

Prerequisites for Personal Revival

by Gary Ellison

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and seeking God's presence in order to experience revival and spiritual growth.

Duration: 52:47

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 28:19, Revelation 2:1, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Personal Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares the joy of preaching the Gospel to a family who came to church. He emphasizes the importance of positive changes in a believer's life, as it can spark interest in others. The preacher also shares a personal story about his son and how God worked in their family, despite their imperfections. He encourages the congregation to let God direct their desires, repent, and seek God's ways in order to meet the challenges of this generation. The sermon references the need for humility and repentance, as well as the consequences of turning away from God.

Transcript

And I want us to see that tonight in a fresh way, I pray. Look with me at 2 Chronicles chapter 7. 2 Chronicles chapter 7, and I want you to read out loud with me verse 14. Very familiar text, something we've seen several times if you've been in the church for some time.

I want us to look at verse 14 together. If you would be so gracious, please stand to your feet in reverence to the Word of God. Let's read it together out loud.

Verse 14, and then afterwards I'll pray and then we'll endeavor to see what God has for us from the text. 2 Chronicles 7, 14. Everybody, we're together? Amen.

Alright, read it with me please. The Bible says, If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the Word of God. I pray, I ask humbly that you would come and just manifest yourself in a very beautiful way, and minister to every heart here, every young person, every adult. Lord, change us forever that we might walk with you.

Lord, bless these families, strengthen them. Lord, may we live here loving you more, more devoted to your ways, and more humble in your presence. We love you, we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. What is the setting of this verse? It's at the dedication of David's temple, which Solomon had built.

In other words, as we read the verse, we see specifically it is God's Word to Solomon concerning the land in that day. And just so that we can better appreciate the context, look back with me, 2 Chronicles chapter 6. We see here first Solomon's sermon. This man was meeting with the congregation of Israel, and was exhorting them and telling them of his plan to build a house, a habitation for God.

And that's what he did. And we slip down, that's verses 1-11. We come down there in chapter 6 verse 12.

And then he stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, spread forth his hands. For Solomon had made a brazen scowl full of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court. And upon it he stood, and I want you to notice this, brethren.

He kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven and said, Oh God! Isn't that sweet? We saw Solomon's sermon, we see in chapter 6 as well, Solomon's prayer of dedication. Solomon was earnest. Solomon knew the importance of the presence of God among his people.

Solomon knew if God didn't come and do something, it wouldn't be done. And so he saw the need to humble himself before God's presence, and to seek Him with a humble and honest heart. And brethren, he didn't just pray casually, he got on his knees before God and before the people.

He wasn't concerned for what others thought of him. I'm going to tell you, we've got to get over this guys. In the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we've got to get over this.

How people think of us, how people perceive us, are we accepted or not? What's important is that we meet God. And we do what God wants us to do, and we become what God wants us to be. Well here is Solomon, honestly, earnestly seeking God.

I mean he's on his knees, his face is toward heaven, his hands spread out. And I want you to look at chapter 7, here's the context. And when Solomon had made an end of praying, the Bible says, the fire, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

What happened, brethren? Solomon was serious and sober minded, humble and broken, got on his face before God. God heard from heaven and came down, and manifested His presence. And I'm going to tell you something.

Moms and dads that are here, I want to encourage you. One of the greatest things you can do for your children is live in such a way that your children see God in your life. There is nothing going to build the faith of your children more than to see you from time to time on your face.

Seeking God humbly and earnestly, and then to see God in heaven. Heard my dad, and God came down, God manifested His power, and God answered. That's going to build the faith of your children more than a

thousand sermons from a pulpit.

I tell you, I'm convinced, brethren, in our day we're playing games. And at times we're playing games, even in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I'm going to tell you, God has screamed. It's time we stop playing games and get humble, and get serious, and ask God to come on down.

Now listen to me, I know He lives in me in the person of the Holy Spirit. I don't have my theology all messed up. But I'm going to tell you what you need, and what I need is what? We need to see the manifestation of the presence of God afresh and anew in these days, that the confidence and the faith of our children would go growing and growing and growing, so that when the world gets close to them and says, why do you dress the way you do, why do you listen to the music you do, why do you do this, why do you do this? They're going to say, brethren, I love God! And God loves me.

They're not going to say, well, my dad's a preacher, you know. No. Brethren, they're going to answer and I'm going to tell you, say, listen, God is real, where He speaks to me through the book, He has manifested His power.

