

## Healing the land

After the dedication of the first temple in Jerusalem, the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and told him:

*If I shut up heaven so no rain falls, or if I command locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves, pray, seek, crave, and require of necessity My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:13-14 AMP).*

Although this promise was originally a covenant promise to the nation of Israel, it is also relevant to the church of today, since all Christians are Abraham's spiritual offspring and heirs<sup>1</sup>. Nowadays the last three words in these two verses are often regarded as the most important part. If we humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face and turn from our sinful ways, God will heal our land. This is of special relevance to South Africa, where many people are leaving the country due to conditions such as the high crime rate, poor economic growth, corruption and dysfunctional local authorities. We are exhorted not to leave the country since God will turn things around if we turn from our sinful ways.

If we focus on social, political and economic blessings, we are actually missing the mark. We are seeking God's favour on our own terms. Instead of making safety, freedom and prosperity our primary concerns, our focus should be on higher spiritual motives, spiritual blessings and spiritual prosperity in the form of knowledge of the good message of salvation in Christ, freedom to propagate the Gospel, sweeping revivals and the growth of Bible-centred churches. To put it in a nutshell: the salvation of souls should be more important than material blessings. If we really seek God's face in earnest, we can come to only one conclusion, namely that the healing of our land should in the first instance be seen as a spiritual healing. Material blessings may or may not follow the spiritual blessings, depending on God's will, but they should never be our primary concern. It is also true that the spiritual state of the church is the key to the blessing of our country as a whole. If God blesses the nation as a whole, it will only be for the sake of His people.

What is God asking from us in return for healing our land? How should we turn from our wicked ways? Should we strive for moral and political reform by means of legislation and campaigns against issues such as abortion and drug abuse, focusing on society as a whole? The answer is 'No'. This should not be our focus. What is needed is spiritual renewal and regeneration, the transformation of individual lives by way of salvation, justification and sanctification through Jesus Christ. We must turn our backs on sins that are currently being

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<sup>1</sup> 'And if you belong to Christ [are in Him Who is Abraham's Seed], then you are Abraham's offspring and [spiritual] heirs according to promise.' (Galatians 3:29 AMP)

tolerated by a large number of churches. We must start with ourselves by constantly searching our hearts for secret sins that must be confessed, repented of and rejected.

A spiritual renewal is needed, starting with authentic repentance by Christian individuals who know and love the Lord, but who have forsaken their first love<sup>2</sup> by falling into a state of spiritual lethargy or indifference. A change of heart is needed, rather than a change of policy aimed at Christianising popular culture, thereby forsaking evangelism and love for the lost. Revival cannot occur unless the Word of God is proclaimed and people are called to repentance. This is exactly what happened on the Day of Pentecost when Peter, in the power of the Holy Spirit, preached the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem and 3 000 souls came to salvation.<sup>3</sup> Churches and congregations should turn from false doctrines aimed at 'itching ears'<sup>4</sup> and return to the truth as contained in the Word of God by focusing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The individual Christian's motive for confessing and repenting should be pure. It should not be done because he or she wants to earn God's favour in the form of spiritual and material blessings or because of fear of punishment. Any attempt to earn God's favour would be tantamount to a denial of His grace. In the first place I should confess and repent of my sinful deeds because I love Him<sup>5</sup> who loved me first as an act of gratitude for His saving grace and because I respect His holiness. Confession and repentance are necessary because sin grieves the Holy Spirit and brings separation between the believer and God.

Although the emphasis should be on repentance by the individual, there might be times when we have to confess and repent of the sins and iniquities of the nation as a whole while at the same time taking a stand against and distancing ourselves from such sins and iniquities.

In this section we will be looking at some serious sins that have the capability of destroying lives. We will examine ways in which such transgressions can be overcome, which will include the salvation of non-believers and the rendering of assistance to Christians who are struggling with sin in their lives. Such assistance may take the form of prayer, counselling, encouragement and discipline. Although these sins, like any other sins, should be taken seriously and should be confronted head on, support should be provided with the necessary

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<sup>2</sup> 'But I have this [*one charge to make*] against you: that you have left (abandoned) the love that you had at first [*you have deserted Me, your first love*].' (Revelation 2:4 AMP)

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:41

<sup>4</sup> 'For the time is coming when [*people*] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [*for something pleasing and gratifying*], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, and will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions.' (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

<sup>5</sup> 'If you [*really*] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.' (John 14:15 AMP)

love and compassion and without showing any spiritual pride or an attitude of condemnation.

**Further reading:**

MacArthur, John. 2002. **Can God Bless America? The Biblical Pathway to Blessing.** Nashville: W Publishing Group.