

Chapel Flock



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[Mountain Of God-
Third Day](#)

[Redeemed-
Big Daddy Weave](#)

[Forgiveness-
Matthew West](#)

[Storm-Lifehouse](#)

Prayer

Lord, I ask You to help me become faithful and dependable. I want to be the kind of person others can rely on. I ask You to forgive me for those times when I got so lazy and complacent that I didn't follow through on commitments and, in the end, let other people down. I thank You for the gifts and talents You have placed in my life, but please help me bring my character to such a high level that You and others will know I can be trusted, in Jesus' name. Amen....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

"Christ Commands To Make Disciple's Not Returning Customers"

Charles Spurgeon

If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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1 SAUL WAS [forty] years old when he began to reign; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2 Saul chose 3,000 men of Israel; 2,000 were with [him] in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and 1,000 with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent away, each one to his home. 3 Jonathan smote the Philistine garrison at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear! 4 All Israel heard that Saul had defeated the Philistine garrison and also that Israel had become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal. 5 And the Philistines gathered to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen and troops like sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped at Michmash, east of Beth-aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a tight situation—for their troops were hard pressed—they hid in caves, holes, rocks, tombs, and pits or cisterns. 7 Some Hebrews had gone over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. 8 Saul waited seven days, according to the set time Samuel had appointed. But Samuel had not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from Saul. 9 So Saul said, Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering [which he was forbidden to do]. 10 And just as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came! Saul went out to meet and greet him. 11 Samuel said, What have you done? Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were assembled at Michmash, 12 I thought, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord. So I forced myself to offer a burnt offering. 13 And Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly! You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which He commanded you; for the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever; 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue; the Lord has sought out [David] a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince and ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you. 15 And Samuel went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were left with him, [only] about 600. 16 Saul and Jonathan his son and the people with them remained in Gibeah of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped at Michmash. 17 And raiders came out of the Philistine camp in three companies; one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, 18 Another turned toward Beth-horon, and another toward the border overlooking the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. 19 Now there was no metal worker to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears. 20 But each of the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines to get his plowshare, mattock, axe, or sickle sharpened. 21 And the price for plowshares and mattocks was a pim, and a third of a shekel for axes and for setting goads [with resulting blunt edges on the sickles, mattocks, forks, axes, and goads.] 22 So on the day of battle neither sword nor spear was found in the hand of any of the men who were with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. 23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

Chapter 13

Now Saul reigned for one year over Israel; and in the second year of his reign, He chose three thousand men of Israel; and he took two thousand under his command in Michmash and a thousand were given to Jonathan under his command the son of Saul in Gibeah: and the rest of the people he sent to their own tents. And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal (1Sa 13:1-4).

So Jonathan was out wiping out the Philistines and Saul was around blowing the trumpet, and taking the glory and announcing that he had smitten the Philistines so that the Israelites heard that Saul had smitten the Philistines with a great slaughter.

Now the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, [They really gathered the whole army.] thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and people like the sand of the sea were in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven. And when the men of Israel saw that they were there sort of trapped, (for the people were distressed) then the people started hiding in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in the mountain tops, and in the pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. For Saul, was down there in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling (1Sa 13:5-7).

I mean this was a tremendous formidable force of the Philistines that had come against them. People were hiding. Some were actually deserting, crossing Jordan going over to the other side to Gad, to Gilead, and those that were with Saul were trembling.

And he waited for seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: [for Samuel said, I'll meet you there in Gilgal in seven days.] And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and a peace offering. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him that he might greet him. And Samuel said, What have you done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days that were appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore I said, The Philistines will come now upon me to Gilgal, and I have made supplication to the Lord: so I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which he commanded thee: for now he would have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever (1Sa 13:8-13).

In other words, He would have made it the dynasty of Saul.

Now Samuel is straightforward. "What have you done?"

"Oh, I forced myself." and gave all of his excuses.

He said, "You have done foolishly in that you have not obeyed the commandment of the Lord."

