

November 12, 2006

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Based on: The Heart of Revival, by Nicky Gumbel

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## HOW SHOULD WE PRAY FOR REVIVAL?

Is. 62:1-7

Israel was a nation in decline, because they turned away from following the Lord. They wound up being defeated by their enemy and hauled off to a foreign land as exiles. This was not the land of promise that God intended for them to possess. As we come to this chapter in our study of Isaiah, the prophet is heartbroken over the condition of his nation and the holy city Jerusalem, which was destroyed in the process. This historic one nation under God was defeated because they became complacent and confident in their own abilities rather than obedient to and reliant upon God. They got what they deserved. I think we can see some parallels to America in this situation. We are in moral and spiritual decline, and yet we think we are invincible and protected by the God we no longer reverence. His judgment could fall upon us as well. Successful nations like successful people tend to rest in their success and forget God. They needed revival as a nation and as individuals, and so do we. Paul told the Corinthian church that the things that happened in Israel's history "*were written down as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.*" (1 Cor. 10:6) The only way for things to change is through prayer.

Listen to the words of Is. 62:1-7 ...

***For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.***

***I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.***

*"Revival will not come until God's people allow themselves to be changed and prepared through the discipline of fervent prayer." - John Kilpatrick*

Isaiah commits himself to ceaseless prayer for Israel's revival. I don't know if we really understand the power of prayer. Many seem to only consider it casually or only when we need something.      **<Lady needs a parking space prayer – joke>**

## WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR? - Is. 62:1-5

**1 – Isaiah Prays For New Righteousness** – for the people to live in a right relationship with God and with each other. We preach and teach that Christianity is primarily concerned with relationships. Yet, when you look at the church – especially if you look as an outsider would – you see that the church is split and divided into multiple groups over non-essential issues. The church, unfortunately, speaks one message and displays another by our actions. There needs to be a transformation within the Christian church so that our *“righteousness shines out like the dawn”* (v.1). We should be united in love. One of the things that attracted me to the Christian church originally was the sense of community I never experienced before. These people ate together, played together, went out together, loved each other, and really knew one another personally. This was very different from my church experiences growing up, where you were just one in a crowd.

**2 – Isaiah Prays For A New Freedom – *“her salvation like a blazing torch”* (v.1).** Salvation means freedom – freedom or release from bondage of every kind. Jesus Christ won or purchased this freedom/salvation for each of us (as we have seen in previous chapters – 52-53). When we realize we have been truly set free from sin, we *“shine like stars in the universe”* (Phil. 2:15), or as Isaiah says, *“like a blazing torch,”* and *“As the nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory”* (v. 2a).

**3 – Isaiah is praying that God’s people will have a New Identity – *“you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow”* (v. 2b).** The giving of a new name is very significant to this culture and time. It signified a real change in status and standing. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, Abram to Abraham, and others in Scripture. It is not merely a name change as we think of it, but a deep inner change in character and standing in the Lord. Revelation 2 tells us that the overcomer will receive a new name from God on a white stone that no one knows but the one who receives it. Names are important throughout Scripture. In the O.T., names especially signify the character of the person. In our text, Isaiah tells the people that instead of being known as “Deserted,” they will be called “Hephzibah – my delight is in you,” and instead of “Desolate,” they will be called “Beulah – married.” God gives names that mean the opposite of what the world calls us or even what we call ourselves.

I can relate to this and the chorus we sing – I Will Change Your Name. My name was FEAR & TIMIDITY – to the extreme. Through prayer and the Word, I came to the place where I had to trust God completely – not sort of – just like P.J. talked about last week. It is a second work of Grace after realizing our need for a Savior. It goes beyond “fire insurance” – you know – praying for Jesus to save you so you won’t go to hell. This was a yielding of my life, my all, to Him, and not really asking God for anything, but rather giving myself to Him and for Him. That’s when He changed my name to Confident – not in my abilities, but confident in Christ. I have never been the same. I encourage you to do the same thing – Yield, Trust, Surrender - It’s so much better and more peaceful. He probably won’t ask you to go to Africa or enter the clergy if that’s holding you back ☺

The church today can seem deserted and desolate – irrelevant and dwindling in size. We should pray that it is a place in which God delights. Isaiah prophesies that the people of God “**will be a crown of splendor in the Lord’s hands, a royal diadem (crown) in the hand of your God**” (v. 3). His people will be a sign that He is KING – They are valued and dignified in His sight.

