

HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

I Will Heal Your Land

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, March 9, 2014

This month, I am preaching a series of messages on “Healing and Deliverance—Praying the Really BIG Prayers.” As I said last week, this topic is essentially Christian, because Jesus Christ “*went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil*” (Acts 10:38). Furthermore, He told His disciples, “*These signs will follow those who believe in My name, they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover*” (Mark 16:17-18). And this theme is especially Pentecostal, because we believe the Holy Spirit is still active today in these Biblical ways.

Our theme Scripture for this series is Acts 10:38:

You know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Healing is a wonderful and broad subject—one that impacts the human spirit, mind, body, society, and the planet itself.

Last week I spoke of the basics. If we hope to pray effectively for the healing and deliverance of others, we must first learn to watch and pray effectively for ourselves—to avoid and overcome temptations. One New Testament writer said, “*Without peace and holiness, a person will never see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14). Peace and holiness. Peace from temptations averted, and holiness from temptations overcome.

This describes the classroom of everyday prayer in which we learn to know and trust the Lord in practical and persistent ways.

Today, we turn our thoughts outward, to covenantal prayers. These are prayers that establish agreements with God about how we will act and respond to His hand in our lives, on the one hand, and how He will act and respond to our prayers, on the other hand.

Dedicated to Worship

We’re going to learn this from a classic prayer for healing—personal, social, and societal healings—in the Old Testament.

When God chose to reveal Himself and His ways to the tiny nation of Israel, He gave to Moses, His chosen leader, a plan for a mobile worship center—the Tabernacle—which for two generations provided a portable tent for meeting with God.

Once the people of Israel had settled in the land God gave to them, David their king, purposed to build a more permanent dwelling place for God's presence. He designed a temple, and gathered materials for it, but it was his son, Solomon, who actually led the people to build it.

When the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem was completed, Solomon offered a prayer of dedication—because this was not just a building, but the House of God. It was more than a place for people to gather; it was a place for God to meet with His people. It was to be a House of Worship and a House of Prayer.

In his dedicatory prayer, Solomon praised the Lord for His unfailing love and His faithful covenant with His people. He pled for God to fulfill His promises to His people, and requested a prayer covenant with Israel—with three affirmations of God's attentiveness and seven requests for clemency. Take the time to read the entire prayer here:

2 Chronicles 6:14-42

Praise for God's Faithfulness

¹⁴ “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You keep your covenant and show unfailing love to all who walk before you in wholehearted devotion. ¹⁵ You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and with your own hands you have fulfilled it today.

¹⁶ “And now, O Lord, God of Israel, carry out the additional promise you made to your servant David, my father. For you said to him, ‘If your descendants guard their behavior and faithfully follow my Law as you have done, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.’ ¹⁷ Now, O Lord, God of Israel, fulfill this promise to your servant David.

Three Affirmations of God's Attentiveness

¹⁸ “But will God really live on earth among people? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built! ¹⁹ Nevertheless, listen to my prayer and my plea, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is making to you. ²⁰ May you watch over this Temple day and night, this place where you have said you would put your name. May you always hear the prayers I make toward this place. ²¹ May you hear the humble and earnest requests from me and your people Israel when we pray toward this place. Yes, hear us from heaven where you live, and when you hear, forgive.

Seven Requests for Clemency

²² “If someone wrongs another person and is required to take an oath of innocence in front of your altar at this Temple, ²³ then hear from heaven and judge between your servants—the accuser and the accused. Pay back the guilty as they deserve. Acquit the innocent because of their innocence.

²⁴ “If your people Israel are defeated by their enemies because they have sinned against you, and if they turn back and acknowledge your name and pray to you here in this Temple,²⁵ then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and return them to this land you gave to them and to their ancestors.

²⁶ “If the skies are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and if they pray toward this Temple and acknowledge your name and turn from their sins because you have punished them,²⁷ then hear from heaven and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them to follow the right path, and send rain on your land that you have given to your people as their special possession.

²⁸ “If there is a famine in the land or a plague or crop disease or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people’s enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever disaster or disease there is—²⁹ and if your people Israel pray about their troubles or sorrow, raising their hands toward this Temple,³⁰ then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people what their actions deserve, for you alone know each human heart.³¹ Then they will fear you and walk in your ways as long as they live in the land you gave to our ancestors.

³² “In the future, foreigners who do not belong to your people Israel will hear of you. They will come from distant lands when they hear of your great name and your strong hand and your powerful arm. And when they pray toward this Temple,³³ then hear from heaven where you live, and grant what they ask of you. In this way, all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do. They, too, will know that this Temple I have built honors your name.

³⁴ “If your people go out where you send them to fight their enemies, and if they pray to you by turning toward this city you have chosen and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name,³⁵ then hear their prayers from heaven and uphold their cause.

³⁶ “If they sin against you—and who has never sinned?—you might become angry with them and let their enemies conquer them and take them captive to a foreign land far away or near.³⁷ But in that land of exile, they might turn to you in repentance and pray, ‘We have sinned, done evil, and acted wickedly.’³⁸ If they turn to you with their whole heart and soul in the land of their captivity and pray toward the land you gave to their ancestors—toward this city you have chosen, and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name—³⁹ then hear their prayers and their petitions from heaven where you live, and uphold their cause. Forgive your people who have sinned against you.

