

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG142 – The National Day of Prayer

Welcome to the podcast, I am glad to have you with me. In this podcast today we are facing the National Day of Prayer, and I really want to address that, because it is an important event in the year. I do not usually talk about it on the podcast; but this year, I feel like there are so many things that are happening and have been happening in our recent past that it would be wise to address it. This year, the National Day of Prayer is on May the fourth, and we are believing for tremendous response in the nation to this day of prayer. But I am believing for something that is really a dramatic, driven, forceful, committed time of prayer to the Lord over the things that are transpiring in our nation. Because of that, I have been praying about what to do. Recently, someone in our little prayer group sent through a declaration by Abraham Lincoln that was the initiation of a national day of fasting for the nation; and when I read that, it really moved me. I thought, "I just want to let everybody know about this document." So I want to read over it; I want to go into some scriptural basis for it that he is talking about; and I want to use this as a platform to say, "Let's really engage in this type of prayer and drive for our nation."

I went online and I found this document in abrahamlincolnonline.org. I know there are other versions of it, which I found, but I think this one seems to be the best, the clearest, the most accurate. And so, I am going to read to us from this. It says, "Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day." At this point in our history, there really was no National Day of Prayer; and this was being declared as a day of fasting, rather than just prayer. It was presented by "Senator James Harlan of Iowa, whose daughter later married President Lincoln's son Robert..." He "introduced this Resolution in the Senate on March 2, 1863. The Resolution asked President Lincoln to proclaim a national day of prayer and fasting. The Resolution was adopted on March 3, and signed by Lincoln on March 30, one month before the fast day was observed."

The document reads thus,

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

It is almost impossible to read this document without weeping. Number one, weeping over the truth of what is being stated. And number two, weeping over how far we as a nation have moved away from these truths and from these principles, this recognition that only nations whose God is the Lord are

nations that are blessed; realizing that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon. I mean, all of these ideas – to realize that this part which is included in President Lincoln’s declaration were the words of the Senate of the United States. And I think, dear God, that the Senate today could write these words with the same passion and emotion and feeling and commitment to these actions. That is my prayer during this National Day of Prayer – that we, as a nation, return; that our government, as a government, that our Senate, our Congress, our President, could return to such principles with such passion and genuine individual as well as national determination that we enter in and engage in this time.

I just want to read that last paragraph again, since I have interrupted it with my commentary; but I just couldn’t help myself, because of the depths that these words strike my heart.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

What a tremendous document this is, recognizing that because of national sin and arrogance, the nation itself had fallen into division, the division of a civil war. And I know we do not see that on a natural plane now, but I think the nation, as we stand today, is in a civil war. It may be of thought, it may be of reason, it may be of faith. It may be based on many things, but we are just as divided today as they were at this time. And they found that the answer would be to cry out to God in fasting, in prayer, in humiliation. I believe it is the same for us today. And I pray that during this National Day of Prayer and during this year, we would as a nation be able to humble ourselves and reach to God to be our answer in restoring to us peace, in breaking the spirits of division that have so decimated this country over the last several years.

We stand divided. It is a dangerous place to be, because a nation divided against itself will not stand. A people divided against itself will not stand. And I believe that if we are not able to reverse the course that we are on, this nation will no longer be able to stand in the place that it has been to the world as a blessing, as a peacekeeper, as a purveyor of Judeo-Christian values and the things which are so important for humankind to be living in.

I want to recognize what President Lincoln was speaking of when he made this statement, "All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace." To me he is referring here to Second Chronicles. In Second Chronicles we read the story about Solomon and his dedication of the Temple to the Lord. I want to read some verses of the prayer that was made by Solomon, and then also read about God's response, which, again, is what President Lincoln was referring to. I am in Second Chronicles, chapter 6, verse 36 through chapter 7, verse 1. This was a prayer that Solomon was voicing about the nation of Israel. It says,

"When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near, if they take thought in the land where they are taken captive, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have committed iniquity and have acted wickedly'; if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been taken captive, and pray toward their land which You have given to their fathers and the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name, then hear from heaven, from Your dwelling place, their prayer and supplications, and maintain their cause and forgive Your people who have sinned against You.

"Now, O my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. Now therefore arise, O Lord God, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your might; let Your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation and let Your godly ones rejoice in what is good. O Lord God, do not turn away the face of Your anointed; remember Your lovingkindness to Your servant David."

Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Not only was it a tremendous prayer, but the response of God to that prayer was the thing that we are looking for. God, fill this country again with Your Presence. God, fill our churches again with Your Presence. Everywhere that we have lost Your Presence and been taken captive by other things, and served other gods, let the reversal of that come by our repentance.

Going to Second Chronicles 7, verses 11-14, it says,

“Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king’s palace, and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the Lord and in his palace. Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.’”

To this Scripture, I am certain, the President was speaking. This is the biblical example of how a nation is to pray when it has lost the favor of God. And God promises that if we will seek Him, if we will humble ourselves before Him, and if we will turn from our wicked ways – and there are so many ways of wickedness now that this nation is clinging to, is worshiping like an idol. We must turn from our wickedness. It is not going to be good enough to have a day of prayer and pray some glib, light little prayers asking for this blessing or that blessing. No, it doesn’t work that way. It happens when we begin by humbling ourselves, seeking His face, His will, and turning from our wicked ways and those things that we have done to offend Him and chase Him away from our land. Then, it says, He will forgive our sin and heal our land. This land needs a healing. We as His people need a healing. And we must, during this day of prayer, cry out to God for that.

I want to voice a few things in concluding this. America and other nations are facing the consequences of their actions, and we need to understand that. It is not even necessarily saying that God is judging us. These are just consequences. They are natural consequences to things that were set in motion by God when He created this earth.

Isaiah 24:5-6 says, “The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.” The devastation that we are facing you do not even have to attribute to God’s judgment. It is the result of our actions. Don’t blame it on God. Recognize, open your eyes and heart to recognize that the consequences we are facing are the consequences of our actions. They are just a natural response, like the laws of physics, transpiring because of what we have done and what we are now doing.

The second point I would say is, on this National Day of Prayer, let us focus on fervent repentance and confession to the Lord of our sins, of our disobedience, and of our falling away from Him. Lastly, I would say, don’t forget that we do have these promises, as He promised Solomon, that He would heal the land if we respond correctly. We do find that in Second Chronicles 7:14. I will give it to you again. Go read it. “I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” I also remind us of First John, the

first chapter, verse 9: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

We believe for this to be the most effective National Day of Prayer we have ever known. I believe with you. Let’s together be seeking His face, turning from our wicked ways, and believing in the grace of God to heal us individually and to heal our land. Amen.