

Great Prayers of History

by F.J. Huegel

The sermon explores the transformative power of prayer through historical examples, emphasizing its significance in personal and global contexts.

Duration: 59:07

Scripture: Ezra 8:31, Ezekiel 22:30, Daniel 10:12, Acts 16:28-34

Topics: "Faith And Prayer", "Gods Providence"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Daniel in the lion's den from the Bible. He highlights how Daniel remained faithful to God and continued to pray despite a decree that forbade it. The preacher emphasizes the King's unsuccessful attempts to save Daniel and his distress over the situation. He also shares a story of a missionary who faced a similar challenge with a lion and how God gave him the strength to overcome it. The sermon concludes with a reference to the story of Sergeant George, who was guided by God to become a hero in World War One.

Transcript

We've been thinking about prayer, have we not? The laws of prayer in the first study, and then yesterday, prayers and ministry, the ministry of intercession. This morning, we're going to be thinking about some of the great prayers of history. The history, of course, sacred history.

As these prayers here in the Word are found, and then we'll touch on one or two or three beyond the pages of sacred history as it is here in the Word. Prayers that have made history. Shall we just entitle this particular aspect of our studies in this fashion? There is such a thing.

We want to limit the Lord, we think, yes, very well, for personal problems, problems of the home, problems of the local church. But there have been prayers that have made history. So I just hope as we consider them this morning, we shall be encouraged to reach out more boldly to distant lands, laying hold of world situations and problems, international, national.

Again, may I call your attention to Jeremiah 33.3. Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things. Of course, when we say great and mighty things, it's one thing, but when the Lord says it, it's another. Great and mighty things which thou knowest not.

We'll begin with Moses. We've already spoken of that great prayer, but we cannot go on without referring to it, if it only be for a moment. When the very life of the nation, not yet a nation, the children of Israel had gone forth from Egypt, but incipient nation, I say, threatened because of that great sin, the golden calf.

And Israel, led by Aaron, it would seem, though he tried to excuse himself, went forth dancing, singing about this idol. Well, Moses tells us in Deuteronomy 9 that the Lord said to him, let me destroy this people. There is such a thing as the wrath of God, why we even read in Revelation of the wrath of the Lamb.

We may not be able to understand, but we know, even within our own experience, that there is such a thing as a holy indignation. I've said that a man who can look upon some atrocity would say some wicked man abusing a child without feeling, experiencing holy indignation. Well, we're just jellyfishes.

If that's true, there's a place for anger. Doesn't the apostle say, be angry and sin not? Well, of course, only the Savior could do that. Pretty dangerous for me to be angry, you know, but there is a place.

The Savior looked out upon these Pharisees and he was angry because of the hardness of their hearts. And so the Lord said, let me destroy this people. And Moses said, no.

Isn't that wonderful? Dare man do that? Moses said, no. Well, yes, when your object is the glory of God and the good of souls, yes, you may. The Lord honors that.

Moses said, no. And he went back up into the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. Oh, this people, he said, Lord, has committed a great sin.

Forgive. If not, let me out of the book which thou hast written. Lord, what will they say in Egypt? They won't understand, Lord.

They'll say you couldn't bring them in. You were not able to do it. Your name will not be glorified in Egypt.

And Moses tried. I sought for a man among them, Ezekiel 22:30, that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Oh, there are mysteries here.

But here it is, brethren. This should encourage us. I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, a nation, but I found none.

It costs to pray. For if we're going to really pray like Moses, we just have to put all on the altar. I wonder if I might digress here for a moment.

I've been wanting to say this, but it didn't seem to fit in at any point. Perhaps at this point. The story is told in quiet talks on prayer by Gordon, of a dear lady in Iowa, greatly burdened for her husband, off there in Washington, a politician, member of Congress, not a Christian.

And she agreed with a friend of hers, a Christian lady, to pray, that they would pray together until her husband was converted. And Gordon said that in the night the Lord spoke to her as they began to pray together, will you accept the consequences? Why, Lord, I'm asking for the conversion of my husband. Will you accept the consequences? Was she close? Yes, Lord.

Well, the next day, according to the story, the husband sought a pastor in Washington and asked what must I do to be saved and was led to the Lord. And then she understood. He gave up politics and came

home and became a circuit rider in those days back there.