Anytime you deliberately, willfully disobey the commandment of God, you are doing foolishly. God's ways are best. God's ways are right, and for me to presume that I can do, or improve on God's ways is sheer folly. If I think I can improve my position by disobeying God, that's sheer folly. So the prophet laid it out to him, "You have done foolishly in that you have not obeyed the commandment of the Lord. For the Lord would've established your kingdom for ever upon Israel."

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his own people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee (1Sa 13:14).

So here is Saul's rejection by God as the continuing king. God is now searching out a man to take his place.

And Samuel arose, and went from Gilgal to Gibeah there among the tribe of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men (1Sa 13:15).

Now you remember there are thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen and Philistines, like the sands of the sea. Saul has six thousand or six hundred that haven't deserted him.

And spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: and one company turned unto the way that leads to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: And another company turned by way of Bethhoron: and another company turned to the way of the border that looks to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel (1Sa 13:17-19):

Thought that was interesting in searching for my heritage. So at this time, interestingly enough, the Jews had not yet developed any forging kind of processes, or iron, the development of iron implements, although the Philistines and all the people of the land around them had entered into the Iron Age. The Hebrews had not yet really developed the capacity for smelting and all, and they had not yet themselves entered into the Iron Age. In fact, when they wanted to sharpen their picks, or their hoes or their farm implements, they had to go down to the Philistines to have them sharpened because they really didn't have any blacksmiths in Israel at this particular time. By the time of Solomon they began to really develop in these skills. In fact, they were highly developed by the time of Solomon. But at this time they had not yet developed these skills. Actually the Philistines had deliberately kept them from developing these skills because they didn't want them making swords and really being able to create real fighting implements.

So all the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, or coulter, or the axe, or the mattock. And yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: only Saul and Jonathan had spears (1Sa 13:20-22).

Now that's not a very well-equipped army against the thirty thousand chariots and the horsemen. "Guys all you've got are sticks; fashion a club or something." But you're going out against guys with shields, and spears and swords and all, and so you've got a small army and surely you are mismatched in equipment and all, hopelessly mismatched. There's absolutely no way that you can go out against this highly developed army with their superior weapons and superior numbers and hope to have any kind of victory. You've got six hundred men with clubs and sticks, and you're facing an army that can't even be counted with spears, swords, shields.

Which introduces chapter fourteen, which is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible.
(Through The Bible; C2000 series; Chuck Smith; Bible Commentaries; 1979-1986)

VIII. NEHEMIAH, THE PRAYING BUILDER

"We care not for your splendid abilities as a minister, or your natural endowment as an orator before men. We are sure that the truth of the matter is this: No one will or can command success and become a real praying soul unless intense application is the price. I am even now convinced that the difference between the saints like Wesley, Fletcher, Edwards, Brainerd, Bramwell, Bounds, and ourselves is energy, perseverance, invincible determination to succeed or die in the attempt. God help us."—Rev. Homer W. Hodge.

In enumerating the praying saints of the Old Testament, we must not leave out of that sacred catalogue Nehemiah, the builder. He stands out on an equal footing with the others who have been considered. In the story of the reconstruction of Jerusalem after the captivity, he plays a prominent part, and prayer is prominent in his life during those years. He was a captive in Babylon, and had an important position in the palace of the king to whom he was cup bearer. There must have been considerable merit in him to cause the king to take a Hebrew captive and place him in such an office, where he really had the life of the king in his charge, because he was responsible for the wine which he drank. It was while Nehemiah was in Babylon, in the king's palace, that one day his brethren came from Jerusalem, and very naturally Nehemiah desired news from the people there and information concerning the city itself. The distressing information was given him that the walls were broken down, the gates were burned with fire, and the remnant who were left there at the beginning of the captivity were in great affliction and reproach. Just one verse gives the effect of this sad news upon this man of God: "And it came to pass when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." Here was a man whose heart was in his own native land far away from where he now lived. He loved Israel, was concerned for the welfare of Zion, and was true to God. Deeply distressed by the information concerning his brethren at Jerusalem, he mourned and wept. How few the strong men in these days who can weep at the evils and abominations of the times! How rare those who, seeing the desolations of Zion, are sufficiently interested and concerned for the welfare of the Church to mourn!

