

# Repairing the Altar

by Joshua Daniel

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*We must repair the broken altar of prayer and worship in our lives by humbling ourselves before God and throwing out the false altars of self and idolatry.*

**Duration:** 51:34

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:7, Exodus 29:42, Isaiah 43:22

**Topics:** "Personal Prayer", "Spiritual Revival"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a personal altar of prayer in our lives, drawing parallels to historical figures like Queen Victoria and biblical characters like Abraham and Manasseh. It highlights the need to repair and maintain our spiritual altars, focusing on genuine communication with God and humbling ourselves before Him. The ultimate altar, symbolized by the cross of Jesus, is central to experiencing God's mercy and love, urging listeners to prioritize prayer and intercession in their lives.

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## Transcript

You know, this song reminds me of Queen Victoria, the great Empress, Queen of England, Empress of India, and ruled half the globe. She heard one day a message of Jesus' return. And after the sermon, she went up to the preacher and said, I wish the Lord would come when I'm still on the throne, because I want to lay the crown of England at his feet.

So when we think of that glorious day, we must also think of what we will lay at his feet. Now, dear friends, we shall start. This is a huge subject which I have before me this morning.

Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou has been weary of me, O Israel. Thou has not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou has been weary of me, O Israel.

You know, we talk of being weary of this and weary of that. And I have yet to hear of people who are getting weary of all the sad and dark things that people are saying today. See, in a sense, it is sickening.

The very atmosphere appears to be sickening. What? No hope. Gloom.

Now, here, you know, we are not to be just diagnosticians. Suppose there's a hospital or a group of doctors who say, we only diagnose here. We don't cure anybody.

I wonder who will want to go there. So today, everybody has turned into a diagnostician. See, that's wrong.

And this is wrong. And that's wrong. This is wrong.

But nobody to suggest the cure. But God says, you have been weary of me. You won't call upon me.

In other words, there's no altar in your life. Now, that seems to be the root of the problem. No altar.

You know, when the heathen man, Abraham, obeyed the call of God, I wonder what concept he had of God. The heathen only seem to think of God as some terrible being. Powerful, yes, and terrible being.

If you turn to the 12th chapter of Genesis, you will find that when Abraham began to obey God, about the first thing that he did was in the seventh verse. And the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, unto your seed will I give this land. And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him.

An altar. He said, I need a place where I meet God. An altar.

You know, it's very amazing that in heathen homes, they set aside a room where they keep their gods, and they call it puja room, prayer room. In heathen homes, you can see it. If you go into a Chinese place of business, you will find a little shrine right in front.

They're not ashamed of it. You know, whatever figure they put inside or image, they have a place of prayer, they call it. And when business opens in the morning, the first thing they do is offer their prayers or their incense.

That's the first thing which they do. You know, one of those great engineers was Sir Arthur Cotton. He turned a great river into a source of great blessing for a whole district.

A mighty river almost three miles across. When I first drove over that anicut, as it is called, a little strong masonry structure which crossed the river right across. I said, my, three miles.

And he managed just, there was room for me to drive the car just upon that road. And the river was just about a yard away or four feet away from me, held by a little structure. Otherwise, the whole flow of water would have gone into the ocean.

By stopping the river, he managed to irrigate, give supply of water to a whole district. And it is such a prosperous district. Green and beautiful, as far as your eye can see.

Yes, and of course, it must have. And when he began his work every day, he would go on horseback. And before he got his workers to work, don't forget that was before concrete and that was before cement.

It was a masonry structure with which to the mighty river. He would gather all the crew and pray with them. That was his first act before he got them to work.

Yes, there were some people who were unashamed of their altar. I do not know how the White House is today. And when they have heathen festivals celebrated like Diwali, which is a purely fictitious mythological festival, replete with idolatry.

To bring it into the White House is an abomination that the nation must repent of. But you see people who are ashamed of prayer. I remember on the turnpike from New York to Philadelphia, I was in a little restaurant and there below the glass top was a little statement, a printed note.

Don't feel ashamed to bow your head and thank the Lord for your meal. Yes, there were people who were unashamed. And yet today we almost apologize if we are found at church or if we have an altar where we pray and where we want to be really private and cut off from the world.