Think of the hardships of this good wife with her husband, village to village, circuit rider. Then she understood what the Lord meant. Will you abide by the consequences? So the prayer really has to represent us, really have to mean it, and Moses really meant it.

Lord, if there's no forgiveness for this people, blot my name out of your book. And Moses triumphed. And an incipient nation is forgiven.

Now we turn to another great prayer to be found in the third psalm, David. Moses, David, the greatest of the kings. We sometimes wonder about David.

We see that he was indeed great, a man after God's heart. How good the Lord was to forgive him his sin. You will recall the story how Absalom conceived iniquity.

He aspired to sit in his father's throne. He would overthrow the king and step in and sit upon the throne. Seems to be a sort of type of the evil one, doesn't he? It seems he was very beautiful physically.

Ah, that hair. The Scripture tells us all about it. You will recall how he... Now, I wasn't thinking of the dear ladies.

This was a man. You will recall the clever way, the subtle way in which he wrought, taking his place at the gateways into Jerusalem to speak to those who came to consult the king with their grievances. Ah, yes, if I were in the throne, on the throne, I can see your causes just, but who knows if I were there.

And so little by little he took over until the hour came for the uprising and the king fled, cursed as he was. On the way, you will recall Shammai who cursed him. Many there be would say of my soul there is no help for him in God.

There's no way out of this, David. You're licked. Absalom marches in and sits on the throne as the king flees.

But the king is a man of prayer. Oh, he learned to pray as a boy out tending the sheep with his harp. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

And then later, fleeing from cave to cave, hiding from Saul, jealous, infuriated Saul, he learned to pray. And now he cries unto the Lord. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me.

Many there be would say of my soul there is no help for him in God, Selah. But thou, Lord, art a shield for me. My glory and the lifter up of mine head.

I cried unto the Lord with my voice and he heard me out of his holy hill, Selah. I laid me down and I awake for the Lord to sustain me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.

Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God, for thou hast smitten all mine enemies. Upon the cheekbone thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.

Thy blessing is upon thy people, Selah. Well, it was settled up here before it was settled down here. Seems we have to get our victories up here first, friend.

And now it's settled, having been settled up here on the field of battle, I've always felt there was something so significant in the fact that this in which Absalom so gloried should have been the means of his tragic end. Ah, that's fair. There we have him hanging.

Yes, friends, it's very perilous for us to glory in anything save the cross. Paul said it. You dare not glory in your denomination.

You dare not glory in your learning. You dare not glory in your eloquence should be. You be eloquent.

You dare not glory in anything. It becomes an idol. Save in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So here again we have a prayer that made history. It was a whole nation that was in the balance. Now let us turn to, oh, they abound here in the Scriptures, but we must choose.

Some of my dear friends here have heard me speak on this theme, but I'm thinking again of our dear brethren here, the missionary candidates. Oh, so much will depend upon whether or not they have learned to pray. You will recall that period post-captivity, after the captivity.

There had been a returning Cyrus being in the hands of the Lord, the instrument for the fulfilling of the prophecy, Jeremiah, saying that it would be 70 years of suffering for Israel, for Judah. And then the people would again return, and the temple rebuilt. Of course, Israel's history had to be again initiated.

The Messiah had not yet come. And Daniel was permitted to see that. You've read there in Daniel 10, 11, and 12, the Messiah cut off, and the weeks of years, the things of which Daniel speaks.

I say here in the book of Ezra, we have a great return to Jerusalem, the heads of families, princes, and with it all came a great problem for this priest, warrior, leader, the desert lands infested with bandits through which I was ashamed to require the king a band of soldiers and horsemen. That's beautiful, isn't it? I was ashamed to require of the king horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all of them for good that seek him. He was just afraid that the Lord would not be glorified in the eyes of the king, that his conduct would cast a shadow.

I was ashamed. I've often felt we're wanting in this kind of shame, with a hasten to run to the secondary, you know, get help here, get help there, get help who knows where. What does Ezra do? Why, he calls for a prayer meeting.

Let's pray. Let's pray. I proclaim the fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek him.

Of him a right way for us and for our little ones and for our substance. Oh, those precious vessels, gold and silver, and the result? Did he make a mistake in not asking for horsemen to protect the families? Did he make a mistake? Were they set upon by thieves, bandits in the way? Why, not a hair of their head. As we read, beginning with verse 31, Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month to go unto Jerusalem.

