



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

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“Who knows? Perhaps you [Esther] have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.” Then Esther called the people together and they held a fast – neither eating nor drinking for three whole days and nights. Then King Ahasuerus said to Esther, “You may write as you please with regard to the Jews [her people] in the name of the King, and seal it with the King’s seal, for an edict written in the name of the King and sealed with the King’s ring cannot be revoked.” Mordecai the Jew became next in rank to the King ... and he sought the good of his people, and interceded for the welfare of all his descendants. (See Esther 4:13-17; 8:7-8; 10:3)

The power of God in answer to prayer

The above verses show God’s power in answer to the prayers and fasting of God’s people. When we cry out to God – both for the saved and the unsaved – God hears our prayers. When we come to the King of kings, and He seals the answers to our prayers, nothing and no-one in Heaven or hell can revoke it – it **will** be done!

Let’s pray for our people and nation in this way. Prayer and fasting changed the situation in Esther’s time, and it can change our people and nation today.

Please pray for the Lord to reveal to us *how* we should pray for:

- The Lord’s glory and power to be seen in our nation.
- Revelations to our people of Who God is, and our need to follow Him and His ways.
- Revelations to our people of the life-giving, and life-changing, ways of the Lord Jesus.
- Revival throughout our land, bringing salvation and eternal life to our people; and blessings to our nation.
- The Church and churches throughout our country – especially for unity and effective witness.
- Our nation and its people groups – for good inter-racial relationships.
- Our Government and all its MPs – for wisdom, and the courage to legislate and do what is right in God’s eyes.
- People with special needs – for effective ministry to them, that will provide for their needs, and bless and encourage them.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach [shameful] to any people” (Proverbs 14:34)

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord – the people who He has chosen as His heritage” (Psalm 33:12)

“... If that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change My mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. ... But if it [a nation or kingdom] does evil in My sight, not listening to My voice, then I will change My mind about the good that I had intended to do to it” (see Jeremiah 18:7-11)

PRAYER FOR OUR NATION

Our nation desperately needs to come to the Lord in repentance; seek Him for forgiveness and be willing to forsake our evil ways. (Note what God says in Proverbs 14:34; Psalm 33:12 and Jeremiah 18:7-11 quoted above). The above words, of course, apply to “any nation”.

Our whole world is a very troubled place. *The more we turn from the Lord and disobey Him, the more we can expect Him to withdraw His hand of protection over us.* We are seeing major troubles in our world – destructive hurricanes, major fires, drought, floods, famine, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. – what we often call “natural events” – but there are also wars and threats of war, and terrorism, which are man-made.

No generation has had as much time (over 2000 years since Jesus came), more abilities, skills, wealth, knowledge, etc., than our generation, but we have turned our backs on God and His ways. Instead, we have chosen “our Rights” (whatever that may mean) instead. The Word of God has gone throughout the world. We have no excuse. If we think that “all is well”, then we need to think again!

- **Please pray** that God will have mercy on us; that He will send His Spirit throughout the world to bring conviction of sin, repentance and a turning to God, to follow His ways of righteousness. “When He (the Comforter – the Holy Spirit) comes, He will convict the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgement. ... When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth” (see John 16:7-14).

Pray for the Holy Spirit to do this now – in our nation and throughout the world.

- The **First Commandment** is this: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The second commandment is: You shall love others as you love yourself.

Pray that above all else, we will love God in these ways, and worship and serve Him and Him only. Pray also that we will love other people in the ways we love ourselves, and how we would like others to love us.

PRAYER @ PARLIAMENT

The first Prayer @ Parliament gathering for this year was held on Thursday 1 March, and the next ones will be held on 14 June and 6 September. Please pray for

these very important gatherings which are unique opportunities to pray at Parliament for our government. Everyone is welcome to come, if they can, but registration is **essential**.

The three main prayer themes this time were:

- **Prayer for the present Parliament** – Cabinet and all other MPs. Hon Alfred Ngaro introduced this session of prayer.
- **The End of Life Choice Bill** – Tania Jones introduced this session. The closing date for submissions on this bill is Tuesday 6 March. See www.prayeratparliament.org.nz for further details.
- **Adopt MPs for Prayer (AMPP)** project was launched by Ps Rasik Ranchord. For more details, see www.prayeratparliament.org.nz/ampp

Please pray for the above.

When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd [no-one to provide and care for them]. Matthew 9:36

CARING FOR THE POOR

Jesus said, “You will always have the poor amongst you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you want to ...” (See Mark 14:3-9). In other words, poverty has always been a need in the world, and will never go away, but we can and should do all we can to help the poor. What does it mean to love the poor? It means to give to them, and pray for them – and seek do all we can to help them out of their poverty. One of the good things our Government is seeking to do is to help the poor out of their poverty. Our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, has committed her Government to reducing the number of children in material hardship by 70,000 over the next ten years. This is a great ambition. But, of course, there are also adults in poverty – and usually child poverty is a result of their parents’ needs too; and there is poverty in many other different areas. We need to pray for our Government, and for the poor, and for practical ways in which every effort can be made to help relieve the poor from their poverty, and bring them into a *fuller* and *richer* life in every sense of those words.