I'm going to tell you, that's what I want to see, amen? Well, God came down and God manifested His power. So, we see here in chapter 7 the setting. It's at the dedication of David's temple, which Solomon had built.

It's God's word to Solomon concerning that land and in that day. And in verse 12, look at there, chapter 7. And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him. Here God has come down and now He is speaking to Solomon.

And God is a word for Him. And it was a word for Him in that day. It records God's second appearance to Solomon at the dedication of this temple.

Solomon had, and here at this dedication, Solomon had just finished this great prayer. We saw the context, we didn't read it all, you can read it later. And the context is God talking to him about who? About Israel.

And we see in the context that He lays out definite conditions that God put down for Israel. And I'm going to tell you, as you study the history of Israel, you see their history demonstrates the accuracy of these specifications that He laid out. And brethren, He told them they cannot have peace in the land until they've met these conditions.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Well, brother Gary, we're not Jews here, and I'm the first to agree. We're the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But brethren, listen, all Scripture is not written to us, but all Scripture is written for us. In the first place, we've already seen the interpretation. But now I want to speak to you tonight about an application in your own heart and in mine.

Brethren, God drew near. And God began to speak to Solomon by night, and He said to him, I've heard thy prayer. I'm in verse 12.

And I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. And then God began to speak to him. And here's what God said, listen to me.

He said, if I shut up heaven, if I shut up heaven that there be no rain, if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, then God said here, here's the verse, if My people who are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I'll hear from heaven, I'll forgive their sin and will heal their land. Brethren, what are we seeing here? Here's the application. I'm fully convinced in our day that there are problems abounding, brethren.

The hour is needy. Problems abound. Sin's influence is growing.

People's hearts are waxing cold. And I'm going to tell you the problem. The problem are not the sodomites out there.

The problem are not the bar rooms over there. The problem, brethren, are not the politics. The problem are not the laws they're not passing.

The problem is not found out there. The problem is found within the walls of this church. God didn't say, listen, God didn't say, when problems come, what you better do is start correcting the laws and start changing that over there and stop doing that over there.

God said, you know what? When there's a manifestation of problems and crises come and pressures come, He said, if My people... You know, sometimes, brethren, we think God's just spanking this old sinful world. And in one sense, I'm sure that He is, but I'm going to tell you something. I remember what an old preacher said one time.

He said, God, don't discipline, don't spank the devil's children. What's happening sometimes, brethren, what we ought to do is what 1 Peter 4, 17 says, For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of the Lord. There are times when God is trying to get our attention by the absence of His blessing and protection and provision in our land.

There are times when God's trying to speak to us, His church, and the solution is not that they get right, but the solution is that we get right. Amen, amen. Brethren, the church.

The great need of the hour is that the church be the church in this world. God is not weak, and God is not sleeping. God is on His throne, governing the affairs of men, and I'm convinced in our day we are to anticipate a better day for our children and our children's children.

Why? Because God still longs to save the lost, to strengthen families. God still longs for godly generations to be built. I'm going to tell you, God still longs to do a work, a work in this day.

It is wrong for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to walk around as though, brethren, we can't do anything about it. I'm going to tell you, there are times when things aren't being done about it. Why? It's our problem.

God said, if My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves. Are you listening? The church, God's people, we're not being what Jesus died on the cross to make us, and we're not doing what Jesus died on the cross to help us to do. The problem is not them out there.

The problem is us in here. Amen? That's the truth. You say, well, I'm trying to do my part.

Maybe you ought to do a little more. Well, I pray a little bit. Maybe you ought to pray a little more.

Well, I'm not burdened for the lost like I should. You ought to get on your knees until God gives you the burden. I still believe with all of my heart that heaven is a beautiful place, and hell is hot! And what's happening? We're sitting around all content just like we are.

In need of the hours for the church to rise to the occasion with the greatness of the power of God in her, and meet the challenge that God's work might go forward in this generation. It's for such a time as this that God has wanted to do something great. I'm convinced of it.

Brethren, we must repent. We must acknowledge our wrong. We must accept our responsibility.

We must return to God and to His ways. We must stop blaming others and all the problems that are around us to other people. And we, brethren, must humble ourselves and seek God afresh.

And now what God is saying in the text, He said to His people, Well, you know what? If I shut up heaven, no rain, drought, locusts come, devour your land, pestilence come. He said if these things happen, He said let it be a reminder to you that I'm talking to you. I'm wanting you to draw nigh.

