



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

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The LORD said, "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 I will forgive their sin, and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

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Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophecies, but test everything, hold fast to what is good and abstain from every form of evil.

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-22)

GIVE THANKS for the Hope within us

In the midst of a very troubled world – troubled with threats of war, natural disasters, human suffering, climate change, and so on – praise God for the hope that is within us as Christians. We are not without hope; in fact hope is part of our faith and trust in God. Without hope, where would we be – spiritually and mentally? But what gives us hope?

Give thanks to God for the following ...

The fulfilment of God's promises. One thing which gives us hope is seeing that God always fulfills His promises – we see this in what He has said and done in the Scriptures, and in the prophecies which have been fulfilled (e.g., the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament). God has, and always will, do as He has said. Note, however, that God's promises often have conditions; if the conditions are not fulfilled then neither might the promises.

The life of Christ and His teachings. The character of Jesus and His teachings bring hope to those who choose to follow Him. All those who belong to Him have an inner hope, in spite of everything which might seem to be contrary. Apart from the Gospels, the rest of the New Testament also brings us hope (e.g., the book of Romans, where "hope" occurs 15 times).

The testimonies of many Christians who have testified to the blessings God has brought to them even out of terrible situations they may have faced, or even are still facing. We also see this in the faith and hope in the lives of many New Testament Christians, some of whom gave their lives for their Lord and Saviour (e.g., Hebrews 11 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11). Plus the testimonies and lives of people like

Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Esther, Job, Mary, Peter, Paul, John and many others.

The promise of eternal life with the Lord. Heaven – a place of peace, joy, purity, love, worship; a place without sin, darkness or death. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, and one day, so will we! (See 1 Thess. 4:13 to 5:11; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21, 22)

That we live under God's grace and no longer under the Law. We are forgiven, saved and cleansed from all sin through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore we can have fellowship and intimacy with the Lord God.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead and ascension to Heaven assure us and give us hope that if we are born again and saved followers of Jesus, we also will rise from the dead when Jesus comes, and will ascend into Heaven to be with Him forever!

***What a glorious Hope!
Praise and thank God for
the Hope we have in and through Him!***

GIVE THANKS for our Country

It goes without saying, that every country has its problems and no country is perfect in any area. But when we enter the Kingdom of God on earth and live according to God's principles, to that degree we will know God's blessings upon us and our country. The more we deviate from God's will and purposes, the more we will suffer as a people. Nevertheless, while not perfect, we have many things in our country for which to praise God – many blessings which may not occur in other countries, at least to the same degree as we have them here.

Let us praise God for – and continue to pray for – the following:

1. **Peace.** We are blessed that our country has not been in a state of war, rebellion, anarchy, civil war, and so on; and that we live in a land of peace. Praise God!
2. **Prosperity.** There are areas within our country where we need to address issues of material need, but as a whole we live in a prosperous land with, on the whole, good social welfare and support for those in need. Praise God! ... and continue to pray for those who are in need, and for a solution to those people's needs.
3. **Freedom.** Praise God for the freedoms we have in our country – the freedom of speech; the freedom to practice the Christian faith and share the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and the freedom to practice what is good, right and healthy. There is also the freedom to practice what is harmful to our people, and we need to pray about these issues and how to deal with them.
4. **Democracy.** We are privileged to live in a land which is democratic and does not suffer from being a dictatorship or being totally controlled by a small group of people. We have the freedom to express our opinions, religious beliefs, political views, etc., within the bounds of laws which are necessary to protect our people and uphold right standards.
5. **Justice.** We can also praise God for our justice system – the neutrality and justice of our police, legal system, legal defence, courts and rights for prisoners.

Praise God for everything good which we have in our country, in the above and other areas.

Pray for all the lacks there are in the above and other areas; and for the wisdom, ability and action to change what is wrong or deficient.

