

PRAYER JOURNAL

January 3, 2021

And they assembled their brothers, consecrated themselves, and went in to cleanse the house of the Lord, according to the commandment of the king by the words of the Lord.

2 Chronicles 29:15



Chapter One

Cleansing the Lord's House

How little we understand of the One who has granted us the unfathomable riches of His presence! We are called to be His house, His place of rest. Yet not until we are cleansed of sin will His purposes for us become clear. Indeed, it is the pure in heart who see God.

Highland Village Church

Prayer and Fasting 2020

Cleansing the Holy Place

Within the heart of every Christian there is a secret place, a sanctuary we must prepare for the Lord. This holy place is not unlike the holy of holies in the Jewish temple. Not until this place is cleansed will the Lord dwell within us in the fullness of His Spirit; not until this room is pure will we truly become a house for the Lord.

Bring Out the Unclean Thing

"And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). The Lord is cleansing us for the distinct purpose of bringing His people into His glory. Out of His desire to present us as a pure bride to Jesus Christ, God is purging the Church of its sin. He is refusing to allow our interchurch relationships to continue without love. According to the Scriptures, before Jesus returns the body of Christ will be holy and blameless (*Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Thess. 5:23; Titus 2:14*). Through new and successive levels of purity, the house of the Lord will again see and reflect the glory of God.

To facilitate this process of cleansing, by way of example we will study one of the greatest periods of restoration and renewal in the Bible: the rule of King Hezekiah. Prior to Hezekiah's reign, his father, King Ahaz, brought the very worst forms of idolatry into Israel. Ahaz shut the

temple doors and persecuted the priests. Those whom he did not kill he corrupted. Without the influence of a godly priesthood, the Israelites soon followed Ahaz into idolatry and unrestrained sin.

Although Hezekiah was a relatively young man when he succeeded Ahaz as king, he was God's anointed man to bring revival and healing to the nation. In the very first month of his reign he *"opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them" (2 Chron. 29:3)*. He then consecrated the priesthood and began to restore the temple. Hezekiah's first priority was for true worship to be established. We read, *"And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them into the square on the east. Then he said to them, 'Listen to me, O Levites. Consecrate yourselves now, and consecrate the house of the Lord'" (2 Chron. 29:4-5)*.

God initiated His plan to redeem the nation by consecrating the priests and cleansing the Lord's house. For this task Hezekiah had been prepared. As a young man he watched Israel's "fathers ... fallen by the sword." The men who were not slain on the battlefield could be heard weeping in the grain fields: *"our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity" (v. 9)*. Hezekiah knew only one option, one plan, was offered to Israel: return to God. In obedience, he began his reign by consecrating the Lord's house.

Hezekiah next ordered the priests

to *"carry the uncleanness out from the holy place"* (v. 5). Before the eternal One moves visibly in power, He moves invisibly in holiness. He cleanses His house. Then the outward signs of restoration and revival, the miracles and true conversions, can come forth. If God will touch our cities with His fire, He must put that fire within us as individual believers. Everything the Almighty does for us as individuals will in time bless His Church and work to fulfill His eternal purpose in our communities. He will deliver those who are not innocent, and they will be delivered through the cleanness of our hands (*Job 22:30*).

Hezekiah reopened and cleansed the temple. He never stopped thinking of Israel, but he knew in order to see the nation consecrated to God, the priesthood must be consecrated. It is significant that he made no appeal or effort to win the nation itself; he had no program of reform other than reinstating true worship. The king's focus was not on turning the heart of the people but on drawing the heart of God. If the Lord is lifted up, He will of His own will and power draw all men unto Himself.

Even as Hezekiah reopened the temple doors, so also in us there is a door that we must open daily to the Lord. David

wrote, *" 'I was always beholding the Lord in my presence' "* (*Acts 2:25*). Right there within the psalmist's heart was a dwelling place for the Lord; David was always beholding the Lord. Similarly, there is something in our presence, in our spirits, that can be opened or closed to God. We must not assume that because we are Christians this gate toward God is automatically opened. Jesus stood "at the door" of the church in Laodicea and knocked, desiring to enter their lives. We must choose to unlock this door and swing it wide toward Christ.

Yet opening this chamber of our hearts can indeed be a frightening thing. It requires that we be open to talk to God and to hear from Him as well. It is one thing for us to speak honestly with the Lord; it is quite another when He speaks without restraint to us. Therefore, the most essential commodity for stimulating revival is a tender, open heart before God.

Is the door of your heart opened toward God? Can the Spirit of Jesus Christ come in and speak with you? Are you defenseless to His voice? Can you sense both His pleasure and His displeasure? For us to become sensitive to divine realities, we must live with the door of our hearts open. It is

impossible to do the will of God otherwise.

