

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

[Unfailing Love-](#)  
[Chris Tomlin](#)

[When The Rain Comes-](#)  
[Third Day](#)

[I have always loved](#)  
[you-Third Day](#)

[Spirit Fall-Phil Wickham](#)

## Prayer

Lord, please forgive me for the times I've been a whiner and a complainer! I am so sorry that I've made life miserable for the people who work with me at my job or at church. I recognize that I complain more than I should, and I admit that I have been wrong. I repent for my wrong behavior, and I'm asking You today to help me make a mental adjustment. Help me learn to be thankful for the blessings I have and for the salary my employer pays me. Help me to serve with a happy heart and to be a continual source of blessing instead of a continual source of complaint, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

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[chapel-flock@sbcglobal.net](mailto:chapel-flock@sbcglobal.net)

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1 AND SAMUEL said to all Israel, I have listened to you in all that you have said to me and have made a king over you. 2 And now, behold, the king walks before you. And I am old and gray, and behold, my sons are with you. And I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. 3 Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and Saul His anointed. Whose ox or donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded or oppressed? Or from whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? Tell me and I will restore it to you. 4 And they said, You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand. 5 And Samuel said to them, The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, He is witness. 6 And Samuel said to the people, It is the Lord Who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of Egypt. 7 Now present yourselves, that I may plead with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did for you and for your fathers. 8 When Jacob and his sons had come into Egypt [and the Egyptians oppressed them], and your fathers cried to the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. 9 But when they forgot the Lord their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of Hazor's army, and into the hands of the Philistines and of the king of Moab, and they fought those foes. 10 And they cried to the Lord, saying, We have sinned because we have forsaken the Lord and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You. 11 And the Lord sent Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel, and He delivered you out of the hands of your enemies on every side, and you dwelt safely. 12 But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, No! A king shall reign over us—when the Lord your God was your King! 13 Now see the king whom you have chosen and for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. 14 If you will revere and fear the Lord and serve Him and hearken to His voice and not rebel against His commandment, and if both you and your king will follow the Lord your God, it will be good! 15 But if you will not hearken to the Lord's voice, but rebel against His commandment, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers. 16 So stand still and see this great thing the Lord will do before your eyes now. 17 Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call to the Lord and He will send thunder and rain; then you shall know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking for a king for yourselves. 18 So Samuel called to the Lord, and He sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. 19 And [they] all said to Samuel, Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil—to ask for a king. 20 And Samuel said to the people, Fear not. You have indeed done all this evil; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve Him with all your heart. 21 And turn not aside after vain and worthless things which cannot profit or deliver you, for they are empty and futile. 22 The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, for it has pleased Him to make you a people for Himself. 23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way. 24 Only fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; for consider how great are the things He has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king shall be swept away.

## Chapter 12

Now in the twelfth chapter Samuel is now sort of stepping down because they have now proclaimed the king. So his career as the judge over Israel has pretty much come to an end, as the reigns of government are now turned over from the theocracy, Samuel the judge speaking for God to the people, now to a monarchy where Saul is ruling. So Samuel is stepping down. This is more or less his farewell speech to the people. He is going to go into pretty much political obscurity after this point. He's gonna step into the background. He will be dealing not with the people; he will be dealing with Saul and with individuals, but no longer the public figure in leading Israel. So this is his last, final speech to Israel in chapter twelve.

Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in that you have asked that I should set a king over you. And now, behold, the king is walking there before you: and I am old, I'm gray-haired; and my sons are with you: and I have walked with you from my childhood to this day (1Sa 12:1-2).

So you do remember that he started out his career extremely early. As soon as he was weaned he was a public figure. He was there in the place of worship. The people who would gather for worship saw this little boy year by year as he grew and as he developed. They recognized that God's hand was upon this young man. He just sort of naturally grew into the position of leadership and judge over Israel.

Now [He declares] here I am: and I want you to witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? whose donkey have I taken? ["Who have I defrauded?"] who have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? tell me and I will restore it (1Sa 12:3).

