



"The Church with a Difference"

Never Underestimate the Power of Prayer

Our reading today is from Chapter 54 of Isaiah. The connection is in verses 8-9: **"For with a slight wrath have I concealed my countenance from you for a moment, but with eternal kindness shall I show you mercy, said your Redeemer. For like the waters of Noah shall this be to me: as I have sworn never again to pass the waters of Noah over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wrathful with you, or rebuke you."**

Why is the flood in **Genesis 7** considered to be "the waters of Noah"? Why is it not called the waters of the generation of Noah? In what sense is it Noah's flood? In this context of scripture, if you are a keen student of the bible who doesn't just scratch the surface, you will realize that Noah did not ask for

mercy for his generation. The flood is called by Noah's name because he did not sufficiently pray for his contemporaries. I know someone somewhere may raise a case that Noah should not be faulted for this. Notice this; that God came to Noah and announced that the people of the earth were wicked and that He was going to destroy them. The Scripture elaborates on the perversion and the wickedness of that generation. God commanded Noah to build an ark to save his family and selected mates from each species. Noah did not question God's judgment. He didn't pray to Him to suspend His plans. Noah's prayers **could** have reversed God's judgment and brought the people to repentance from the corruption that had gone on for **many years.**

This is a typical example of the incredible power of prayer. Our reading from **Genesis 8:20-22** implicitly tells us that yes indeed, had Noah prayed, he would have prevented the flood. It seems like he did not have sufficient faith in the power of his own prayers for the people and therefore the flood came and was even called by his name; **the waters of Noah.** He only preached to them without praying for them. We need to do both.

The proof that Noah's prayers could have helped is what we read after the end of the flood: **"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every pure animal and of every pure bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, and the Lord said in His heart: 'I will not continue to curse again the ground because of man... Nor will I again continue to smite every living being as I have done.'" [Genesis 8:20-21].** Noah's prayers are accepted and God concedes that Noah is right. **"Never again will I bring a flood!"** We see that the prayer did work. Conceivably, had Noah built such an altar and offered such a prayer before the flood, the flood might never have happened.

However, in some extreme cases, even though righteous people are present and pray much as Job and Daniel did, God has His limits.

"Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ¹³ "Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast, ¹⁴ even *though* these

three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves,” declares the Lord God. ¹⁵ “If I were to cause wild beasts to pass through the land and they depopulated it, and it became desolate so that no one would pass through it because of the beasts, ¹⁶ *though* these three men were in its midst, as I live,” declares the Lord God, “they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the country would be desolate.

In **Jeremiah 7:17**, God even says not to pray for the people. “As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you.”

Therefore -- in view of their abandonment to destruction without any remedy -- God commanded Jeremiah:

1. Not to pray for Judah.
2. Not to lift up a cry (or prayer) for them.
3. Not to make intercession for them.

In **Jeremiah 14:7-9** we have an intercessory prayer offered by Jeremiah, but it was not answered.

Even so, God is always seeking for a person who will stand in the gap for the family, community and nation. In **Ezekiel 22:30-31**, it says, **“And I sought for a man among them, 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. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord.”**

It is like two people who are taken ill with the same illness or two criminals who are convicted of the same crime. It is possible for one to get better and the other one not to get better. It is possible for one to be ultimately acquitted and one not be acquitted. One can live and the other one can die. Why is this so? Because one who prays has his prayers answered, the other who doesn't pray has nothing for God to answer. The one who prays a “complete prayer” is answered and the one who does not pray a “complete prayer” is not answered.

What is the definition of a “complete prayer” versus an “incomplete prayer”? A “complete prayer” indicates that the

person believes in the power of his prayer. He believes in the Power of the Almighty and the power of his own prayers and he is therefore answered. One person believes in the power of his prayer, however, the other person does not have confidence that his prayer would be answered.

A sister was once sick and nothing helped her. She went to her brother and asked that he might help her. He looked at her and said, "There is nothing I can do for you" and then slammed the door in her face. His sister then started crying, "Master of the Universe, my own brother won't help me. You must help me!" The brother then opened the door and said, "This is what I wanted to hear. It is not your brother who can help you or the doctors who can help you; it is only the Almighty that can help you. I just wanted to bring you to that realization. Once you have come to that realization, then you will be fine." This is the definition of a "complete prayer". Most of the time we run to people instead of running to God first.

One man said that prayers are matters "that stand at the heights of the world," yet people treat them lightly. Many times, we pray and our prayers have cosmic impact, even though we do not

recognize that fact and even though we may think that our prayers have gone unanswered. We do not see the results, because sometimes the effect is not felt until generations later. We think that when we pray for our sick family member that the prayers have to help our sick family member. That is understandable. But something else we need to know is, many times, even though the specific person in critical condition may pass on, our prayers for him or her may have impact to save many others lives. Glory to God!!

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