



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing



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Worship Music

Prayer

Lord, help me treat my wife like the partner You intended for her to be in my life. You gave her to me to be a co-ruler and co-inheritor of the grace of life. You placed her at my side to be my helper, my companion, and my partner. You called us together to achieve Your will for our family. I am sorry for the times I have ignored her or unintentionally forgotten to treat her like the partner she is in my life. Starting today, please help me reverse any of my behavior patterns that my wife perceives to be unkind or insensitive. Show me ways to demonstrate to her that she is truly my partner and my co-ruler in this life, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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

chapel-flock@sbcglobal.net

1 NOW THE men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah, None of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin. 2 And the Israelites came to the house of God [Bethel] and sat there until evening before God and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. 3 And they said, O Lord, the God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel? 4 And next morning the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5 And the Israelites said, Which among all the tribes of Israel did not come up with the assembly to the Lord? For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah, saying, He shall surely die. 6 And the Israelites changed their purpose [and had compassion] for the Benjamites their kinsmen and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel today. 7 What shall we do for wives for those who are left, seeing we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them our daughters as wives? 8 And they said, Which one is there of the tribes of Israel that did not come up to Mizpah to the Lord? And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead, to the assembly. 9 For when the people were mustered, behold, not one of the citizens of Jabesh-gilead was there. 10 And the congregation sent there 12,000 of the bravest men, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the sword, also the women and the little ones. 11 And this is what you shall do; utterly destroy every male and every woman who is not a virgin. 12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins, who had known no man by lying with him; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. 13 And the whole congregation sent word to the Benjamites who were at the rock of Rimmon and invited them to be friendly with them. 14 And Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead; and yet there were not enough for them. 15 And the people had compassion on Benjamin, because the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. 16 Then the elders of the congregation said, What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since the women of Benjamin are destroyed? 17 And they said, There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe shall not be wiped out of Israel. 18 But we cannot give them wives of our daughters, for the Israelites have sworn, Cursed be he who gives a wife to Benjamin. 19 So they said, Behold, there is the yearly feast of the Lord at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem and south of Lebonah. 20 So they commanded the Benjamites, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, 21 And watch; if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and catch every man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh and go to the land of Benjamin. 22 And when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, we will say to them, Grant them graciously unto us, because we did not reserve a wife for each of them in battle, neither did you give wives to them, for that would have made you guilty [of breaking your oath]. 23 And the Benjamites did so and took wives, according to their number, from the dancers whom they carried off; then they went and returned to their inheritance and repaired the towns and dwelt in them. 24 And the Israelites left there then, every man to his tribe and family, and they went out from there every man to his inheritance. 25 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Chapter 21

Now, these men [in chapter twenty-one, had made an oath] they had sworn in Mizpah, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin for a wife (Jdg 21:1).

These Benjamites do these things; none of us will allow them to marry our daughters. It was a vow that they made. Now, let me say that most vows, like this one, are stupid. Most of the vows that are given in the Bible are stupid. This is a stupid vow. Saul made a stupid vow when he saw Jonathan wiping out the Philistines with his armorbearer he said, "Cursed be the man who eats anything today until Saul be avenged of all of his enemies." Stupid vow because later on in the day as they were chasing the Philistines the guys were so hungry and they were getting faint and weak because they didn't have any food, they were running out of energy and they really could have slaughtered a lot more of the Philistines that day, had a total victory.

But the stupid vow of Saul which really had no sense behind it, "Cursed be any man who eats anything until Saul" sort of exalting of himself. And of course Jonathan his son didn't hear his old man say that. He was busy fighting the Philistines and running through the forest. He saw this honeycomb and he put his spear out and you know reached through and licking on his spear as he's chasing the Philistines and the honey, the quick energy, he was revived you know and had all that energy and really got after them and was able to go and then later on his old man said, "Someone broke my vow today. Who was it?"

No one would rat on him and so he says, "Divide in two companies. All of you and my son Jonathan will cast lots. The lots fell on Saul and his son and he said, "Jonathan what have done?"

"Hey dad, I didn't know what you said. I'm going through the forest and I saw the honeycomb and I put my spear in it and ate it and I was revived. Hey dad, it was sort of foolish for you to say that. Look how faint the guys are. We could've wiped out the Philistines totally today if the guys had strength but they ran out of energy."

