

“Turning from the Wickedness of Prayerlessness”

When God has something very great to accomplish for his church it is his will that there should precede it, the extraordinary prayer of his people. When God is about to accomplish great things for his church, he begins with a remarkable outpouring of his spirit of grace and a desire to pray. If we are not to expect that the devil should go out of a particular person, who is in the grip of bodily possession, without extraordinary prayer, or prayer and fasting; how much less should we expect to have him cast out of the land without it.” Jonathan Edwards

Turning is a Call to Repentance— Do We Believe That in the Realm of Prayer, We Have Something to Repent of?

1 Sam 12:23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you;

“ We need God to show us how our lack of prayer indicates unfaithfulness to our consecration vows to give God all of our hearts and lives. Our limited prayer, with the excuses we make for them, are a greater sin than we know. It shows that we have little taste or relish for fellowship with God and that our faith rests more on our own work and efforts than on the power of God. It demonstrates that we have little sense of the heavenly blessings God waits to shower down on us and that we are not ready to sacrifice the ease and confidence of the flesh for perseveringly waiting on God. And finally, it proves that our spiritual lives— our abiding in Christ— are altogether too weak to make us prevail in prayer. When the pressure of work for Christ is allowed to be the excuse for our not finding time to seek and secure His own presence and power in it as our chief need, our sense of absolute dependence on God is not right. It shows we have no deep understanding of the divine and supernatural work of God in which we are only His instruments, no true entrance into the heavenly, altogether otherworldly, character of our mission, and no full surrender to and delight in Christ Jesus Himself. **Andrew Murray, “The Ministry of Intercession”, p. 67**

“ What statement is my prayer life making about my enjoyment of God’s company?

“ What is revealed about our faith and expectations of God’s actions toward us by our prayer lives?

“ What do we learn about the true state of our inner man if we have little prevailing in prayer?

“ If we are to deal effectively with the lack of prayer, we must look at it from this point of view and ask, ‘Is restraining prayer a sin?’ ... To see that our prayer-sins are indeed sins is the first step to a true and divine deliverance from them. (p. 20) Do let us believe that God’s call to much prayer need not be a burden and cause of continual self-condemnation. He means it to be a joy. He can make it an inspiration, giving us strength for all our work and bringing down His power to work through us in our fellowmen. Do not be afraid to fully admit to the sin that shames us and then to face it in the name of our Mighty Redeemer. **Andrew Murray, p. 64, 20**

“Turn from your wicked ways”

Prayerlessness is not merely an issue of neglect, it is an issue of pursuit”

“ Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” **C.S. Lewis (quoted by Piper in “Desiring God”, p. 17**

— The truth is we haven’t set our goals high enough!

- **What Do You Need to TURN FROM in order to Begin to Have a Life of Prayer?**

WICKEDNESS REDEFINED

Jer 2:11-13, 29-32

- **Prayerlessness is a reflection of what the heart is going out to....** when our hearts become more enamored by life and its trappings than we are by God & His Glory, we are in the throws of something "wicked" in our hearts and we are in need of Turning.

— **The Snow Capped Peaks of the Mountains of Wicked Idolatry find their beginnings in the Foot Hills of Misplaced Affections.** "I don't have time to pray" "We've got so much going on"

Beware! Idolatry Lurks in Every Heart and Must be Guarded Against (on an ongoing basis)

Deut 6:10-12

WARNING: "Stuff Distracts" ... including good stuff from God— Jobs Families Luxury Items Money Ministry

"During a convention several years ago, I was discussing the subject of prayer in conversation with a well-known London minister. He maintained that if so much time must be given to prayer, it would involve the neglect of the responsibilities of his position. 'There is the morning mail, before breakfast, with ten or twelve letters that must be answered. Then there are committee meetings waiting, with countless other engagements, more than enough to fill up the day. It is difficult to see how it can all be done.' ... Another example is this: a pastor of quite a large church who had many responsibilities once said to me, 'I see the importance of much prayer, and yet my life hardly leaves room for it.' ... I admitted that the difficulty was universal." **Andrew Murray**, "The Ministry of Intercession", p. 17, 18

An Historic Revelation of Wandering Affections

God's Unique People — Called by His Name

- Deut 7 **a chosen people** whom God has set His unearned love upon

- 2Chr 6, 7:14ff **a People Called to Pray & Worship!** ... When we forget God, we will neglect the VEHICLES of COMMUNING W/ HIM