**4 – Isaiah Prays For New Love** – God is committed to His people in a marriage covenant (as we have seen before in this series). “**As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you**” (v. 5a). Isaiah is seeing Jerusalem and God as married, but it goes beyond that to the church of Jesus Christ being the people of God and married to Him. God is committed the marriage, but are we? The second part of this verse speaks of the honeymoon, “**As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you**” (v. 5b).

God desires a relationship of love with His people – it can and should be a relationship that is genuinely experienced. We should be praying for this relationship of commitment, love, and joy in and for the church today. The invisibility of God remains a problem today as it was then. Israel was mocked for worshipping an unseen God – Yet the result of their commitment was visible. Ps. 42:3,10 – it is repeated – “**while they say to me continually, ‘Where is your God?’**” They cried out to God to come down and show Himself. When disasters occur, like 9/11, Katrina, a Tsunami, an earthquake, or a bizarre massacre, people ask, “**Where is God now?**” God’s invisibility adds to the questioning and confusion.

God dealt with this problem by revealing Himself, showing Himself in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. John 1:18 says, “**No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.**” Well, in case you didn’t realize it, Jesus died! He rose again, but then ascended to the Father in Heaven, so He is no longer here as Himself – we are still dealing with the invisibility of our God. In John first letter, he tells us how God still shows Himself to those who are His. “**If we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit**” (1 Jn. 4:12-13). God continues to make Jesus known to us and that we are His, by the Holy Spirit. This was Isaiah’s cry and the church today needs to still be praying for God to reveal Himself.

**Isa 64:1-2** – “**Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!**”

**God – tear open the heavens and come down!** This is the ultimate prayer of revival! When we are together, God comes down and makes His presence known. It may be in a small group or a large congregation, but it is always when His people are together praying and worshipping Him.

Tom Shaw said this about the 1859 Irish revival, “*It began when God moved upon the hearts of a small group o people, resulting in a prayer burden that never slackened until God rent the heavens, and mountains of sin and evil flowed down at his presence.*”

Whether personal or corporate revival, there is a burden to pray! What better way to pray than the way Jesus taught ...

**Matt. 6:9-10 – “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

### **WHO SHOULD PRAY FOR REVIVAL? (Is. 62:6a)**

***“I have posted watchmen on the walls, O Jerusalem.”***

**WATCHMEN** – had 2 purposes back then:

1. look out for wild animals and thieves
2. defense – warn of attack or hostile action against them

**Ezek. 3:17 – “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give warning from Me.”**

**Matt. 24:42; 25:13 – Jesus warned His disciples to “keep watch.”**

**Matt. 26:41 – They were to “watch and pray.”**

All Christians are called to hear the Word of God and intercede for the people. Some have a special calling as intercessors, but we all should pray. We are to pray individually, but we are also called to pray together for the Spirit to revive us, the church, and the nation...

**2 Chron 7:14-15 – “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.”**

In the N.T. we also see that as God’s people unite together in prayer God acts.

**Acts 1:14 – “They all joined together constantly in prayer ...”**

**Acts 2:4 – “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit ...”**

They were saturated with God – **Revival began!**

### **Revival happens when people pray! <Prayer works – churches vs. distillery joke>**

In his autobiography, Billy Graham talks about the great events in London in 1954. Graham acknowledges that prayer was the key. He said that 800 men and women spent an entire night on their knees – praying for event. Prayer groups all over the world were focusing their attention on London. During the event there were prayer groups established and praying. It was written in a U.S. article that there were several factors that aided this great revival, but first on the list was **“the power of prayer.”**

**Who should pray for revival?** God may call some to a special ministry as intercessors or watchmen, but **we ALL have a responsibility to pray**, both individually and corporately. So, where is everyone on the last Tuesday of each month when we have a corporate prayer service here in the sanctuary? We are all responsible. God has set us all in place as prayer warriors!

## HOW SHOULD WE PRAY FOR REVIVAL? (Is. 62:6b-7)

### 1- Pray constantly – (continually) – “*They will never be silent day or night.*” (v. 6b)

Israel’s watchmen were not so diligent, and Israel was in exile. We are to learn from their mistakes and heed the prophet’s warning. The church today seems to want to kick back and rest.