Saul said, "Put him to death." Oh, that stupid guy. No wonder, well he admitted himself at the end of his life he said, "Hey I played the fool." That's no understatement.

Jephthah made a stupid vow. We studied that last week; remember? "The first thing that comes out of my house I'll sacrifice it as a burnt offering unto the Lord."

The Bible says quite a bit about keeping your mouth shut. When you go into the temple of the mount or when you go into the temple of the Lord, you know, put a lock on your mouth lest you sin with your mouth. I don't think it's a proverb but it ought to be. It is better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you're a fool then to open it and dispel all doubts. The problem we get into with our mouth.

Now here was a foolish vow. They wiped out the Benjamites, only six hundred guys left. The rest of the Benjamites are wiped out and now they think, "Oh, we're not gonna have a tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin's gonna get wiped out. Oh that's horrible. Oh, we can't do that. What should we do?"

"Well is there any city that didn't send anybody?"

Someone says, "I didn't see anybody come from Jabeshgilead." So they checked that.

"Anybody here from Jabeshgilead?" Nobody there from Jabeshgilead.

"All right. Then let's go to Jabeshgilead and we kill everybody except the virgins and we'll bring them back and let them marry these guys, in that they didn't enter into the vow, you see." No one from Jabeshgilead was there to enter into the vow, so horrible. You know it's covering one stupidity with a greater. But you know, you get into these kinds of things where you begin to follow one sin with another. You do one and then it leads to another, another, another. You get further and further down the line. It's tragic.

And so what they did was horrible. They went to Jabeshgilead and they wiped out the city, killed all of the married women, killed all of the men. And they got the virgins and brought them back but there still wasn't enough, there's still some guys that weren't married. Well, Shiloh was the religious center at that particular time and they would have the feast in Shiloh. And during the feast the young virgins would come out and do some traditional folk dances.

And so they said to the men of Benjamin who still didn't have wives, "Now, during this feast when the young virgins come out you guys hide in the bushes and you watch and see if you know, cute gal that you like. Grab her and take off with her." Sort of a reverse of Sadie Hawkins kind of a day. And when the men from Shiloh come to us and say, "Hey, they've kidnapped our daughters" we'll say, "Ah, that's all right. Just let it go, you know, and we'll protect you in it." So that year when they had the feast and the young virgins from Shiloh came out and were doing their little ritual traditional dances, these Benjamites were hiding and they each find them a gal that they liked the looks of and they grabbed them and took off with them. And thus, the tribe of Benjamin was spared and did not, you know, they weren't deleted as a tribe in Israel.

But again, no condoning of the scripture. In fact, the condemning of it in the scripture; it was wrong, it was stupid but that's just the way things were going because they had lost their conscienceness of God as king. And so it gives you just a little insight into the civil and religious confusion that existed during the time of the Judges.

And again the chapter ends as this section began.

In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes (Jdg 21:25).

But I'll tell you, when people do that which is right in their own eyes, quite often it is very, very wrong. Because of the mentality and the moral level of many people you can't just let people live as they want, they will revert to an animal state. How important that we submit our lives to God as king.

Next week the beautiful little book of Ruth. Shall we stand?"What are we gonna do?"

Let's turn back to Numbers six. For a long time I've been wanting us to learn this chorus that Crystal taught us tonight as a sort of a departing kind of a chorus. I think it's beautiful, you know, as a sort of a conclusion to the service and departing from one another to pronounce this blessing of God upon each other and I don't know if Crystal's still here but if she is she can probably help me. I don't think I know this chorus but I think I can start it if you can finish it. Ah, all right Crystal. I'll sing the after part. No, tell you what. Let the men sing the first "Lord Bless you" and let the women echo it, "and keep you" the women echo it and then we all sing together those other parts. So men, join with me. Women, join with Crystal and then we'll all sing those parts together
(Through The Bible C-2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible Commentaries; 1979-1986)

God's Need Of Men To Pray:

This present world's general attitude retires prayer to insignificance and obscurity. By it, salvation and eternal life are put in the background. It cannot be too often affirmed, therefore, that the prime need of the Church is not men of money nor men of brains, but men of prayer. Leaders in the realm of religious activity are to be judged by their praying habits, and not by their money or social position. Those who must be placed in the forefront of the Church's business, must be, first of all, men who know how to pray.

