

Living In a Nineveh Moment

by Doug Stringer

Transcript

And, you know, I was thinking even about for me in 2015, I came against an unexpected detour, and I was in the middle of helping to facilitate and moderate prayer gap solemn assemblies in four different states just in 2015. And I remember right after the first one, we were in Louisiana, Baton Rouge, it was in January of that year, came home, was doing some things and noticed a lump in the side of my neck and thought maybe just a, you know, a pinched nerve or something. But within just the next few weeks, found out that it was stage four B-cell, 80% aggressive B-cell lymphoma cancer.

And so, you know, when I came, I went, I heard the news, I got a phone call from the doctor who normally said I would wait until I make an appointment for you on Monday. It was on a Friday and said, I felt like I need to call you now because we need to get this moving so quickly. We need to move you into the MD Anderson system immediately.

So I need you to come right in on Monday, right into that. So, but I want you to be prepared for that. And so of course it was, it's shocking news because it's an unexpected thing.

And just like many are going through unexpected detours right now. And, but the first thing I felt I needed to do is go into the parking lot of a grocery store for about two, two and a half hours by myself, talk to God and to worship him just because, because, because of who he is and what he's already done. And when I got home, I took communion with my wife and daughter and mother-in-law who lives with us.

And, and I said, first of all, I want you to know God did not do this to me. And I think we need to understand all of us that, that when circumstances happen, God is a God who wants to pour out his life and his mercy. And he's giving us every opportunity to align ourselves with him and, and circumstances in life, it rains on the just and the unjust, but we as believers have an eternal hope and eternal promise.

That's why we worship him just because of who he is and because of what he's already done. And so I want to remind us that no matter what we go through to learn, to praise him through it. Yes, realities are there.

We don't deny that we're not name it and claim it. And we're not trying to, you know, to, to create something that's not real, but the fact is he's worthy of our adoration and praise no matter what goes on. And even as, as Paul and Silas, and, and we, and we saw many times, Peter, we see, we saw Paul when he was on shipwreck as Carter Conlin Sheriff last night, that there's a place of keeping focus on the Lord, praising him in the midst of what we're going through.

And we can see that the prison doors open. We can see deliverance and being healed and delivered and, and protected in the midst of whatever we're going through. We have an eternal promise.

I remember the late Leonard Ravenhill wrote me some notes and he wrote me a note one time and what a great influence he was in my life. And he said, my dearest brother Doug, let others live on the raw edge or the cutting edge. You and I should live on the edge of eternity.

And when I think about that often, no matter what I'm going through, I'm thinking I'm on the edge of eternity. Let's live on the edge of eternity. The reality is we take care of living in this world, but we're not of it.

And we take stewardship of our time here, but we have an eternal promise. We have an eternity with the Lord, the one who saved us and healed us and liberated us and gives us promises of the future beyond our circumstances. So when I got home and I just said, first, God did not do this to me.

Secondly, if God did not do this to me, it does not belong to me. And the third thing is, if it does not belong to me, let's not let it become about me. And too often, when we go through difficulties, we always want to turn it about us and have a pity party or God, you know, what's going on, you know, everybody should feel sorry for me.

And I'm saying that in kind of an adjusting way, but the reality is we have to be careful not to let circumstances become about us. And so finally, I said it can't be about us. And finally, it's not about us.

Let it become a ministry we did not ask for, but a ministry nonetheless. And I believe we're in a situation now where we have an opportunity to go through this deeper consecration in the Lord, higher expectation of the Lord, an opportunity we did not ask for this pandemic. We did not ask for the things that are happening in the idolatries of this world.

We did not ask for the things that are coming against Israel, against the church and against us. But in the midst of that, we will turn it into a ministry we did not ask for, but it will become a ministry nonetheless. As I shared yesterday on Luke 21, that Jesus' own words, he says, all these different things happen from tsunamis and wars and rumors and wars and ethnos against ethnos, racial tension, uh, uh, tornadoes and fires and all these different shakings that take place.

Jesus' own words in Luke 21, 13 says, but it should be an occasion, uh, it shall be an occasion for your testimony. See, we don't ask for things like this, but when they happen, this is when we, the church, are, grow. It's an opportunity for us to become those who shine, to let others see Christ in us.

It's an opportunity in the midst of difficulties because people in the midst of difficulties of the shipwreck, shipwreck of life, shipwreck of life are looking for answers. And the answer is still in you and me. And I love the problem that says that to the satisfied soul, he takes for granted the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul, even the bitter things are sweet.

You see, we have so much, even in our, in the most difficult of circumstances, those who call upon the name of the Lord, those who have the Lord in our hearts, we have more even, uh, in our difficult times than some who have nothing. And they're looking for that answer. And so I really believe that it's a time for us to continue to pray to the Lord through what we're going through, because there's some breakthrough that happens in praising the Lord.

And, uh, and I'm reminded of, of, uh, the scripture, of course, in Hebrews 12, 28, and I love this scripture because it says, so since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us give thanks. And through this, let us offer worship, pleasing to God in devotion and awe. I love that devotion and awe.

You know, one of the litmus tests for me is I'm always just wanting to check my heart and say, God, I just pray I would never lose the awe of who you are. I never want to lose that place of recognizing the awesome and wonderful and extravagant and great love you bestowed on the high cost of Calvary, the high cost of love on the work of the cross at Calvary. God, I never want to lose that.

And one of the ways I try not to lose that is I never, when I'm going through something, I always look back to the moment when Jesus revealed himself to me, that while I was still in my sin, he came and he drew me closer and began to speak into my heart, change my life. If I never forget that moment, then all the difficulties that come, weighing compared to that, because no matter what I go through, I have landmarks along the way, and especially the moment that Jesus revealed himself to me, the awe of his love that came into my life, that when I deserved punishment, he gave me his mercy and his grace. Now I can draw from a well that never runs dry because it comes from a water source that never ceases, the rivers of living water that come from the mercy seat of God, the throne of grace, and it brings healing everywhere it goes in and through us.

And if I can remember that moment and all the landmarks along the way, then no matter what we go through, I have something of a perspective to be able to look to the Lord and say, I know, Lord, you've been faithful all these times, so I know you'll be faithful again. And it gives me a hope for a future, even though I'm going through what I'm going through. And so all that to say that we felt that the Lord had called my wife and I to continue, by the grace of God, to continue to minister and to help lead these psalm assemblies and all the other ministry responsibilities and disaster relief and things that we do on a regular basis in 2015.

And by God's grace, even though I lost my hair, and in fact, I had one friend who's a pastor, a Calvary Chapel pastor, told my wife after my hair started growing back in 2016, he said, Lisa, I know that you're happy your husband's hair is growing back. He goes, but I've got to tell you, most people didn't even know that he was struggling through cancer. And as he was leading us and doing the things he was doing, he just lost his hair.

He just looked like a bad ninja dude. And I thought that was a great way to kind of look at the, you know, taking control of a terrible situation, but realizing that we have a hope in the Lord. And so, but through that time, the Lord really did a work in all of us.

I kept focusing and desperate, and by the grace of God, the desperation of his presence, realizing that all I need is him, that I needed his presence. And from that place, we were able to continue to minister by the grace of God. And everybody's story is different, but I was able to minister by the grace of God.

