



OPEN UP THE BLACKSMITH SHOP

Jentezen Franklin

If ever there was a time when ministers need to stand up and preach the truth, it's now.

To show you why that's important, I want to direct you to 1 Samuel 13:19–20, 22...

Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, "Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!" So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plow points, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened."

So on the day of the battle not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

When I read this text, I can't help but think about where we are as a nation in America, and particularly the American church. You see, much like the nation of Israel, we've become vulnerable and disarmed.

Let's consider the context of what's happening in this passage from 1 Samuel. Israel had been invaded by the Philistines. They were completely under siege. The first thing the enemy did was take their weapons. The Philistines did not want the Israelites to have physical weapons with which to defend themselves.

Now although I'm a big proponent of our Second Amendment rights, in our case I'm not talking about physical weapons. I'm talking about spiritual warfare. It's a battle that too many Christians are ill-equipped to fight in our nation.

I believe that a lot of the responsibility for this falls squarely on the shoulders of pastors in our churches.

Notice the text begins by saying there were no blacksmiths in Israel. Blacksmiths were the craftsmen who could fashion weapons – swords, spears, knives – for battle. Blacksmiths could put weapons in the hands of the Israelites, but there were none to be found.

As pastors, we are like blacksmiths. We are to help believers arms themselves with the tools of spiritual warfare and to help them sharpen those tools.

But that's not what I see happening in the American church.

For the past several years, I've watched a trend of pastors preaching a "me"-centered gospel. It's not really about doing what God has called us to do, rather it's about being your "authentic self" or living your best life, on your terms.



It's fashionable to preach a lot about self-esteem. And I understand that people need to be built up, but at some point, when we see our nation being overtaken with evil, we must open up the blacksmith shop again, because we've become unarmed and defenseless.

We must get to a point that we understand that we cannot take the pain out of Christianity. We can't take the shortcuts anymore to produce Christians who will take a stand and fight for what is right.

It's time to open up the blacksmith shop.

The passage says that because there were no blacksmiths, there were no weapons in Israel. The only ones who had weapons were Saul and Jonathan – the king and the king's son. Nobody else even had a weapon, they had to submit in every area of their life to those who had overtaken them.

And the reason was not because the enemy was so powerful, the reason was because the blacksmith shops were shut down.

I believe it is the picture of pulpits in America because...

as the pulpits go, so the nation goes.

Sadly, in America today, it's amazing how few strong preachers I hear.

I'm talking about men and women of God who point their fingers at the sin of America and say, "Let's turn it around."

We're not to simply call out sin and pronounce condemnation. No. We're not here just to curse the darkness, we're here to turn on the light. We're here to open up the blacksmith shop. To bring a defense against the enemy in our midst.

There's a shortage of strong preachers and strong pastors and strong Christians who don't compromise, are not for sale, and who refuse to water down the message of the Gospel.

You cannot create tempered steel without the heat of the furnace and the pounding of the hammer, which is the Word of God that breaks to pieces every resistance that comes against it.

We need the hammer of the Word of God to break down the lies in our culture. We have to open up the blacksmith shop again and get the furnace burning until the word of God is like a fire shut up in our bones.

If that means you need to change your sermon series because something in the news needs to be addressed by the hammer and by the furnace, we must be led by the Spirit and be willing to do that.



This is a call to every pastor who calls on the name of Jesus. It's all hands on deck. It's time to open up the blacksmith shop.

We've got to get the heat of the furnace back. We've got to get locked up with the Lord and come out like there's fire shut up in our bones and speak the truth. Head talks to head, but heart talks to heart, and a heart on fire will speak to other hearts.

When the two disciples walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection, the Bible says, they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he spoke?"

They got holy heartburn.

America is dying on the vine and it seems like our sermons are so out of touch. I see school boards fighting and standing up. I see college students fighting and standing up. I see all kinds of people in politics and business standing up.

But too many pastors in the pulpits think that we have to just go along and be nice and get along with everybody.

I'm all for love, but we must speak the truth in love.

If we're not careful, we will seek the approval of men more than the approval of God.

We want what sells books and draws people in – how-to sermon titles like "Seven ways to improve your vacation this summer," "How to quadruple your salary by five o'clock this afternoon," or seminars like "You're a winner."

I want to hear something about the glory of God. I want to hear something about the truth of God's Word. I want to hear something that convicts me.

