

I Have Seen History Shaped by Prayer



Ruling by Prayer (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. In my talk yesterday I spoke about our obligation to pray for our government. I explained that good government is the will of God because it facilitates the preaching of the gospel, which is the primary purpose of God for our world. However, this does not mean that we will automatically have good government. God waits for us to pray! Our prayers have a great deal to do with the kind of government, much more than most Christians have ever realized.

Today I'm going to speak about this out of my own personal experience. I'm going to tell you of cases in which I myself have seen history shaped by prayer.

For my first example I'm going to go back to the early years of my Christian experience. In 1940 I was called from a position as a professor of philosophy at Cambridge University into the British Forces in World War II. In July 1941, I had a dramatic personal encounter with the Lord in an Army barrack room. I can't go into the details of that right now, but it completely transformed me and changed the whole course of my life. Sometime later that year my unit was sent out to North Africa, and I found myself serving as a hospital attendant with the British Forces in North Africa. In the course of that experience I was granted the rather doubtful privilege of taking part in the longest retreat in the history of the British Army, 700 miles of continuous retreating, from a place named Alagalah in Libya to the very gates of Cairo. And let me say, to retreat for 700 miles is a very wearisome and demoralizing experience, especially in a barren desert.

At that point the fate of the whole Middle East hung in the balance. If the Axis forces could press through and capture Cairo, they would command the Suez Canal, cut one of the main lifelines of the British Empire and ultimately the Land of Israel, and the oil resources of the entire Middle East would be at their mercy. So it was a critical moment.

Now, doubtless there were any factors that caused that retreat which I could not properly analyze, but the one that impressed me was that the officers did not have the confidence of the men under them. The morale was bad, there was poor communication, and our impression of the officers was that they were much more concerned with their

own comfort and selfish needs than with the needs of the men under them, or even the needs to prosecute the war successfully.

For example, there was the question of water. Water was tremendously scarce and the ration of water was one military water bottle every two days per each man, which had to be used for everything, drinking, washing, and cooking. But it was very obvious to us that while we were living on that ration of water, the officers were using more water each day just to put with their whiskey than we had for all other purposes. Obviously that didn't work for a good relationship between the officers and the men under them.

Now as a Christian who had come to know the Lord and had a definite relationship with him and believed in the Bible, I felt I ought to pray, but I just didn't know how to pray. And so I more or less waited for God to give me a prayer, the kind of prayer He wanted prayed. And after a while God gave me this specific prayer: "Lord give us leaders such that it will be for your glory to give us victory through them." Once I started praying that prayer, I prayed it every day regularly. Now I didn't know what was happening but God began to move swiftly. The British government appointed a new commander for their forces in the Middle East in North Africa, an officer who was serving up in the desert. He was flown back to Cairo to take command but his plane crashed on landing and he was killed. So at this very important time in the most active theatre of the war, the British Forces were left without a commander.

In that situation, Winston Churchill, who was Prime Minister of Britain at the time, acted more or less on his own initiative and appointed an unknown officer who was flown out from Britain. His name was Bernard Montgomery Now I have to say on the basis of observation that Montgomery was a committed Christian and a God-fearing man. He was also a very kind commander and a man of great discipline. And he went to work reorganizing the British Forces. He restored discipline and morale; he changed the whole attitude and bearing and conduct of the officers; and then there was fought the well-known battle of El Alamein, which was the first major Allied victory in the whole of that theatre of war. In fact, in the whole war. And it reversed the whole course of war in North Africa in favor of the Allies. That was the Battle of El Alamein.

Now I was serving with a military ambulance up in the desert, a little way behind the advancing British Forces, and on the tailboard of the truck there was a little portable radio and a news commentator was describing the preparations at Montgomery's headquarters just before the Battle of El Alamein was fought. And he described how Montgomery came out and assembled his officers and men and said, "Let us ask the Lord, mighty in battle, to give us the victory." And as I listened to those words, what I call "heaven's electricity" went through me from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and God spoke very quietly but very firmly to my spirit and said, "That is the answer to your prayer."

So early in my Christian experience I learned that prayer can change the course of history. Now this is right in line with Scripture. For instance, in Psalm 75:6-7, the psalmist says this:

> "For not from the east, nor from the west, Nor from the desert comes exaltation; [or promotion. And notice it says 'and not from the desert' which was particularly appropriate to my situation. Then it goes on to say:] But God is the Judge; He puts down one, and exalts another." (NAS)

And that's exactly what happened in that situation. The human leaders had chosen one commander, but God put him down and raised up another man who was a man that would give God the glory. And so I want you to understand that it pays to pray for leadership.