Mourning and weeping over the decay of religion, the decline of revival power, and the fearful inroads of worldliness in the Church are almost an unknown quantity. There is so much of so-called optimism that leaders have no eyes to see the breaking down of the walls of Zion and the low spiritual state of the Christians of the present day, and have less heart to mourn and cry about it. Nehemiah was a mourner in Zion. And possessing this state of heart, distressed beyond measure, he does that which other praying saints had done—he goes to God and makes it a subject of prayer. The prayer is recorded in Nehemiah 1, and is a model after which to pattern our prayers. He begins with adoration, makes confession of the sins of his nation, pleads the promises of God, mentions former mercies, and begs for pardoning mercy. Then with an eye to the future—for unquestionably he had planned, the next time he was summoned into the King's presence, to ask permission to visit Jerusalem and to do there what was possible to remedy the distressing state of affairs—we hear him pray for something very special: "And prosper thy servant this day, I pray thee, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For," he adds by way of explanation, "I was the king's cup bearer."

It seemed all right to pray for his people, but how was a heathen king, with possibly no sympathy whatever for the sad condition of his city and his people in a captive land, and who had no interest in the matter, to be so favorably affected that he would consent to give up his faithful cup bearer and allow him to be gone for months? But Nehemiah believed in a God who could touch even the mind of a heathen ruler and move him favorably toward the request of his praying servant.

Nehemiah was summoned into the king's presence, and God used even the appearance of Nehemiah's countenance as an entering wedge to gain the consent of Artaxerxes. This started the inquiry of the king as to its cause, and the final result was that the king not only permitted Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem but furnished him with everything needful for the journey and for the success of the enterprise.

Nor did Nehemiah rest his ease when he first prayed about this matter, but he stated this significant fact as he was talking to the king: "So I prayed unto the God of heaven?" leading out the impression that while the king was inquiring about his request and the length of time he would be gone, he was then and there talking to God about the matter.

The intense, persistent praying of Nehemiah prevailed. God can even affect the mind of a heathen ruler, and this he can do in answer to prayer without in the least overturning his free agency or forcing his will. It was a parallel case with that of Esther when she called upon her people to fast and pray for her as she went uninvited into the king's presence. As a result, his mind at a very critical moment was touched by the Spirit of God, and he was favorably moved toward Esther and held out to her the golden scepter.

Nor did the praying of Nehemiah cease when he had succeeded thus far. In building the wall of Jerusalem, he met with great opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah, who ridiculed the efforts of the people to rebuild the city's walls. Unmoved by these revilings and the intense opposition of these wicked opponents of that which was for God's cause, he pursued the task which he had undertaken. But he mixes prayer with all he does: "Hear, O our God, for we are despised; and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of our captivity." And in continuing the account he says, "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God."

All along in the accounts of the high and noble work he was doing, we find prayer comes out prominently to the front. Even after the walls were completed, these same enemies of his and of the people of God again opposed him in his task. But he renews his praying, and he himself records this significant prayer: "Now there, O God, strengthen my hands."

Still further on, when Sanballat and Tobiah had hired an emissary to frighten and hinder Nehemiah, we find him setting himself directly against this new attack, and then again he turns to God in prayer: "My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear." And God answered his faithful laborer, and defeated the counsels and the plans of these wicked opponents of Israel.

Nehemiah discovered to his dismay that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, and as a result the house of God was forsaken. He took steps to see that the lawful tithes were forthcoming so that God's house should be opened to all religious services, and appointed treasurers to give attention to this business. But prayer must not be overlooked, so we find his prayer recorded at this time: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof."

Let it not be thought that this was the plea of self-righteousness as was that of the Pharisee in our Lord's time who professedly went up to the temple to pray, who paraded his self-righteous claims in God's sight. It was a prayer after the fashion of Hezekiah, who reminded God of his fidelity to Him and of his heart's being right in his sight.