We shouldn't expect to go to church and always feel good. Sometimes your toes need to get stepped on. Sometimes you need to leave there saying, "I feel convicted."

We've got to get morality and moderation back in people who call themselves Christian. That only happens when you open up the blacksmith shop and get the furnace of the Holy Spirit burning and the hammer of God's Word preaching.

When I was coming up, we had people like Chuck Colson and Billy Graham. There were no mixed signals coming from the pulpit. It was a furnace. It shaped you and placed in your hands the weapon of the Sword of the Spirit.



I listened to people who shaped my life because they would stand up and address the condition of America concerning abortion, gay marriage, and the other issues facing our culture. They did it in a way that gave us clarity. We knew what we believed. Our people knew, and our young people and children knew what was right and wrong.

We've got Christians today who have better cars, better clothes, better homes than ever before. But there's a hollowness on the inside because we need revival to hit our pulpits.

We need to stand up and proclaim the Word of God, so that the hammer of the Word will form swords in the hands of a new generation of believers. We have to do more than just get up and criticize young people.

I believe they're the greatest generation – they have technology, they have knowledge, and all they need is a sword in their hand to fight with courage and conviction for the cause of Christ.

That's why we must open up the blacksmith shop.

Don't worry about what people say. Preach what the Bible says... about gay marriage... about abortion... about corruption.

Can we never speak about anything anymore? Can we not preach anything that's controversial? Of course we can, and we must!

Open up the blacksmith shop. Call it like it is. Preach the Word, without fear.

Notice what happened because there were no blacksmiths in Israel. The Israelites went down to the Philistines' camp to get what they would use to equip the people. They went to the enemy to get the tools they needed to defend themselves.

You can see the problem, I'm sure.

But isn't that what's happening in our churches?

Pop psychology from the pulpit, poems and stories and what I call "Longhorn sermons" – two points and a lot of bull in between.

When I walk up to a pulpit, my goal is to preach something that gets beyond the parking lot. That's my goal in ministry.

Most of our sermons don't get past the parking lot, because people simply forget a lot of things they hear. But if you preach a Word from the Lord, God will back you up. Not because you're a great preacher, but because people heard a Word from the Lord in your sermon.



Instead of teaching about the complexity of the human personality, tell people about the glory of God. Tell them about Jesus, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. He's coming back again. There's a heaven and there's a hell and everyone is headed to one of those places.

Let's tell it like it is. That is not mean, that's not being ugly.

If you compromise, you're going to lose. But Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice." People are looking for preachers who will stand up in love and share wisdom.

We can't make the mistake of thinking that to be kind is to be holy. It's the other way around. You can be kind without being holy, but you can't be holy without being kind. So we are to preach the truth unashamedly and without reservation, but we are to be kind to people.

As pastors we need to be prepared to do this from the pulpit. And we need to prepare believers in the pews to speak the truth in love when they leave the building.

It's possible to preach the right message with the wrong spirit. We've got to keep loving and showing people that we love them, but we don't compromise. We want everyone at our table, we just don't want them to be able to change the menu. What we serve is what we serve.

As I've already said, this is a call to every pastor, every leader in the church. It's time for us to be unified around a gospel that breaks Satan's power over a generation.

When I watched what happened at Asbury, when I see revivals like that, I feel like God is about to suddenly send a mighty rushing wind to his church, the breath of God, like on the day of Pentecost.

We need a revival that shakes us.

Andraé Crouch used to sing, "Jesus is the answer, for the world today. Above him there is no other, for Jesus is the way."

Don't be afraid to talk about what everybody else refuses to talk about in your city. Talk about it, give the instruction, be bold.

Talk about holiness, and what it really means.

We have watched them experiment on our children, experiment on our families, experiment on marriage, and it's only led to depressed, defeated, messed up lives. It's time to arm the church for spiritual battle.

Preach the truth of God's Word, preach it boldly.



Open the furnace back up. Teach your people. Put a shield and a sword in their hands, and a helmet on their head, as Ephesians 6:16–17 says...

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

God is worthy of our best and we have nothing to apologize for.

Take Your Study Further

For verses about teaching and learning God's Word: Matthew 28:19–20, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, Titus 2:1–8

For passages about boldness: Psalm 27:1, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 1 John 2:28, Hebrews 12:1

To read about the full armor of God: Ephesians 6:11–17

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