

The Healing of Our Land



Ruling by Prayer (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life, and can do the same in yours.

The theme that I'm dealing with this week is "Ruling by Prayer." I've explained that God expects that Christians in a nation to pray intelligently for their government; and that when they do this with faith, God intervenes to bring the curse of government and the destiny of the nation into line with His will.

In my talk yesterday I gave examples of how I myself have seen history shaped by prayer. Today I'm going to deal with the situation that arises where God's people have failed to pray as they should for the government of their nation and, as a result, the course of events in the government, and in the nation at large, has not been in line with the will of God. Rather, there has been moral and ethical decline, both in the nation's leadership and in the whole national culture; and many evil and destructive forces have been let loose, that are in opposition to both the purposes and the people of God. Quite obviously, this is the situation that prevails in many areas of American life and culture at this time. Therefore, the subject of my talk today is highly relevant to our contemporary situation.

Let me state my subject in the form of a question: Suppose we acknowledge that we Christians have failed, through prayerlessness and in other ways, to exercise our potential influence for good in our nation.

Is there anything that we can do to remedy this situation?

My reply is: Yes, the Bible has a clear and practical answer to this question, but before we turn to the Bible's answer, let us first face up to the full extent of our responsibility as Christians to exercise a unique and decisive influence on the society in which we live.

Jesus states this for us in the Sermon on the Mount. He uses in succession three vivid metaphors; Salt, Light, A City on a hill. Here is what He says in Matthew 5:13-14:

> "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing any more, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." (NAS)

So there are the three metaphors: Salt, Light, A City set on a hill.

Let's look at the particular significance of each metaphor, and I'll deal with them in the reverse order to which Jesus mentioned them. First of all, we Christians are a city set on a hill. What does that mean? I think the word that sums it up is we're conspicuous. We can be seen from all angles at all times. And we're always being watched. That's true. The moment that you let people know that you believe in Jesus Christ, that you're a committed follower of His, that you attend such and such a church, people begin to look at you in a special way. They analyze your life, your conduct, your behavior. What they are saying is, "Is it real or is it just a religious act that he's putting on?" They won't look at you in the church, but they will look at you in places like the office, or the factory, or the kitchen, or wherever it may be. Remember then, all of us who profess faith in Jesus, we are collectively a city on a hill. We're being watched all the time.

Secondly, Jesus says, "We are the light of the world." There's one important thing about light, there's no substitute for it. Nothing else can take the place of light. And that's true of us as Christians in this world, there's no substitute for us, no one else can take our place or do our job. Also, another fact about light, it's the only answer to darkness. There's no other way to deal with darkness but by light. And where light comes, really you don't have much more of a problem with darkness. The light automatically takes care of the darkness and that is how God expects us to be in the world, to be a light that automatically takes care of darkness.

And then the third picture that Jesus uses is that of the salt of the earth. Now salt is very familiar, of course, in our daily lives and there's much that could be said about salt, but I would just point out to you two main functions of salt. The first is to give flavor, the second is to hold back corruption. For instance, if food is not very tasty, maybe it's an egg that you're eating, what do you do? You sprinkle salt on it, and the salt gives flavor to that which otherwise might be flavorless. And so we're the salt of the earth. We're like the little grains of salt sprinkled across the earth's surface. Our responsibility is to give the earth flavor. Flavor for whom? The answer of course, is for God. Our presence should make the earth acceptable to God in a way that it would not be acceptable to God if we were not here as Christians, living out our lives in the grace of God and the love of God, worshiping and praying and praising God. Our presence makes all the difference to how God views the earth. In fact, I believe the earth will discover that one day when God takes us all out, but that day hasn't come yet, and meanwhile we're responsible to be the salt.

Then the second function of salt is to hold back corruption. In the days before refrigeration, when the sailors took meat on a long voyage, how did they preserve it? How did they prevent it going bad too soon?

By salting it. And so our responsibility in the earth is to salt it, to hold back the forces of corruption, moral corruption, social corruption, political corruption, until God's purposes of mercy and grace have been worked out for this world of ours.

Now, suppose we fail in our function as salt, to give flavor and to hold back corruption. Listen to what Jesus says, "If the salt doesn't do it's job, it is thenceforth good for nothing anymore." Do you realize that applies to us if we are not doing what we should? We're good for nothing anymore! Except one thing, "To be thrown out and trampled under foot of men." How would you feel if that happened?

