMBOURG

Just as there were great and mighty deliverances through wartime, there are also numerous examples of small and localised instances of Divine help. Listen to this personal letter written from a soldier to his mother. The soldier was called Joel, he was serving in Patton's Third Army and he describes how the entire platoon narrowly escaped being wiped out as it faced the Germans in Luxembourg. He wrote,

"One of my best friends, Tom, with his whole platoon were pinned down by mortar and artillery fire. They were given the order to move but they couldn't because the enemy had full view of them from a hill and were zeroing their fire on them accurately. Tom is the most conscientious Christian boy I have ever met in the services. He knew something had to be done to save the fifty men. He crawled from his foxhole and looked things over. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, he lay down behind a tree and prayed earnestly for God to help him. This is true mother...after he prayed a mist or fog rolled down between the two hills, and the whole platoon got out of their foxholes and escaped. They reorganised in a little town behind the lines where there was a church building.

They all went in and knelt down to pray and thank the Lord, and then they asked Tom to take the service. This is true mother, and it just shows how much prayer can mean. If that was not an answer to prayer I don't know what is."

WHY HAS GOD PRESERVED US?

In April 1945 the Bishop of Chelmsford Dr Henry Wilson wrote in the press,

"If ever a great nation was on the point of supreme and final disaster and yet was saved and reinstated, it was ourselves. That is a fact which should be written on the souls of us all in indelible letters of fire. It does not require an exceptionally religious mind to detect in all this the Hand of God. It has been a miracle and the person who does not recognise that, is impervious to the deeper significance of events."

Challenging people as to why we had been saved, the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr William Temple said in his sermon at St Paul's Cathedral on Battle of Britain Sunday in 1943 *"Why has God preserved us? We may, and we must believe that He Who led our fathers in ways so strange, and has preserved our land in a manner so marvellous, has a purpose for us to serve in the preparation for His perfect Kingdom."*

THE SINGLE STRAND...BROKEN

It is plain to see that between the wartime generation and today's generation the thread of faith has broken. In matters of faith it really is like a different Country between then and now. Just imagine if those individuals whom I have quoted, individuals who had personally witnessed God's intervention first hand, were by some miraculous means sent back to speak to our Nation today, what do you think they would say? Their message would surely be; *"This Nation must take Almighty God seriously and people must take the Bible seriously. They must carefully apply the Lord's will, as revealed in Scripture, to their own personal lives because faith does matter, it makes all the difference; it is the single strand that holds the whole web secure."* But along with this message I think they would also have a question to ask of those holding positions of influence. They would surely want to know why the events they witnessed which were so profound and are so well documented, are at the same time so rarely taught, talked about or even mentioned in churches, Parliament or schools today. **This is a national scandal and a betrayal of the very freedoms and democracy which this generation claims to appreciate.**

Faith is so important after all, that if it hadn't been for the faithfulness of the wartime generation praying to Almighty God, none of today's generation would ever have been born. This truth needs to be broadcast in every church and taught in every school, right across this Nation of ours. *"Thank you Granny for reading your Bible every day and going to church. Your faith and the faith of your generation meant I could live."*

What God dramatically did for that generation, He can also do for ours. Our nation urgently needs His help and protection. May we, like the wartime generation before us, turn to God in a true spirit of repentance and plead for Divine help. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 He promises, "If people humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land." If our nation, once again sought God's help as it did during Wartime, now, just as then, miracles of blessing and protection would begin to happen.

(A full account of what happened at Dunkirk and similar extraordinary events, can be read in the book *"We have a Guardian"* by W.B. Grant. Available in print or Kindle format from Amazon. See also, articles under *"National Deliverance"* located in the right hand index on www.internetpulpit.co.uk as well as the article *"We must urgently pray for our Nation"*).

Please share this important and encouraging article with others. If you would like to have it as an email to forward out, then simply email strengthenthefaithful@gmail.com clearly putting "Wartime Miracles" in the subject box. Thank you.

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