I'm wanting you to humble yourself. I'm wanting you to turn from your wicked ways. I'm wanting you to do something about it.

The solution, brethren, there's a solution for the problems of the day are not found in the lives of those outside the church, outside of God's people. The solutions are found when God's people get right. Then God is free to come and manifest Himself in a way that otherwise He would never be able to manifest Himself.

How many of you are hungry for a manifestation of God? Brother, I am. I want God to come and do something unusual in my family. The unplanned, the unexpected.

I'm not talking about emotionalism and silliness and craziness. But I'm talking about God moving in. So that there'd be no mistake and His work and presence would be something measurable and evident that the faith of my children, my own faith, would grow and we'd just all be convinced.

I'm going to tell you, God showed up and did something. This morning, by the mercy of God, we baptized seven in our Spanish church. That's by the grace of God.

I'm a big zero. And if God is so pleased to take this big zero and use me once in a while, I'm just humbly grateful for that. But I'm going to tell you, I want to believe God for a better day.

I told the church this morning, I said, why should we not anticipate God saving sinners every month? Baptizing every month for the glory of God. What's wrong with that? Does not God still want to save sinners? I mean, am I not? Listen, if I slip and start preaching in Spanish, you'd bear with me. I haven't preached in English for a little while.

If we get into Spanish, we're lost. Alright. Folks, what are the problems? We see problems in the lives of God's people.

And I'm convinced of that. Often the problem is not out there somewhere, it's in here. Right? It is not right.

It is not right to say to our children and continue to kind of shift the blame out there. I'll tell you why this is not happening. Why that's not happening.

Why this isn't going on like we want it. It's because those people aren't doing it. Listen, God is saying, when are you going to accept responsibility for your lack of faith? When are you going to accept responsibility for your proud heart? When are you going to accept responsibility for your lack of passion for the unsaved? When are you going to accept responsibility for sitting on your hands and not doing something for the glory of God? When are you, the church, going to change your own heart and mind? I'm convinced that God's hands are not short that He cannot save.

I believe we serve the same God yesterday, today, and forever and ever. Listen, He is wanting to manifest His power and do something beautiful. You say, well, what are the problems? What is holding God back? One thing we see in the text.

Look with me at verse 14. We're going to share it with you quickly. He said, if my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves.

There's the first problem. Unbroken wills. Unbroken wills.

This is the problem. Humble themselves. At times, brethren, we in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we're so full of pride, so full of self-sufficiency.

Brethren, we've made our plans and we've got it planned today and we don't want to get it done tomorrow and even planning down the road a little further. And we're making plans. Brethren, we're not humble before God.

God said, if my people, read that, which are called by my name shall humble themselves. Here's the problem. Unbroken wills.

Brethren, the Bible says in Proverbs 6, it says there are six things that the Lord does hate, yet seven are an abomination to Him. And I'm going to tell you something on this hate list, you won't find smoking and drinking. You won't find fornication and adultery.

What's the first thing on God's list? I mean, brethren, when I read the word something that God hates, something that God abhors, something that God... We're seeing terms that are very strong. They're very strong in the Hebrew. They're very strong in the English.

And God is saying, I'm going to tell you something, this is something that grieves my heart. And what's the first thing on His hate list? It's a proud look. It's a proud look.

It's that attitude that says, I don't need to depend on God so much. I have a job. I have my health.

I have my family. And when it's convenient, I have my church family. And when I need this, I do that.

Listen, God is saying, what does James chapter 4 say? God resists the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Three times the word of God says that God resists the proud. The word resist there is a military term.

And God says for those that have this attitude, I'm okay, I don't need to depend so much on God. God says, what do I do? I stiff arm the proud. Have you ever been stiff armed? It's not a good thing.

You're trying to get close, and it's like, back up. My son told me one day, he was out running in the military, and you know how they do, sometimes a little rough with these guys, and he was running, and somehow

he got ahead of the group. He was the top runner there for a little while.

Maybe still is, but he got so far ahead that he lost track of the guy that was supposed to tell him to turn around and go back the other way. Thank you, dear brother. I think my allergies are bothering me.

Anyway, but he saw another Sarge a little further up, and he said, well, I'm ahead of the crowd. I'll just run it up there. So he kept running, kept running, and as he was about to pass the Sarge, he stiff-armed him.

What do you think my son happened to him? Well, he fell on the back of his head, he hit the ground, was out of breath, and everything else. Got up. He said, what are you doing over here, private? The crowd's going that way.

