

If my people,...shall humble themselves. (Quality: very good)

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[0 : 00] I've been so much to need the Lord's merciful and gracious help. I must venture now in directing your thoughts to the second book of Chronicles, chapter 7 and reading verse 14.

The second book of Chronicles, chapter 7 and reading verse 14. If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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.

Many of you, I'm sure, will know that we've come to a time in our history when there is, and I'm sure there is, particularly among the Lord's people in our land, the desire to rightly remember God's great goodness to this nation and others during the Second World War.

Many of you will know that much has been going on in London, and it will be today in other places.

And it may well be that in many places of worship some thought will be given to the victory, both the victory in Europe and the victory over Japan.

[2 : 16] I hope that there are those here that perhaps have heard people giving praise and thanksgiving to our God for his great goodness in all that that dreadful conflict meant.

Alas, it would seem to my understanding that very little, if any mention, has been made of what needs to be said in that our God, the God of heaven and earth, the almighty Jehovah, in such remarkable ways, was pleased in the end to grant victory over those awful enemies who were seeking, in some instances, to conquer the world.

The devil was indeed behind it. And some of those leaders of those nations that we opposed, one, I feel, could rightly say that they were motivated by the devil.

Now, I have had much thought and much exercise regarding the will of God today concerning his word that I was to venture to bring.

And my thoughts have been, again, in Solomon's song, they have been in another part of God's word. But when I awoke this morning, the truth, the opening words of this 14th verse, kept coming into my heart and thoughts.

[4 : 32] Therefore, it is in this way that I must venture with the verse that I have read. I had a feeling that I would find it in Solomon's prayer.

And of course, another very important thing which is going on at the present time in our land, and there are many things, solemn judgments are upon us in many different ways.

And it will be our mercy if we are made aware of this. We so need to be made aware, graciously aware, that the hand of God is raised against this land of ours.

It is raised in judgment. We have such need to tremble before almighty God regarding the state of our nation, regarding the state of true godliness in our land, which is, as dear Mr. Dawson would have said, such a low ebb.

And another very solemn judgment, as I view it, is certainly with us, and you will understand what I am going to say.

[6 : 09] But what did we read in verse 26 of the 6th chapter of the 2nd book of Chronicles? Well, we read this, When the heaven is shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee, yet if they pray toward this place and confess thy name and turn from their sin when thou dost afflict them.

People have been complaining to the water authorities regarding the fact that they are having to put restriction upon the use of water.

One of the most important things that we have in our life. And I wonder how many of us take this, just this one great blessing, this one of the many good gifts which our God does give to us, even water.

And people so soon complain and ready to blame the water authorities. But one of those concerned in these authorities, I heard him say it on the wireless, only the other day, he said that it was not their responsibility that he blamed the weather.

And he said two things, either we need to pray, and I thought, well that's very necessary, and I was glad to hear him say so.

[8 : 04] Firstly, he said we need, or there is the need, to pray. Secondly, there is the need for these restrictions. It is very evident that we are in a time of drought.

God has sent it, and we need to remember that. Records that have been kept proved to us that this year is an exceptionally dry summer, and I'm sure many of us have known this, that the sun is extremely hot.

It has been burning hot. And I'm sure that many people, indeed I've heard neighbours speaking to me only this week, and those who evidently do not fear God, and yet they have said things like this, I can't bear it.

And that is what is being said. And just perhaps an aside to that, quite recently I had to preach at Hayward Heath from this particular truth, and that regarding the seven vials full of the wrath of God that will yet be poured upon this world.

We know not how near it is, but in the 16th chapter of the Revelation, and from verse 4 we read this, and the rather from verse 8, and the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire, and men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues, and they repented not to give him glory.

[10 : 18] So I feel I must first mention this fact that God is withholding rain, generally speaking, and we need to tremble as to how much longer the drought will continue.

But if we think that Solomon, in the dedication of the temple, in praying as he did, he came to this, and it's true at the moment in our own land, when the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, and why?

Because they have sinned against thee. Dear friends, sin is the cause of all the woe the world has felt or seen, sin, and all the judgments that lay upon us as a nation, and in whatever way we might speak of it, the solemn cause is sin.

But we need this to be born home upon our hearts. It is one thing to say yes, sin is the cause, but it's another thing, and this is what I feel at least, we so need, and we need it in the truth of the verse that came into my thoughts this morning.

if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves. Oh, I feel this, our only hope, whether collectively or individually, is we need the Holy Spirit to bring home upon our hearts the reality of sin, and of course we need it in our own hearts the reality that I am a sinner, that you are sinners, and that we are sinners in the sight of an holy God.