Once more Nehemiah finds evil among the people of God. Just as he corrected the evil which caused the closing of the house of God, he discovers practices of Sabbath breaking, and here he has not only to counsel the people and seek to correct them by mild means, but he proposes to exercise his authority if they did not cease their buying and selling on the Sabbath Day. But he must close this part of his work also with prayer, and so he records his prayer on that occasion:

"Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."

Lastly, as a reformer, he discovers another great evil among the people. They had intermarried with the men and women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Contending with them, he caused them to reform in this matter, and the close of his record has a prayer in it:

"Remember me, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites."

Cleansing them from all strangers, he appointed the wards of the priests, and the Levites, and his recorded career closes with this brief prayer: "Remember me, O my God, for good."

Fortunate is that Church whose leaders are men of prayer. Happy is that congregation who are contemplating the erection of a church to have leaders who will lay its foundations in prayer, and whose walls go up side by side with prayer. Prayer helps to build churches and to erect the walls of houses of worship. Prayer defeats the opponents of those who are prosecuting God's enterprises. Prayer touches favorably the minds even of those not connected with the Church, and moves them toward Church matters. Prayer helps mightily in all matters concerning God's cause and wonderfully aids and encourages the hearts of those who have His work in hand in this world.

IX. SAMUEL, THE CHILD OF PRAYER

"That was a grand action by Jerome, one of the Roman fathers. He laid aside all pressing engagements and went to fulfill the call God gave him, viz., to translate the Holy Scriptures. His congregations were larger than many preachers of today but he said to his people, 'Now it is necessary that the Scriptures be translated; you must find you another minister: I am bound for the wilderness and shall not return until my task is finished.' Away he went and labored and prayed until he produced the Latin Vulgate which will last as long as the world stands. So we must say to our friends, 'I must away and have time for prayer and solitude.' And though we did not write Latin Vulgates yet our work will be immortal: Glory to God."—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

Samuel came into this world and was given existence in direct answer to prayer. He was born of a praying mother, whose heart was full of earnest desire for a son. He came into life under prayer surroundings, and his first months in this world were spent in direct contact with a woman who knew how to pray. It was a prayer accompanied by a solemn vow that if he should be given, he should be "lent unto the Lord," and true to that vow, this praying mother put him directly in touch with the minister of the sanctuary and under the influence of "the house of prayer." It was no wonder he developed into a man of prayer. We could not have expected otherwise with such a beginning in life and with such early environments. Such surroundings always make impressions upon children and tend to make character and determine destiny.

He was in a favorable place to hear God when He spoke to him, and was in an atmosphere where it tended to his heeding the divine call which came to him. It was the most natural thing in the world when at the third call from heaven, when he recognized God's voice, that his childish heart responded so promptly, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." Quickly was there a response from his boyish spirit, of submission, willingness and prayer.

Had he been born of a different sort of mother, had he been placed under different surroundings, had he spent his early days in contact with different influences, does any one for one moment suppose he could have easily heard the voice of God calling him to His service, and that he would have so readily yielded his young life to the God who brought him into being? Would a worldly home, with worldly surroundings, separated from the Church of God, with a worldly-minded mother, have produced such a character as Samuel? It takes such influences and agencies in early life to produce such praying men as Samuel. Would you have your child called early into divine service and separated from the world unto God? Would you have him so situated that he will be called in childhood by the Spirit of God? Put him under prayer influences. Place him near to and directly under the influence of the Man of God and in close touch with that house which is called "the house of prayer."

Samuel knew God in boyhood. As a consequence he knew God in manhood. He recognized God in childhood, obeyed him and prayed unto him. The result was that he recognized God in manhood, obeyed him, and prayed unto him. If more children were born of praying mothers, brought up in direct contact with "the house of prayer," and reared under prayer environments, more children would hear the voice of God's spirit speaking to them, and would more quickly respond to those divine calls to a religious life. Would we have praying men in our churches? We must have praying mothers to give them birth, praying homes to color their lives, and praying surroundings to impress their minds and to lay the foundations for praying lives. Praying Samuels come from praying Hannahs. Praying priests come from "the house of prayer." Praying leaders come from praying homes.