You're going the wrong way. I'm going to tell you something. When you and I choose not to humble ourselves and acknowledge our utter dependence upon God for what we need and for what God wants to accomplish in and through our lives, God's going to stiff-arm us.

You say, I don't like that. I don't either. But I'm going to tell you, God hates your pride too.

And what we need to do in the church, I'm going to tell you, we've come to a place in our day where we are not earnestly and humbly seeking God. When's the last time you found your face in an altar prayer after preaching service? When's the last time when you, with your own family, have gotten on your knees and cried out to God for something for your family? When's the last time you as a family or you as an individual have found yourself seeking God with all of your heart? When's the last time? Humble yourself. Here is the problem.

Unbroken wheels. Unbroken wheels. Brethren, I believe God wants to come and manifest Himself in my family and in yours, in this church, and in ours.

But I'm going to tell you, God is not going to come down and visit with us and manifest His power when we are full of pride and arrogancy and we think we don't need to quite depend so much upon God. I'm going to tell you, God is grieved. Isaiah.

Isaiah chapter 57. I see a great verse. Isaiah 57, verse 15.

I love this contrast. It says, Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is Holy. Wow! It's like we get a picture of God high and lifted up.

This Holy One is above everything and above everyone. And there He is, high and lifted up and holy in the sense that He is separated from all and from everyone. But notice what He says.

I dwell in the high and holy place with Him also that is of a, what does it say, contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and to receive the heart, to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Do you know when we choose to humble ourselves, God is pleased to draw nigh. When we choose to humble ourselves and acknowledge our dependence upon God, God is pleased to draw nigh.

And do more than just draw nigh, feelingly near, but also God chooses to revive. Brethren, that's what I need. That's what I want.

And if you desire that, that first step is to humble yourself and acknowledge your need. Instead of making excuses for your lazy life or your sorry spiritual life or your unfruitfulness or your ineffectiveness in the

gospel of Christ, why don't you get honest and just humble yourself and say, God, I can't. And He says, I already knew that.

That's good. Lord, I just can't anymore. I know that.

I know that. Lord, I don't know what to do next. I'm not sure about the next step.

I knew you didn't know the next step. Why don't you come over here? Lord, would you please help me and cleanse me and give me power. I want to do Your will.

Oh, that's wonderful. And God's going to draw feelingly near to you. And God's going to do something in your life and heart that you could never do and He never said you could do it anyway.

But when we stand there and think, I'm alright and He's alright and if they would get right, the world would be better, you can just forget it. God is not going to meet you and He's not going to meet me with that kind of attitude. This is the first thing God said to His people.

He revealed to them a problem. He said if things start falling apart and they're not going forward, there's that drought and locusts and pestilence in the land. He said, I'm in heaven waiting to change it, waiting to revive, waiting to heal the land and forgive their sin.

But He said the first thing is you've got to deal with the problem of an unbroken will. An unbroken will. Humble yourselves.

I love 1 Peter. If you want to turn there with me, you can. If not, I'll just turn there and read.

But 1 Peter chapter 5. Unbroken wills. Here the whole context, we see the importance of humility in the local church. First to the Lord, then to the elders, the younger to the elder.

But He says there in 1 Peter 5, verse 5, Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder, yea, all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility. Dress yourself up in humility. Oh brethren, He said for God, this is the third time, resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.

God's stiff arms, the proud, the self-sufficient, the independent. But He says, I pour out grace and I draw fillingly near to the humble. Therefore, verse 6, here's the command, Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He might exalt you and what do the last three words say? Read it with me.

In due time. God's timing is everything. God knows when your heart is humble.

God knows when my heart is humble. And when He chooses, He can exalt us. Amen? He will use us.

He can revive the work again. He can come and forgive sin and heal the land. He can correct the wrong and make right the wrong.

He can do more. Listen to me, listen to me. God can do more in one visit and just a couple of minutes than a thousand hours of counseling.

Amen? The Lord Jesus can come and in one minute do more in this church than a thousand sermons could ever produce. That's what we need. But I'm going to tell you, God is not going to come and be feelingly near to a proud people, to a self-sufficient people, to a people that is not willing as Solomon.

He got down on His knees and He humbled Himself. He acknowledged His need and I'm going to tell you, God came down and manifested His power. But we're living in a day where somebody will say, well, I don't want to go forward and somebody will think I'm lost.