And by the end of 2015, after going through all this, we were going through in the middle of facilitating psalm assemblies and coming back to the hospital and doing my treatments and going back out, that by the grace of God, we were able to continue to pray for the Church of America, because I believe that part of it was a prophetic kind of act that, you know, God, I know I'm carrying, I'm going through this and fighting this by your grace, because you're my great position and healer. But Lord, I'm praying for the healing of the church to cross its racial, denominational, generational lines, to meet at the cross of Christ, to focus on the all of God. And through that, may the church begin to be the church to impact the soul of

our nation and touch the nations of the world.

So by the end of 2015, by keeping that perspective, it helped me obviously. And in fact, I'm going to tell you something that in the middle of all of it, I believe it was August of 2015. And I was asked to come speak in Philadelphia for some pastors and some of those in political arena.

And so after we were done on Saturday night, I told my wife, I said, our flight's not till Sunday afternoon. I have to be back at the hospital on Monday for the next PET scan and then treatments that week. And I said, but I feel like here we are in Philadelphia.

I feel like I'm supposed to run the flags of the nations and pray for the nations and pray for our nation and then run the rocky steps from like Rocky Balboa in the movie, Sylvester Stallone in the movie Rocky. And you have to understand being a former athlete in high school and in college, I hate running. I used to run a chain of fitness centers.

I like to beat up on weights, go to the gym, I'll ride a bicycle, but I do not like to run. And here I'm saying I want to run the flags of the nations to intercede for our country and the nations and run the rocky steps. And the next morning I woke up and I said, Lisa, it must've been the pizza I didn't have last night because I don't want to run.

And she gave me my own message. She looked at me and says, you know, you taught me that Dr. Edwin Lewis Cole used to say, you're committed to what you confess. I'm thinking, why would you have to tell me that? So I put my do-rag on because I had no hair and I put my workout clothes on and she took me out there and I didn't realize she was taking her iPhone or whatever it is and zooming in and trying to keep up with me.

She dropped me off and she started getting portions of my running. And as I was interceding, I realized I hate to run, but I was enjoying this moment where I was actually praying for our country and praying for the church of our nation and praying for the nations of the world. And when I got up to the rocky steps, I looked up there and I ran to the top, did my victory pose.

And I felt so good in this place of just the glory of God, that the blessings of God and focusing on God in the midst of the most difficult of circumstances in my own life that I wanted to do it again. So I did it again. And so the life lesson for me is this, you know, that my desire to win had to become greater than my moment of challenge or pain.

And the other is that my focus must always be on the gaze of the like an eagle who has an ability to get above the dark clouds and be above the storm and to get past the clouds to fix his gaze on the brightness of the sun. And likewise, we should bound up with wings of eagles in the midst of what we go through, storms of life, whatever's going on, what's happening in the world today that we have, because we're on that edge of eternity. We have, we are part of the unshakable kingdom when everything else has been shaken down.

The whole earth is groaning. The nations are raging. The earth is groaning with birth pangs.

Everything that can be shaken is being shaken. And yet we have, we can mount up with wings like eagles and fix our gaze above the darkness and the storm, above the storm clouds and fix our gaze on the brightness of the S-O-N, the brightness of the son of the living God. I know it sounds cliché.

I know it sounds, but it's the reality. It's the simplicity of the gospel that God has given us these tools and promises. So when I look at Hebrews 12, 28, again, I'm thinking, God, I never want to lose the place of worship and pleasing God and devotion and all.

God, so since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us give thanks. But let's just do that right now. I just want to thank the Lord because, just because of who he is.

Father, I thank you right now in the name of Jesus that we are part, we have received because of your high cost of love, because of your extravagant love for us, that while we were still yet in our sin, you died for us. You gave your life for us. You exchanged our robes of, you took our robes of unrighteousness, our filthy rags and exchanged robes of righteousness.

You put upon yourself, you took upon yourself a crown of thorns of pain and suffering and anguish and death. You took that upon yourself so we could have a crown of life. God, we thank you for that.

We worship you, Lord. We give you thanks and gratitude for who you are and for what you've already done just because of who you are. And Lord, I pray that through this, that we can also offer worship, authentic worship.

And as we shared yesterday, that worship is not about just singing. It's not just about instruments. That's the external expression of what is happening in our hearts.

But we are the living worshipers offering ourselves before you, Lord God. Oh, God, holy and acceptable unto you. I pray that you would help us to recognize this awesome and amazing grace you poured upon us, that we would offer ourselves as living sacrifices, as living worshipers who give our lives in simple obedience to you, that you can transform our lives, change our lives, and through us impact the lives of many others.

God, I pray we would never ever lose the devotion and awe of what you've already done for us. You know, I was thinking about a friend of mine, Dr. Francis Yeo, Tan Sri Dr. Francis Yeo in Malaysia. And he is the senior chairman of all of YTL Corporation.

And many years ago, when I first met him, I was coming out of working with underground churches in Vietnam. And it was in 1990. And I stopped in Malaysia on one of those trips.

And a business group called Full Gospel Businessmen asked if I would stay an extra day to share at one of their lunches. And so we did. And I remember this distinguished man comes up to me afterwards and began to share with me that he wanted to become a friend and if there was a way we could stay connected, and if I would help disciple him.

And I'm thinking, well, I live all the way in Houston, Texas. How can I disciple or do that for someone here? But we began to talk and dialogue, became friends for many, many years. We're still friends today.

I had the pleasure of officiating the wedding of his eldest son a few years back. And of course, he's just a great family, great friends. And I remember one time, I had given him one of my books, my first book I ever wrote, that Brother Ravenhill and Steve Hill, The Evangelist, and Dr. Michael Brown and others, Dr. Avalos Cole had encouraged me and endorsed and so on.

And so I remember that he had read that book. I had actually published it first in 1990, and then again later a couple of different times under the new titles. And it was about crossing the Jordan.

And I remember I gave a copy of that book and came back. And I went back the next year going and working with churches in Vietnam and doing some humanitarian work, came back through Malaysia. And my friend, Dr. Francis Yeo, asked if I would speak to some of his leaders in his office building, in his penthouse there.

And so I went up there and we're talking. And as he's introducing me, he says something that really touched me deeply. Well, two things.

One, he said, he said, you know, the highest form of worship is simple obedience to God. And I said, Tom Sri, that is amazing. Can I borrow that? He was my brother.

I read it in your book. Oh, I better read my own book. But that is so true.

It's a reminder to me that the highest form of worship is not about just the things we say, even the things we do. The highest form of worship is simple obedience to God and how we respond in right posture to God when God begins to speak to our hearts. And then the external expression of that worship as we're living worshipers is through the singing and through adoration, through praising the Lord, through instruments.

Those are all external expressions. But the inward portion of worship is really us as the living worshipers offering ourselves to be available and obedient to God. And then something else he said, he said, you know, I was in church and I was raising my hands.

I was worshiping God. And he said he felt the Lord spoke to him and said, Francis, why do you worship me? And he says, well, I'm in church. I'm supposed to be worshiping.

I'm singing. I'm worshiping. We're in church.

We're worshiping God. And the Lord spoke again to his heart. But why do you worship me? Do you worship me because of who I am or for what I can do for you? And when he sensed the Lord speak that to his heart, it resonated with him because here's a man who at that time and still today goes in and out of offices of presidents and prime ministers and does business dealings all over the world.

And in that he realized, he goes, you know, who are my real friends? Most people want to do a business deal. They want a job. They want something from me.

