

Accessing the Power of Desperate Prayer

“Transformation of an enterprise begins with a sense of crisis or urgency,” he told the students. “No institution will go through fundamental change unless it believes it is in deep trouble and needs to do something different to survive.” –Lou Gertsner, former CEO of IBM, at Harvard Business School, December 2002.

Today we are living in very challenging, critical and volatile times. Every day the news is filled with more human tragedy or disaster. Crises are escalating at an unprecedented rate. We cannot afford to put our heads in the sand and pretend everything is okay. We also cannot afford to slip into depression and sleepwalk through life, hoping it will turn out all right. We simply cannot hit our snooze buttons any longer while ignoring the sounding warnings and alarms around us. We must respond!

Joel, an ancient prophet, spoke of a wake-up call to a nation in crisis. He pleaded for his nation to gather before God in a great sacred assembly. Their time of great crisis and need called for a corporate response, a response of corporate prayer, repentance and renewed consecration before God. They had to recognize that they could not save themselves; it would take God’s intervention. America is now in such a state of crisis. The epic crises facing our nation and threatening our future demands an epic response.

In ancient Israel, when the commander of the Assyrian army threatened Israel with annihilation, King Hezekiah knew he could do nothing to save his nation. Desperate and overwhelmed, he realized their only hope was to seek the Lord in passionate prayer. He took the threatening letters and laid them out before the Lord. He tore his clothes, put on

sackcloth and prayed. First, he acknowledged the nation's helplessness, praying, "This day is a day of distress, chastisement, and disgrace, for children have come to the mouth of the womb, but there is no strength to birth them" (2 Kings 19:3).

Then Hezekiah declared the greatness of God and petitioned the Lord for help. His prayer proclaimed that God alone is God, Creator of the heavens and earth. He pleaded that God would open His eyes to see and His ears to hear the threats against the nation and that God would come to their aid. In authentic humility, Hezekiah prayed and God intervened.

Today the nations are again raging and the whole earth groaning. Human wisdom and ideologies cannot save us. Our institutions have failed us.

A wise king named Solomon once said, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12a). He also said, "A merry heart does good like a medicine" (Prov. 17:22a). Many of us are desperate and overwhelmed, our hearts are sick with despair. Too many are losing hope and find themselves in need of strength to move forward. We need to cry out to the Lord for His intervention. We need to realize He is our only hope, but He is a great Savior!

Throughout history, humble and honest leaders have called upon the Lord in authentic repentance and consecration, asking God to hear from heaven and heal their land. Even George Washington, when faced with an impossible situation in the Revolutionary War, commissioned a flag with the words "An Appeal to Heaven," a phrase from John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* acknowledging that God was our country's only hope.

In this day of difficulty and chaos, we need an appeal to heaven once again. It starts with us. Moses prayed, "Show me now your way" (Ex. 33:13b). The prophet Jeremiah, speaking to the people on behalf of God at a time when his nation was

facing great difficulties, reminded them to call on God so He could show them “great and mighty things which [they did] not know” (Jer. 33:3b). He shared with them that God wanted to renew His covenant with His people and restore the nation, if they would acknowledge Him as Lord.

James, one of the early church fathers, said, “The effective and fervent prayer of the righteous accomplishes much” (James 5:16b). Today more than ever, we need to be a people who pray effectively and passionately. As the late Leonard Ravenhill often said, “God doesn’t answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer.” Our private posture with God affects our public influence; humility before God gives us a right heart.

As in the days of Hezekiah, we are living in overwhelming, desperate times. As I have traveled the globe, I have come across people from countries like Iran, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, Uganda, Nigeria, India and many other regions who are praying fervently for America because they know that if the heart of our nation, which is the church, is awakened, then the soul of the nation will be healed, and they too will become beneficiaries.

Will we, out of our own desperate situation, come before God in authentic humility, repentance and consecration? And would He incline His ear to hear our cries and be moved to turn an impossible situation around? Our only hope is an appeal to heaven, coming in humility before the living God, pleading for His intervention on behalf of our nation and the world.

If we come out of desperation and not with religious incantations and shallow platitudes, God can hear from heaven and heal our land. Only He can heal the soul of our nation, as He reconfirms His covenant and restores our foundations. {eo}

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