It does not matter what other people think about you. What's important is what God already knows is true in your heart. And when God knows what's going on in your heart, we ought to go ahead and get right with God anyway and let others think what they're going to think.

Amen? Give them something to talk about. Glory to God. Humble ourselves.

If My people which are called by Name shall humble themselves and pray. He's addressing the other problem. What's withholding? God's blessing.

God renewing the work, healing the land, forgiving sin, removing the problem. The first problem is unbroken wheels. The second problem is what? Unbent knees.

Prayerlessness. Prayerlessness. Why is God not coming and manifesting His power? It's because, brethren, we're not believing God for anything.

We're not believing God for it. We're not getting in that place where God can hear us and we can believe from Him that which He promises and longs to do. Why? Once again, the problem gets back to that lack of humility, right? Unbroken wheels.

We've made our plans and we're trying to work them out. God said, I'm going to tell you, God has the right. We make plans.

He can change our plans. And He has every right to change our plans. But something He wants us to do is come and pray.

There are those who believe, listen, God is sovereign. Don't misunderstand me. God is sovereign.

Amen. But there are those who believe, listen, God is sovereign. He's got everything planned from beginning to the end.

And really, therefore, we really shouldn't pray. You know. God has decided in eternity past who He's going to save today and tomorrow and it's all under the umbrella of the sovereignty of God and we ought to just leave it alone.

I'm going to tell you something, brother, if you believe that way, you're never going to pray. If you believe that way, you're never going to get earnest and earnest and serious about the lost and the dying that are going to hell. Because if you really believe that, you're going to be a lazy soul winner.

You're not going to be a soul winner. You're not going to be burning for them. Because you believe, listen, God's got it all worked out and really my prayers don't matter.

I'm going to tell you something, you ought to read the book, brother. You ought to read the Word of God and understand it. Paul prayed that Israel would be saved.

What do you think about Paul? If he prayed, brethren, you ought to pray. The Lord Jesus Christ found Himself rising way before dawn, found Himself at times before He would make a decision. The Lord Jesus

before, brethren, He chose His disciples.

The Bible said He spent all night praying. If the living God sensed the need to draw near to the Father, to God, and to pray, and to seek Him out before He made a decision, how much more should you seek Him out? How much more should I seek Him out until we get an answer from God? There are those that believe, brethren, this state of affairs, God is sovereign, what's going to be is going to be. I'm going to tell you, I'm not in agreement with that kind of philosophy.

I know that God is sovereign, but I also recognize that the sovereignty of God does not interfere with the volition of men. Men make choices! And they will suffer for those consequences. It's the same in your life and mine.

I believe with all my heart that prayer does change things, and prayer moves the hand of God. And in answer to prayer, I do believe souls are saved. And in answer to prayer, I believe God does work.

And in answer to prayer, I believe lives are changed. And in answer to prayer, I believe God does change families. I believe God is pleased to hear our prayers and come and visit in a great way.

There was one young man, his name is Benjamin. He came to Christ last December. He's now in our Bible Institute.

He's starting to grow spiritually. His daddy says, I don't believe anything. His mother says, I'm a strong Catholic.

They had no interest. They were upset with him that he was seeking God outside the Catholic Church. But he came to Calvary and came to the Lord.

Amen? Got saved. He began inviting his family. We began praying.

Amen? Lord, help them to come. Lord, burden their heart. Lord, give us an opportunity to preach the Gospel to them.

Guess who came this morning? Guess who came? His whole family. I made out of my notes? Brother! Guess who came? The family came! They came and today I had the joy of preaching the Gospel to them. Sowing the seed.

Brethren, there was mom and dad and little sister. When lost people see positive changes in someone's life because of the Gospel of Christ, all of a sudden interest is rekindled. Maybe we should go and see why our son is now treating us respectfully.

Why our son has stopped cussing and stopped drinking. Why our son leaves the house to go to the office of the Spanish church and study his Bible. Amen? Brethren, I'm going to tell you something.

We are to believe God for something. I want to give you an example. Just one.

But look with me at 1 Timothy 2. 1 Timothy 2. Here, Paul is exhorting the church. He said, you guys ought to pray. He said, I exhort, therefore, I'm in 1 Timothy 2, verse 1. I exhort, therefore, that first of all... And notice this.

Here's the priority. Here's the instruction concerning the conduct in the local church. There ought to be a place of prayer in the church.

I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for... And what does the Bible say? All men. For kings and for all that are in authority. We're to be praying for our president, folks.