People don't understand this. But here in the eighth verse, so Abraham moved on to the next mountain and at Bethel, the eighth verse, and there he built an altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. And he called upon the name of the Lord.

He was not ashamed now. If somebody asked him, hey, what's this that you put up here? It is an altar where I pray, where I call upon the almighty God, the name of the Lord. If you turn to Exodus chapter 29 and verse 42, God wanted that there should be a continual burnt offering.

This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak there unto you. So there was to be an altar, an offering made by fire unto the Lord and a continual burnt offering. You see? And the 44th verse, I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar.

I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons to minister to me in the priest's office. I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. So God wanted an altar.

And the 30th chapter begins with, thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon. You know, friends, a continual burnt offering. There were to be two lamps, one in the morning, one in the evening to be offered to the Lord.

And that was to be a continual process, you know, enjoying prayer, not as though it is something by rote. You know, some people say their prayers by rote and they hardly know what they're saying. And some of them have a system even today.

You know, they say their prayers in Syriac, in Latin and languages that they don't understand. They don't know what they're saying. You know, I was talking to a yoga teacher on the plane.

He said he was a yoga teacher. I asked him a question. All right, you say certain prayers and chants.

Do you understand them? No. What? You say prayers which you don't understand? Oh, our guru knows it. Our guru knows it.

My dear people, you see, that's what has happened to prayer today. Now over in Germany, they said to me, you see, saying prayers for the dead has got very costly over here. It is cheaper to send those prayers to Spain and Portugal, where it is less expensive to say those masses or those prayers for the dead.

I said, has it come to this? It's all to do with money. And you want prayers for the dead to get them out of purgatory into heaven. And so you want it done as cheaply as possible.

So you send those prayers over to priests in less expensive Spain. See, folks, we have made a kind of travesty of prayer, a ridiculous imitation of prayer. Did anybody teach you how to talk to your mother? Did anybody tell you how to call your dad dad? Did somebody teach you how to say mother? Nobody did.

It came from your heart. The altar is something which comes from your heart. You want to cry about father.

You are my father now. So the altar, abandoned by a people, by a nation, and what is placed instead? Some ceremony, a ceremonial ritualistic prayers by road. Now, my dear friends, can you ever displace those little warblings that come from a baby? How precious they are.

I used to kind of, you know, before my children became articulate and before they could talk, I would say all kinds of little noises to them, quack, quack, or something, and they would respond. You know, it was, it was a language which they understood before they could speak. Yes, they wanted to communicate.

There is in the heart of man the desire and the necessity to communicate with the heavenly father. And the abandoned, you know, some of our churches look really disused. All through the week they're shut up.

Cemeteries may speak of more activity, you see, because somebody is getting buried there. And so they have to keep it open, kind of, for people to come in and go out. But the altars are abandoned.

Now, what more do you see? In Genesis chapter 22, you see that marvelous altar which Abraham built. You know, that altar that speaks of the cross. Take now your only child, your beloved child, and go to a mountain that I will show you, and Abraham obeyed.

And offer him there, for a second verse, as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I tell you of. You see, he loved God more than the gifts of God. You know, we make a very big mistake there.

We love him for his gifts, you see. Well, I don't give too many gifts to people, except when they are in real trouble. But if people say to you, I only love you because of the gifts which you give me, otherwise you mean nothing to me.

You know, there should come a time of spiritual maturity when we say, hey, gift or no gift, I want the giver. I want the father of all mercies. I need Jesus just to love him because of his many gifts.

Yes, we all enjoy many gifts. See, I always feel that I am very ungrateful. I can't help feeling that I am very ungrateful, because I have so much to praise him for, that I am living at all is his mercy and his gift of life.

But suppose I love him just because of his gifts, how poor that relationship would be. Suppose your father became a really poor man, and he became a beggar. And you say, how can I love a beggar? No, he's my dad.

He's my dad. A great preacher said, the last time I saw my father was, he was so drunk, he was across the street, and he was abusing me, and wanted to kick me, or actually kicked him. Still, that was his dad.

So, my dear people, that cry in the heart. You see, I am preaching this sermon largely because I feel I am failing. Failing at the altar is real failure.