God does not conduct His work, solely, with men of education or of wealth or of business capacity. Neither can He carry on His work through men of large intellects or of great culture, nor yet through men of great social eminence and influence. All these can be made to count provided they are not regarded as being primary. These men, by the simple fact of these qualities and conditions, cannot lead in God's work nor control His cause. Men of prayer, before anything else, are indispensable to the furtherance of the kingdom of God on earth. No other sort will fit in the scheme or do the deed. Men, great and influential in other things, but small in prayer, cannot do the work Almighty God has set out for His Church to do in this, His world. Men who represent God and who stand here in His stead, men who are to build up His kingdom in this world, must be in an eminent sense men of prayer. whatever else they may have, whatever else they may lack, they must be men of prayer. Having everything else and lacking prayer, they must fall. Having prayer and lacking all else, they can succeed. Prayer must be the most conspicuous and the most potent factor in the character and conduct of men who undertake divine commission. God's business requires men who are versed in the business of praying.

It must be kept in mind that the praying to which the disciples of Christ is called by Scriptural authority and enforcement, is a valorous calling, for manly men. The men God wants and upon whom He depends, must work at prayer just as they work at their worldly calling. They must follow this business of praying through, just as they do their secular pursuits. Diligence, perseverance, heartiness, and courage, must all be in it if it is to succeed.

Everything secured by Gospel promise, defined by Gospel measure, and represented by Gospel treasure are to be found in prayer. All heights are scaled by it, all doors are opened to it, all victories are gained through it, and all grace distills on it. Heaven has all its good and all its help for men who pray.

How marked and strong is the injunction of Christ which sends men from the parade of public giving and praying to the privacy of their closets, where with shut doors, and in encircling silence they are alone in prayer with God!

In all ages, those who have carried out the divine will on the earth, have been men of prayer. The days of prayer are God's halcyon days. His heart, His oath, and His glory are committed to one issuance—that every knee should bow to Him. The day of the Lord, in a preeminent sense, will be a day of universal prayer.

God's cause does not suffer through lack of divine ability, but by reason of the lack of prayer-ability in man. God's action is just as much bound up in prayer at this time, as it was when He said to Abimelech, "Abraham shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." So also it was when God said to Job's friends, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept."

God's great plan for the redemption of mankind is as much bound up to prayer for its prosperity and success as when the decree creating the movement was issued from the Father, bearing on its frontage the imperative, universal and eternal condition, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession."

In many places an alarming state of things has come to pass, in that the many who are enrolled in our churches are not praying men and women. Many of those occupying prominent positions in church life are not praying men. It is greatly to be feared that much of the work of the Church is being done by those who are perfect strangers to the closet. Small wonder that the work does not succeed.

While it may be true that many in the Church say prayers, it is equally true that their praying is of the stereotyped order. Their prayers may be charged with sentiment, but they are tame, timid, and without fire or force. Even this sort of praying is done by a few stragling men to be found at prayer-meetings. Those whose names are to be found bulking large in our great Church assemblies are not men noted for their praying habits. Yet the entire fabric of the work in which they are engaged has, perforce, to depend on the adequacy of prayer. This fact is similar to the crisis which would be created were a country to have to admit in the face of an invading foe that it cannot fight and have no knowledge of the weapons whereby war is to be waged.

In all God's plans for human redemption, He proposes that men pray. The men are to pray in every place, in the church, in the closet, in the home, on sacred days and on secular days. All things and everything are dependent on the measure of men's praying.

Prayer is the genius and mainspring of life. We pray as we live; we live as we pray. Life will never be finer than the quality of the closet. The mercury of life will rise only by the warmth of the closet. Persistent non-praying eventually will depress life below zero.

To measure and weigh the conditions of prayer, is readily to discover why men do not pray in larger numbers. The conditions are so perfect, so blessed, that it is a rare character who can meet them. A heart all love, a heart that holds even its enemies in loving contemplation and prayerful concern, a heart from which all bitterness, revenge and envy are purged—how rare! Yet this is the only condition of mind and heart in which a man can expect to command the efficacy of prayer.