They're coming to get something from me. There's, you're always, you know, they might say, hey, he's my friend, but are they really? And he realized at that moment what the Lord was saying to his heart. Do you love me? Do you worship me because of what I can do for you or just because of who I am? And that's why I want to worship the Lord.

I want to never lose the awe of God. Lord, I just want to worship you. I love you.

I praise you just because, because, because of who you are and what you've already done. Lord, I make myself available to you. I yield myself to your will, Lord.

I pray that I would be a man who walks in simple obedience to you, that I would honor you in all my ways, and that you would be glorified in all that I do, say, and think in Jesus' name. A.W. Tozier said in his teaching on removing the veil, he said, and he used the scripture Hebrews 10, 19 and goes on through there, but he says, having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. And he goes, at the heart of the Christian message is God himself waiting for his redeemed children to push into conscious awareness of his presence.

Wow. At the heart of the Christian message is God himself waiting for his redeemed children to push into conscious awareness of his presence. There's something about the presence of God, but something else that A.W. Tozier said, I like to quote a lot, and he says, self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us.

Wow. Here the Lord rings from the top to bottom, the veil that separated us from the holiest of holies. And yet God is saying to us, I want you to come boldly into my presence.

And here A.W. Tozier is reminding us though, that what hinders us from this free access is self. In fact, he wrote this down. I just want to read this to you.

He says, self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction. We may as well try to instruct leprosy out of our system.

There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us. We must bring our self-sins to the cross for judgment.

And here's what he says. To be specific, the self-sins are self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, and a host of other like them. I actually go on to talk about the self-absorption that we live in.

We're so self-absorbed with ourselves. We tend to worship the creation rather than the creator. This is not a criticism or judgment.

It's the reality of the world we live in. And we have to contend for the righteous. We have to contend for what is pure and right.

We have to contend for what we know is authentic. And that's why I want to make sure that in my own life that I hold on to that place of the awe of God and to continue to walk in that place of worshiping him just because of who he is and what he's already done, not because of what I can get from him. It's not about what I get.

It's about, wow, I get the privilege and the honor of serving him. In fact, as I shared yesterday, I have two prayer times every morning. My first is my horizontal prayer time where I just thank the Lord for who he is and all the things he's done.

I don't ask him for anything. And then afterwards, I get up, do my shower devotions. And before I leave my home or like this morning, coming down to my study, or if I'm in a hotel somewhere or traveling, before I ever leave, I have my second prayer time, which is my me time.

That's my supplication time. But one of the things I pray when I'm thanking the Lord, I say, Lord, thank you. Even as King David said, Lord, thank you for the joy of your salvation.

Lord, thank you that it's you that gives me a clean heart and a right spirit. It's you that gives me a sound mind. Lord, thank you.

And then I say, Lord, thank you for the privilege of your calling. I remember David Livingston. And I've had the pleasure over the years of ministering in Zambia, of course, in Livingston, Zambia.

And I remember that was named after David Livingston. But David Livingston had this incredible mission's heart and a heart for the beautiful people of Southern Africa. And I remember attributed to him was a statement says, why is it when an earthly king commissions us, we consider it an honor.

But when the heavenly king commissions us, we call it a sacrifice. So that's why everyone, yes, there's sacrifices in small ways and that and things that we do in our lives to serve the Lord or to put his kingdom first. It's just a shift of our attitude, a shift of our heart to say, Lord, not my will, but your will be done.

I know that your ways is better than my ways. Your ways are higher than my ways. So now I want to realize it's not really a sacrifice.

It's a privilege to serve the Lord. I want to worship him in awe. I want to worship him to the glory do his name living and to live holy because it's the glory do his name.

But at the same time, I want to recognize in my own mind, in my own thinking, have the right attitude. It's a privilege to serve the Lord. So just like David Livingston, I don't want to just be impressed by and enamored by celebrity or even celebrities in the church or or Hollywood or musicians or politicians.

All people will bow their knee. Every knee shall bow and every time confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And so I want to make sure I realize that I'm really putting things in my perspective.

I show great respect for anyone, even if they're not a Christian in their accomplishments that they've made. And at the same time, I don't want to worship the creation. I respect people what they've done, but I want to worship the Lord.

He's the one that's worthy of my adoration of worship. He's the one that is that just because because of because of what he's already done and who he is that I want to worship. I want to be in awe of him.

It's a privilege to serve the Lord. It's not a sacrifice. And so that's something in my own personal walk that I'm constantly being reminded of.

And and yesterday I shared a little bit about Duncan Campbell and Duncan Campbell during the 1948 Hebrides revivals when he said that it takes the supernatural to break the bonds in the natural of the natural. That's what we need right now. We need a supernatural move of God.

And so Duncan Campbell wrote something called When God Stepped Down about the great revival of the Hebrides of 1948. And not that God stepped down from his position, but God stepped from his position into our world to invade our world. And when heaven comes down, so to speak, and God just showed up in the midst of what was going on in 1948 and that in the Hebrides.

And of course, we saw revivals of the last 100, 200 years that God just shows up, he steps down. Another friend of mine, Pastor Wallace Henley, who wrote the book, Called Down Lightning was about the Welsh revivals. When lightning of God and God steps into our world, things happen.

It takes the supernatural to break the bonds of the natural. But he says, Duncan Campbell says the beginning of what he wrote, Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. And when the melting fire burneth, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.

When thou didst terrible things, which we look not for, thou came down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. Isaiah 64, one through three is a scripture he's quoting. Wow, that you God would rend the heavens, that you would come down, the mountains might flow down at your presence.

And he goes on to speak, this is God's glorious supernatural stepping into our world. Read that when you have a moment Isaiah 64, one through three. And here's what Duncan Campbell says about that scripture.

I never read that third verse without my mind going back to what actually happened in the parish of Barbus on the island of Lewis. At the outset, let me make it clear that I did not bring revival to the Hebrides. I had the privilege of being there and in some small way leading the movement for about three years, but God moved in the parish of Barbus before I set foot on the island.

Revival is still a sign which is spoken against, and you cannot believe every story you've heard about the Lewis awakening. Down through the years, things have been said which have no foundation. In fact, however, facts are powerful things.

And first of all, I recognize what Duncan Campbell was saying. He was being humble enough to say, first of all, it wasn't me. God showed up.

I just came and helped steward it for about three years of that Hebrides revival. And he says, don't always believe everything you hear, because stories begin to happen. And, you know, we talk a lot about false, false fake news.

And even as a church, we have to be so careful. I really believe we need the gift of discernment in operation like never before. And we need the wisdom of Solomon, the wisdom that God gave Solomon to discern who really cares and who really cares about people, who cares about our communities, who cares about our nation, who cares about the nations, not just those who are able to communicate, or they have a good gift of words, or they're going to slant the truth because a little bit of untruth is still untruth.

We need the truth. In fact, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2 that we need to be lovers of truth. If we no longer have a love for the truth, we'll be given over to strong delusion.

So the point is we need to be lovers of truth. I always say, Lord, help me to love the truth more than my own life, because I don't want to be deceived by the attractions of the flesh. I don't want to be deceived by just the things I hear.

I want to be a man of discernment. I want to be a man who has the wisdom of God operating in my own life so that I'm not just listening to the words of people speak, because anybody can say the same thing, but mean something totally different. We need the gift of discernment activated in greater measure.