In other words, he is declaring his innocence before the people. "Look, I didn't take from you at all. I didn't take from you your oxen, your donkeys. I didn't accept bribes. I've not oppressed you. If anyone feels that I've oppressed you, anyone feels I've defrauded, step forward, and I will pay." Really Samuel did have a very beautiful and remarkable career as the judge of Israel. Extremely outstanding person.

So they answered, You haven't defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither have you taken anything from us. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand. And they answered, God is witness (1Sa 12:4-5).

"If you swear God is witness, I've not taken anything from you." "That's right, we swear to that. So Samuel said unto the people, [Rehearsing now their history a little bit.] It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and they brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt. Now stand still, for a minute that I might reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts which the Lord did to you and your fathers (1Sa 12:6-7).

Now he is seeking now to justify God. He's justified himself; "Look I've taken nothing."

"Right."

"I'm clean."

"Right."

"Now I want to show you that the Lord is also clean, that the Lord has treated you right. That He has never mistreated you or your fathers. That which the Lord has done has been fair and just."

When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried to the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, and they brought your fathers out of Egypt, and made them to dwell in this place. And when your fathers forgot the Lord their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, who was the captain of the host of Hazor, and then into the hand of the Philistines, and then into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and we have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve you. And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you dwelled safely. And when you saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, you said unto me, No; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king (1Sa 12:8-12).

"Now I want you to acknowledge this that God was fair and just. Your father Jacob went down to Egypt, and there your fathers were oppressed. They cried unto God, God sent Moses and Aaron who brought them out of Egypt, and to this place. But when your fathers began to forsake God, then they were forsaken of God. It was only after they had forsaken God that their enemies came in and began to oppress them. But they cried unto God, and God sent deliverers." these various judges.

He names some of the judges that God used as the deliverer, finally Himself. But now you are faced with another crisis and rather than crying out unto God for His deliverance, you are now asking for a king. In thus doing, you are rejecting God from being king. So you are going from a theocracy, a people governed by God, to a monarchy, people governed by an earthly king.

Now therefore behold the king that you have chosen, and you have desired. ["Here he is, take a look at him."] and, behold, the Lord has set a king over you. If you will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against his commandment, then shall both you and the king that reigns over you continue following the Lord your God: But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, and you rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Now I want you to stand and see this great thing, which the Lord is gonna do before your eyes. Today is the day of the wheat harvest. I'm gonna call unto the Lord, and he's gonna send thunder and rain; that you might perceive and know that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord; the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil thing, to ask us a king. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: you have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain (1Sa 12:13-21).

So Samuel says, "Look you've done an evil thing in asking for a king. That you might know how wicked it is, God's gonna show you a wonder. I'm gonna ask God to send thunder and rain upon your wheat harvest."

There in the sight of the people God sent thunder and rain. So as the thunder began to clap around them, and the rain began to fall, they said, "Oh we've sinned, we've done wickedly. Pray that God not destroy us."

Now it is interesting, they aren't really repenting. The repentance means a change, a true repentance they would've said, "Oh get rid of Saul. We'll let God serve us or reign over us. We'll serve God." That would've been repentance. But theirs is, "Oh we're sorry, but we still want our king."

Now there is a difference between sorrow and repentance. The Lord requires repentance from sin, not just a sorrow for sin. So often we have a sorrow because of the consequences of our sin, but we go on doing it. God wants repentance, that is a turning away from the evil in our lives. God requires repentance.

So they said, "Pray that we will not die."

Samuel said to them, "You're not gonna die, but just make sure that you don't quit serving the Lord, for if you do, you're gonna start serving other gods, vain things, which cannot profit or deliver."

Now he declared this because he knew the nature of man. You've got to serve somebody. If you are not serving God, you're going to be serving some vain thing that really can't help you or deliver you, that is really no profit to you. We look around the world today and we see the vain things that men are worshiping or serving. But you cannot serve God and mammon. They are mutually exclusive. If you forsake serving the Lord, because you've got to serve somebody, you're gonna start serving vain things, which when your time of trouble and peril arises, they'll not be able to profit you or to deliver you.

