

Can Tony Evans' Prayer Strategy Turn America Back to God?

Our nation is in troubled waters. Have you noticed?

Every newscast reminds us of our national woes. Terrorism has destroyed any false illusions of security and safety. We see bitter political discourse and finger pointing. There is growing distrust of political institutions, rising racial tensions, and the breakdown of the nuclear family, biblical marriage and traditional moral standards. The cord has seemingly been loosed.

Now amid this tumult—as the people of the world grind their teeth—God's people, the church of Jesus Christ, are called to do something entirely peculiar.

We are called to hit our knees in humble desperation.

I've said it before in the pages of this magazine, yet it bears repeating: The future of our culture is in the hands of Christians because the cause of our demise is innately spiritual. If we Christians are going to turn our nation to God, we've got to fall on our knees and our faces before God and pray.

But not just any kind of praying will do. God requires the right kind of praying.

Humble Ourselves

There's a definite attitude of heart that God is looking for when Christians pray. God is seeking those who will "humble themselves." This humble position is the first prerequisite we see in perhaps the best-known passage about a nation seeking

God in its distress: 2 Chronicles 7:14.

“If My people who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

God is seeking humble Christians. Humility marks those who understand that, without Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Too many of us are autonomous and self-sufficient in our own minds. We don't really believe that we need God. He is for emergencies only. We say, “God, don't call me; I'll call You.”

To put prayer last means to put God last. And to put God last means everything else we do is a waste of time.

Seek His Face

The Lord goes on in 2 Chronicles 7:14 to call His people to “seek My face.” Don't miss the context, which is people losing their focus on God's face. What has turned people away from God is sin, so we are the ones who must come to *Him* on His terms. Prayer is not a process of negotiation. We don't come before God's face and say, “Now, God, let me tell You what I'm going to do. Let's make a deal.”

No, we are the ones whose culture is crumbling because of sin and rebellion against God, so we had better be the ones who are seeking God's terms of reconciliation.

Repent

Notice in 2 Chronicles 7:14 that “seek My face” is closely linked with “turn from their wicked ways.” This is how we seek God's face—by turning from our sin.

The biblical idea here is repentance, turning away from something that displeases God and turning toward something that pleases Him. If you want God to show His face to you,

then you must turn toward Him. And that involves turning away from anything that is contrary to His will.

The reason the culture is crumbling is that Christians refuse to forsake their own sins. God will not negotiate His standards. He wants us to place ourselves under the authority of His Word and conform to it.

God's people have allowed themselves to be shaped and defined by the culture. So we wind up giving God what everybody else is giving Him, which is a polite nod.

We must repent.

Hearing and Healing

Upon our humble recognition of our insufficiency, our seeking His face and our turning toward Him in repentance of anything contrary to His will, "Then," God says, "I will hear from heaven." And more than that, God promises to forgive sin and heal the land when we get His attention.

Once God's people are forgiven, then God is free to "heal their land." That is, the effects of their righteousness will spill over to the environment in which they live.

If our culture is to be granted a stay of execution, it will be because God's people are a force for spiritual and emotional healing in our land. For example, if the whole concept of marriage and family is to be salvaged, it will happen when Christians get their marriages and families lined up with God's commands.

You may say, "America is too far gone. How are we going to change public education, government and the media?" You change those things by having new people in those places who are going to represent Jesus Christ and His frame of reference. That doesn't mean only Christians are qualified to serve in government or that politics is the primary force of change—but

it does mean that the political realm is a legitimate sphere of influence for some believers.

If enough Christians in places of responsibility in the fields of medicine, law, government, education, the media and even the church begin to humble themselves and pray and seek God's face and turn from their wicked ways, we could influence this culture and make the presence of Christ felt top to bottom and bottom to top.

That's what God is after. He wants people who will commit themselves to Him personally and in their families, and then move out to be salt and light for Him.

We have a great God who is willing to forgive and heal our land ... if He can find some people who are ready "to humble themselves and pray and seek (His) face and turn from their wicked ways."

When we do that, He can turn the trajectory of our nation around. {eo}

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