GIVE THANKS for Life

Life isn't always easy – ask Job! – and we certainly need to love, support, encourage and **PRAY** for those who are facing difficulties. But human life is incredibly precious – and eternal. Below are six ways in which, as a country, lives are being taken either accidentally or by deliberate action. These are all areas where we need to **PRAY** and consider the ways in which some of our people are deprived of their God-given lives. (The following numbers are lives, not just statistics!) Some of the causes of these deaths

are not just by accident or human choice, but there also demonic attacks on our nation and our people; we need to **PRAY** concerning these attacks. Paul speaks of them as “the wiles of the devil ... principalities and powers of this present darkness ... spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:10-18)

- **Fertility rates** in New Zealand have reached an all-time low. Fertility rate is the average number of children a woman has. In order to maintain our present number of people, New Zealand needs at least 2 live births per woman. In 1961 our fertility rate was 4.3 children per woman; now it has dropped to 1.7 which is below replacement rate.
- **Abortions** in New Zealand last year totalled 13,282 which is one abortion for every 4.4 live births. In its peak year, there was one abortion for every 3 live births.
- **Road fatalities** in New Zealand last year were 377 – people who died as a result of motor accidents.
- **Suicides** in New Zealand reached an all-time high of 685 last year.
- **Synthetic drugs** used in New Zealand in the two years up to July this year resulted in the deaths of an estimated 70 to 75 people, although the causes of some of these deaths have yet to be finally confirmed.
- **Euthanasia**, the “End of Life Choice” Bill, is still waiting to be decided by a vote of our Members of Parliament.

**PRAY FOR OUR GOVERNMENT
AND ALL ORGANISATIONS, GROUPS
AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE TRYING
TO HELP IN THESE AREAS**

PRAYER @ PARLIAMENT

The Prayer@Parliament website www.prayeratparliament.org.nz has a **Reports** tab which includes the following information about past meetings: MPs who attended; the Scriptures which were read; the speakers, their topics and prayer suggestions, and a summary of their talks. These all give valuable information for your prayers.

About 200 people, from about 12-15 different parts of the country and almost all denominations attend the last meeting. The next meeting will be in March 2020; the date and how to register for this meeting will be on the website by about February next year.

Please pray for these very valuable and important meetings to pray for the nation.



GOD'S DEALING WITH CITIES

In recent years, evangelical Christians have placed great emphasis on the salvation of individuals. Generally, there has not been a great emphasis on seeing whole families come to the Lord, as long as individuals are being saved.

We have tended to think of God's dealings as only being concerned with the individual, not families, and certainly not cities or nations.

But God is concerned with cities (or towns) and nations too. After all, a city is a large collection of people for whom Christ died. And while God is concerned over one person's sin, He is also concerned at sinful cities and the sins of nations. The sinfulness of cities and nations are bad examples and influences on the individuals who live in them!

As far back as Genesis 18, God was grieved over the sins of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was so grieved that He shared with Abraham the judgement He was about to bring on those cities because of their sins. Abraham pleaded with God to spare the cities, and God said that He would if He could find even ten righteous people in the city – but He could not. So God removed Lot, his wife and two daughters, and destroyed the rest of the cities.

God spoke to both Moses and Joshua about setting aside certain cities as cities of refuge (Joshua 20); these were cities to which people could come and find protection if they had accidentally killed someone.

Larger cities, in Biblical times, were protected by high walls and gates. The elders and judges of the city exercised their authority and judgement at the gates of the city. The city was thus to be a place of protection and justice for the people.

When Nehemiah saw the state of the city of Jerusalem, with its walls broken down, lying in waste, the haunt of jackals and wild beasts, open to the enemy, undefended and unprotected, he wept, he fasted and he prayed (Nehemiah 1). The Temple, the House of God, had been restored by Zerubbabel about 100 years earlier, but the city and the Temple still lay unprotected.

Why had the city of Jerusalem been destroyed? Because the people of Israel had rebelled against the Lord; they had refused to listen to His prophets, refused to obey His Word and His laws, and had gone into idolatry. Therefore God said, "I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good" (Jer. 21:10).

Even when the people of Israel were in captivity in Babylon, God said "Seek the welfare of the city

where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7).

A city will know the goodness of God, or His judgement, depending on how the people in that city live.

A city's protection

A city is protected by:

1. **Its walls and gates.** "You shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise" (Is. 60:18; cf. Ps. 100:4).
2. **Its watchmen.** "I have set watchmen upon your walls; all day and all night they shall never be silent" (Is. 62:6-7). "I have made you a watchman ..." (Ezek. 33:7-9)
3. **Its soldiers.** When the watchmen perceived the enemy coming, they sounded the alarm (blew the trumpet) and warned the people; it was the soldiers' task to protect the city and its inhabitants (2 Kings 11:4-8)
4. **Its elders.** The elders sat at the gates of the city and exercised judicial authority over those who lived within – they maintained law and order within the city, while the walls, gates, watchmen and soldiers protected the city from dangers outside. (Ruth 4:1-12)

Our cities need protection! They need watchmen to sound the alarm; they need spiritual elders; they need people who can engage in spiritual warfare and intercession! They need the walls and gates of salvation, praise and thanksgiving! Too many of our walls have been broken down by neglect or by the enemy. Sound the alarm! Warn the people! (Joel 1:14; 2:1, 15-16)

How we need God's help! How we need to cry to Him! "Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Ps. 127:1). We cannot protect the city in our own strength or wisdom. We are utterly dependent upon God for His help!