But if you serve the Lord he will not forsake you for his great name's sake; because it has pleased the Lord to make you his people (1Sa 12:22).

"Now for God's reasons He's pleased to make you His people. If you'll just serve Him, He will not forsake you."

Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way (1Sa 12:23):

Now here Samuel brings up something that to me is quite interesting. They said, when they realized their wickedness, they said, "Pray for us that we not die." In response to that Samuel said, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." In other words, not praying is sinful. Not praying is sinning against the Lord. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you."

Now if God has commanded us to pray one for another, then our failure to pray for one another is disobedient to the command of God, and disobedience to God's command is sin. The Lord has told us we are to pray one for another. Therefore we are all of us required to pray for each other. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for one another. Oh, that we would realize the awful sin of prayerlessness in our lives. That not to pray, not to spend time in prayer with the Lord is actually sinning against the Lord. It's sinning against His commands to us.

Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he has done for you. [Just consider the wonderful things God has done for you, and then serve Him with all your heart.] But if you continue in wickedness, just know you're gonna be consumed, both you and your king (1Sa 12:24-25).

(Through The Bible; C2000 series; Chuck Smith; Bible Commentaries; 1979-1986)

## VI. HEZEKIAH, THE PRAYING KING

"One can form a habit of study until the will seems to be at rest and only the intellect is engaged, the will having retired altogether from exercise. This is not true of real praying. If the affections are laggard, cold, indifferent, if the intellect is furnishing no material to clothe the petition with imagery and fervor, the prayer is a mere vapping of intellectual exercise, nothing being accomplished worth while."—Rev. Homer W. Hodge

The great religious reformation under King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah was thoroughly impregnated with prayer in its various stages. King Hezekiah, of Judah, will serve as an illustration of a praying elder of God's Church, white-robed and gold-crowned. He had genius and strength, wisdom and piety. He was a statesman, a general, a poet and a religious reformer. He is a distinct surprise to us, not so much because of his strength and genius—they were to be expected—but in his piety, under all the circumstances connected with him. The rare statement, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," is a glad and thrilling surprise when we consider all his antecedents and his environments. Where did he come from? Under what circumstances was his childhood life spent? Who were his parents and what were their religious character? Worldliness, half-heartedness and utter apostasy marked the reign of his father, grandfather and his great-grandfather. His home surroundings as he grew up were far from being favorable to godliness and faith in God. One thing, however, favored him. He was fortunate in having Isaiah for his friend and counselor when he assumed the crown of Judah. How much there is in a ruler's having a God-fearing man for a counselor and an associate!

With what familiar and successful praying did he intercede with God is seen in the Passover feast, in which a number of the people were unfitted to participate. They had not prepared themselves by the required ceremonial cleansing, and it was important that they be allowed to eat the Passover feast with all the others.

Here is the brief account with special reference to the praying of Hezekiah and the result:

"For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified; therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passover for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord.

"For a multitude of the people had not cleansed themselves yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them saying, The Good Lord pardon every one.

"That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

"And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people."

So the Lord heard him as he prayed, and even the violation of the most sacred law of the Passover was forgiven in answer to the prayer of this praying, God-fearing king. Law must yield its scepter to prayer.

The strength, directness and foundation of his faith and prayer are found in his words to his army. Memorable words are they, stronger and mightier than all the hosts of Sennacherib:

"Be strong and courageous; be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more

**"With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah."**

His defense against the mighty enemies of God was prayer. His enemies quailed and were destroyed his prayers when his own armies were powerless. God's people were always safe when their princes were princes in prayer.

An occasion of serious import came to the people of God during his reign which was to test his faith in God and furnish opportunity to try the prayer agency to obtain deliverance. Judah was sorely pressed by the Assyrians, and, humanly speaking, defeat and captivity seemed imminent. The King of Assyria sent a commission to defy and blaspheme the name of God and to insult King Hezekiah, and they uttered their insults and blasphemy publicly. Note what Hezekiah immediately did without hesitation:

**"And it came to pass when King Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord."**

His very first impression was to turn to God by going to the "house of prayer." God was in his thoughts, and prayer was the first thing to be done. And so he sent messengers to Isaiah to join him in prayer. In such an emergency God must not be left out of the account. God must be appealed to for deliverance from these blasphemous enemies of God and His people.