Summary

⁴⁰ “O my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to all the prayers made to you in this place.

⁴¹ “And now arise, O Lord God, and enter your resting place, along with the Ark, the symbol of your power.

May your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation; may your loyal servants rejoice in your goodness.

⁴² “O Lord God, do not reject the king you have anointed. Remember your unfailing love for your servant David.”

Could you learn to pray more effectively from studying Solomon's prayer? I don't doubt that you could.

Could you use this prayer as one model for your own prayers? I am sure that you can.

Consider this simple 4-point outline as one guide for your prayer time:

- Offer praise to God for His faithfulness
- Affirm God's goodness and promises of provision
- Present your requests as "if-then" scenarios—"If this happens, then, God, will you hear and respond according to Your promise?"
- Summarize your heart's cry with thanksgiving and praise.

Pray for Impact

What happened after Solomon's prayer was nothing short of spectacular! There was an immediate response from Heaven. There was an immediate impact on the people. And there was a protracted response from the people, as well.

2 Chronicles 7:1-10

Response from Heaven

¹ When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple.

Immediate Impact

² The priests could not enter the Temple of the Lord because the glorious presence of the Lord filled it. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the Lord filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying, "He is good! His faithful love endures forever!"

Protracted Response

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices to the Lord. ⁵ King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats. And so the king and all the people dedicated the Temple of God. ⁶ The priests took their assigned positions, and so did the Levites who were singing, "His faithful love endures forever!" They accompanied the singing with music from the instruments King David had made for praising the Lord. Across from the Levites, the priests blew the trumpets, while all Israel stood.

⁷ Solomon then consecrated the central area of the courtyard in front of the Lord's Temple. He offered burnt offerings and the fat of peace offerings there, because the bronze altar he had built could not hold all the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sacrificial fat.

⁸ For the next seven days Solomon and all Israel celebrated the Festival of Shelters. A large congregation had gathered from as far away as Lebo-hamath in the north and the Brook of Egypt in the south. ⁹ On the eighth day they had a closing ceremony, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the Festival of Shelters for seven days. ¹⁰ Then at the end of the celebration, Solomon sent the people home.

They were all joyful and glad because the Lord had been so good to David and to Solomon and to his people Israel.

It was a long worship service! But the people were happy and fulfilled. And they took that satisfaction home with them.

Do you think, after a meeting like that, they had difficulty speaking with their neighbors about the goodness of God or their experience at church? No, of course not.

What was the foundation for that exciting service of worship? Was it special guest musicians or singers? Was it a powerful preacher? Was it a slew of giveaways for the congregants?

It wasn't even the new sanctuary building, though that was the frame for it.

It was the prayer service that dedicated the building and the people to the glory of God! That service was a direct answer to prayer!

More Than a Building

Now, let me get right in your face for a few minutes—not in an unkind manner (because I care too much for you), but because I want you to know the Lord in ways like this, like He is described in this passage.

The remodel project that we have planned over the last two years will refresh our building and its systems—no doubt! But it was not designed or planned merely for that purpose. If that was all we wanted, we could have done what we have done in the past—repainted the walls, recovered the floors, replaced the lighting and the sound equipment. Some people might have been satisfied with that and considered it more thrifty-conscious.

But there was more to it than that! God imparted a vision for ministry that requires something more.

You see, apart from the aging condition of the building, the very design and arrangement of the building has stifled us in ways that only became apparent over a long time.

For years, members have expressed to me their hunger for deeper relationships with fellow believers in the church, yet the very structure where we gather divides us from one another, constricts our meetings to certain limited purposes, and discourages us from pressing past the well-worn boundaries of our short-term relationships. This building doesn't make deeper relationships impossible, but it creates extra hurdles that make them less likely.

The changes we have planned will address those failings. Let me speak today about the changes we will make in just this room. The sloping floor is good for auditorium viewing, but for almost nothing else. When we remove the slope, all kinds of uses and arrangements will become possible. Besides a new kitchen and a new nursery in place of the stage, and a new classroom on one side at the back, the rest of this space will be open for various uses—which is why we have called this our Lobby/Café/Chapel.

Across one end of the kitchen will be a coffee and snack bar—much more functional and attractive than the plastic tables we use in our present lobby. In front of the coffee bar will be several small tables with chairs, for intimate conversations over a cup of tea or coffee.

Across the room, the space between the nursery and the classroom will be filled with comfortable seating nooks—couches and armchairs—for relaxed conversations or small group studies, or just sitting and reading.

The remaining space in the middle will provide a large area for meeting, gathering, and lingering together—about six times the size of our present lobby.

Move a few things around and set out chairs for up to fifty people and this room becomes a community meeting hall, or a chapel for smaller services or weddings or youth meetings or children's church, or a small luncheon or dining hall.

Natural lighting from the windows, plus improved and adjustable lighting fixtures will help us create a variety of attractive and useful atmospheres. Decorative furnishings and wall décor will make this space both homey and inspiring.