You don't like what's happening? Don't gripe about it. Get on your knees about it. I know he's not making all the best decisions.

I'm not always in agreement with him. But I'm going to tell you something. I thank God for our president.

I thank God that we're in this country. I'm going to tell you something. If the church doesn't get right with God, we're going to see bad days.

I saw a sticker just recently. I said to my daughter, I said, look at that. It said, Harriet 08.

Be careful. I mean, Hillary. I'm sorry, Hillary.

It said, Hillary 08. And immediately, my heart just jumped up. Okay, I won't get on that, brother.

But I'm going to tell you something. God said we better pray for those in authority. Why? Verse 2, the second part.

That we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. Read out loud verse 4 with me.

Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. Brethren, you better think about it. Why should we be praying for the authorities? Why should we be praying for this world and for this country, brethren, that we can live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, but also because we see it as the will of God that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

There are people that actually believe this, and prayer does not change things. God is on His throne, and what's going to be is going to be. I'm going to tell you something.

God moves in answer to prayer, and you need to lift your sights and get your eyes on the field, brethren, and begin to envision what God longs to do in your family and in this country for the glory of Christ. And you are to pray. You are to believe God for something.

Unbent knees. Jesus said, men are always to pray. Luke 18, verse 1. Jesus said, pray lest you enter into temptation.

Some of you are falling into a state of compromise, spiritually speaking, because you're not on knees acknowledging your utter dependence upon God. 1 Thessalonians 5. The Bible says, men are always to pray. Brethren, pray without ceasing, the Bible says.

Pray without ceasing. Brethren, we see all these exhortations, all these commandments, and God says to His people, you begin to see problems. Oh brethren, problems abound, the influence of sin growing, hearts waxing cold.

What should His people do? Brethren, correct these problems. Unbroken wheels. Unbent knees.

Get in that place of prayer once again as a church, as a family. Get where you can meet with God. Oh brethren, I just believe God wants to do more than we see these doing.

I just believe in my heart that God wants to grow His church. God wants to save people. God wants to change lives.

God wants to change my life. And brethren, I believe there is no power where there is no prayer. But where we get humble and we meet with God, I believe God gets feelingly near and meets with us and does something in that moment that otherwise would not be done if we didn't pray.

I want to believe that. I do believe that. There are those that, well, I don't believe that.

Well, I suggest you read the book. Amen? Maybe that's why not much is happening in your spiritual life. Paul prayed for the lost.

He said, I pray, he earnestly prayed that all of Israel would be saved. If Paul, the man of God, saw in the context as God's sovereign election for the nation of Israel where the Bible says that the calling and repentance... What does it say? The election of God are without repentance. Right? The calling and the gifts of God are without repentance.

I'm wrestling between Spanish and English. The calling and the gifts of God are without repentance. What's the context? It has nothing to do with the called pastor.

Nothing to do with the called missionary. Nothing to do with it all. The context is God's elective plan and purposes for the nation of Israel.

They have not changed. Whether the nation receives Him or rejects Him, God has not changed His attitude toward them. It is unchangeable.

God's sovereign purposes will be accomplished in that country. And His hand is still on it today. That's the context.

And in that context, Paul says, I'm praying they'll all be saved. Think about it. Unbent knees.

There's a third problem. Unbroken wills. Unbent knees.

Why isn't God coming, touching down, manifesting Himself? Undirected desires. God said, if My people shall humble themselves and pray, and what does it say? Seek My face. Undirected desires.

At times in this life, brethren, we're more excited and more committed to the temporal than we are to the eternal. Listen, God is not against you having things, nor myself. But when things have you, it's a problem.

You see the difference? Some of the wisest men in the Bible, some of the people we study about mean they had everything. Right? I'm talking about rich people. They were rich.

We don't know anything about it. And God's not against you having things. But when those things have your heart, then it's sin.

And God says, you are to be seeking My face and not seeking to acquire more things. Right? See the difference? He said, seek My face. Seek My face.

God knew where they were and He reminded them. He reminded them in verse 19 in the context. He said, you better not go and serve other gods and worship them.

He said in verse 20, then will I pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them in this house which I have sanctified for My name. What did He say? Will I cast out of My sight and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. He said, I'm going to tell you something.

You start putting emphasis on things and other false gods and idols, the things that these other people are worshiping all around you, you start putting your affections over there, God says, I'm going to withdraw My blessing over here. You got it? Undirected desires. God says in Colossians, set your affections on, what does the Scripture say? Things above.