Just at this particular juncture the forces of the King of Assyria, which were besieging Hezekiah, were diverted from an immediate attack on Jerusalem. The King of Assyria, however, sent to Hezekiah a defaming and blasphemous letter.

For the second time, as he is insulted and beset by the forces of this heathen king, he enters the house of the Lord, the "house of prayer." Where else should he go? And to whom should he appeal but unto the God of Israel?

**"And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.**

**"And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord: O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel that dwellest between the cherubim, Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth.**

**"Now, therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only."**

And note the speedy answer and the marvelous results of such praying by this God-fearing king. First, Isaiah gave the King full assurance that he need fear nothing. God had heard the prayer, and would give a great deliverance.

Then secondly, the angel of the Lord came with swift wings and smote 185,000 Assyrians. The king was vindicated, God was honored, and the people of God were saved.

The united prayer. of the praying king and of the praying prophet were almighty forces in bringing deliverance and destroying God's enemies. Armies lay at their mercy, defenceless; and angels, swift-winged and armed with almighty power and vengeance, were their allies.

Hezekiah had ministered in prayer in destroying idolatry and in reforming his kingdom. In meeting his enemies, prayer had been his chief weapon. He now comes to try its efficiency against the set and declared purposes of Almighty God. Will it avail in this new field of action? Let us see. Hezekiah was very sick, and God sends his own familiar friend and wise counselor and prophet, Isaiah, to warn him of his approaching end, and to tell him to arrange all his affairs for his final departure. This is the Scriptural statement:

**"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the Prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord: Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."**

The decree came direct from God that he should die. What can set aside or reverse that Divine decree of heaven? Hezekiah had never been in a condition so insuperable with a decree so direct and definite from God. Can prayer change the purposes of God? Can prayer snatch from the jaws of death one who has been decreed to die? Can prayer save a man from an incurable sickness? These were the questions with which his faith had now to deal. But his faith does not seem to pause one moment. His faith is not staggered one minute at the sudden and definite news conveyed to him by the Lord's prophet. No such questions which modern unbelief or disbelief would raise are started in his mind. At once he gives himself to prayer. Immediately without delay he applies to God who issued the edict. To whom else could he go? Cannot God change His own purposes if He chooses?

Note what Hezekiah did in this emergency, sorely pressed, and see the gracious result:

**"Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed unto the Lord, saying,**

**"I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore."**

It was no self-righteous plea which he offered to God for recovery. He was only pleading his fidelity, just as Christ did in after years:

"Father I have glorified thee on earth."

He is the Lord's reminder, and is putting Him in mind as to his sincerity, fidelity and service, which was in every way legitimate. This prayer was directly in line with that of David in Psalm 26:1, "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity." This is not a prayer test with Hezekiah, nor is it a faith cure, but it is a testing of God. It must be God's cure if a cure comes at all.

Hezekiah had hardly finished his prayer, and Isaiah was just about to go home when God gave him another message for Hezekiah, this time one more pleasant and encouraging. The mighty force of prayer had affected God, and had changed His edict and reversed Him in His purpose concerning Hezekiah. What is that which prayer cannot do? What is it which a praying man cannot accomplish through prayer?

"And it came to pass before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying,

"Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, the captain of my people, Thus, saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears; Behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord.

"And I will add unto thy days fifteen years, and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King of Assyria; and I will defend this city for my own sake, and for David, my servant's sake."