And we need the wisdom of Solomon, especially now more than ever before, to really hear what God is saying beneath all the other fodder and all the noise pollution goes on around us. Years ago, I was asked to come to, I believe it was in 2012, I was asked to go to Philadelphia to help with another national prayer

gathering called, I believe, America for Jesus. And we were in Philadelphia and I was traveling back and forth.

I got privileged to meet a gentleman who had retired, but he said that growing up, he didn't really have a great relationship with his parents. So when he became a father, he couldn't wait to, when he got off of work, he went straight home on Fridays and wanted to be with his children, trying to get everything he could, that their different functions, school activities, and on weekends that they were doing athletic events, he wanted to be there for them as much as he could growing up. And he had his son, Brandon now is in college.

And there were these scouts coming out to look at all these people doing regatta here. His son was really good at crew and being a part of a regatta on a crew team. And so all these scouts were coming out and he went to his son says, Brandon, I know that it might embarrass you, but I'm always, I'm always screaming loud.

And I'm so proud of you, son. I know it might embarrass you, but I just want to be there for you. I love you, son.

And, and, and Brandon said, it was dad, dad, you don't really get it, do you? Of all the hundreds and thousands of people screaming and hollering and, and rooting their team on. He said, he goes, I don't hear all of them. All I hear is one voice.

I get to hear the voice of my dad, the voice of my father encouraging me. And that's what I hear. I shut out all those other voices to hear the encouragement of the voice of my dad.

And when he said that, it so leaked in my spirit. And I said, God, that's what it is. We have a world of noise pollution.

We have a world with people saying so many different things. We need to discern the voice of the father. God, I want to hear in the midst of all the noise.

I want to hear the voice of my heavenly father. I want to hear my, the voice of my father giving the affirmation, approval and acceptance, encouraging me to stay in my lane, encouraging me to keep pressing on regardless of what all the naysayers say, regardless of all the other distractions, all the temptations. I want to hear the voice of my heavenly father.

And that's what we need today more than ever. We need to hear the voice of our heavenly father. We need the wisdom that God gave Solomon to discern.

And we need the gift of discernment activated like never before. There's a couple of questions I want to ask today. And one is, could we be in a Nehemiah moment? Or are we also living in a Nineveh moment? Could it be both? And I want to just quote something that Billy Graham said in 2012, in an article he wrote.

And he says, my heart aches for America and its deceived people. The wonderful news is that our Lord is a God of mercy, and he responds to repentance. In Jonah's day, Nineveh was the lone world superpower, wealthy, unconcerned, and self-centered.

Remember self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. When the prophet Jonah finally traveled to Nineveh and proclaimed God's warning, people heard and repented. I believe the same thing

can happen once again, this time in our nation.

I believe what Billy Graham said in 2012, in July of 2012, is very prophetic. And that's why just back in 2015, right in the middle of all that I was going through and traveling doing these, around the country and helping to put together and facilitate, moderate solemn assemblies. And in the midst of all my chemo, the Lord woke me up one night.

In fact, I was in Philadelphia, I believe when that happened another time. And I was just, I was seeking the Lord. I couldn't put it out of my mind.

And I ended up writing an article called, Are We Living in a Nineveh Moment? And I quoted Billy Graham in that article. I also quoted something that William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army wrote, and he said this. Now understand that he wrote this in the late 1800s, beginning of the 1900s.

And he says, I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell. Now let's stop for a moment, just think about this. I would have never thought in my lifetime that we would live in a generation, even in America, that was founded on the Judeo-Christian foundations, using the scriptures to help lay out our constitution, and to lay out all the things that we believe in, and the Bill of Rights.

And yet in our lifetime, just a few years ago, at one of the national major political conventions, who would have thought they would have had, they were taking God out of the platform. They had taken God out of the platform. They wanted to make sure that they were pushing for the shedding of innocent blood through abortion.

They wanted to make sure they were pushing the whole concept of moral licentiousness, that would be open to anybody to do whatever they want and to live how they want. And then also that they wanted to take Israel or Jerusalem as being the capital out of their platform. Now as I saw that, this can't be.

And yet from that very convention, realizing some of the power players of that party, political party, realizing we can't do this, we can't win without getting this done right. So what they did was they voted God back in to their platform. Now, first of all, how do you even take God out? So how do you even have a right to vote him in? He was never voted out in the eternal perspective.

And yet this party platform was trying to vote God back in because they had taken him out of the platform. And I just grieved over this because it doesn't matter which party, just the fact that we're even in a generation that this would even be considered to take God out of the platform or the foundations of our nation. And sadly, as the moderator that day got up and said how many would like to, you know, they were trying to vote God back in the platform and they got more nays than yays.

And he says, let me do that again. I think we got more yays. And they're saying, no, no.

And they were adamantly opposed to putting God back in the platform. And then he just took it upon himself and to say, okay, I hear that we've passed it. There's more yays than nays.

And yet the controversy was more people were saying no, but he knew that he had to put God back in the platform. Sadly, this is a time in which we live. And in fact, I wrote another article in 2004.

And I said that there are three major things that can hinder God's blessing from a nation. One, ritual or temple prostitution. Two, the shedding of innocent blood.

And three, licentiousness or moral looseness. And let me clarify what I mean. Number one, ritual or temple prostitution.

If we look at what was happening even in 1 Samuel and in chapter one with Hophni and Phinehas, it had been God's command that the oil in the lamp that was to illuminate over and to shine and illuminate over the Ark of the Covenant was to always perpetually, always be full of oil and always shining brightly. It was a command of God that this should never stop. The light should never go out.

But out of neglect, Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, out of neglect, temple prostitution, taking advantage of their position. They were abusing the call and the privilege of God's calling to take care of the things in the temple. And so they let in their neglect and the things they were doing in the temple prostitution, the things of God, taking the best of the sacrifices, doing it all for them.

It's about them. In that place, the oil in the lamp went out and the light went out over the Ark of the Covenant, the presence of God. This to me represents that we need to keep the oil of God's presence full.

We need the oil of God's presence full so that the light of Christ shines brightly in our lives and manifests the presence of God. You know, Matthew 5, 16 says, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and bring glory to your Father in heaven. We should never let the light go out.

We should never let the lampshade be covering the light of Christ to illuminate the presence of God. And yet Hophni and Phinehas did. Out of that, we see what happens.

We see that the Ichabod takes place. The glory of God had departed. And all the people were impacted because of their negligence.

And so I wrote down private choices have public consequences. If you're a leader, if you're a parent, we all lead in some way. If we neglect so great a salvation, if we neglect keeping the oil of God's presence full in our lives, if we neglect that stewardship, and it is stewardship because now we no longer belong to ourselves.

If we're believers in Christ, we are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We are the living worshipers, offering ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service, the least we should do just because of what he's already done and who he is. And yet if we neglect so great a salvation, neglect and allow the oil of the presence of God, the Holy Spirit to go low and the light goes out, then what happens is the glory of God departs.

What we need is the presence of God more than ever before. We need the manifest presence of God. There are four things for me to keep it simple, how to attract the presence of God.

One is that God is attracted to humility. The Bible says that by humility and the fear of the Lord comes riches on our life. In other words, stewardship of riches on our life first must go through the humility and respect and the fear of God, a holy reverence from the things of God, not taking God for granted, not considering what Christ has done a common thing.

The second thing that attracts the presence of God is humility. Number two is holiness. I'm not talking about external piety or some sort of legalism, but I'm talking about that internal consecration of the heart that says, God, my life is not my own.