[12 : 45] Oh, how I feel this is so needed in the day in which we now live. there is a hymn that expresses it in these words, convince us of our sin, then lead to Jesus' blood, and to our wandering view reveal, the secret love of God.

Coming back for a further moment to our great need of rain, rain. In the seventh chapter, it says this in verse 13, if I shut up heaven, now God is speaking here, Solomon was praying in the preceding chapter, but now God is speaking to Solomon directly, if I shut up heaven, that there be no rain.

or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among the people. Well, only this week it so happened that I heard there is the danger of a plague of fleas.

And of course, this continuing heat, the effect of it is to be seen on the pastures, the grass is dried up, and we need to consider this regarding the provision that God has made.

We know there's been a record harvest, we know that the corn this year is of exceptional quality, but oh, the poor sheep and the cattle, you may have seen them, and these are things that relate to us in our lives.

[14 : 41] And so one could go on, we could speak of many things, many judgments that lay upon us as a nation.

And how does this word begin? What does it say in verse 14 of this seventh chapter, if my people, if my people?

Now that is where it begins with us today. It's not speaking about the poor people that are right out in the world. It is not speaking in that particular way.

If we think of our own land, the thousands today that are desecrating God's day, the Sabbath day, and yet they're ignorant. Many of them are ignorant.

I was only told recently that how children, young people, they didn't even know, they didn't even know that it was Sunday.

[15 : 48] You see, the ignorance that prevails because of sin in our land today is, I think we could use the word, it's awful. But dear friends, does it really concern us?

And I have to say before my God, does it really concern me? It's so easy, I've said this before at times, but it's so easy for us to accept a situation that prevails in our land.

It's so easy for us to say, yes, how dreadful this is. We have this awful national lottery, and almost all the great businesses in this land, they are all joining in this gambling parade, as it were, and that is just another of our sins.

And most of you will know that the sale of alcoholic drink has been legalised. The Lord's Day has been used yet more and more, and I know for a fact that alcohol at the present time is one of the scourges in our land, and in some respects even more so than drugs, which again is another awful, awful evil, awful sin.

And you may say, well, whatever you're telling us all this about, I hope none of you are saying, well, it doesn't concern us. I hope none of you are saying, well, it doesn't concern me.

[17 : 28] My dear people, dear friends, it most certainly does. Why, you say, why does it concern us? It's in this.

If we are among his dear people, if my people, which are called by my name, now that is the name of Jesus, the margin renders this, upon whom my name is called, if my people, which are called by my name.

You know, and every poor sinner that's quickened into life by the Holy Spirit, they are called by the name of Jesus. That sacred name, and that name that is above every name, and the name of Jesus.

And whosoever shall call upon his name will be saved. Now, let me ask all of you here this morning, have you been compelled to call on the name of Jesus?

Have you had to cry for mercy? Have you had to bow before him, the King of kings and Lord of lords? Have you had to tremble before his majesty, even a little, as the apostle John did on the isle of Patmos?

[18 : 57] I fell at his feet as dead. You know, it would be a mercy if such blessing could yet be known in our land through an awakening of the Holy Spirit, that we, that as a nation, we might be brought to have even a glimpse of the eternal sonship of Christ, his glory, his kingship, his power, and to bow before him.

You know, dear friends, and I say this in love to you all, if we are not brought to bow before him in this life, confessing our sins, acknowledging our guilt, and yet to receive mercy from his hands, if we are not brought to bow before him in this life, we shall certainly bow before him as our judge in the great day of judgment.

It will be one thing or the other with us. We shall either fall upon that stone, Christ, now, or as the Bible, Jesus tells us regarding that stone, that cornerstone, and Christ is the cornerstone, he is that stone.

Now, Jesus has told us this, that if we do not fall on that stone here, then that stone will fall on us, and they are the words of Jesus, and that stone will crush us to powder.

You see, dear friends, we all have a never dying soul. Every one of us, we all have a never dying soul.

[20 : 52] Have you been made aware of that? Great mercy if you have, because if you have, and it has been by the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, you've had to cry for mercy, you've had to plead for Jesus' sake, and yet that precious name, none have ever pleaded it, and have been empty, sent back.

None have ever pleaded the name of Jesus, and have not been, have not received mercy. Now, that is the wonder of the gospel.

