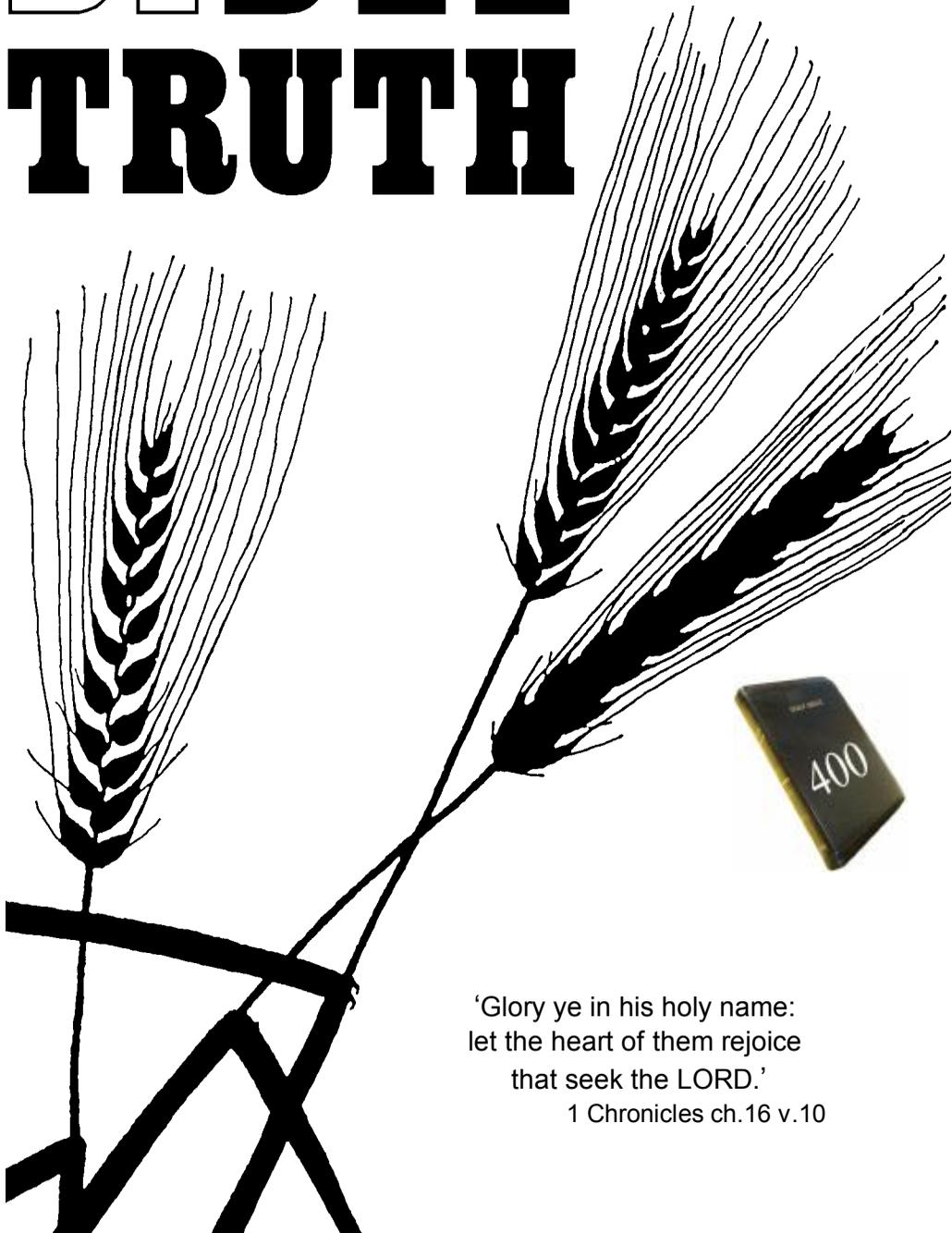


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'Glory ye in his holy name:
let the heart of them rejoice
that seek the LORD.'

1 Chronicles ch.16 v.10

PRAYING WHEN WE SHOULD BE REPENTING

BY ROBERT RECORD

Some time ago I tuned to a religious broadcast on the TV where great concern was being expressed for the safety and future of our country. At least four preachers from across the country waxed eloquent in prayer asking God to come to the rescue of our nation. Nothing was said about the sins of our country and its leaders as being the cause of our national plight. Thus nobody prayed that our nation recognise its sins and repent. There was not any recognition that we had brought the troubles on ourselves. They were just bemoaning the fact that evil and wicked men were getting the upper hand, and imploring God to come to our rescue.

It is important to remember that when the Divine perspective of things has been lost, when many are reading into the Bible things that are not written therein, it is unlikely that many people are praying the prayer of repentance, for the kingdom of God to come, and the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer can only be effective when it is uttered in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word and promises of God. Therefore, even if all churches were to gather for prayer, and if every member in them prayed, they would not necessarily be heard for all their speaking and praying, no matter how sincere.

It would be worthwhile at this point to turn to the first chapter of the Book of Isaiah. Here our Israel forefathers were facing captivity and divorcement from God. They had been living in sin and idolatry for years and had refused to heed the warning of the prophets to repent. In v.4 the Lord describes them as 'Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers ...'. They were a people who had forsaken Jehovah and who had provoked Him to anger. The point is they did not think so, they were still very religious. However God speaks thus to the civil leaders as 'ye rulers of Sodom', and the citizens under them as, 'ye people of Gomorrah' (v.10). The people thus characterised were offering the sacrifices required by law. They were going through the form of worship, even to the point of praying. But God has this warning for them.

‘And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.’

Isaiah ch.1 v.15

The people thus addressed were the ‘churchgoers’. These words are addressed to a people who professed to love God and who were actively engaged in the religious rites of the day. But they were not listening to God, or walking in obedience to His Word.