It belongs to you. Do whatever you need to do in my life. And the third thing is the place of honesty, that we would be so brutally honest with ourselves, honest with God, honest with ourselves.

So God's great and amazing abounding grace would work in our lives. We don't have to run from God. We don't have to put on the proverbial fig leaves and run from him when we should be running to him.

And so it's humility, it's holiness, it's honesty, and it's also the place of honor. Malachi says, if I am your father, where is my honor? And he goes on to say, look, you honor people of this world. Like David said, you're honored when the earthly king commissions you.

But yet the Lord would say, look, you're more enamored and you're more excited about the things around you and impressing other people. But he says, but you've not given me honor. You've robbed me of my time.

You've robbed me of who I am. You've robbed me of my lordship. And when I look at those things, I think, God, I want to honor you.

But I also want to honor you by loving and appreciating people. I want to honor God and love people, care for people. I want to be a tangible expression of Christ to others.

How can I preach a good sermon? How can I just go and write and do articles or books and preach and even go out and do evangelism and do all the things we do in the disaster relief we do if I'm not going with the presence of God? Because what good is good works, but if it's just dead works, if I'm not first filled with the Holy Spirit presence of being in the presence of God and taking his presence with me so that everything I do, bring glory and honor to him. I want God to be glorified in my life and all that I do the same thing. And I know that doesn't come just because I say it.

I need to yield to him on a regular basis. And I want to yield my life to him and say, God, my life is not my own. It does belong to you.

God be Lord of every part of my life. Be glorified in all that I do, say and think, Lord. And it's a daily process, isn't it? It's a daily submission.

It's like daily manna, heavenly food. It's a daily commitment in my own life to be intentional, say, God, I know how easy the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. God, help me to be led of the Holy Spirit.

God, help me to love you in such a way that I'm led by your Holy Spirit. And I'm sensitive to you leading and sensitive to the needs of those that you bring me to. As I shared yesterday in a book I wrote back in 2001, and I quote an anonymous quote that says, there are preachers who love to preach.

And then there are those preachers who love those to whom they preach. Oh, my goodness. One year at a state convention in Texas for a large political party, just because I have been around a while, they asked if I would come and do an invocation at this convention.

I would have said the same thing at any political convention, because I'm not in anybody's pocket. My first commitment is the kingdom of God. And so I want to make sure that how I express that is to anyone.

I don't care if they're Republican, Democrat, independent, we need to represent first and foremost as ambassadors of Christ, the kingdom of God. And that being said, we need to pray for righteous leaders in all these positions, if it'd be local, county, state, or federal governments, we need righteous people in those positions. And we need to pray for that.

But I was sharing and they asked me to do an invocation. What happened was the person that was supposed to speak was being delayed. So the chairman of that political party said to me, can you stretch your time? I'm thinking, well, that never happens.

But I'm not going to give you all that I said. I'm just going to say one thing I said. I finally said this.

There was a great king named Solomon, who said hope deferred makes the heart sick. But he also said a merry heart does good like medicine. There was another great king named Hezekiah, who said, and I'm quoting Isaiah 37 on this one, who said, King Hezekiah said, this is a day of distress, and reproach, and trouble, because the children are ready to come forth, but there's no strength to bring them forth.

And I use the analogy of a childbirth, that a man who has strength, who's securing his identity in Christ, is not intimidated by the gifts of women. And in a pictorial analogy, I said that when a woman is giving childbirth, a man needs to be there to be a strength giver, as she is a life giver, so this child can be born. But as Hezekiah is saying on a larger scale, there's a whole generation of young people ready to come forth, where? Into their destiny, come forth into their purpose, but there's no strength to bring them forth or to bring birth to that.

I said we have a generation of young people ready to give their lives for something. They're ready to give their lives to purpose and destiny, but there's no strength to come alongside to give them birth. What they're looking for is not just people who could give a good speech or a good sermon.

What they're looking for is men and women who will lead by example and give them strength to walk into their depth, give them a foundation to build on. I said, and what we need from preachers to politicians and all in between, from pulpits to political offices and all in between, what we need is a revival of character. You see, the characteristics of the kingdom emanate from the character of the King, King Jesus.

There's a quote from Dr. Evel Lewis Cole, the founder of the Christian Men's Network. The characteristics of the kingdom emanate from the character of the King, King Jesus. How can we lead lest we first have King Jesus on the throne of our hearts, and when we represent Him, reflect Him, then we can lead others to a place of victory and a place of strength.

And right now, we live in a world that's going through so much, not just COVID-19, and not just coronavirus. There's so many other diabolical and nefarious things happening all around us at many levels. That's why we need the gift of discernment in the church, and we need the wisdom that God gave Solomon to discern who is telling the truth and who really cares about the baby, who cares about the people, rather than those who would rather just chop the baby up.

We need that today. And so, we have seen this temple prostitution, but where have we in the church, and this is where we want to go to prayer for a moment, where have we come to in the church that we want to be so acceptable to the world that the world now influences the church? I like what Alan Redpath and

Leonard Ravenhill talked about on the Chapel of the Air radio show years ago. You'll find that cassette and transition it to digital because it's so powerful.

They did a series, and both of them talked about, I can't remember who said what, but one of them said, why would people want to leave the world to come into the church to find that the world is in the church? They might as well go back to the world, or people leave the world to come into the church and find the church is only about an inch deep. What we need is to be, we need to be those who are able to reach more people by going deeper in the Lord and not just being an inch deep. I believe we're in a place right now that God's doing the reset for us as Christians, especially as Christian leaders, that we have a responsibility.

Our responsibility is get back to the purity of the gospel, the simplicity of the gospel, get back to putting God back in his own house, in our hearts, in our congregations, and so that it's not about how to get the numbers here, but how do we get people to see. I like what Adam Peacock said as we were doing some gatherings after the North California fires invited me up, and I was sharing it, and he said something that I want to share with you. He said, so often in the church, we spend so much time trying to get the community to come to church or people to come to church.

Rather, shouldn't it be that we, the church, should find ways to get into the community. You see, we've been trying to bring everybody into our holy huddles, and there's a place to gather, but we're to be equipped to go out and make a difference in the community. That means the seven spheres of the culture, some people call it, or as Francis Schaefer and Lauren Cunningham and Dr. Bill Bright gave kind of definition to what those things are, some now call the seven mountains, whatever you want to call them, every sphere or level of the culture needs to be impacted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we're in a place now where we allow the world to impact the church that we look like the world, so why would the world even want to hang out at the church? I'm not talking about the institution.

I'm talking about we, the church, the ecclesia, need to be those who recognize the moment that we're living, like the sons of Issachar discern the times, and to be used by God to go out and make a difference in the community and impact the spheres of the culture. Years ago, I was on the board of a sentinel group that did a lot of transformation films back in the 1990s and 2000s, and identifying different communities and nations where God was showing up and touching and impacting the various spheres of culture, and every one of those communities that we, in fact, in the 1999, I think there was four or five or six communities that we recognized and gave definition to what the journey to transformation looked like, Cali, Columbia, all along with Guatemala, different places like that where it seemed impossible circumstances that darkness had prevailed, and yet in the midst of these situations, when the church, in a very difficult time, the church humbled themselves before God and began to, in like 2 Chronicles 7 14, ask God to forgive us. Don't blame the world for the ecological challenges.

Don't challenge, don't blame the world for the lack of vegetation or the gang problems or whatever it might be. They say, God, we take responsibility. God, forgive us, your people, and God, forgive us of our sins.