And the door of his mercy stands open all day and all night, to the poor and the needy, who not by the way, and no sinner was ever yet empty, sent back, who comes seeking mercy for Jesus' sake.

Now, just a few more thoughts regarding what we desire. I don't know how any of you feel about this, but the Lord has burdened me with it.

There are many dear children and young people in this chapel this morning, and of course you cannot understand, because you were not alive, you were not born when the Second World War began.

[22 : 16] There are others here of our dear friends who were born even before the First World War. I'm aware of that. Not many of them, but there are still those.

But dear friends, many of you here are completely ignorant, apart from your history books. You're completely ignorant of what happened from 1939 to 1945.

And I want today, if nothing else, to tell you that our God, the God of heaven and earth, in a most remarkable way, he stretched forth his hand, the hand of mercy.

There are a few of our dear friends here this morning who know this, and who were called up in his majesty's forces, as it was then, King George VI.

Some of our friends lived through that conflict. And although I didn't, I wasn't old enough to be called up during those years, but I lived through them.

[23 : 34] I was nine years old when the war started. So we lived through it, and at least we understand something of it. But you see, what I feel, among other things, is this, that even today in our land, there will be, and there have been, and there will be services.

this, and so much emphasis is being put on, of course, it's to do with the victory against Japan. So much emphasis is being put on the soldiers, yes, that lived through it, and were so affected by it, and thousands perished.

but oh, that at least in this chapel, and I believe in other places, oh, that today we may remember God's goodness, we may record his goodness, and a few things, if the Lord may help me, just to convey to you something of what the Lord did, but I want to keep to the word of God in this.

if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves. I can sincerely say this, that I feel more and more as your unworthy pastor, I need to be humbled.

I keep praying to be humbled, because the Holy Spirit I believe has taught me, that we can never be too humble. We can certainly be too proud, and we often are, if we're honest.

[25 : 23] But you know, we need, this nation needs it. Oh, that the Lord would even use the drought to bring people to prayer.

You may have heard the true story of those who gathered prayer. For prayer. And the little girl, yes, that child, and faith was given to her.

What did she do? She went out with her umbrella. Why? Because that child believed the prayer was going to be answered. That child believed, you see.

faith. And if thou believest, we so need this true faith. I know it's God given. But oh, the Lord has told us that if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, and shall say to that mountain, be removed into the depths of the sea, it shall be done for you.

Now it's all bound up with the sovereign will of God. My next door neighbour, only yesterday morning, and there seems no evidence that the lady fears God, she said, I don't think I've ever felt the need of rain like I do now.

[26 : 46] And she must be about 60. Now you see, if nothing else remains in our hearts, and I hope something will remain, but dear friends, we've such need to pray for rain.

Whether the Lord will give it, we do not know. But it's very needed. It's very needed. And you see, this is what the Lord says, even regarding such a matter, and it's in the verse before, if I shut up heaven and there be no rain, if my people which are called by my name shall 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.

You know, dear Jonah, and I say dear Jonah, I've been thankful for the book of Jonah. You know, his will was in opposition to the will of his God.

God told him to go to Nineveh and preach against the preaching that I bid thee. But he rebelled. His own will opposed the will of God, and he fled as it were.

[28 : 07] He fled to Tarshish. Where did it bring him? It brought him into the whales, the great fish's belly. And yet the Lord had prepared that great fish, and it swallowed up Jonah.

And there he turned, oh, he cried unto his God. And there he had to learn this, salvation is of the Lord. But you see, ere long his God said to him the second time, go and preach, Jonah, the preaching that I bid thee.

And so he went, didn't he? And he cried, didn't he? What a short sermon it was. Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown. Now the effect of that sermon, it reached the hearts of the Ninevites.

And from the very king downward, they put on sackcloth and ashes, and they acknowledged their guilt. And God had mercy upon them.

Oh, if only, if only our queen, I do not know what goes on in her heart. If only the royal family, if only our government.

[29 : 15] If only those in authority. If only those in high positions in our national church. We don't hear it. But if only we were brought before God, in all the different ways that we need it, what a mercy it would be.

Oh, you see, the Lord used that short sermon to the Ninevites. And he repented of the evil that he would have brought upon them. And this is what the Lord says here.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall 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.

God, in the world, and will I hear you? In so many, many ways, we are a fallen nation, and we're part of it.

You see, we're part of it. Dear Nehemiah, when he was confronted with very solemn things in his day, he didn't first of all put the blame on everybody else.