Israel's Sequence of Events

Abraham — Egypt — Sinai (the temple revealed) — Solomon (House of Prayer: the temple constructed) — Idolatrous Influence & Disaffection & Distraction — The Prophets (Is 1 – Disaffectionate Worship Leading to Captivity... Warning: Disaffectionate worship leads to Captivity) — Babylonian Captivity (70 yrs, the Lament over the House of Prayer, Lam 1:3-12) — Restoration from Captivity — Hag

Hag 1 ... the Need of Turning AGAIN and the Path of Turning

- Background: The Exiles have returned to Jerusalem from Babylon (538 BC), they had begun to rebuild the temple but have stopped when Haggai prophecies (520 BC)

– Doesn't this identify with our own experiences of "Rebuilding Our Prayer Lives".

v. 1, 14

! **God's Grace in Prophetic Revelation** ... "in the second year, sixth month, and first day... the word of the Lord came" it is the grace of God that corrects our course! It is the Grace of God that STIRS Us from our place of Complacency

! **The Significance of Leaders**.... God doesn't just say that He sent word to His People & Stirred His People— He highlights that the word was to the Leaders & the People, and that He stirred the Leaders & the People

— God Has Established That There Be Leaders.... **Differentiation is Biblical.**

Responsibility is Essential! (Jeremiah's statements about the shepherds)

“ how was it that the Prophet addressed them? and since the whole blame belonged to the people, why did he not speak to them? why did he not assemble the whole multitude? The Lord, no doubt, intended to connect Zerubbabel and Joshua with his servant as associates, that they three might go forth to the people, and deliver with one mouth what God had committed to his servant Haggai. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that he was sent to Zerubbabel and Joshua.” **John Calvin**, *Commentary on Haggai*

v. 2-4 ... the Propensity to Neglect, Distraction & the Casualizing of Essentials

“ easily might this objection occur to them, — “It is indeed true that the worship of God is deservedly to be preferred to all other things; but the Lord grants us this indulgence, so that we are allowed to build our own houses; and in the meantime we attend to the sacrifices. Have not our fathers lived many ages without a Temple? God was then satisfied with a sanctuary: there is now an altar erected, and there sacrifices are offered. The Lord then will forgive us if we defer the building of the Temple to a suitable time. But in the meantime every one may build his own house, so that afterwards the Temple may at leisure be built more sumptuously.” However this may have been, we find that true which I have often stated, — that the Jews were so taken up with their own domestic concerns, with their own ease, and with their own pleasures, that they made very little account of God's worship. This is the reason why the Prophet was so greatly displeased with them.” **John Calvin**, *Commentary on Haggai*, CCEL

v. 5-9 ... Consider Your Ways

(an urgent appeal to examine the fruit of neglect and misplaced passion)

! **a Classic case of trying to “FIX ALL THE WRONG PROBLEMS”**

.... *What do we do when we have “harvested little”?* — Sow more and work harder

.... *What do we assume when our “eating and drinking” become empty?* – need something new

.... *What do we try when our “clothing” doesn't accomplish what we want it to?* (In a modern sense, clothing is not about warmth, but rather about image and people connection— today's translation might say, “*You clothe yourself, but never look good enough. You restyle your hair or lose weight, but never gain satisfaction in your appearance.*”

— **v. 9** Everything seems to be coming up short in your life:

WHY? interesting the answer to the problem "here" is not here, but it's "over there"! "Why, declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house."

- When the House of Prayer & Worship (the life of prayer and worship) is neglected, there is weakness and want throughout our lives.

v. 10-11 ... Conditions Designed by God to Drive Us Back to Prayer

- De 28
- 2Chr 6, 7:14ff

! Our Experience of Drought and the Withholding of Produce

"If we are too busy to pray, we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions; much machinery but few results." **R.A. Torrey**

— What We're Not Having as a Church.

"I have called for a drought on power, on transformation, on health, on harvest, on fellowship (much shallow and ease of offense occurring)

"Just as pain in the natural realm is a warning sign of some hidden evil in the system, so defeat is God's voice telling us there is something wrong spiritually. ... The church is complaining about many defeats today; she has so little power in the civilized world; the preaching of the Gospel everywhere is paralyzed by the scarcity of money and men; powerful conversions are rare; and the number of holy, consecrated, spiritual Christians who are devoted to the service of God and their fellowmen is small. This all stems from a lack of effective prayer that brings the Holy Spirit in power to ministers, believers, missionaries, and unsaved souls. Can we deny that our lack of prayer is the sin causing God's presence and power to be so far from us?" **Andrew Murray**, "The Ministry of Intercession", p. 66

— What are You NOT HAVING as a Family? as a Single Person? in your Career?