And the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy. And of such a lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem and abode there three days.

Ezra 8.31 Here again, here again, here we have Israel getting underway. The seventy years have passed. Getting underway again.

For the Messiah must come. Critical hour, wasn't it? Why, they might have been decimated in the way and taken off. No.

He said that the hand of God was upon them for good. And now we turn to Daniel. We had referred to Daniel.

Oh, this great man of prayer. How these Jewish... You know, this has been repeated again and again in history. Some great Jewish statesman at the side of a king, a president, an emperor.

Well, Daniel, you know, it was first with the Babylonian kings and then the Persian. Babylon fell, but Daniel didn't fall. And then with the Persian kings, Daniel is exalted.

And he becomes the prime minister. That great empire, the Persian you will recall, that seemed to be bringing all the world under its sway. In Greece, no.

Thermopylae. Greece never fell. It pleased Darius to send over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes which should be over the whole kingdom and over these three presidents.

Over these three presidents of whom Daniel was first. That the princes might give accounts unto them and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel, chapter 6 of the book of Daniel, was preferred above the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him and the king thought to send him over the whole realm.

Makes us think of Joseph, doesn't it? Makes us think of the Israeli. Makes us think of that Jewish statesman who was at the head. The secretary of the treasury under FDR.

Makes us think of that great family in Britain, Jewish. So rich. Ah, but of course this stirred up the envy and jealousy, the politicians around the king.

What? A Jew? No. This place is for one of us. And then comes the plot, you will recall.

They come up on the king's blind side, fanning his pride, requesting that he might decree that no one should, for the period of a month, was it not, ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king. Well, the king falls from his throne. He falls into the net.

Very dangerous thing to be flattered, isn't it? And the decree is made and signed. Wherefore, now when Daniel, verse 10, knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and took down the blind. Is that what your Bible says? No, that's not Daniel.

That's not Daniel. He might well have done so. He might have been precautionous and yet have remained within the bounds of the word.

He might have said, I'll not worship this idol, I'll go right on worshipping. But there's no need of telling all the world about it. I'll just pull down the blind.

Well, that isn't Daniel. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and his window being opened and his chamber toward Jerusalem. A good Jew would pray toward Jerusalem.

In the dispersion, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime. And there are the politicians looking on. And they run to the king.

Now they have Daniel. And they have the king too. The decree it read that should anyone disobey, would be cast into the den of liars.

We read that the king does his best to liberate Daniel to no avail. The law of the nations Persian, which could not change. The king went to his palace and passed the night fasting.

Neither were instruments of music brought before him in his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste under the den of liars. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel.

And the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. My God has sent his angel and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me. For as much as before him innocency was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

Please turn the tape over at this time. Daniel is taken out and the politicians are plunged in. Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, languages, that dwell in all the earth.

Peace be multiplied and make a decree that every dominion of my kingdom, in every dominion, men tremble in fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and steadfast forever. And his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed.

And his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of prayer that shook nations.

I wonder if I might digress for a moment and tell a story at this point. It was told to me over in Japan by one of the missionaries of the, of Tim. He gave me the name, I think the name was Peterson, a fellow missionary of his over in India.

He said out in the village where the going was very hard, he could make no progress. Until one day someone came to him and said, knocked at his door, there's a lion out on the outskirts of the village, missionary, you'll have to kill him. Well, he realized he'd been put on the spot.

So he accepted the challenge. He got his gun, put in two shells, and went with this gentleman, went out to the outskirts of the village. And the moment came when his guide said, now you'll have to go alone.

I can go no farther. And so he pressed forward towards the jungle. And there he was, the lion, and he raised his gun.

The shell was a dud. And again he fired, the second shell was a dud. And the Lord spoke to him and said, lay hold of the lion and cut off his wind.

And he threw his arms around his neck. The Lord gave him superhuman power. And he cut off his wind.

He fell dead. Then the Lord said, now you stay here. I want all the glory to be for you.

Through you, of course, for the Lord. Because if you leave it, the natives will come and claim the glory. So though his back was bleeding, he remained.

And then they came from the village and the lion was carried in. This missionary told me that the fellow missionary still has the lion's skin. And then the village opened for the gospel.

Now, let us hasten on to the New Testament. Oh, we haven't exhausted what's found in the old. We really ought to pause to gaze upon that scene in Gethsemane.