Amen? For to live for things that have greater value than the houses we own and the cars we drive and the clothes we wear. Oh, nothing wrong with nice clothes? Brethren, you can get them in this country cheap. Amen? That's right.

This suit I bought, I really like it. I paid \$12 for it. Amen? I like to go to these last chance stores, you know.

I bought this tie there, got these pants, I got this, it's a whole suit, brethren. \$12. I'm going to tell you something.

You can look nice in these days and I think God's people are looking nice. I believe that. God's people are looking sharp.

Nothing wrong with that. But I'm going to tell you, it better not have your heart. Once your heart is divided, that becomes the focus.

I want to inquire this and I want to acquire that and I want more of this and I've got to have bigger and newer and bigger and newer and bigger and newer. I'm going to tell you, God has a way of taking these things away. They're called distractions.

Undirected desires. The Lord Jesus said, set your affections on things above. Jesus said, lay up for yourself treasures in heaven.

I'm going to ask you something. What are you doing today that is affecting eternity? What are you doing to ensure that your children catch something of the vision that you're investing in the hearts and lives and the souls of men and women, boys and girls? When's the last time your own family saw you, mom and dad, sacrificing time, sacrificing money, sacrificing moments alone for the souls and the lost people around you? When's the last time? When's the last time your family has seen you come to the place of sacrificing anything for the glory of God? Or have they never seen it? You say, well, my family know I love you. They know I love them.

I didn't ask you that. I asked you, when is the last time your children have seen mom and dad do something for the work of God, the local church, for the souls of men, for lost folks, for strengthening families, something for the glory of God and it cost you something. There's a great impact when our desires are directed and focused in the things of God.

And once again, I say to you, moms and dads, this does more for the heart and the lives of our children and their faith than a thousand sermons. When God began to direct our desires to go to Mexico City, I was

happy pastoring. I'm still happy.

The church we were in was a fine church, a stable church. 450 attending. There weren't problems.

I was not fighting with the leadership. We were having a good time in God's work. And God began to enlarge our vision to leave that and go learn another language and culture and try to have an impact in the largest city in the world.

And that was in Mexico City. And in faith, in 98, I left and we left and I went with my family and I'm going to tell you something. We never thought we'd come back, but here we are.

I was going to say something in Spanish. It almost came out. Here we are.

And brethren, a lot of changes. My wife made a lot of sacrifices. You know, it's easier for men to move and make changes.

Amen? Men? It's easy. You know, we can say, I got a place to park my Ford truck. We're all right.

I don't know. But, you know, it's hard for the dear wife to start selling things and start selling things. Get everything down to a little trailer you're going to pull behind your van and you go.

To have two children birthed out of the country. Two children were born in Mexico City. All the challenges that come with that.

Learning a new culture, a new language. I never dreamed, you know, that we'd learn Spanish. Some that hear me preach every Sunday would say, He still has not learned Spanish.

But brethren, I'm going to tell you something. I believe, number one, God did bless us there. God was very merciful to even use us there for His glory.

But I'm going to tell you something much greater that stands out in my heart is what? Is our children begin to see our willingness to allow God to direct our desires to something beyond us that required some sacrifice and change. What did it do? It knitted our hearts together. My son was 12 years old when we went to the field and he had never played piano not one time in the local church.

We had a church of over 400. We had a lot of pianists. He didn't need it.

He wasn't needed. What happened when we went on the field and started planting churches? Who do you think had to play the piano? My son had to play the piano. Amen? And in the five years we lived in Mexico he played the piano at our place.

He played the piano at another church. He played the piano for other churches as well because they didn't have a pianist. And I've seen my son at times for several weeks in a row have to practice more than four hours a day to get ready for a song service or a cantata.

What did that do in his heart? He became willing himself to make some sacrifices for the work of God. He's 20 years old. He's not a perfect son.

I'm not a perfect dad. But I still believe I have his heart. God did something as He directed our desires in our family.

He knitted us together as imperfect as we are and He made us something close. My son is big, bigger than I am and stronger. Of course, all this push-ups and sit-ups he's been doing.

But he still, when he visits us each night before we separate, he gives me a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Amen? He grabs me. Love you, Dad.

Love you too, son. I'm going to tell you something. I wouldn't take anything for it.

What happened? We began to let God direct our desires. We made some plans, but God reserves the right to change them. How about you? I'll tell you the problem in our church is why is not God coming and visiting with us and manifesting His power and correcting the ills and the problems? Because we've got unbroken wheels, unbent knees, and undirected desires.

