

Some of the “golden oldies” of the 1940’s and 1950’s are memorable, aren’t they? Who can forget, “I Only Have Eyes For You,” “I Did It My Way” or “I Can Handle This Job All By Myself”? It’s fascinating to consider the message in the lyrics of earthly songs. Those of us accustomed to hymnals or who sing “off the wall” music at church know that most songs are either about or to the Lord. Others in our Christian repertoire might be songs of testimony about how relating to the Lord impacts us, or might actually be doctrine put to song. If you look at these, it’s interesting to categorize them according to the message in the lyrics. So how about those golden oldies I mentioned above? Rephrase those titles and their meanings become crystal clear.

- 1) “I Only Have Eyes For You” obvious love song proclaiming single vision of one person for another.
- 2) “I Did It My Way” - a statement of pride in following one’s own goals and methods of achieving success in a matter, as opposed to doing something in an approved or suggested manner.
- 3) “I Can Handle This Job All By Myself” - meaning “Leave me alone! I don’t want your help!”

Why mention these three? Actually, they just came to mind, but on further thought, they fit quite well into our current thoughts.

Few thinking Christians would not be overjoyed to experience a visitation of God upon their lives, their fellowships, their communities, and their country. But apart from an occasional report of “a great service” or a “wonderful series” of meetings, church services tend to be just that – church services, and the visible or perceptible working of God (sometimes called Manifest Presence) seems either to be something we simply “believe in,” but never see for ourselves.

When one reads about the Lord really moving in ways that can only be termed **transformational** in their scope, the inevitable question comes to our minds and hearts. Why them? Why not us? What is it about the Lord, what is it about the people where He is so powerfully present in places that combine together to produce such divine results, such profound changes in Christians and in their communities.

I think I just asked two questions! What is it about the Lord: Let’s think about that for a moment, then we’ll tackle the second question. Do you think that perhaps He loves others more than He does us? do you think He only desires to be present in such a powerful way, but has no desire to be so everywhere? Does He dislike you and me? Was He at one time with you or your fellowship or denomination in a powerful way, and now doesn’t manifest His presence like that at all? Does He change? Does God change? We’ll leave that thought there right now.’

What about the communities where He is massively present? What are they like? What were the conditions that prompted folks to seek God’s intervention? First of all, the conditions of the

land where they live were awful. There was murder and mayhem, violence and bloodshed; immorality ran rampant; God in general and Christians in particular were dismissed as all show and no substance. In many places, unbelieving leaders manifested more power over people than any church leader. Church programs to stem the tide of evil were as ineffective as government efforts. Church leaders decided that unless God intervened, there was no future for the people of their community.

Pastors gathered together in prayer to seek the Lord. They studied the Scriptures to ascertain what they were either doing or not doing that might cause the Lord to absent Himself from their midst to the extent that they were so powerless against these forces of evil. The Lord began to speak to them in His Word.

1) They assumed (in many cases each pastor) that *their* church was “okay,” that both they and their congregations were spiritually impotent simply because for an unknown reason, God had not empowered them to stand effectively. But they read Rev. 3:17

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

2) The churches at large were segregated tightly into denominational enclaves, never praying together, never working together, never seeing themselves as the Body of Christ in more than some theoretical biblical sense. They held tightly to their “name” tags, and if anything, spoke disparagingly about one another, sometimes right from the pulpit! They found 1 Cor 12 and discovered it applied to more than their own congregation or denomination!

18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" (and also)

24 But God has combined the members of the body...25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

They also read **Ephesians 5:23b** *Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*

3) They KNEW that God always desires to be with His Church. But they also knew there was one thing that would cause Him to draw away from Him: sin in the camp. They scoured the Scriptures. Over and over again, there were examples of how God would promise to “be there”

for His people *if* they stayed true to Him and didn't embrace other idols (loves) and didn't take on the ways of their unbelieving neighbors. So long as His people fulfilled their part of this covenant, He remained present with them such that all the nations around them knew and feared the very real and powerful God of Israel. But when the people turned from Him, when they commingled their worship of Him with the same high esteem for anything else besides Him, when they blatantly sinned against Him, there came a great separation.

Without His covering, without His Presence and Protection, Israel would become captive to someone, and experience the only thing that would drive them to their knees and to their senses: Desperation. Desperation for His help! Desperation for His intervention! And ultimately desperation leading to repentance for their own sins. Well did they remember God's warning:

1 Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2

God, in His graciousness, not only warned Israel of the consequences of not keeping their end of His covenant of friendship, but He made a promise to them about what He would do if they would turn back to Him in such times:

...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 will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chron 7:14

These leaders, together with small groups of fervent intercessors, took this Scripture straight to their heart. They ate it and drank it as their own. In place of the phrase "my people," they put their names individually. They began to genuinely do the three things God calls for His people to do:

- 1) Humble ourselves
- 2) Turn from our own wicked ways
- 3) Pray and seek His face.