But no, ah yes, that was the greatest prayer of all history. For it was not a nation, but all the nations and all the destiny of all Trembled in the balance as the Savior cried and said, Father, if it be possible, let this come past. Nevertheless, not by will, but thine be done.

He triumphed. And so redemption came. As he took the cup to all mankind.

I say here in the book of Acts, this prayer, of course, we can't compare with other prayers. It was so very great. Now I say we will for a moment read and meditate upon what we find in Acts 16.

I've always thought that it was a great moment in the history of the world. How is the gospel through Asia, from Asia? No, Europe, the ambassadors of Christ to Europe, to America, to South America. Now it was Paul's resolve to go into Asia.

And he tells us here in this chapter that the Spirit forbade him. The Spirit suffered him not. No, Paul, it's not going to be Asia.

It's going to be Europe. And the Lord spoke through that vision. The Macedonian, the man from Macedonia, come over and help us.

And Paul and his companions accept the challenge. And here we have them marching toward Europe and crossing over into Europe. It was a critical moment in the history of the world for as this ambassador of Christ, the apostle Paul, goes.

Well, it seems like it roused the devil. You shall not enter here. And he mobilizes his forces.

And the blows begin to fall. You will recall the story. The one out of whom Paul cast the demon.

The accusation before the magistrates. And how Paul and Silas are beaten, scourged. And how they are thrown into prison.

And how the magistrates order that it should be the innermost prison. And how at midnight, ah yes, with their feet in the stocks and their backs bleeding in that dank cell, the innermost, we read, prison. Well, here it is, at midnight, Paul and Silas, what? Is that the way your Bible reads? If it had been for Teagle, that's the way your Bible would have read.

Oh, I'm sure I'd have gotten out my handkerchief. Grumble, Silas, the Lord sure let us down this time. No, that, Silas, keep your hands off my back, can't you see how it is? That's not Paul.

At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang. You know, we said last night, when defeated shall victory. Well, that's what Paul's doing here.

That's what Paul's doing here. Well, you might say, isn't that rather ridiculous? He'd better be a realist. Well, he's a realist.

He's a realist. He sees beyond circumstances. As we said last night, his position hasn't changed.

He's still reigning with Christ. Still seated in heavenly places with his Redeemer. He sang praises unto God.

Well, the Lord has permitted this. Silas, why do you turn it all to good? You watch. All things work together for good.

Silas, there's something great in store. It's just around the corner. Let's sing.

And the prisoners heard that. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and every man's back. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that all the prisoners.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm. Paul looking after this one who had done him harm. Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved in thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized.

He in all his straight way. Now we have Paul marching into your triumph. You know, I love this defiant attitude he assumes at the close of the chapter there.

It makes you think of Daniel. The keeper of the prison told to, we must read the 35th, and when it was day, the magistrate sent the sergeant saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this thing to Paul.

The magistrates have sent unto them, they have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans. I think there is a place for this sort of thing. Yes, and I don't think humble men can be.

Think of Sergeant George. You know the story. He felt he couldn't go to war.

You know the story. Oh, I'm a Christian. I can't go to war.

But he spent a day in the mountains alone, in his Bible. The Lord told him to go to war. Then he went.

He became the outstanding hero of World War I. Why, it looked like he was going to take the whole German army. Cleaned up these pillboxes, whatever they called them, you know. Brought in, how many were there? Not only according to Americans, but according to generals.

He spent a day alone in the mountains with God. Shall I go to war, Lord? Now, there may be some pacifists here. And we're not going to quarrel.

There's a place for that too. I think some, perhaps, the Lord said, no, you're not going to war. We're not going to quarrel.

No, humility doesn't clash with courage. And valor. In the right way, in the right moment.

Let them come out, these, why, we're Roman citizens, and uncondemned they cast us into prison. And they came, and we sought them, and brought them out, please, please. Look at them.

And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydian, and when they had seen the brethren, they took their time about it. They comforted them, and departed. Now, perhaps you're thinking very well, that these things don't happen today.

Yes, they do. You know, prayers are still making history. And I'm so glad that I can talk to you about this matter this morning.

For it's such a critical hour in the history of America. Prayers are still making history. Some of you heard me tell about what happened over in Jerusalem in the days of World War I. Wait a minute.