[30 : 31] But he came to this, and I need it, we need it, both I and my Father's house have sinned. Do we know that we have sinned?

Do we know? You know, another thought comes into my mind. The great stores that are open again today, you all know this is true, but the great stores and shops, they're full of food.

They're full of luxuries. We're surrounded by it now, in these very days in which we're living. And yet we well know that in other parts of the world, there are people starving.

There are people that do not have water. They do not have food. They do not have clothes. They do not have a home to live in. And yet we can be so complacent. I do not know how you'll feel about what I've said, but I must leave that with my God.

I'm compelled to come once more, and I expect to be away for a little while. And friends, the Lord alone knows what the future holds, for me and for us.

[31 : 42] But I'm sending these, or sounding these few notes of warning to us here today. I hope none of you will say, well, we don't need it.

I hope none of you will say, there's no need for you to preach like you have. The Lord alone knows what is needed. Now, I would just convey one or two very brief thoughts of God's mercy to this nation during those years of war, which our God so mercifully, oh so mercifully delivered us and in the end granted victory.

But let me remind you that thousands of young men from our own land and other parts of the world, thousands were slain. They did give their life for this country.

They do need a right remembrance, but only as before God. But on the 2nd of June, 1940, which was the second year the war began in 1939.

But by the 2nd of June, 1940, the Germans had pushed the French, the British, and others.

[33 : 12] They had pushed them to the coast. And a day came on the 2nd of June, 1940, when through the mercy of God, 335,000 men were rescued from the shores of France.

And that day, this great God, he stilled the English Channel from being what it often is to being like a mill pond.

And hundreds of little boats went over to France. France. And those 335,000 men, their lives were spared. They were brought back to England in safety, at least for the time.

They lost all their equipment. They lost it all. In 1940, there was what we knew as the Battle of Britain, when Hitler thought that he'd got England.

And he sent the might of his air force to bomb this land. And yet he failed. Why did he fail? Because God, in his great mercy, enabled our people to produce the aircraft that were needed.

[34 : 34] And the young men who gave their lives, many of them, God used them to defeat that mighty air force that Hitler had. And they were defeated in that respect.

I believe it would be right to say, regarding Hitler particularly, that his undoing, and God was in it, he invaded Russia, that great country, in 1941.

The law so worked, because the Battle of Britain had been won, as it were, by God, in giving victory to our own men.

Now, God turned Hitler's eyes away from this country, and he directed it to Russia. Now, that was his undoing, really. Because in what happened, and it was an awful battle, thousands of Germans and Russians perished, but that was Hitler's undoing.

Really, it was. It was the beginning of a turning point in that conflict. Now, in 1941, Japan entered the war.

[35 : 49] And initially, they wrought great havoc in the South Pacific, in places there. And at one point, 60,000 troops were captured by the Japanese.

And oh, the awful way that the Japanese treated their prisoners of war. It was awful, as it was with the Germans. But the Japanese, I think, were even worse.

Now, today, yesterday and today, at least, we are desiring to thank God that victory was given, victory over Japan.

And many of you will know that what brought it finally to an end was those two awful atomic bombs that were dropped on the Japanese.

And thousands perished in a moment with those awful bombs. Now, those few thoughts, much could be said.

[36 : 57] But I have just looked a little into these things again, and it has so brought home upon my heart the mercy of God, the great mercy of God, to this land of ours, all through that war.

And yet, where are we today? We've turned our backs upon this great God. And sin runs down our streets like water. And what shall be the end of these things?

Well, dear friends, we need to tremble before this God. If it could please him, I feel the only thing that will change the scene in our land is an awakening.

It can only be through the divine power of God the Holy Spirit, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Whether God will grant it, we know not.

But I'm sure we're living in the last days. And so I have ventured as I have. May God in his mercy forgive anything that I have said amiss.

[38 : 11] Because in a multitude of words, there won't it not say, I hope you will feel that the Lord has spoken. Now, our closing hymn, I felt that we ought to sing it, and I hope we shall be able to sing it rightly, as our friend will now give it out.

May the Lord then pardon all amiss. And may his truth within us live. Amen. May we help to conclude our service with hymn 1150.

Lord of heaven and earth and ocean, hear us from thy bright abode. While our hearts with deep devotion own their great and gracious God, now with joy we come before thee.

Seek thy face, thy mercies own. Lord of life and light and glory, bless thy church and guard the throne. 1150.

Thank you.