You see, it's a realistic fact that there are millions and millions of people across the earth's surface today who would count it their greatest privilege to trample under foot the Christians of America. God is not going to come down and trample us under foot Himself. He's going to turn us over to those who hate Christianity and all that it stands for. And the most bitter reflection of such a moment would be, "We deserved it? Jesus warned us. We didn't listen. He said that if we didn't serve as salt, we'd be thrown out and trampled under foot of men."

Is there a remedy? Is there a way out? Or is it just inevitable that we will be thrown out and trampled under the foot of men. I believe that God offers us an alternative, an alternative of mercy, a way to change the situation for the better. There's one key verse in 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God says this:

> "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (NIV)

Let's consider for a moment of whom that is spoken. God says, "My people who are called by my name..." The Hebrew says "Upon whom my name is called." That describes you and me as Christians exactly. We are Christians because the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is called upon us. We are His

people, so that promise applies to us. God says that he requires us to do four things. Then, if we do four things, He will do three things.

Let's look first at the three things that God says He will do. He says, "I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sins, and will heal their land." Notice God is not committed to hear all prayers in the sense of responding to them and answering them. But God says if we will meet His condition, then He will hear and respond to our prayer, He will forgive our sin. Notice it's the sin of His people. We need to understand that. What stands between God and intervention of God in this land is not the sin of the unbeliever, it's the sin of God's people.

The third thing that God says He will do is heal our land. Let's look at our land for a moment and see does it need healing. What would you say? I would say that the American people, the American nation has never needed healing more desperately at any time in its history than it does today. And God says there's a way that He will heal our land. Surely that's a promise for us today. But remember, it's a conditional promise. God says we have to do certain things first before He'll do those three things: hear, forgive our sin and heal our land.

What does God require us to do? What are the four things God asks of us? Here they are. The first is to humble ourselves. The second is to pray. The third to seek God's face. The fourth, to turn from our wicked ways. You see, the first thing we have to do is humble ourselves. The Scripture says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." We can pray, but if we pray out of pride and arrogance and self-righteousness, God does not hear our prayer. So we have to humble ourselves, and God places upon us the responsibility. I don't think it's scriptural to pray, "God, make me humble," because God says, "You humble yourself."

Secondly, when we've humbled ourself, then we pray. Thirdly, we seek God's face. What does that mean? I think it means more than just a prayer meeting. Prayer meeting begins at 7:30 and ends at 9:00, but seeking God's face means we pray until we've met God and the answer is on the way. And fourthly, we have to turn from our wicked ways Let's face the fact it's our wicked ways that have caused the problem in our land. Our prayerlessness, our lack of witnessing, our lack of forthright open righteousness that challenges the ungodly unbeliever, the responsibility is upon us.

All right, our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing more fully with the four things that God requires us to do. In particular, I'll show you a specific and practical way that we can humble ourselves.

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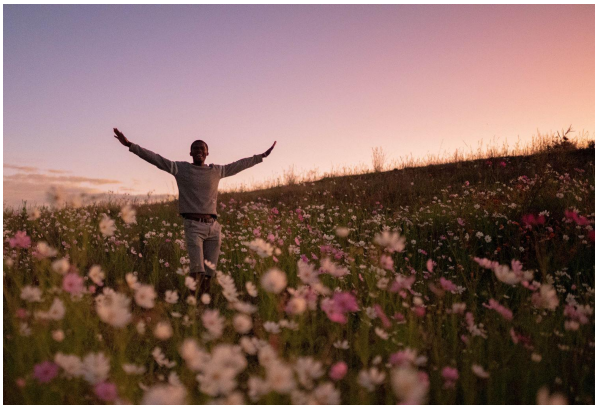

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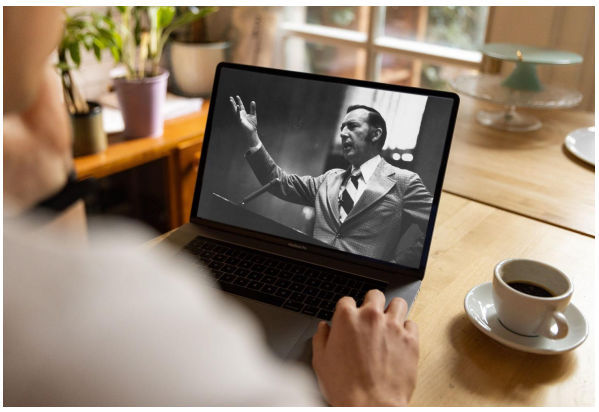

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