They began to humble themselves in repentance. God did a work and changed the communities, the atmosphere, and I had the pleasure of being in quite a few places, and we saw a video or the documentary, probably, Unconventional War, and that was about what happened in Uganda, and of course, Fiji, the resounding seas, just incredible things where God was touching every community, but what we found was in every difficult situation, the church put aside its competitiveness, and the element of

the church and cohesion came together, called upon the name of the Lord, says, Lord, we invite your presence. We need your presence.

As I said earlier, Duncan Campbell said that it takes the supernatural to break the bonds of the natural. God, we need your presence, and then, God, we humble ourselves. Forgive us, Lord, we have neglected what you have given us in stewardship, and in every situation from 1999 to where we saw 10 years later, in 10 years, in 2009, in a board meeting, we could not keep up with over 1,000 communities and places around the world experiencing an element of a journey to transformation, and in every one of them, we identified certain commonalities, and here were the five commonalities.

One, there was persevering leadership, not leadership that tries to lead by saying, charge and follow me, but persevering leadership who understood leadership comes from the bottom pushing up, encouraging people into their destiny, encouraging people into their gift things. There was a place of humility in that leadership, but persevering and courageous in the midst of that leadership to help cast vision and direct people and guide people, encourage people to focus on the Lord and not on man. Secondly, united efforts of prayer.

What does that mean? Not everybody can gather in stadiums together all the time or things like that, but it's getting people to have a common informed intercession to pray for our communities. What is it we're praying for? What are the things that we need to be praying for? One of the things we need to do is identify what are the sins that we in our nation or the community that you're in do to identify, so you can have informed intercession, some of the history or the diagnostic research of what's happening in your communities and what's happening in our nation. We see that we've gone so far away from the founding of our nation.

How do we get back and some of those things are praying about God. How do we compromise? How have we prostituted the church? How have we become the institution that no longer has God in? How have we put God out of our nation? How do we put God out of the marketplace? How do we put God out and how do we compromise even in the church in our stewardship and how we prostitute ourselves for the sake of being acceptable to the world? The other is God, the shedding of innocent blood. What have we done, Lord, to look the other way at the shedding of innocent blood? I'm not just talking about murder.

I'm not talking about murder of people. Those are realities. We've allowed euthanasia.

We're allowing abortion, all these things. Regardless of your view on abortion, the point is this, any society that's ever had to come to the point of discarding their unborn will ultimately discard others along the way, including their seniors. Sadly, with this COVID-19, they find that the most vulnerable are people that are 65 and older.

Although it's affecting others as well, are those that are vulnerable if they're going through chemo, if they have other things that have weaknesses in their immune systems. It's interesting to me that here we are seeing the unborn and the elderly. Even in COVID-19, that the majority happened to be that we first started hearing were in senior citizen homes and nursing homes and others.

There's a diabolical thing that's happening in the unseen community as well, to kill the next generation of children, as well as to destroy the wisdom of the elders. We need the wisdom of the elders to give direction and guidance to the zeal and passion of the young. We need strength to come forth into our destiny.

The other thing that we've done is we've allowed licentiousness and moral looseness to the point that we have totally disregarded the most sacred institution. The first holy, sacred institution that God provided was the sacredness of family and marriage. Yet, we've totally redefined all that, what that means.

I'm not saying we have to be ... We're not hate mongers. We have to be self-righteous. We don't have to be those who are out there being angry.

We're not angry, but we do need to stand for what is right. We need to stand for God's word. Even when it's uncomfortable for us, we need to be lovers of truth more than our own lives.

We need a revival of character, don't we? United efforts of prayer, being able to pray with information. How can we pray? I'm going to pray for these things in a moment. Then, the third thing is the areas of biblical justice and social justice and compassion.

I'm not talking about some sort of good works that bring death. I'm talking about biblical compassion and justice. Because in the Lord, that we want to be a people of justice.

We stand for what is right and true. Even to those who disagree with us, even those who are not unbelievers, we want to stand for them to make sure that we are being just and that we create an environment that gives everyone an opportunity to live under liberties and justice and so on. One of the things I noticed in Isaiah chapter 1, in fact, I want to just quote this briefly here before we get into Nehemiah and Nineveh some more.

As I was looking about Isaiah chapter 1, especially verse 11 through 12, that Isaiah 1 through 12, chapter 1, 11 through 20 says that God doesn't even regard our raising of our hands, our gatherings, your conferences, and that's my paraphrase, our numerous prayers, because an ounce of obedience produces more than a ton of prayer. It says basically Isaiah 1 is the point of first reference of all of Isaiah, the book of Isaiah. We quote Isaiah 58 a lot that talks about what a true fast is and we should be those who are out there being tangible and take care of the poor and the needy and the orphan and the widow, etc.

Those are all exactly right. But let's go back to the point of first reference for the whole book of Isaiah. Isaiah 1 starts out by saying, you come to me in all the raising of your hands to pray, all your get-togethers, all your sacrifices, all the things you're doing.

It says that I don't regard them. I'm thinking, wait, God, you don't regard prayer. He does.

What he's saying is you've missed something here. You've missed the fact that you don't have to segregate prayer and intercession from tangible expression. It's prayer with a purpose, intercession with a purpose.

And so here's the things that God begins to say. He goes, look, if you'll do these things, then I will regard. He says, the first things you have done is you allow the shedding of innocent blood.

You overlook justice and you neglect the orphan and the widow. He says, now wash and cleanse yourself. So in a moment, I want us to pray about where we have allowed the shedding of innocent blood, that we have overlooked justice and we've neglected the orphan and the widow.

He says, your hands are covered with blood. He says, wash and cleanse yourself, remove your sinful deeds, put away your evil doings from before my eyes. And that represents even representing the Lord

and the house of the Lord, the church.

Have we misrepresented the Lord? We need to be those who do not misrepresent the Lord. He says, remove your simple deeds, put away all your evil doings from before my eyes, even representing the Lord and the house of the Lord, the church. Like we talk about Hophni and Phinehas who misrepresented God in private, but it became a public consequence to the people they were supposed to represent.

He said, it says here, stop sinning, cease to do evil. I mean, stop sinning. So when God reveals to us, like when David was revealed of his own sin, thou art the man.

When we ask the Lord to show us our presumption and our hidden sins, let God begin to do a work and that we're open to receive from the Lord. And when we have habitual or willful sin in our lives, let's be quick and say, God, forgive me. Lord, I know that I'm saved by grace, but Lord, forgive me.

I don't want to justify. I'm not justified by my excuses. I'm justified by faith.

And so we need to be a people justified by faith and not by making an excuse for our sins. He says, learn to do right, promote justice, give the oppressed reason to celebrate and yoke up the cause of the orphan, defend the rights of the widow. I like what it says in Psalms 82.4, rescue the poor and helpless, deliver them from the grasp of evil people, Psalms 82.4. God has called us to be a people who rescue the needs of people.

Proverbs 14.25, a true witness rescues lives or saves souls. We are those who are called not just to be saved and rescued from the shipwreck of our own life, but we are called with a purpose to go and do likewise to be rescuers of other lives. The martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his costume discipleship said, if your enemy is, he says evil, when the evil is this, when the oppressed, the poor deprived, cry aloud into heaven, while the judges and Lords of the earth keep silent.