I believe all of this will help real people—your friends, neighbors, and family members—develop real relationships with God and with one another. Isn't that what you want to do? Isn't that who you want to reach?

Can a building really do that? When it is planned and bathed in prayer it can!

We're already experimenting with such ideas in our renovated library, over in the office building. And the impact has been remarkable, both for learning and for fellowship!

I want you to get on board with this project. I want you to pray for a vision of how *you* will use this renovated space, how we can use it to reach people with the message of Jesus' love and grace. I want you to be a partner in this ministry movement. Pray for the project—to see what God plans to do with what we build.

Then One Night

So, Israel finished building the Temple, and they celebrated for a solid week, with worship and feasting. Then everyone returned home. The city emptied out. The priests put away their instruments. The smoke from the altars dissipated. The merchants closed up their shops. The happy noise and commotion ceased. Once again, the sound of individual sandals could be heard as they shuffled along the streets. Things were returning to normal.

The people heaved a collective sigh of relief and satisfaction and rest. And then it happened...! Then one night God answered Solomon's prayer.

2 Chronicles 7:11-16

¹¹ So Solomon finished the Temple of the Lord, as well as the royal palace. He completed everything he had planned to do in the construction of the Temple and the palace. ¹² Then one night the Lord appeared to Solomon and said,

"I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices. ¹³ At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or command grasshoppers to devour your crops, or send plagues among you. ¹⁴ Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. ¹⁵ My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. ¹⁶ For I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be holy—a place where my name will be honored forever. I will always watch over it, for it is dear to my heart."

God answered every one of Solomon's requests. He agreed to everything that Solomon requested. He made a covenant with him in that very place.

He said, "I will hear," "I will forgive," and "I will restore." "*My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place.*"

A bold promise in response to a bold prayer!

A promise that you and I may lay hold of, though 3,000 years have passed, for our God remains the same, "yesterday, today, and forever."

Healing for spirit, mind, and body. Spiritual healing is initiated in the words, "I will hear from heaven." Psychological healing is secured in the words, "I will forgive their sins." And physical healing is released in the words, "I will restore their land." While each of these is wondrous and meaningful, it is the last—"I will restore their land"—on which I will focus for our remaining minutes together.

For an agrarian people, who live from what the land produces and sustains, the condition and productivity of their land is a major issue. For God to restore that productivi-

ty—that fruitfulness—represents a bountiful harvest, a fat paycheck, plenty for the family, good times with friends, influence with strangers, and future dreams realized. In a word, it represents the restoration of the fullness of life!

There might be any number of reasons for diminished productivity, but there is just one cause of restoration: *“if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.”*

Can we get that today? We are those people. We are candidates for this promise!

What Do you Want?

Do you want God to hear your prayers? Do you want God to forgive your sins? Do you want God to heal your “land”?

What area of fruitfulness would that be for you?

Could it be the opportunity to employ your God-given gifts productively?

Could it be the release of the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

Could it be winning lost friends to faith in Christ?

Could it be bearing a child in your marriage?

Could it be the successful maturing of your family?

Could it be the realization of a lifelong dream?

Could it be the recovery of your health?

Could it be a job promotion?

“Restoring your land” is all of this and more! What do you need? And how much do you want it?

Once again, here is the key: *“if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.”*

Humble yourself. Pray. Seek God’s face (His favor). Repent.

Humble yourself. Pray. Seek God’s favor. Repent.

If you will, then He will.

It’s just that simple. There is no substitute. There are counterfeits, but there is no substitute.

Here’s how to do it:

- Humble yourself—admit that you need God, you need more than His help, you need HIM at the center of your life.
- Pray—listen to God and talk with Him, make covenants of faithfulness with Him.

- Seek His face—ask for and look for the favor of God, the provision of God, the blessing of God, through a face-to-face relationship with Him.
- Turn from your wicked ways—be quick to amend your ways to please the Lord, do things His way, lean on Him for guidance and direction.

Are you ready? Do you want this? If so, you can begin right now with a prayer like this one:

"O Lord Jesus Christ, there is no other God like you in all of heaven and earth. Your unfailing love has rescued me and kept me alive to this day. Your promises of mercy and grace have sustained me."

"And it is You that I need—more than food, more than breath, more than health. I need You at the center of my life. And today I choose You for the center of my life. I push away everything else to make room for You."

"Let me hear Your voice. Open my understanding of Your words. When I speak to you—when I pray—hear my words and answer me. Show me what is wise, what is good, what is right, and what is delightful to you."

"When I stumble, pick me up and set me on the right path again. Show me Your favor and generous provision, as I show grace and generosity to others with what You have given me. Guide me in the path of fruitfulness, so that my cup overflows."

"I refuse to be selfish. I refuse to serve myself at the expense of others. I will be a giver more than a taker. I will depend on You more than on myself. I will seek to honor You before I seek honor for myself."

"May the way I conduct my life bring Your name praise, for that is why I am here, and that is why You have come into my life. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen."

With such a promise in your hand, won't you embrace it right now? His healing brings fullness of life.

If you made the choice and prayed this prayer, please tell me about it. Send me an email. Write me a letter. Give me a call. I want to pray with you.