How well does this describe much of the religious life in the Western World today? The people are still very religious, profess to love God and go through a form of worship. They are concerned, as were our fathers, about the plight of these nations, and offer up prayers to God for victory and deliverance, but they do not seem to understand why they are in trouble. How, then, can there be effective prayer?

Many quote glibly and freely such scriptures as 2 Chronicles ch.7 v.14 where the Lord, Jehovah, is replying to Solomon’s prayer in ch.6 as he dedicated the temple. It is plain when reading Solomon’s prayer of dedication, to see that it was a prayer for the nation of Israel. At this point in time the Jews were a religious sect, and were unknown and unheard of, so it was not a prayer for them. Solomon prayed that if Israel were in trouble because of sin and God sought to punish them by withholding the rain or if Israel were put to the sword by her enemies, his plea was that they would pray, turn from their sin and that God would hear from heaven and forgive them.

This is God’s response to Solomon’s prayer.

‘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.’

2 Chronicles ch.7 v.14

It would be stretching the imagination to say that Jehovah-God was even intimating or alluding to a Gentile church. It is a precious promise to Israel, few of which are Jews. Yet the clergy of our day quote this promise time and time again as though it referred to Christians, irrespective of their racial or national origin. Their minds are so cluttered with fable and tradition about the Jews being Israel, and the church being Gentile (or non-Israel) that they do not see the absurdity of applying this verse to Gentiles. Had they read their Bibles, particularly the Old Testament, with any degree of

understanding, they would have known that Israel was destined to become the 'sons of the living God'. They would also have known that Israel, not the Gentiles, were to be God's servants and witnesses to the rest of the world. Who is it that has served as God's witnesses in this Christian dispensation? Has it been the Jews? Has it been those from any nation? Just where, and within which people, did the great spiritual revivals break out in the Reformation period beginning with Martin Luther? It was in the peoples of Western Europe. Over 90% of the world's missionary activity was carried out by the United States and Britain. This did not just happen. It was God fulfilling His Kingdom purposes in the people He chose to be His servants and witnesses. It is proof positive that the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and English speaking peoples are modern national Israel. Not to see this, or to read the word, Jew, into the Bible every time the word, Israel, is mentioned, or alluded to, is to do irreparable harm to the Scriptures and to the thinking of God's people. Yet this is exactly the situation confronting the people of Christendom (Anglo-Saxondom) today.

Having either spiritualized Israel and given her promises to a Gentile Church or, taken Israel's promises and mistakenly applied them to the Jew, a religious sect classed with Protestants and Catholics, religious leaders by and large have taken to spiritualizing the kingdom and supplanting it with heaven above.

They have lost the Divine perspective of things, and the meaning of the developing crisis. Now let me ask you, how can a people whose eyes are blinded by fable and tradition, and whose ears are filled with religious ear wax, ever read their Bibles with any degree of understanding as to its overall message, or pray effectively for God to come to the aid of His people? If these people had their way, they would forever defeat the kingdom purposes of God. To be sure, they believe in Christ, and they are busy trimming their lamps preparatory to the return of Christ the second time, but it has not yet dawned on them that their lamps are going out and that the traditions they preach are not God's message for this hour.

Please note that one of the reasons why God would not hear the prayers of our forefathers was because 'their hands were full of blood'. Whatever did He mean by that? The answer is to be found in such scriptures as Numbers ch.35 vv 30-34. Here we are told that if the judges or the courts let murderers go free for a bribe or for some sentimental or emotional reason, and did not mete out capital

punishment for capital crimes, that this failure to exact justice polluted the land and the nation had blood on its hands.

Today our land is filled with 'sob sisters' who are constantly decrying the bestiality of putting murderers and rapists to death. With soft-headed judges occupying seats in many courts, our prisons are literally bursting at the seams with murderers who have not paid for their crimes, and many of them are let out on good behaviour to repeat their crimes. Such action and leniency is a violation of Divine Law and is inviting the judgement of God. This failure to exact justice, says God, is the reason why He will not answer prayer for the nation.

The fact is, we are basically a lawless nation within which many of our clergy labour under the delusion that salvation by grace removes the necessity of God's Law. Discard the Law of God and you are left without any standards of right and wrong — save what is deemed to be right in the eyes of mankind. We are thus left without any absolutes or authority higher than man to deal with sin. In a hundred different ways we are violating the law of God without a twinge of conscience because we are blind to the laws we are transgressing.

Many surely will have heard it said that 'prayer changes things', but this is not always true. Prayer changes things if it is offered to God in faith and in keeping with His will and Word.

The condition of God hearing our prayers is not simply that we seek His face, but that we turn from our wicked ways. This we are making no effort to do. We labour under the delusion that because we are 'saved and ready for heaven' no other preparation is necessary. No, we are not saved by our works, but there is a righteousness of works, and of obedience to God, that God recognises and demands. It is only in this way that we can work out our salvation and walk in His will.

I mention these things relative to the Divine Law because they are either ignored or forgotten in our national life today, and it is the basic cause of most of our troubles. The law of God sets forth a way of life — God's way in contrast to ours. In complete disregard of God's word and law, we are given to taking the way that seems right unto us. In the Book of Proverbs we are told,

'There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death'.

Proverbs ch.14 v.12

From time to time in our great country we have national days of prayer. And God knows we need such days. But I have yet to read where there was ever a confession or repentance of our national sins, and a realisation that we need to return to God. We tell God of our great needs, but nobody points to the sins which are damning our nation and inviting the judgment of God. We read in Proverbs ch.14 v.34 that 'Righteousness exalteth a nation ...' but our righteousness consists of walking with God in the light of His Word.