We're not seeking His face! And we're not seeking the things that He loves. We're seeking the things that we love. And the result is He is not present.

And much like Solomon, brother, when he rose to meet the enemy, he thought God was with him, but He was alone! And some of us are walking and we don't even know that God's blessing and presence is not with us! Why? Because we're in such a routine of this religious activity stuff and we're just going with the course and we haven't yet sensed that God is long. I'm not talking about losing salvation. I'm just talking about the blessing of God leaving your family.

Undirected desire. Here's the last thing. I'm going to close with this.

Notice what he said. If my people... God's wanting to correct it. God's wanting to manifest His power.

God's wanting to draw feelingly near. But he said there's a problem. What are they? Unbroken wheels, unbent knees, undirected desires.

There's another problem. Unrepented hearts. He said, if my people who are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and here it is, turn from their wicked ways.

God says this unrepented hearts is grieving God. I'm going to tell you the most grievous thing that's going on in the church, I believe in this day, is this. We've got sins unconfessed in our lives.

We've got sin going on in the closet, in the secret place, and we haven't come out and got clean with God. We haven't come out and got clean with our parents. We haven't come out men and got clean with our wives.

And the result is God is not coming in power and doing something for us that we utterly cannot do. We want to say everything's alright, when the truth is things are not alright. I believe after pastoring for 20 years, I've seen about every sin in the church, just like we see sin in the street.

You say, oh no, it's not in our church. I'm not fooled, brother. I've seen it.

I've seen the problems. But the result is what? At times, we're not just getting honest with God. We think because our parents don't know, God doesn't know.

Or we think because our wife doesn't know, God doesn't know. Or maybe because our husband doesn't know, God doesn't know. I'm going to tell you something, God knows it all.

And He says, you know, if my people would just turn from their wicked ways, unrepented hearts. I'm going to tell you something, repentance is for the child of God. Repentance is for the child of God.

Once again, I'm going to tell you, if they would get right, if my neighbor would get right, if the school board would get right, if our leaders would get right, I'm going to tell you, this would be a better world. It may be, but I'm going to tell you, it would be a much better world if God's church would get right. Because we're right with God, God is able to manifest His power through us and use us in a glorious way.

But when we're walking around with sin unconfessed, things undealt with, with pride in our hearts and all this stuff, all we're doing is comparing ourselves with them and that group over there. We're saying, no, we're doing better. We couldn't go to that church because of this.

I'm going to tell you, God is grieved, brother. God is grieved. 1 Peter 4 says, For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

It must begin not with them out there, but with us in here, brethren. Not with that group, but this group. Not with those pastors, but us.

You're pastored me. Oh brethren, turn me quickly to Revelation in chapter 3. I love the Revelation. I've never preached to that book in Spanish, but I'm trying to these days.

I believe it's a sober word to the church about judgment and the hope of the church and the future and God's plans. It should give us a measure of confidence and hope and soberness. I see a great contrast here.

Revelation 2, verse 1. Jesus is revealed as the one who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. We see from the Word of God, He's speaking here of the seven churches. And Jesus is there walking in the midst of them.

Fillingly near. Isn't that something? There He is. And then by the end of things, we begin to see, I believe, historically speaking, we see something at least of the spiritual state of the church throughout its history.

I'm not a... We won't get into that. Chapter 3, verse 20. What does he say? Verse 19, what does God say to His church? As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent.

He's talking to the church. And we see that word repent many times in chapters 2 and 3 as Jesus speaks to His church. And here we say He's exhorting them, be zealous therefore and repent.

And He says in verse 20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me. This is fellowship unlimited and unhurried with Jesus.

The context here is not Jesus telling the world to repent. The context here is Jesus, sadly, sadly is outside the doors of the church saying, I want to come in. I want to come in and be close to you.

I want you to be close to me. I want to manifest My presence. I want to do for you what you cannot do for yourselves.

But I can't come in. You won't open the door. You're not willing to humble yourself and repent and acknowledge your need.

You're not willing to get real and get right and get honest and get humble with God. And Jesus says, so I'm on the outside. The picture here is Jesus on the outside.

We're on the inside enjoying ourselves. And Jesus is grieved out there. Hey! And who in the world is out there yelling? We're trying to have service.

He's trying to get our attention. He loves us. He wants to get close.

He wants to come and do something that...

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