Israel for years had been under bondage to the Philistines and the ark was housed in the home of Abinadab, whose son Eleazer was appointed to keep this sacred testimony of God. The people had gone into idolatry and Samuel was disturbed about the religious condition of the nation. The ark of God was absent, the people were given to the worship of idols, and there had been a grievous departure from God. Calling upon them to put away their strange gods, he urged them to prepare their hearts unto the Lord and to begin again to serve Him—promising them that the Lord would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines. His preaching thus plainly to them, for with all else belonging to him, Samuel was a preacher of the times, made a deep impression and bore rich fruits as such preaching always does. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtoreth, and served the Lord only."

But this was not enough. Prayer must be mixed with and must accompany their reformation So Samuel, true to his convictions about prayer, says to the people, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord." While Samuel was offering up prayer for these wicked Israelites, the Philistines drew near to battle against the nation, but the Lord intervened at the critical moment and thundered with a great thunder, and discomfited these enemies of Israel, "and they were smitten before Israel."

The nation fortunately had a man who could pray, who knew the place and the worth of prayer, and a leader who had the ear of God and who could influence God.

But Samuel's praying did not stop there. He judged Israel all the days of his life, and had occasion from year to year to go in circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh. Then he returned home to Ramah, where he resided. "And there he built an altar unto the Lord." Here was an

altar of sacrifice but as well was it an altar of prayer. And while it may have been for the benefit of the community where he lived, after the fashion of a town church, yet it must not be overlooked that it must have been a family altar, a place where the sacrifice for sin was offered but at the same time where his household gathered for worship, praise and prayer. Here Almighty God was acknowledged in the home, here was the advertisement of a religious home, and here father and mother called upon the name of the Lord, differentiating this home from all the worldly and idolatrous homes about them.

Here is an example of a religious home, the kind so greatly needed in this irreligious, godless age. Blessed is that home which has in it an altar of sacrifice and of prayer, where daily thanksgivings ascend to heaven and where morning and night praying is done.

Samuel was not only a praying priest, a praying leader and a praying teacher and leader, but he was a praying father. And any one who knows the situation so far as family religion is concerned knows full well that the great demand of these modern times is religious homes and praying fathers and mothers. Here is where the breakdown in religion occurs, where the religious life of a community first begins to decay, and where we must go first to beget praying men and women in the Church of God. It is in the home that the revival must commence.

A crisis came in the history of this nation. The people were infatuated by the glory of a kingdom with a human king, and was prepared to reject God as their king, as He had always been. So they came to Samuel with the bold request, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The thing displeased this man of God, who was jealous for the name, the honor and the pleasure of the Lord God. How could it be otherwise? Who would not have been likewise displeased if he were built after the pattern of Samuel? It grieved him in soul. The Lord, however, came to him just at that time with the comforting assurance so far as he was personally concerned in the transaction, that "they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. Harken unto the voice of the people, in all that they say unto thee."

Then it was that Samuel followed the bent of his mind, "And Samuel prayed unto the Lord." It seemed that in every matter concerning this people, with which Samuel was connected, he must pray over it. How much more now when there was to be an entire revolution in the form of government, and God was to be displaced as the ruler of the people, and a human king was to be set up? National affairs need to be prayed over. Praying men are demanded to carry to God in prayer the affairs of government. Lawmakers, law judges, and law executives need leaders in Israel to pray for them. How much fewer the mistakes if there was more praying done in civil matters?