There's no failure comparable to that failure, where you meet with the Lord, and you intercede for others, and you have no such place in your life. You know, where do people put a TV? In almost any hotel room now, prominently. One of the first things that hotel boys do is walk into the room ahead of you, open the room, put your baggage, and turn the TV on.

They want the great communicator to be talking to you. I say, turn it off. Yes, you want to put it there.

You see it, or you hear it. So, my dear friends, we see the ultimate altar. What is the ultimate altar? The cross.

You know, Lenten time, and we are passing through the Lenten time, and people think of the diet at Lenten and other features. All right, I won't touch them. But where once and forever the offering for you and me was made, the cross.

And if you take the cross out, what have you got? You have nothing. And that's exactly what people do. They have managed to bypass the cross, to obliterate the cross, the love of the cross.

My dear people, of course, love makes you love in return. You cannot hate somebody who loves you. Can you? Somebody just loves you.

Is it possible to hate him, hate her? No. The coldest heart is awakened and responds to love. And if you have come to such a state where you don't respond to the cross, then let me tell you, you have suffered the ultimate death.

You're a dead soul and a dead spirit. Now, whatever is making you insensitive and unresponsive to the cross, you know, you must let it go. You must throw it out.

You know, you're only doing yourself a great favor. You're rescuing yourself. Anything that makes you unresponsive to the cross and the altar is not there in response.

My dear friend, throw it out because there should be nothing between you and the place of prayer or the heart of prayer. So, we are really living at some great distance from the cross. That's why we complain of the symptoms.

What are the symptoms? One of the symptoms is no time for prayer. No time for prayer? Suppose a mother says, I have no time to love you children. I'm just too busy.

I have no time to love you children. How can she be a mother? The prime duty of a mother is that love, that love which seeks to give the very best to the children, not the scorpion in place of the egg, not the snake in place of the fish. A mother wants to bring love.

She can't help it in a way. Nature has so formed a mother. But today, we can even see people afraid of motherhood.

Say, this child, this baby is going to take me off my professional career. Or some such stupid excuse. Now, folks, the ultimate altar, the cross, is it in place in your life? You know, in 1 Kings 18 and verse 30, you see the repairing of that altar.

You know, you need to, there is a time when an altar needs to be repaired. So, how did Elijah find the altar of the Lord? Verse 30, 1 Kings 18 and verse 30, Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him.

And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. So, they had, in the midst of all their idolatry, they had no use for the altar of God. And it was broken down.

And before Elijah could prove the living God to that idolatrous nation, he needed that altar. See, my dear friends, we may be full of good intentions, good, great plans. You know, we have some noble ideas.

But we are not able to turn them into real fruitful results. Why is that? There's no altar. The broken altar is not repaired.

So, your great thoughts or your great plans. You know, as I worked with young people all my life, this is what I found. Some of them had great ideas, great thoughts.

But the years went by. And today, when they are on the brink of the grave, they haven't got anything really accomplished. They had great thoughts.

But there was no real altar to back up those thoughts. You know, so people are full of great ideas. And every now and again, somebody comes up with a new idea, some wonderful idea.

But it doesn't work. It doesn't lift a nation. It doesn't turn a people from their destructive ways and their course of self-destruction.

What's the good of that? Now, my dear friends, so there is a repairing of the altar of the Lord. You know, you will find that one of the most wicked kings in the recorded history of the Bible, in the 33rd chapter of 2nd Chronicles, one of the most wicked kings, Manasseh. Now, this Manasseh had actually carved an image and set it up in the house of the Lord.

You know, he was that wicked. The 33rd chapter of 2nd Chronicles, in the fifth verse, he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, blazing sacrilege. He said, hey, come on, set up two altars.

I'm going to worship the moon and stars like some people do today. You see? And he caused his children to pass through the fire. He observed times, sixth verse, and used enchantments and used witchcraft and dealt with the familiar spirit and with wizards.

He wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. He set a carved image, the idol that he had made in the house of God. I don't know what you are putting in the place which should be a sacred place of prayer.

I see many people putting self. This man made an idol, a carved image, and he set it in there, in the temple of the Lord, as though he didn't care and dared God. Some people are daring God by setting up their own carved image.