We can't be silent. We need to be a voice that shouts from the rooftop, God's word, God's justice, that we need to be a people who love God and love people and express it, not just in our writing, not just in our sermons, but in tangible ways. How we're expressing that by a phone call, by how we treat our neighbors, how we treat those at the supermarket.

Even, you know, I have a thing with our, my daughter, when she was young, that if someone was rude at the post office or wherever we went, then instead of letting that become, their sin become an attitude for us that we carry, because I like what David Wilkerson said in his book, have you felt like giving up lately? He said, it's always the wrong person on the cross, because when somebody has offended you, we carry that offense and we put ourselves on the cross and the people offended us may not even know they offended us and they've moved on and they're living their life while we're still sitting there at that moment of offense. And so I, I love that book. Have you felt like giving up lately by David Wilkerson? Because it's talking about get off the cross, release it to the Lord, let God deal with it and be your vindicator.

And so my daughter and I, when she was young, we would go places if somebody was copying an attitude and just being rude or, and so we didn't want to carry that. We didn't want the sins of others to be part of who we are. So we responded with an opposite spirit.

In fact, what we would do is we take 2 Corinthians 2.14 that says that, that we give thanks to God who always leads us to triumph or victory in Christ Jesus, so that we can become dispensers or manifestors of the fragrance of heaven. And so I always give her the example that, you know, when you go into

restrooms or different places, you have this dispenser or you have a Febreze sprayer, a dispenser, and every few minutes it goes off in those areas that potentially become stinky. And so we live in a stinky world.

So we need to be like the Febreze or the sprayer of God's presence wherever we go. And so whenever someone was rude or angry or causing an offense, we didn't want to retain that. We want to go with an opposite spirit.

We bless them. And then my daughter and I would look at each other, give each other a bump. And then we go, because that's what it sounds like when you spray, you know, the thing on the wall that goes.

So we go, so I always say, let's be the fragrance of heaven. Let's be the fragrance of heaven, no matter how stinky things are around us. She doesn't like to do that anymore.

She's a teenager. So, but when she was younger, she loved to do that with me. Here's another example.

There was a person who hated Christians who hated me because we were doing so much evangelism, reaching out in the community in Houston, in the highest crime areas. And they would come out and try to provoke us to anger because they didn't like Christians. In fact, he was a secular disc jockey.

And he was part of a very militant group. And he had come down with AIDS or HIV. And so he would always even come out into the streets and try to harass us.

Then they turn the cameras on to see how we respond. Just so they can say, see how a bunch of hate mongers and they're just a bunch of bigots and they're a bunch of hypocrites. But we prayed up every time we'd go to the streets and we'd say, God, help us not to respond in the same spirit.

One day I was on a two-hour Christian talk show. And this person again was trying to harass me. So he called the talk show.

He got on the line to ask a question and he changed his name so he could get on. And when I, the DJ turned it on and said, yes, how can I help you? And he says, hi, I'm so-and-so. And I just want to ask Doug something.

He goes, and he began to go just to rail Christians again, call us a bunch of names and everything else. I said, is this so-and-so? And I could tell it was his voice. And of course he bumbled around a little bit.

He goes, yes, it is. I said, so where are all your friends when you really need them? He said, what are you talking about? I said, last month when you could not pay your rent and your light bill, where were your friends? He got real quiet and goes, how did you find out I couldn't pay my rent and my light bill? I said, it doesn't matter how we found out we did. And I thought we would never tell you.

We never did. We didn't do it to tell you. We didn't because the Lord spoke to my heart and spoke to the hearts of those that I served.

Yet a few of us were volunteering at the time in the ministry and we all felt their prayer. We were to take up an offering between our personal offering and anonymously pay your rent and your light bill. And he got really quiet.

He shut the mouth of the line. He didn't know what to say. He goes, my community, we stick together, but why would you do that? And that was it.

I thought we'd never tell him. I only told him because he was harassing us. I'm writing about what to go ahead and tell him.

It was you guys that paid the rent and the light bill anonymously. Years, a couple of years later, I was actually in Phoenix at a mission America gathering. And I got a message to call the office.

I called the office and found out that this particular person who hated us was now in the hospital, not doing well and had AIDS and looked like he was dying from AIDS complications. So I called another young man that had come to Christ through our ministry who also was HIV. And I said to Bill, I said, Bill, would you go to the hospital and check on so-and-so? And he did.

And later he called back, said, you know, so-and-so, I went to see him and he couldn't stop talking about what we had done for him. He goes, why would you do this? And Bill said, that's what Christians do. It's even if you don't like us, this is what Christ put in our hearts to do for you.

We just did it because Jesus said to do it. It's so moved him that night on that Friday night that this other person through Bill helping him led him and directed him to Christ. On that Saturday, that other person passed away from AIDS complications.

You see, only God knew that moment that what we had done was going to turn into an opportunity to minister the gospel for his eternal soul. I shared the story in a large assembly of God church in another part of Texas and between services, there was multiple services and between services, a woman comes to me and I'd shared that story. I never tell a person's name and a woman comes to me and says, Doug, can I ask you a question? What's his name? Such and such.

I said, yes, did you know him? And she begins to tear up and her tears begin to flow down her face. She said, Doug, that was my son. I was taken back in shock.

She goes, I had been praying, God, would you please lead people to my son, that he would come to know you. And this, the prayer of a mother's heart had been answered because we simply obeyed to do something that we didn't even think was, why would we do that? Why would we take up and pay someone's rent and life bill who doesn't even like us and do it anonymously? And yet it just created a chain of events because of a mama's desperate prayer. See, desperate prayer produces far more and an ounce of obedience with prayer and desperate prayer can produce a far more than all of our efforts and energies that we exert.

And that's what we need to pray with desperation, pray with a passion that the agreement of prayer together, we can pray and see God, forgive us of our sins, heal the land. I believe God can do that if we begin to do so, like in Isaiah 1, that it's not just about praying, it's about being living intercessors. It's like in number 16, when Aaron, by Moses' direction, Aaron grabbed the censer representing prayer, grabbed and put the fire from the altar in the censer.

He put incense on top of it and he began to go out with the censer and stood between the living and the dead and the plague was stopped. What would happen in our desperate prayer, first meeting, having a right posture in our own hearts, as we take a right posture as the church to come with an opposite spirit, not blaming, but coming in our own responsibility where we have neglected so great a salvation, where we

have maybe prostituted the church in some ways, the temple prostitution, where we have neglected standing up for the right of the unborn and for the elderly, that we've not taken care of the widow and the orphan. These are all things in justice areas where we, the church, have the answer.

Jesus in us is the answer, and together we can meet at the cross of Christ, cross our racial, denominational, generational lines, meet at the cross of Christ, because we're part of something greater than ourselves. It's not about me. It's not about you.

It's about lifting up the name of the Lord and allowing his lordship to work in and through us, and I want us to pray into that in a moment, because we see in our nation that we have allowed, in some ways, compromised in the church. We've seen the shedding of innocent blood. We've seen licentiousness and moral looseness have gone haywire, and so much so that we've neglected to stand for what we know is right, a plumb line of righteousness and justice.

Maybe if we look at what's happening now, in the midst of all the shakings that are going on because of things that brought us to our knees here in this COVID-19, and all the other things that are going to be, I believe, darkness is going to be exposed. The light of the Holy Spirit is going to be exposing things in the church and in the world, and if we're going to begin to see things exposing, how we respond is going to be so important as the church. We have the answer.