World War I? Yes. In the days of World War I, you'll recall Turkey was allied, at that time, with Germany. The Holy Land under the heel of the Turks.

Well, great wars were fought over that. Oh my, a whole century. Europe convulsed.

Crusades, even children. Nothing permanent. The hour hadn't come.

General Allenby, down there in Egypt, of the British forces, was ordered to take Jerusalem. This was a critical hour in the history of the world. Jerusalem, Israel, is still the framework of history.

And Allenby and his forces marched northward to take Jerusalem. And when Allenby came to the gates of Jerusalem, he trembled. He was a Christian.

I cannot bomb the Holy City? What shall I do? The Christian and the soldier. And he called together the members of his staff, fellow officers, laid before them the problem. What shall we do? Will you pray with me, the General said, for the Lord to intervene? Yes, General.

And so we have General Allenby and the members of his staff on their knees in his tent, calling on the Lord. And the next day, the civilian walked out of Jerusalem with a white flag in the city. A great hour in history.

Just before you know how things began to change from that hour for this ancient people of God, British Mandate, World War II, Hitler's hate for the Jews, and we have them fleeing by the thousands to the Holy Land. And you know the result. Israel again a nation after twenty centuries.

Again a nation. And the Savior had said to Israel, Jerusalem shall be throtten under foot. Yes, yes, yes.

Until the times of the Gentile people. Yes. Prayer still makes history.

Prayer still changes the very course of history. For there's nothing impossible with the Lord. I want to say this before I close.

It isn't the prayer and all. It's the prayer hearing God. It's not the sole force of prayer.

No. I loathe that kind of a heresy. It's the glory of Almighty God who has given His promises, who says, call unto me and I will answer you.

There's where the greatness of prayer is found. In Him and Him alone. I wonder if I might tell that story again.

There's a book out that God was at Dunkirk. Indeed He was. Indeed He was.

Never was there a darker hour in the history of the world. For if Britain had fallen, if Hitler had, ah yes, but he'd gone as far as the Lord was going to permit him to go, subjugating the nations, this demon-possessed soldier, God was at Dunkirk. You'll recall the Maginot Line had fallen in France and the British forces, 300,000, were fleeing to the Channel and Hitler was laughing.

I've got them. What could they do, 300,000 British soldiers, once they reached the Channel? And behind them the old Wehrmacht and then the King. George V? George, was it George V? And then the King, a decree calling upon the peoples of Great Britain, the world over, for a day of prayer.

I had the privilege of joining in Mexico City British citizens in the Anglican church that day I remember the dear brother who led them to Peasland, gone home to be with the Lord. Were those prayers answered? Ah, Fred, you know what happened. Over the German line, such a storm, not a plane could take off, not a soldier could move, such a storm bogging down the entire Wehrmacht.

And on the British side, why they never saw the Channel, it was like glass, so calm and all day long ships, even women with little boats crossing the Channel and rescuing British Tommies. Two hundred and ninety thousand saved. And it appeared in a little magazine published by the officers, Christian officers of the British forces that so clear was the manifestation of God, so clearly was it His hand that British soldiers formed prayer circles to praise His name.

Was God at Dunkirk? Why, friends, at Dunkirk the whole Nazi movement was hot. Then things began to change, you know. Yes, God was at Dunkirk and He laid bare His holy arm and Hitler had to bite the dust.

To kill your thing to come from the lips of one whose ancestors were Germans. But you know, when you belong to Christ, you are liberated from national points of view and you take God's point of view. Yes, God was at Dunkirk and prayers do make history and prayer can determine the course of a nation.

Oh, may the Lord teach us to pray, to be more bold. Ah, yes, we need light, we need understanding. We need to be taught of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, may the Lord teach us to pray for these coming days. Ah, we know not. Oh, gracious Father, we're so thankful for Thou art a prayer-hearing God, covenant-keeping God.

Thy promises are sure. The Lord Jesus Christ, our great high priest, is at Thy right hand and He ever liveth to make intercession for the saints. How wonderful, Father, to realize that He ever liveth to make intercession.

And now, Father, teach us to pray. Bring us deep into the Savior's wounded side that we may share the burdens of our great high priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for the saints. Oh, Father, teach us to pray.

We ask it humbly through Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/3/SID3579.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/fj-huegel/great-prayers-of-history/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net