- Please pray for people with the following needs, and for their needs to be met as far as possible. Those people who suffer from lack of, or inadequacy of:

Money/finance

Good parenting (say, to under 18-year-olds)

Housing

Happiness (people who are depressed; have anxiety, anger or other problems)

Paid work

Friendship (social needs) – not just online, but face-to-face!

Healthy food

Purpose and meaning to life – and a sense of “I’m needed, wanted, important.”

Good education

Good health ... and so on.

- Please pray for social agencies (both Government, and welfare organisations) including ...

Government social agencies, Ministers of Government departments, advisors, staff, legislation and Government policies, in the following (and similar areas):

Ministries and Ministers of: Social Development (Carmel Sepuloni), Education (Chris Hipkins), Health (David Clark), Housing (Phil Twyford), Children and Seniors (Tracey Martin), Employment (Willie Jackson), Finance (Grant Robertson), Child Poverty Reduction (Jacinda Ardern); and the Children’s Commissioner (Andrew Becroft). See <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/ministers> for a list of all Ministers of the Crown.

Other organisations which assist in physical, social, mental and similar areas.

- Pray for people you know who need help; and for people you know who serve the community to help people living in poverty.
- Please pray for the very important role of churches, inter-church groups and Christian organisations in ministering to those in poverty, especially spiritual needs but also in the other areas as well.
- Pray that all churches will take seriously their need to reach out into their communities to help those in need; and to pray for them and for all the agencies seeking to help minister to their needs.

INTERCEDING FOR THE NEEDY

Most of us probably had a great Christmas and New Year break, and enjoyed our time of rest, relaxation and friends. But this is not the case for thousands of people, many of whom we probably don’t even think about, unless we have family or friends who might find this time to be particularly difficult. Consequently, the following prayer items focus on those people who are going through difficult times (and this might include you).

Please pray for the following people, especially those people you know who may face these situations:

- Those who are sick, elderly, or people with special needs – and those who look after them.
- Those in hospitals, in care, or in prison – and those who are responsible for them.
- Those who are poor, needy, or homeless – and those who help them.
- Those who are lonely or hurt – that God will bring healing, wholeness and friendship to them.
- For Government departments, especially the Ministry of Social Development and its Cabinet Minister; Christian and other welfare groups, and others who look after those with special needs.
- For all those who don’t know or understand why Jesus came into our world; who don’t yet know His love, salvation, amazing grace, and power to meet all our needs.

Also give thanks to God for all those good things *you* enjoy, and pray that God will help *you* to share these things with people who are not otherwise able to have them!

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His name is *J e s u s*

12. Hebrews – chapters 11-13

Hebrews chapters 11-13

These last three chapters of Hebrews no longer directly mention or compare: the Old Testament with the New Testament; the Old Covenant with the New Covenant; priests and their sacrifices, with Jesus and His sacrifice; or whether the Covenant is temporary or permanent. These things have been dealt with in the earlier chapters of Hebrews.

Chapter 11

11:1-3 Faith. Faith is the assurance or substance of things hoped for; the conviction or evidence of *unseen* things – i.e., not physical or material.

- How do we know there is a God Who we can have friendship and relationship with? By faith!
- Creation and conscience are two major evidences of the reasonableness of our faith (see Romans 1:18 – 2:16)

Some of the Jews' ancestors "received approval" for their faith. They had the example of Creation – the worlds were made out of nothing that can be seen; God spoke, and they were created! They also had God's Law to guide them.

11:4-40 Examples of people of faith

Abel was a man of faith and he offered "a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain" (Gen. 4:1-16). Heart attitude is very important! Abel offered an animal sacrifice; but Cain offered grain. Adam and Eve clothed themselves with fig leaves; but God clothed them with an animal skin, involving the shedding of blood and giving up of a life. Some people try to earn salvation by works (Cain and the fruit of his labours) versus Jesus Who gave His blood and His life for us. Our salvation is not by works but by faith; we can't do anything to earn our salvation. Good works come as a **result** of our salvation, and the change the Holy Spirit brings to our lives when we are born again.

"By **GRACE** we are saved, [and this grace is received] through **FAITH**, which is not our own doing, but the gift of God. It is not [earned] by **works**, or we could boast. We are what He has made us, created in Christ Jesus to **do** good works, which God prepared beforehand, to be our way of life." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Enoch – "pleased God". Do we, and our lives, please God?

Verse 6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him".

Noah – obeyed God by building an ark as God instructed him – without which we would not be here today!

Abraham:

- Obeyed God and set out, not knowing where he was to go. He simply obeyed God; he looked forward to the land God had promised him.
- He had a son, Isaac, even though both he and Sarah were "too old" to have children (they thought!)
- Abraham was prepared to give up Isaac (see Genesis 22:12-14). He believed he would receive Isaac back (even by resurrection, if necessary!) – and he did!
- Abraham believed God was faithful to His promises – see Genesis 22:15-18; 32:12. He had faith, *even without receiving the promises*, but saw and welcomed the days to come, in the city that God had prepared for them.