And what is that carved image? Self, gratifying self. See, you know, there are various ways in which you gratify self. You know, the biggest sportsmen these days, they don't stay true to their families.

That's their sport. Running away from their families is their sport. Getting together with all kinds of wicked women is their sport.

What is it? Carved image, an idol, self. You know, when you put self in the place of God, it can have various manifestations. It can be sport, it can be money, it can be profession, it can be sex, it can be a number of other things.

But what are you doing? You're putting a carved image in the temple of the Lord. And now, my dear friend, God got this pride down, the pride of this man down. What? He was taken captive.

He was dragged amongst the thorns, 11th verse. Therefore the Lord brought upon him the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

He needed a right altar, and though he threw it out of his house, out of his life, yet there came the time when he said, I have no one else to turn to except the living God, one of the most wicked on record in the Bible, Manasseh. He humbled himself greatly. So, my dear friends, we must not despair of those who are too proud.

You know, they appear too proud and self-sufficient. They scoff at the things of God. They call it waste of time, going to retreats and so on.

But we should not lose heart. You know, folks, we should not lose heart. God has a way of bringing them to book.

And here, God brought this man to book, and he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and prayed unto him. Thirteenth verse. And God is so merciful.

He was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. And what did he do immediately? He took away, the fifteenth verse, the strange gods and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

That's it. All those false altars must go. He cast them out of the city.

You know, when there isn't the true altar of prayer, you will get these false altars. There are so many things that make demands upon you. Upon your talents, upon your resources.

And, you know, those are real altars of the devil. And they have to be thrown out. He threw them out of the city.

Sixteenth verse. And he repaired the altar of the Lord. You know, it takes some doing, you know.

I'm going to repair the altar of the Lord. There's going to be a time when I'm going to meet him. That is, I will set aside a time.

You know, if I had not set aside that evening hour for God, I would have just been a talker, a vain talker all my life. I have great thoughts, great ideas, but no implementation. I believe in implementation.

I don't believe in all kinds of fanciful ideas and thoughts that cannot be executed. So, if I had only neglected that time, I used to come back so tired from a match, a cricket match. All through the day, you stand in the sun.

Or a tennis match. I used to come back so tired, you know. But I would never miss that time of prayer.

I would go alone and pray. The altars have to be repaired, my friends. If we are going to get anything done in our short lives, and desolate altars, I can't spend much time with that.

Ezekiel 6.6, the altar shall be desolate. Desolate. And now the prayer meetings have become desolate in many places.

And that is the next thing that happens. The church becomes empty, the blessing stops, the nation begins to go on a nosedive. These are all consequences.

No altar. You know, when you read the story of the founders of the nation, John Adams, the second president, he would stop his horse, put it in the stable, on his way to Washington, the Lord's Day. He would get off, he'll spend the Lord's Day carefully.

And then, the business of state, he had to ride a very long way through the snows, you see. And that at a time of battle, when British forces were closing in, but he would stick to the Lord's Day. My dear people, those were men to whom the altar meant something.

And today, if we try to bypass the altar, we are finished. But the Lord will help us to go to the greatest altar of all, the cross of Jesus, to humble ourselves. Let us pray.

Let us tell God, Oh God, let not my altars be broken down. Save me, Father, to make time at the altar, the altar of prayer, the altar of intercession. How much I seem to fail at the altar in intercession, in the shedding of tears for the nations.

Gracious Father, we pray and ask you, at this time when the world appears to be standing at a crossroads, a critical crossroads, and the nation, Oh my Father, give to us that humility that came to Manasseh, that hard man, bent on his idolatry and indulgence of self. Oh my Father, that we too may humble ourselves. We pray and ask you, repair the altar.

Lord, let not our altars be desolate. We pray, we cry to you, teach us how to make room for the altar, the centrality of the place of prayer, the heart of prayer, the pure conscience with which to lift up holy hands. Please, Father, don't let America choose heedlessly its own destruction, nor any of us choose the damnation of our souls or the souls of our loved ones.

Teach us to pray. Instruct us. Teach us, Father, teach us.

If needs be, chastise us and teach us that the altar may never be moved out of its place, and the false altars may be thrown out of our city like Manasseh did. We ask this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

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