"When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness. By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 11:10-11)

There is hope! Even if things look bad, there is hope. Nineveh was an exceedingly great, but wicked, city. Nevertheless God had pity on the city

(Jonah 4:11) and sent Jonah with a message of impending judgement. When the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, mourned over their sin and cried to God, God spared that heathen city. "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it" (Jonah 3:10)

New Testament examples

God's concern for cities did not stop at the end of the Old Testament. Lest anyone should feel that today God is only concerned for individuals, not cities, let us look at some New Testament examples.

When Jesus sent His disciples out into the towns and villages He said that if a town did not receive their message they were to shake the dust off their feet as a sign against it, and pronounce judgement, not over individuals, but over the town as a whole (Luke 10:8-12)

Jesus Himself did this when He pronounced judgement over Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum because of their refusal to repent, in spite of the mighty works done in them (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 10:13-15). More than this, Jesus compared city with city, and the response of one city with the response of another. He compared Chorazin and Bethsaida with the cities of Tyre and Sidon; He compared Capernaum with Sodom. Thus Jesus dealt not only with individuals and their judgement or salvation, but also with cities as a whole.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not!" (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44)

What does Jesus think of our city? Does He weep over it? Does He rejoice over it? Does He pronounce judgement, warning or blessing?

Acts 8:14 says that Samaria received the Word of God. No doubt not everyone in Samaria became a true believer in Jesus Christ, but as a city it received God's Word, so Peter and John went there and prayed for the believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit – and they did!

The seven letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 were written to the churches in seven cities.

The city of Babylon (a type of the city of Rome, built on seven hills) is described in Revelation 17:1-9 as "the great harlot", and "the mother of harlots". In marked contrast, the city of Jerusalem (in spite of all her faults and failings) is described in Revelation 21:1-2 as "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband".

Characteristics of a city

In the Bible we see cities described by many different characteristics, some good and some bad.

Bad cities

Rebellious and wicked city (Ezra 4:12)
City of confusion or chaos (Is. 24:10)
City full of injustice (Ezek. 9:9)
Rebellious, defiled, and oppressive city (Zeph. 3:1)
Waste or ruined city (Is. 61:4; Ezek. 36:35)
Bloody city (Ezek. 22:2)
Undefended city (Is. 25:2)
Divided city (Matt. 12:25) – which leads to ruin.
Desolate city (Jer. 9:11)
Idolatrous city (Acts 17:16)

Good cities

Righteous, faithful city (Is. 1:26)
City of praise and joy (Jer. 49:25)
City of perfection, beauty and joy (Lam. 2:15)
Faithful city (Zech. 8:3)
City of refuge (Num. 35:14-15)
Beloved city (Rev. 20:9)
Fortified city (Jer. 1:18)
Cities of our God (2 Sam. 10:12)
Great city (Josh. 10:2)
Holy cities (Is. 64:10)
City of the Lord (Is. 60:14)
Great and good cities (Deut. 6:10)
City called Jehovah-Shammah – "the Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35)

How would you describe your city? We need to discern how God sees our city – and pray for it accordingly!

Cities can change!

There is hope: ruined cities can be repaired (Is. 61:4; Ezek. 36:35). Conversely, once-fortified cities can have their defences broken down and they can be destroyed (Is. 1:21; 25:2; 37:26; 64:10). We must continually maintain our defences!

How does God see our city?

QUESTIONS

1. We know that God is concerned about individuals. What Scriptures show us that God is concerned about cities and nations too?
2. Why is it important that we pray for, and seek the welfare of, the city in which we live (Jer. 29:7)?
3. How are cities protected – physically and spiritually?
4. What does the book of Jonah teach us about how God deals with cities?
5. Does God still deal with cities in this way today, or was it just for Old Testament times?
6. How would God describe the city you live in today.