In response to His promise in this Scripture this is what they did:

- 1) They humbled themselves, privately and in small prayer groups. They asked God to examine their hearts and show them their own personal wicked ways – and He did.
- 2) They repented of their sins. They stopped doing the wicked things, the less than the best things, and began to do what He wanted them to do.
- 3) They prayed and fasted. They sought His face.

Mind you, this was not a once a year Lenton event, this was not even just one solemn assembly, though some of them declared just that. This was a process that went deep, that took time, that lead to genuine tears of repentance, to softened hearts that slowly but surely turned, turned, turned. Eventually their heart cry became one of unrestrained surrender to the Lord God Almighty. Their hearts began to come before God with really clean hands and pure hearts.

And what happened as a result? God came! God came! And oh, the blessing! As I mentioned a few pages ago, He opened up the heavens and came down among them in what can only be described as a Consuming Fire that transformed them, their churches, their towns, and their communities! He was only waiting for them to do what He had commanded.

Now to you and me. Now to our hearts. Now to our congregations. Now to our denominations (or lack of them). Now to our cities. Now to our nation. Did you think I was describing our country when I began describing the problems these countries were facing? Yes! We are in a desperate situation, and if we are anywhere near honest, we must confess that there is not a government program or a church program that is fixing the crime problem, the pornography pestilence, the beasts of moral decline and violence. We have no cure for the descent into utter godlessness that this country is falling headlong into. So does God have a word for us? Is their hope? Is it possible that He would do for us what He has done for the Country of Figi, what He has done in Kampala, Uganda, what He is doing in Almolonga, Guatemala, and many other countries? Do you think He wants to? Do you think He loves you? Do you think He loves those who don't know Him in this country? Do you think He would come and rescue us and deliver us if you and I took Him at His Word and did what our brothers and sisters have done in other places?

My answer is absolutely "Yes!" I have thrown my lot in with an unshakeable confidence that His promises in His Word are as good as He is. If He said He would do something if we do our part, I believe He'll do it.

Dear friends, a group of us in my circle of brothers and sisters, both in my church and in my city, have begun praying through 2 Chronicles 7:14. We recently spent 3 weeks in prayer and fasting, posturing ourselves before God both privately and in special weekly meetings together. We spent one week on each of the areas God asks all of us to do in this Scripture passage. We studied Scriptures each day that applied to that area of our lives. We prayed those Scriptures for ourselves. We told God we were "rendering our hearts and not our garments" before Him. I cannot tell you the effect of this process.

I have learned that I don't really know anything about repentance. The longer the 21 days went, the more I realized how superficial my relationship to Him has been. As the days ended, I knew I needed to do this again – and again. Each time I know I will grow. Just in this first time through, I feel like He has begun to tenderize my heart anew. I found myself looking for Him

during the day more than I have in so long a time. I began to experience unusual grief as I drove through cities on the way from one place to another. I think He is beginning to purify me and give me His heart for this nation and for His people.

He is teaching me three new songs. The names of them are

- 1) I Only Have Eyes For You, Jesus
- 2) I'll Do It Your Way
- 3) I Can't Handle This Job at All By Myself. (In fact, without You, I can do nothing, but with You I can do all things!)

So, how about you? Are you desperate? Have you decided that if the Lord doesn't come and take control, there is no hope? Then, take Him at His Word! Pick up 2 Chronicles 7:14 and ask Him to lead you through that Scripture into the very center of His Holy Presence.

Let's start a fellowship of intercession! Let's begin walking opposite the direction of the flow in our country at large! Let's jump on that narrow road. Yes, that one – the one that not many travel, kind of lonely, not flashy or attention-getting. Yes, let's begin to get smooth knees (from being bent in worship and adoration), quiet hearts, and fixed gaze on the One – the One love of our life.

P.S.

If you'd like to know what reports I've been reading, what prayer guides have been used to help me plumb the depths of these Scriptures, some videos I have seen and heartily recommend that document these fantastic blessed visitations of our Lord, write me back and ask for it.

I am personally making available a book written by a lady who met with the group of pastors and intercessors in Fort Wayne of which I am a part. She helped us so, the effect of her ministry will only be measured in eternity. She helped us think about our own part in preparing the way of the Lord for this corner of His world. If you are interested in purchasing it, I'd be glad to send you a copy. Otherwise, I urge you to get a copy for yourself from your local Christian Bookstore. The name of the book is **Desperate for His Presence by Rhonda Hughey**.