Paul encourages us to – “*pray continually*” – 1 Thess. 5:17.

He wrote to the church in Rome ...

“*Constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times*” – Rom. 1:9-10.

Paul was a man of prayer.

The great revival in the Korean church in 1907 began at a huge meeting, and the speaker, Dr. Graham Lee, instructed the entire crowd to pray out loud together. The Spirit fell upon that place and they have not stopped praying to this day. Today there is a 10,000 seat auditorium where people come to pray every day. On any given day, there is at least 3,000 people praying.

I have experienced this type of corporate prayer, and it is powerful. God can handle everyone praying at the same time out loud even if you can’t. I’ve got news for you. Even if you are the only one praying out loud in this place, there are millions of people’s prayers reaching God at the same time (some silent and some aloud).

You can imagine the prayers of the people rising to the throne of God like incense, a sweet aroma to the Lord. He loves when His people pray to Him.

David Yonggi Cho from Korea wrote, “*I am convinced that revival is possible anywhere people dedicate themselves to prayer ... it has been historically true that prayer has been the key to every revival in the history of Christianity.*”

### 2- Our Prayer Should Be Disciplined – Isaiah says, “*give yourselves no rest*” (v. 6c).

We are to pray regularly, day in and day out. It’s not easy. John Arnott, the pastor of the Toronto Airport church in Canada write of his struggle to maintain a disciplined prayer life ...

*“In my own case, the struggle has been desperate and intense. There have been seasons o wonderful times ‘in the closet’ with my Heavenly Father, praying to Him in secret and being rewarded by Him openly. During such times, one feels that everything is working out for the good, and one wonders why we could ever be so foolish as to not spend generous hours in communion with God. Then suddenly the cares of this life descend with such fury that the new-found prayer route is derailed once more, and the battle to regain it continues.”*

I can definitely relate to this – can you? It takes work and determination to groove a good prayer life into your daily routine. It’s like hitting a certain shot in golf – well for me it’s always like golf. You can hit it right once and then it falls apart. You have to practice and groove it into your swing for it to become consistent.

**3- We Are To Pray With Urgency** – Isaiah tells us – “*give Him no rest*” (v. 7) - with regard to our prayers.

Jesus told his disciples in **Luke 18:1** – “*always pray and not give up.*” The persistent widow in this parable would not let the judge rest until she received justice. Keep praying – fervently – urgently – unceasingly. The judge saw that she got justice. Then Jesus turns to the disciples and says in v. 18 – “*and will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly.*”

This is a good example in praying diligently for revival. We need to recognize our current state and pray passionately asking God for a change.

*“Only when we realize and admit our true condition will we long for revival. Praying for revival is not enough: we must long for it and long for it intensely.”* - Brian Edwards

So, what is our current condition – spiritually – as a church and individually? Have we become complacent – satisfied – fat and lazy in our Christianity (spiritually speaking)? Don’t we need revival? Then we must long for it to happen – no matter what. We must pray for it until it happens.

**4- Our Prayer Should Be Persevering** – Isaiah says to pray, “*till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of all the earth*” (v. 7).

We need to decide individually and decide as a church that we are going to covenant with God that we will not stop praying for revival until we are revived – starting now! So where do we start? What do we pray for first?

**Ps 24:3-5** – “*Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD...*”

Isn’t it something how that always happens? We want to fix everything we see wrong and when we commit that to God, He turns it around and says, “**Alrighty Then! Let’s start with you!**” I must ask myself, “Is my heart pure? Are my hands clean before our Holy God?” **Revival is always related to holiness!**

Our challenge is to pray that God would tear open the heavens and come down and ignite us with the fire of His presence and His Spirit. We need a new touch from God - a new love for Him and for each other, and new freedom or liberation from the status quo. Prayer seems to be the first thing we compromise and allow to slip away. It must be the first thing we bring back! We need to pray constantly. We need to call upon God in a diligent and urgent way, until He establishes our Jerusalem. Individual and corporate prayers are a vital part of preparation for revival that leads to deeper individual and corporate prayer.

**Billy Graham** – “Three keys to revival – prayer – Prayer – PRAYER!