But this was not to be the end of this matter. God must show so definitely and plainly His displeasure at such a request as had been made for a human king, that the people might know what a wicked thing they had done, even though God acceded to their request. They must know God still existed and had to do with this people, and with their king and the affairs of the government. So the prayers of Samuel must again be brought into play to carry out the divine purposes. So Samuel called upon the people to stand still, and he would show them what the Lord would do before their eyes. So he called upon God, and in answer God sent a tremendous storm of thunder and rain, which exceedingly terrified the people, and caused them to acknowledge their great sin in asking for a king. So afraid were the people that they hastily called upon Samuel to pray for them and to spare them from what seemed to be destruction. Samuel again prayed, and God heard and answered, and the thunder and rain ceased.

One more incident in the prayer life of Samuel is worth noticing. King Saul had been ordered to destroy all the Amalekites, root and branch, and all their stuff, but Saul, contrary to divine instructions, had spared King Agag and the best of the sheep and the cattle, and had justified it because he claimed that the people wanted it done.

God brought this message to Samuel at this time:

"It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments."

"And it grieved Samuel, and he cried all night unto the Lord." Such a sudden declaration was enough to produce grief of soul in a man like Samuel, who loved his nation, who was true to God, and who above everything else desired the prosperity of Zion. Such grief of soul over the evils of the Church and at the sight of the abominations of the times always drives a man to his knees in prayer. Of course Samuel carried the case to God. It was a time for prayer. The case was too serious for him not to be deeply moved to pray. So greatly was the inner soul of Samuel disturbed that he prayed all night about it. Too much was at stake for him to shut his eyes to the affair, to treat it indifferently, and to let it pass without taking God into the matter, for the future welfare of Israel was in the balance.

X. DANIEL, THE PRAYING CAPTIVE

"It is a wonderful historical fact that the men of prayer have always been the men of power in the world. I want to convince you about this. Some of you men—and I am glad to see such a large number of men here tonight—if you are arguing with some friend in the workshop, be sure and ask him why it is that the men of power in the world have been the men of prayer. Take only one instance: Where did they go always to find men for the forlorn hope in Havelock's days? They went to Havelock's prayer meeting; that is where they found men who had courage to come out for the forlorn hope."—Bishop Winnington Ingram.

That was a notable experience in the life of Daniel when he was ordered by the king while in Babylon not to ask any petition of any God or king for thirty days, under penalty of being cast into the lions' den. He paid no attention to the edict, for it is recorded, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being opened in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Do not forget that this was the regular habit of this man of God. "He kneeled upon his knees and prayed as he did aforetime." What was the result? Just as expected. God sent an

angel into the den of lions with Daniel and locked their mouths so that not a hair on his head was touched, and he was wonderfully delivered. Even so today deliverance always come to God's saints who tread the path of prayer as the saints of old did. Daniel did not forget his God while in a foreign land, away from the house of God and its religious services, and deprived as he was of many religious privileges. He was a striking illustration of a young man who was decidedly religious under the most unfavorable surroundings. He proved conclusively that one could be definitely a servant of God though his environments were anything else than religious. He was among heathens so far as a God-fearing nation was concerned. There was no temple worship, no Sabbath Day, no Word of God to be read. But he had one help there which remained with him, and of which he could not be deprived, and that was his secret prayers.

Purposing in his heart without debating the question one moment or compromising at any one point, that he would not eat of the king's meat nor drink the king's wine, he stood out in that ungodly country a striking illustration of a young man, fearing God first of all, and resolving to be religious, cost what it may. But he was not to have a flowery bed on which to rest nor a smooth road on which to travel. The whimsical, tyrannical and unreasonable king, Nebuchadnezzar, was to put him to the test, and his praying qualities were to be proved. This king had a strange dream, the particular items of which passed from his memory, but the fact of the dream remained. So troubled was he about the dream, he called for all the soothsayers, astrologers and sorcerers to call the dream to mind, an impossible task, humanly speaking, and then to interpret it. He classed Daniel and his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, with these men, though there really was nothing in them in common with the two classes of men. Being informed that it was impossible to discover a dream like that, and at their saying if the king would tell the dream to them, they would interpret it, the king became very angry, and ordered them to be put to death. This sentence of death was against Daniel and his three companions.