The second example I'm going to give you of history being shaped by prayer happened in the country of Kenya in East Africa in 1960 when I was serving there in educational work with African students and teachers. At that time Kenya was scheduled to receive independence from British Empire within just a couple of years and the country had gone through a tremendous political crisis. The Mau Mau emergency which had torn the country in two created enmity and suspicion, not only between blacks and whites, but between the different African tribes. Just at that time the Belgium Congo to the west had received independence from Belgium and had immediately been plunged into bitter Civil War. All the political experts predicted that Kenya would go the same way as the Belgium Congo, only worse.

Now in August of that year, I was one of the speakers at the Bible convention for African young people. The convention lasted a week and we had come to the closing night. And somehow the Spirit of God moved in in a rather sovereign and unique way; and at a certain point I felt that we had tapped the resources of God's Almightiness and that it was our responsibility to use them aright. So I went up to the platform and silenced the young people who were praying and I challenged them to pray for their nation's future. I pointed out to them that Christians have a responsibility to pray for their government and that their country was facing a major crises, and that probably their prayers were the only

thing that could save their country from disaster.

Well, they united in prayer and for about ten minutes everybody, something like two or three hundred people, were just praying; laying hold of God, one of the most dramatic experiences I've ever been in. Then when they became silent, the young man, the young African who had been standing beside me on the platform, quietly spoke to his fellow Africans and said, "I want to tell you that while we were praying I had a vision. I saw a man on a red horse, and the horse was very fierce and very cruel, was coming toward Kenya from the east. Behind it were other red horses, also fierce and cruel. But," he said, "While we were praying I saw these red horses turn around and move away from Kenya toward the north." And he said, "As I was meditating on this, God spoke to me and said this, `Only the supernatural power of the prayer of my people can turn away the troubles that are coming upon Kenya.'" Let me quote those words to you again. "Only the supernatural power of the prayer of My people can turn away the troubles that are coming upon Kenya."

Now I can not go in full length into the history of the years that follow, but I have to say that that vision granted to that young African was exactly fulfilled. About three or four years later there was a serious Communist attempt to move into Kenya and take the country over from the east, but it was foiled by the wise and the prompt action of Jomo Kenyata, the first president of Kenya; and the Communists never have made any real advance in Kenya. But they moved away to the north, occupied Somalia and today Somalia is basically an armed Communist camp. But, from that time onwards until now, Kenya has been one of the most stable and progressive of more than 50 new African nations that have emerged on the continent since World War II. Certainly that was not what the political experts predicted. It was brought by prayer, by concerted, corporate, believing prayer at a crisis in the nation's destiny.

Now, as I close I want to ask you this question. Could the same be true of the United States? Could it be true of the United States, what God said to that young African in 1960 about Kenya? "Only the supernatural power of the prayer of My people can turn away the troubles that are coming upon the United States."

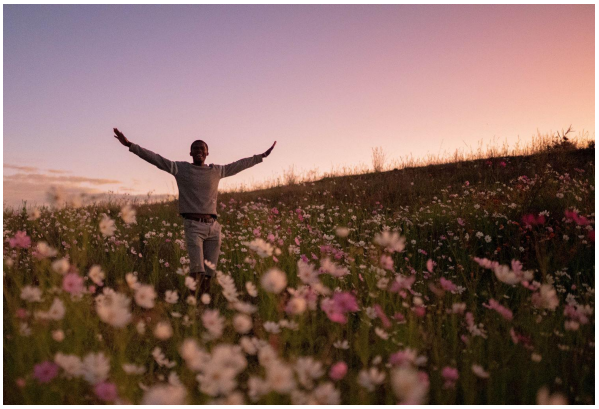
All right, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme of "Ruling by Prayer." I'll be explaining God's provision for "The Healing of our Land."

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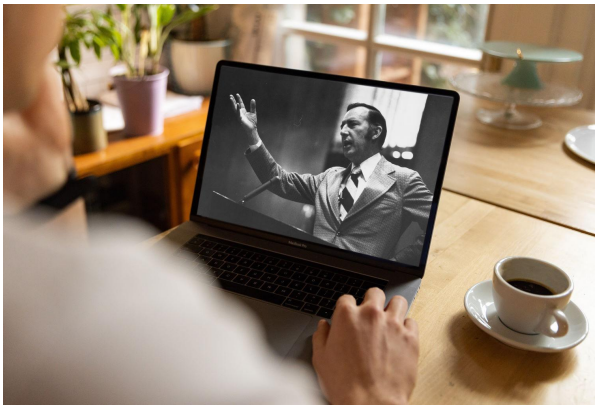
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