Isaac prophesied over Jacob and Esau.

Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph.

Joseph had faith for the exodus from Egypt (Genesis 50:24-26)

Moses – His parents' faith saved him from death.

He was not afraid of the king's edict! He left Pharaoh's courts and suffered abuse in order to be with his own people. He looked ahead to God's true reward. He left Egypt in spite of the king's anger, because of God's leading. He kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the first-born of Israel were not destroyed.

Israel – Passed through the Red Sea on dry ground, and saw the walls of Jericho fall, after doing what God told them.

Rahab – Received the spies in peace – which saved her life!

Others (unnamed) – who received rewards (v 32-35a), but suffered greatly for their faith (v 35b-38)

All these people, even though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided *something better* so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

"**Something better**" – heavenly rewards are much better and greater than earthly rewards! The promised Messiah, His death for us, and eternal life, were yet to come!

APPLICATION – chapter 12

1-3 Lay aside every weight and sin; run with perseverance; and look to Jesus our perfect Example.

4-13 God's discipline: see Psalm 94:12; Proverbs 3:11-12.

- Take notice of God's discipline but **don't lose heart** or become discouraged – it is for our good, and for the good of others.

- Human parents discipline us as seems best to them, **but ...**
... God our Father disciplines us for our good, and to share His holiness.
- Discipline always seems painful at the time – but it produces righteousness!

14-17 Pursue ... the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

- Don't fail to obtain the grace of God.
- Cut out every root of bitterness.
- Don't become immoral and Godless like Esau.

18-29 We have *not* come to something physical that can be touched (see Exodus 19:12-13, 16), but we *have* come to ten things mentioned in Hebrews 12:22-24.

Don't refuse to listen – God is our Judge, and is a “consuming fire”, Who destroys the trash but leaves the gold! (see Deuteronomy 4:24). So let us give *thanks*, and offer to God acceptable *worship*, with *reverence* and *awe*.

APPLICATION – chapter 13

- 1 Let us continue to love one another.
- 2 Be hospitable to strangers (some may be Angels!)
- 3 Remember those in prison for their faith, as if you were in prison.
- 4 Honour marriage – yours and others!
- 5-6 Don't love money; use it as God leads, and be content with what you have, for God will not forsake us. (See Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Joshua 1:5; 1 Chronicles 28:20)
- 7-8 Remember your leaders – especially Jesus!
- 9 Be strengthened by **GRACE**, not by “Food Regulations!” or other strange teachings.
- 15 Continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, through Jesus; confess His name!

18-19, 22-24 Paul may have been in jail in Rome at this time, writing to Jewish Christians in Israel.

Paul's blessing to faithful believers (v 20-21):

“Now may the God of peace, Who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do His will, working among us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen!”

FINALLY ...

“**Faith**” occurs 34 times in Hebrews, including 26 times in chapter 11.

- Ultimately, who **will be** in glory with the Lord; and who will not be there – and why? Will I?
- Aren't you glad we live under the New Covenant, not the Old one – after Jesus has come, not before?

- All this is because we have **FAITH** in God's **MERCY** and **GRACE**! *Praise God!*

QUESTIONS

1. What does “faith” mean?
2. Who were some Old Testament people who suffered for their faith?
3. Who were some New Testament people who suffered for their faith?
4. Why does God discipline us? Doesn't He *love* us? How should we react to God's discipline?
5. In chapter 13, there are 11 things we should do or not do (verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18). Which 3 of these speak to you most, as things you need to do?
6. What is “grace” (13:25).

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“Rejoice in the Lord always. ... Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (See Philippians 4:4-7)

Let us reflect on who God is, and bring praise and worship to Him for all His goodness and blessings to us.

The Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-21) declares and praises God for His attributes. He is awesome, full of splendour and glory. He is majestic. He is almighty, powerful, strong, victorious and triumphant. He is unique, holy, steadfast and eternal. He works wonders; He guides and leads us by His Spirit. He is full of love – our loving Heavenly Father.

In David's praise to God (1 Chronicles 29:10-22), he worships God for His greatness, power, glory, majesty and Kingship. He is our Creator; head over all; ruler over all. A God of power and might, but also the giver of all things. Every single thing that we have is a gift from God, who created all things – including the supreme gift of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, so that we may have hope now, and eternal life.

In David's Song of Praise and Thanksgiving (Psalm 103), he thanks God for all His goodness and blesses Him for all His benefits – forgiveness, healing, redemption, love and mercy, all good things; for renewed youth; His justice, mercy, grace, love, removing our sin, compassion, and His everlasting, steadfast love for us.

Let us read the above three passages, preferably aloud (or quietly); let us really think about them (meditate on them); and then let us praise and worship Almighty God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – for all He means to us, and all He has done for us!

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