But Daniel appeared upon the stage of action. At his suggestion the execution of the rash edict was held up, and he immediately called his three companions into counsel, and he urged them to unite with him in a concert of prayer that God would discover to Daniel the dream with the interpretation thereof. In answer to this united praying, it is recorded: "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven." As a sequel to this incident of the praying of these four men, Daniel revealed to the king his dream and its interpretation, and as a final result the king acknowledged the God of Daniel and elevated to high positions Daniel and his three associates. And it all came about because there was a praying man there just at a critical time. Blessed is that nation which has praying men who can come to the help of civil rulers who are greatly perplexed and in great difficulties, and who can be depended upon to pray for rulers of state and Church.

Years afterward, while still in a foreign land, he still had not forgotten the God of his fathers, and to him was given the noted vision of the "Ram and the He Goat," But Daniel did not comprehend this strange vision, and yet he knew it was from God and had a deep and future meaning for nations and people. So, of course, he followed the bent of his religious mind and prayed about it.

"And it came to pass when I even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then behold there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

"And I heard a man's voice which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision."

And so Gabriel made him understand the full meaning of this remarkable vision. But it came in answer to Daniel's praying. So puzzling questions may often find an answer in the closet. And as elsewhere, God employs angelic intelligences to convey information as to prayer answers. Angels have much to do with prayer. Praying men and the angels of heaven are in close touch with each other.

Some years thereafter, Daniel was studying the records of the nation, and he discovered that it was about time for the seventy years of captivity of his people to end. So he gave himself to prayer:

"And I set my face to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord, and made confession."

Then follows the record in those Old Testament Scriptures of Daniel's prayer, so full of meaning, so simple in its utterances, so earnest in its spirit, so direct in its confession and requests, worthy of being patterned after.

And it was while he was speaking in prayer that the same archangel Gabriel, who seemed to have a direct interest in the praying of this man of God, "being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening sacrifice, and he informed me and talked with me," and then gave him much desired information valuable to Daniel.

The angels of God are much nearer us in our seasons of prayer than we imagine. God employs these glorious heavenly intelligences in the blessed work of hearing and answering prayer, when the prayer, as in the case of Daniel on this occasion, has to do with the present and future welfare of His people.

One other incident on the prayer line in the life of this captive man in Babylon. Another revelation was made to Daniel, but the time of its fulfillment appeared to be far in the future. "In those days, I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth till the three whole weeks were fulfilled."

It was then that he had a very strange experience and a still stranger revelation was made to him by some angelic being. It is worth while to read the scripture account:

"And behold a hand touched me, which set me on my knees, and upon the palms of my hands.

"And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

"Then he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

"But the Prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

What all this means is difficult to comprehend, but enough appears on its face to lead us to believe that the angels in heaven are deeply interested in our praying, and are sent to tell us the answers to our prayers. Further, it is very clear that some unseen forces or invisible spirits are operating to hinder the answers to our prayers. Who the Prince of Persia was who withstood this great angelic being is not divulged, but enough is revealed to know that there must be a contest in the unseen world about us between those spirits sent to minister to us in answer to our prayers and the devil and his evil spirits who seek to defeat these good spirits.

The passage furthermore gives us some intimation as to the cause of delayed answers to prayer. For "three full weeks" Daniel mourned and prayed, and for "one and twenty days" the divinely appointed angel was opposed by the "Prince of the Kingdom of Persia."

Well was it for praying Daniel that he had the courage, fortitude and determination to persist in his praying for three weeks while the fearful conflict between good and bad spirits was going on about him unseen by mortal eyes. Well will it be for us if we do not give up in our praying when God seems not to hear and the answer is not immediate. It takes time to pray, and it takes time to get the answer to prayer. Delays in answering prayer are not denials. Failure to receive an immediate answer is no evidence that God does not hear prayer. It takes not only courage and persistence to pray successfully, but it requires much patience. "Wait on the Lord and be of good courage; and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

("Prayer and Praying Men" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 8-10; Edward McKendree Bounds (August 15, 1835 – August 24, 1913) was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and author of eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer. Public Domain)

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 424-426)

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