The prayer was to God. It was that God should reconsider and change His mind. Doubtless Isaiah returned to his house with a lighter heart than he did when he delivered his original message. God had been prayed to by this sick king, and had been asked to revoke His decree, and God had condescended to grant the request. God sometimes changes His mind. He has a right to do so. The reasons for Him to change His mind are strong reasons. His servant Hezekiah wants it done. Hezekiah had been a dutiful servant and had done much for God. Truth, perfection and goodness have been the elements of Hezekiah's service and the rule of his life. Hezekiah's tears and prayer are in the way of God's executing His decree to take away the life of His servant. Prayer and tears are mighty things with God. They are to Him much more than consistency and much more to Him than decrees. "I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears; behold I will heal thee."

Sickness dies before prayer. Health comes in answer to prayer. God answered more than Hezekiah asked for. Hezekiah prayed only for his life, and God gave him life and in addition promised him protection and security from his enemies.

But Isaiah had something to do with the recovery of this praying king. There was something more than prayer in it. Isaiah's praying was changed into the skill of the physician. "And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered."

God often uses remedies in answering prayer. It frequently takes a stronger faith to rise above means and not to trust in them, than it does to wholly reject all means. Here was a simple remedy that all might know that it did not cure the deadly disease, and yet a means to aid or to test faith. But still more praying was to be done. Isaiah and Hezekiah could not do things without much praying:

"And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord the third day?

"And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken: Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

"And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

"And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz."

Hezekiah meets the occasion and covers the answer to his prayer with thanksgiving. The fragrance of the sweet spices are there, and the melody of the harp also.

Four things let us ever keep in mind: God hears prayer, God heeds prayer, God answers prayer, and God delivers by prayer. These things cannot be too often repeated. Prayer breaks all bars, dissolves all chains, opens all prisons and widens all straits by which God's saints have been holden.

Life was sweet to Hezekiah and he desired to live, but what can brook God's decree? Nothing but the energy of faith. Hezekiah's heart was broken under the strain, and its waters flowed and added force and volume to his praying. He pleaded with great strivings and with strong arguments; and God heard Hezekiah praying, saw his tears, and changed his mind, and Hezekiah lived to praise God and to be an example of the power of mighty praying.

Like Hezekiah, the decent, soulless way of praying did not suit Paul. He puts himself in the attitude of a wrestler, and charges his brethren to join him in the agony of a great conflict. "Brethren, I beseech you," he says, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." He was too much in earnest to touch the praying business genteelly or with gloved hands. He was in it as an agony, and he desired his brethren to be his partners in this conflict and wrestling of his soul victories from the very jaws of hell. We want preachers and men and women who can illustrate the uses, the forces, the blessing, and the utmost limits of prayer.

Epaphras was doing this same kind of praying for the Colossians: "Always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." An end worth agonizing for always. This kind of praying by these early pastors of the Apostolic Church was one secret of the purity, one source of the power of the Church. And this was the kind of praying which was done by Hezekiah.

Here was prayer born in the fire of a great desire, and pursued through the deepest agony of conflict and opposition to success. Our spiritual cravings are not strong enough to give life to the mighty conflicts of prayer? They are not absorbing enough to stop business, arrest worldly pursuits, awaken us before day, and send us to the closet, to solitude, and to God; to conquer every opposing force and win our

## VII. EZRA, THE PRAYING REFORMER

"Before the Great War there were many signs of a new interest in PRAYER and new hope from its exercise. How these signs have multiplied is known to every one. This one thing at least that is good the War has done for us already. Let us not miss our opportunity. Prayer is not an easy exercise. It requires encouragement, exposition, and training. There never was a time when men and women were more sincerely anxious to be told how to pray. Prayer is the mightiest instrument in our armory, and if we are to use it as God has given the encouragement, we must do everything in our power to bring it into exercise."—Rev. James Hastings.

Ezra, the priest, and one of God's great reformers, comes before us in the Old Testament as a praying man, one who uses prayer to overcome difficulties and bring good things to pass. He had returned from Babylon under the patronage of the King of Babylon, who had been strangely moved toward Ezra and who favored him in many ways. Ezra had been in Jerusalem but a few days when the princes came to him with the distressing information that the people had not separated themselves from the people of that country, and were doing according to the abominations of the heathen nations about them. And that which was worse than all was that the princes and rulers in Israel had been chief in the trespass.