Don't fix your eyes on the circumstance. Fix your eyes on your destination. Fix your eyes on the off and finish of your faith, and as we pray in a moment, I want us to do that, because I believe we are in a Nehemiah moment.

I was sharing and wrote an article last week about sharing at some church services that finally opened up in Texas. We're allowed to do social distancing in the church with certain protocols, and so that opened up again a few days ago, and I was sharing about, for those who have an ear to hear, the book of Nehemiah, and in summary, I'll just share with you some of those points, but I believe here in summary, it was in the month of December that, or the month of Kislev, that Nehemiah had prayed, but he got word that the people that had survived the captivity in Jerusalem and throughout the region that Israel, the people of Israel, were scattered. They were reproached.

They were in distress. There was so much disruption, much like the pain and sickness, death and disruption and anguish that we've been going through, a lot of going through, not just because of the virus itself, but because of so many other things going on, but yet it's shaking things down. There's a purging and a cleansing.

There's an exposure of what we've idolized and coming back to a place of, for us, a reset so that we know how to respond when this pandemic is over and how to minister in a very real and tender way to people around us, but here's Nehemiah. He sat down and wept when he heard about the distress and the approach of his people. So that was November, December, the month of Kislev.

The Gregorian calendar is November, December. He prayed, but because he was cupbearer of the king of Persia, it's not like he goes, hey, king, I got to go. He prayed.

He pondered. He says he prayed daily. He fasted regularly.

He was fasting and praying, and January came, no answer. February came, no answer. March came, no answer, and then the month of Nisan, it says in Nehemiah chapter one, the month of Nisan came, and as

he was serving the king, the king noticed.

He says, tell me what's going on with you, Nehemiah. You have the look of not one who is sick, but the one who is sick of heart, someone who is burdened of heart, who is broken of heart. Here is a secular king recognizing the need that Nehemiah had, something going on with Nehemiah, even though he didn't verbalize it.

So Nehemiah fearfully shared his heart about what was going on with his people. This turned out to be the month of Nisan, four months after the month of Kislev. So we first began to hear bits and pieces about the Wuhan and the coronavirus and then COVID-19 back in late November and throughout December.

In fact, I was in Japan, in Malaysia, mid-December, I was hearing bits and pieces, but it was nothing compared to what it had become later in late January into February. But in the midst of that, we began to pray for the needs of people. The people were suffering in China, people were suffering, and the stories we were hearing, they began to become a burden.

And then we saw where we went into February, the self-quarantine, and we began to go into the, being quarantined in our homes and began to go through all, hearing all the deaths and the anguish and then the economy and people losing jobs and people going through anxiety, people going through suicide attempts, people losing everything. So many things began, everything was being shaken. And again, many of us began to weep between the porch and the altar for them and for us and for our families and for those that we serve.

And here we now, in the month of Nisan, Passover, Good Friday, Resurrection Sunday, all in the month of Nisan. And now we've just ended, a few days ago, the month of Nisan that sunned down the 24th of April. And here it is in the month of Nisan that Nehemiah now is approached by the king after four months of fasting, praying, and anguish, and seeking God.

And God used, spoke to a secular king to release Nehemiah to go help his people. The end wasn't there, but the breakthrough came. The breakthrough, because it took the supernatural to break the bonds of the natural.

The supernatural intervention of God began to work in hearing Nehemiah's cry that God said, I've heard your prayers. In fact, it says in chapter two of Nehemiah that God heard his prayers. And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King, the King of Persia, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king.

And he goes on to say that, that he says, why is your heart full of sorrow? The king answered and addressed Nehemiah in the month of Nisan. The month of Nisan was where Nehemiah, and Nisan for us just ended, that Nehemiah was released not just to go, but the king gave him a seal by a signet ring on the letters to let people know the king had given him permission. All authority of an earthly kingdom was now given to Nehemiah to go.

And he said, not only can you go, I'm going to send you with a military escort. And not only am I going to send you a military escort of protection, I'm going to also give you the rights to all the lumber in the forest, to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem and the walls and the gates that were on fire. He got more than he had intended.

All he wanted was praying, God help, God do something. And not only did he do that, God gave Nehemiah the resources to go do what had just been a burden in his heart to see happen. I believe, and then when he got there, it wasn't over.

It was the breakthrough of the process and the deliverance of God's people and the protection of God's people. And I believe we're coming into as we pray, could it be that we're in a Nehemiah moment that as we pray, and we've been praying for these last four months, that we're in a breakthrough moment. We're seeing some breakthroughs, even as our political leaders and medical professionals are talking and dialoguing.

But I believe God wants to take the church into a place of recognizing this moment of breakthrough is coming. And that what God will do is give the manifold wisdom to and through the church to help people to come into the place of protection, healing, and deliverance, and that we would see the revival we've all been praying for. But it has to be done in practical ways, not just in our hidden place of closet.

Our private posture has public influence. Our private choices have public consequences. What choices are we making in private? Are we the same person in private as we are in public? Well, see, while men reach for thrones to build their own kingdoms, Jesus reached for a towel to wash men's feet.

It's what I do behind closed doors when no one else can see but God that determines the power of God or lack of it in public. I believe that we're in a place right now that God is giving us the authority to speak into these situations, to pray into it as we agree in prayer, taking responsibility for our own sins, asking God that he would be attracted by our humility, our holiness, our honesty in our honor, and that we would also recognize that we have become so untethered with accepting of the compromise of the church, accepting the world into the church instead of the church impacting the world and the cultures of the world, that we have allowed the shedding of innocent blood. We have allowed the injustice.

We're not taking care of the widow and the orphan. And now let me just say this, because I do believe the church as a whole is the greatest, most benevolent outreach of any institution. I do believe that.

I believe every disaster proves that. So I'm not downing the church. We are the church.

What I'm saying is let's get our perspective back, hone back into the authority God's given us when we do keep our perspective in our prayer with a purpose by responding in tangible, practical ways to reach the people and to reach this generation, to reach the nations. So Solomon prayed. I mean, Nehemiah prayed in the month of December through April.

We've been praying. Sambalat and Tobiah didn't like the fact that Nehemiah, when the breakthrough came, went to Jerusalem. So there are seven basic things that came against Nehemiah when he sought to reach the well-being of God's people.

The same thing will come against us, but we need persevering, courageous leadership, persevering leadership, united efforts of prayer. We need to be a people of biblical compassion and justice, and we need to be a people who understand what it means to have informed intercession by doing diagnostic research, and we need to come together from time to time, like times like this, or in larger gatherings or public power encounters for the world to see that we cross our racial denominational generational lines to meet the cross because we are the church. So I'm not finished, but I'm going to quit here in a moment.

And the final question I had was, are we also living in a Nineveh moment? I believe we have a Nehemiah opportunity as we pray. Are we living in a Nineveh moment? I do believe we are, but I believe that if we pray for truth, holiness, and grace, God has given us a spirit of truth, God has given us a spirit of holiness, and God has given us a spirit of grace. In fact, as I quoted earlier, 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 8 through 10 says, And when the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming, the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

I believe, as I said earlier, we need the gift of discernment and the wisdom that God gave Solomon because we're going to see a lot of things emerge even through this that will be earthly saviors, anti-Christ type of people or things that will put our hope in. Our hope is not in man. Our hope is not in a woman.

Our hope is not in institutions. Our hope is in the hope of glory Christ in us. Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we be discerning to know what is of God and what is not.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/DQoR5WFmllM.mp4>

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