King Hezekiah commanded the priests to carry the uncleanness out from the holy place. The call to clean the holy place was not an option; it was a command. *"So the priests went in to the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it, and every unclean thing which they found in the temple of the Lord they brought out to the court of the house of the Lord"* (*2 Chron. 29:16*).

When the priests entered the holy place, they entered alone; the rest of Israel was in the outer court and beyond. Here, privately before God, they were to remove those things that were defiling this sacred place. No one else had seen these desecrations. They could have remained in secret, and none except the priests would have known; but they did not. They brought out the unclean things. What was unholy was exposed publicly and removed.

From where did these abominations arise? Predominantly they were the sins of their forefathers—the traditions and offenses handed down to them from the wicked generation who preceded them. The careless approach to holiness, the unbelief toward the promises of God, and the idolatry and worship of man-made things were the products of a generation

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turned from God. They gave to their children, as a legacy, a society oppressed by sin and the devil.

In the new covenant temple, the Church, it is our private, inner lives that need this deep cleansing. We have inherited traditions that justify and reinforce darkness of soul within us. Most Christians have little hope that purity of heart is even attainable. The revival that will turn a nation begins in the trembling unveiling of our hearts, in the removal of what is defiled and hidden within us.

I will tell you a mystery. It is in this very place, this chamber of our deepest secrets, that the door to eternity is found. If God is near enough to "see in secret," He is close enough to be seen in secret as well. If He has entered us, we can, in truth, enter Him. The key to entering the presence of God is intimacy, and intimacy is secrets shared. To ascend the hill of the Lord, to stand in the holy place, we must have clean hands and a pure heart; we cannot lift up our souls toward falsehood. (*Psalm 24:3-4.*) At this door of eternity we must renounce those things hidden because of shame and, in humility of soul, receive Christ's cleansing word.

The Pure in Heart See God

Our goal is not merely to be "good" but to see God and, in seeing Him, to do what He does. However, John tells us that he who seeks to "*see Him just as He is ... purifies himself, just as He is pure*" (1 John 3:2-3). We can be assured that each step deeper into the Lord's presence will reveal areas in our hearts that need to be cleansed. Do not be afraid. When the Spirit shows you areas of sin, it is not to condemn you but to cleanse you.

Let me give you an example. My wife set herself apart to seek the Lord. Her cry during this time was, "Lord, I want to see You." As she sought the Lord, however, He began to show her certain areas of her heart where she had fallen short. She prayed, "Lord, this is not what I asked for; I asked to see You, not me." Then the Holy Spirit comforted her, saying, "Only the pure in heart can see God."

In the same way, the Lord desires His Church to see Him as well. Thus, He is exposing the areas in us that are unclean. If we will walk as Jesus walked, we must remember that Christ did only

the things He saw the Father do (*John 5:19*). Out of the purity of His heart He beheld God and then revealed His glory.

The purpose of consecrating the priesthood and cleansing the house of the Lord is that we might sincerely be prepared to seek and find the leading of God for our city. This oneness transcends gathering around community projects; it is, instead, the result of consecrated men and women seeking God and, upon hallowing His presence, doing what they see God do.

This cleansing must become a way of life, but it does not have to take a lifetime. For Hezekiah and the people with him, it occurred in a matter of eight days.

"Thus the service of the house of the Lord was established again. Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had prepared for the people, because the thing came about suddenly" (2 Chron. 29:35-36).

The key here is this: the cleansing of the temple was the highest priority of the king's life. When we set our hearts toward true holiness, we too will "rejoice over what God [has] prepared."

There is yet one more

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thought, a postscript to this message. The prophet Malachi also tells us that the Lord, *“whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple” (Mal. 3:1)*. As we restore God’s house to purity and cleanse the holy place of our hearts for Christ, He will indeed come “suddenly” into our midst. After the Lord in His fullness returns to His house, He promises, *“Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me” (v. 5)*.

When the Lord is in His house, He will release redemptive judgment upon our cities. Wickedness will be cut off, and our cities will be healed in His presence.

My Prayer of Application

Blessed Lord, I desire deeply for You to dwell in me. I yearn to be Your holy dwelling place. I ask that the sanctuary of my heart be purged of every defilement of flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). Here they are, Lord Jesus, my hidden sins. I bring them out of the secret

chamber of my heart. [Audibly identify your sins by name.] I take them out of the darkness and expose them to Your light. You have promised You will execute Your Word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly. O God, thoroughly cleanse my heart; purify me quickly! In Jesus name, Amen.