It was a sad state of affairs facing Ezra as he found the Church almost hopelessly involved with the world. God demands of His Church in all ages that it should be separated from the world, a separation so sharp that it amounts to an antagonism. To effect this very end, He put Israel in the Promised Land, and cut them off from other nations by mountains, deserts and seas, and straightway charged them that they should not form any relation with alien nations, neither marital, social nor business.

But Ezra finds the Church at Jerusalem, as he returns from Babylon, paralyzed and hopelessly and thoroughly prostrated by the violation of this principle. They had intermarried, and had formed the closest and most sacred ties in family, social and business life, with the Gentile nations. All were involved in it, priests, Levites, princes and people. The family, the business, and the religious life of the people was founded in this violation of God's law. What was to be done? What could be done? Here were the important questions which faced this leader in Israel, this man of God.

Everything appeared to be against the recovery of the Church. Ezra could not preach to them, because the whole city would be inflamed, and would hound him out of the place. What force was there which could recover them to God so that they would dissolve business partnerships, divorce wives and husbands, cut acquaintances and dissolve friendships?

The first thing about Ezra which is worthy of remark was that he saw the situation and realized how serious it was. He was not a blind-eyed optimist who never sees anything wrong in the Church. By the mouth of Isaiah God had propounded the very pertinent question, "Who is blind but my servant?" But it could not possibly be made to apply to Ezra. Nor did he minimize the condition of things or seek to palliate the sins of the people or to minimize the enormity of their crimes. Their offense appeared in his eyes to be serious in the extreme. It is worth not a little to have leaders in Zion who have eyes to see the sins of the Church as well as the evils of the times. One great need of the modern Church is for leaders after the style of Ezra, who are not blind in their seeing department, and who are willing to see the state of things in the Church and who are not reluctant to open their eyes to the real situation.

Very naturally, seeing these dreadful evils in the Church and in the society of Jerusalem, he was distressed. The sad condition of things grieved him, so much so that he rent his garments, plucked his hair, and sat down astonished. All these things are evidences of his great distress of soul at the terrible state of affairs. Then it was in that frame of mind, concerned, solicitous and troubled in soul, that he gave himself to prayer, to confession of the sins of the people, and to pleading for pardoning mercy at the hands of God. To whom should he go in a time like this but unto the God who hears prayer, who is ready to pardon and who can bring the unexpected thing to pass?

He was amazed beyond expression at the wicked conduct of the people, was deeply moved and began to fast and pray. Prayer and fasting always accomplish something. He prays with a broken heart, for there is naught else that he can do. He prays unto God, deeply burdened, prostrate on the ground and weeping, while the whole city unites with him in prayer.

Prayer was the only way to placate God, and Ezra became a great mover in a great work for God, with marvelous results. The whole work, its principles and its results, are summarized by just one verse in Ezra 10:1:

"Now when Ezra had prayed, and had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of There had been mighty, simple and persevering prayer. Intense and prevailing prayer had accomplished its end.

Ezra's praying had brought into being and brought forth results in a great work for God. It was mighty praying because it brought Almighty God to do His own work, which was absolutely hopeless from any other source save by prayer and by God.

**But nothing is hopeless to prayer because nothing is hopelessly to God. Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children, for the people wept sore."**

**Again we must say that prayer has only to do with God, and is only resultful as it has to do with God. Whatever influence the praying of Ezra had upon himself, its chief, if not its only, results followed because it affected God, and moved Him to do the work.**

**A great and general repentance followed this praying of Ezra, and there occurred a wonderful reformation in Israel. And Ezra's mourning and his praying were the great factors which had to do with bringing these great things to pass.**

**So thorough was the revival which occurred that as evidences of its genuineness it is noted that the leaders in Israel came to Ezra with these words:**

**"We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land. Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.**

**"Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born to them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.**

**"Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee. We also will be with thee; be of good courage, and do it."**

**("Prayer and Praying Men" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 6-7; 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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