There are certain conditions laid down for authentic praying. Men are to pray, "lifting up holy hands"; hands here being the symbol of life. Hands unsoiled by stains of evil doing are the emblem of a life unsoiled by sin. Thus are men to come into the presence of God, thus are they to approach the throne of the Highest, where they can "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Here, then, is one reason why men do not pray. They are too worldly in heart and too secular in life to enter the closet; and even though they enter there, they cannot offer the "fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous man, which availeth much."

Again, "hands" are the symbols of supplication. Outstretched hands stand for an appeal for help. It is the silent yet eloquent attitude of a helpless soul standing before God, appealing for mercy and grace. "Hands," too, are symbols of activity, power and conduct. Hands outstretched to God in prayer must be "holy hands," unstained hands. The word "holy" here means undefiled, unspotted, untainted, and religiously observing every obligation. How far remote is all this from the character of the sin-loving, worldly-minded, fleshly disposed men, soiled by fleshly lusts, spotted by worldly indulgence, unholy in heart and conduct! "He who seeks equity must do equity," is the maxim of earthly courts. So he who seeks God's good gifts must practice God's good deeds. This is the maxim of heavenly courts.

Prayer is sensitive, and always affected by the character and conduct of him who prays. Water cannot rise above its own level, and a spotless prayer cannot flow from a spotted heart. Straight praying is never born of crooked conduct. The men, what men are, behind their praying, that gives character to their supplication. The craven heart cannot do brave praying. Soiled men cannot make clean, pure supplication.

It is neither words, nor thoughts nor ideas, nor feelings, which shape praying, but character and conduct. Men must walk in upright fashion in order to be able to pray well. Bad character and unrighteous living break down praying until it becomes a mere shibboleth. Praying takes its tone and vigour from the life of the man or the woman exercising it. When character and conduct are at a low ebb, praying can but barely live, much less thrive.

The man of prayer, whether layman or preacher, is God's right-hand man. In the realm of spiritual affairs, he creates conditions, inaugurates movements, brings things to pass.

By the fact and condition of their creation and redemption, all men are under obligation to pray. Every man can pray, and every man should pray. But when it comes to the affairs of the Kingdom, let it be said, at once, that a prayerless man in the Church of God is like a paralyzed organ of the physical body. He is out of place in the communion of saints, out of harmony with God, and out of accord with His purposes for mankind. A prayerless man handicaps the vigour and life of the whole system like a demoralized soldier is a menace to the force of which he forms part, in the day of battle. The absence of prayer lessens all the life-forces of the soul, cripples faith, sets aside holy living, shuts out heaven. Between praying saints and non-praying men, in Holy Scripture, the line is sharply drawn. Of Fletcher of Madeley—one of the praying saints—it is written that

"He was far more abundant in his public labours than the greater part of his companions in the holy ministry. Yet these bore but little proportion to those internal exercises of prayer and supplication to which he was wholly given up in private, which were almost uninterruptedly maintained from hour to hour. He lived in the spirit of prayer, and whatever employment in which he was engaged, this spirit of prayer was constantly manifested through them all.

"Without this he neither formed any design, nor entered upon any duty. Without this he neither read nor conversed. Without this, he neither visited nor received a visitor. There have been seasons of supplications in which he appeared to be carried out far beyond the ordinary limits of devotion, when, like his Lord upon the Mount of Transfiguration, while he continued to pour out his mighty prayer, the fashion of his countenance has been changed, and his face has appeared as the face of an angel."

O God, raise up more men of praying like John Fletcher! How we do need, in this our day, men through whom God can work!

("The Weapon Of Prayer" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 3 ; 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.)

Study Questions for Judges 12

1. After the death of Joshua, there arose a generation which did not know the Lord. According to Judges 2:10-13, what was the result?

2. Judges 2:16-19 Gives a summary of the book. Write this summary in your own words.

3. In Judges 16:17 we see Samson finally revealing the secret of his strength to Delilah. What was the secret?

4. Like many who are called of God, Gideon was hesitant about being used as His instrument. What is the key to be successful in your service to God? (Judges 6:16; Exodus 3:12; and Joshua 1:5).

5. Although we see the children of Israel weeping in Judges 2: 4 as they were rebuked by the Lord, we still see them continuing their sin. How can we avoid making the same mistake? (2 Corinthians 7:10 and Revelation 2:5).

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 398-399)

Chapel Flock ♦ PO Box 161102 ♦ Wichita, KS ♦ 67216 ♦ (316) 243-1438

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