



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

February 22, 2015

After God Answers

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. —1st Corinthians 10:11

A series of chapters recurs in three books of the Old Testament, 2nd Kings, 2nd Chronicles, and Isaiah, telling of what the great king Hezekiah accomplished in Israel. By faith, he turned the nation from its headlong descent into idolatry. He purged the temple and the entire countryside of every idol and reestablished the true worship of Jehovah in the temple. There never was a greater revival in Judah than the one Hezekiah led.

Revival always invites opposition. At its height, this revival of true faith felt the boot of the vicious armies of Assyria—today's Iraq. While Hezekiah led Judah, the southern kingdom, in revival, Israel's northern kingdom collapsed under the weight of its evil. The sword of God's judgment swept through Israel and Samaria, its capital, then passed into the south, destroyed its greatest cities, and swept around Jerusalem. Sennacherib, Assyria's emperor, had Hezekiah surrounded like "a bird in a cage." God's people seemed doomed.

So Hezekiah prayed. Assyria's general sent an ultimatum to the king, which he in turn spread out before the Lord, praying, *Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone*" (2nd Kings 19:17-19).

As Israel's political and spiritual leader, Hezekiah had a clear grasp of the situation, both naturally and spiritually. But he also knew God and looked to a future filled with hope. When he woke up the next morning, 185,000 of the Assyrian army were dead. God answers prayers for His people.

He also answers the prayers of His individual children. One day, Hezekiah became very ill. After Isaiah, the prince of the prophets, told him to get his house in order and prepare for death, Hezekiah, in faith, prayed. In bitter grief, he asked, in essence, "Please remember how I've served you faithfully all my life," and requested more time. And God graciously gave him fifteen more years of life.

Spiritual victory brings our most vulnerable moments. Hezekiah's last fifteen years included at least two fatal oversights. In an astonishing miscalculation, he welcomed an envoy from an insignificant city called Babylon and showed them all the secrets of his kingdom. Arrogantly hobnobbing with foreign dignitaries, he made himself vulnerable to the kingdom that would eventually destroy Judah and carry its people captive.

But closer to home, Hezekiah had a son whom he neglected to raise in the ways of the LORD. Manasseh became his heir, lived a long life, and had a long evil reign. God's judgment, which Babylon meted out, was for Israel's idolatry, led by Hezekiah's own son.

Now as then, our world is locked in spiritual warfare between the forces of light and darkness. Each one of us is a front in that war, with our souls being drawn to the light or lured by darkness. Jesus Christ has won that war and lives in the heart of every believer. In each battle, His victory is ours through faith. We have all things to receive from Him, including the vigilance to watch and pray so that we don't fall into temptation.

Prayer for Northpoint: In all our study, in all our preaching and teaching and discussing in our worship and instruction as a church, ask God to reveal to us His Son in resurrection power. In all our ministry and proclamation of the Gospel, pray that Christ will make Himself known, to us and in us and through us.

Prayer for the United States: Our culture is rejecting the God who has blessed us from the beginning. Pray for revival in the Church in America. Ask God to use us to reveal Christ to others, exalt Himself, and renew us as a people.

Prayer for the World: The evil events in the news reveal the intense spiritual struggle that has defined all of history. We have God's promise that *the gates of hell shall not prevail*. Pray that the faith of God's people everywhere on earth will not fail. Ask God to use us to build His kingdom among every nation, kindred, and tongue.

Prayer Supporting Ministry:

- *Women's Conference:* Ask God to teach the women of Northpoint to trust God to bear fruit in their busy lives.
- *Grief Share:* Ask God to turn the hearts of those who are hurting to Him to find hope and healing.
- *Revolve Retreat:* Ask God to work this weekend in the hearts, minds, and fellowship of our college students.

Regular Prayer

A habit of regular prayer will contain three main features. The first feature focuses on God and expresses itself in praise, thanks, and worship. A life of prayer is a life caught up with God, lost in wonder, love, and praise. Make praise the main course of your prayer life.

But prayer also turns inward in self-examination and confession. This essential facet of prayer is difficult but not morbid, and it sets us free. In essence, confession is an exchange. As God reveals to us areas of sin—the ultimate disease—we release our unrighteousness and receive Christ's righteousness. The habit of confession sets us free and transforms us into the image of God's Son.

Prayer's outward focus looks to God, expecting to receive. Petition essentially asks things from God for ourselves and others. Christ Himself assures us that God will answer the prayers we ask in His name. In Christ, we come to the father boldly and ask whatever is on our hearts, trusting God to answer with all His wisdom, love, and power. And God always gives good gifts.

Go to God every day. Seek Him above all things. Allow Him to point out your sin and make you new. Tell Him everything. Ask Him for anything. Trust Him in all things. He is our One and only Good.

Prayer Record

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