



# PRAYER: TOUCHING HEAVEN TO CHANGE EARTH

*“3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. 4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. 6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. 7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. 8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. 9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. 10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. 12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 13 That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14 And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about. 16 And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron. 17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.”*

## **Prayer: Touching Heaven to Change Earth**

For many of us, the problem of getting along with other people is our inability to get along with ourselves. Everything visible and physical is preceded by something invisible and spiritual. The consequences we are dealing with in our lives, in our homes, in our culture, we are dealing with them because there is a gap between where God is and where we are.

See, he wants to know that you want him and not just want his stuff. See, a lot of folks go to church to get God's stuff, but who don't want the God who gives it. So, if you're in distress, don't let that drive you away, draw you near.

When you get close and want to live for him, want to please him, want to honor him, want to exalt him, want to draw near to him, then heaven opens up and he lets you find him. I want to begin our time by going over today how the world works because many Christians do not understand how the world works. Because we do not understand how the world works, we approach issues in an illegitimate way because we're operating on a faulty frame of reference.

It is an understanding how the world works that allows us to be able to approach the struggles, stresses, needs in an appropriate way. Many of us are trying to mop up messes in our lives, and every time we try to mop it, there's more mess to mop up because we haven't gotten to the root of the problem. If you will understand the theology I am going to attempt to communicate to you today of how the world works, then it will shift how you approach living and especially shift how you approach challenges in living.

In 2nd Chronicles 15, we're told in verse 3, for many days Israel was without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law. Verse 5 says, in those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress.

It says there was no peace to him who went in or to him who came out. No peace means they were living in conflict. There was conflict.

It says, first of all, there was personal conflict. No peace to him. Many of the problems of coping today are people unable to live with themselves.

That's why they often go to devices to help them to cope. That's why they become dependent, because they can't live with themselves, and so they are dealing with inner conflict. But not only was there no peace to him, it says there was no peace to him who came out or who went in.

That is, when he left home and when he came back home. So, there was conflict in the family. When you look at the number of divorces, when you look at how many times people have been divorced, when you look at the way people talk about each other, the way couples curse at each other, the way they demean one another, then you see the parent-child conflict, and it goes on and on while the mops keep slinging and swinging.

And there was conflict not only when the individual left, but he says when he came back in, when he entered back into his home, there was more conflict or disturbances. It says city rose up against city, and nation rose up against nation. There was cultural conflict.

We'll say city, urban conflict, international conflict, many disturbances. That was the situation. Ah, but here's where it gets interesting.

The end of verse 6 says, for God troubled them. For God troubled them with their distresses. End of verse 6. Now, wait a minute.

I would have thought with all that chaos, it would have said the devil troubled them. I would have thought with all this confusion, verse 6 would end by saying the devil troubled them with every kind of distress, but it says God troubled them. So now we're going to mess with your thinking a little bit, because a lot of things you're blaming on the devil is God.

There was no peace, the family disintegration, conflict, urban conflict, international conflict, and God says if you're going to blame somebody, blame me. See, a lot of us are blaming the wrong person, because here's how it works in the world. If God is your problem, only God is your solution.

If God is the cause, only God is the cure. You say but wait a minute. How can all this evil be given over to God? Because God uses the devil to carry out his dirty work, because even the devil is not the devil.

The devil is God's devil, because the devil can only do what God allows him to do. So even if the devil is messing with you, it's by divine permission. For God troubled them with every kind of distress.

Let me put it another way. The spiritual always precedes the natural. The spiritual governs the natural.

The heavenly determines the earthly. So, if you have an issue on earth that has been caused by heaven, trying to solve it on earth is a waste of time. If it's an issue on earth caused by heaven, God troubled them, then you need heaven to come to earth to fix the issue on earth that heaven is responsible for, even if it's a problem because they were living in distress.

What most people do is spend all their time on earth trying to fix earth when the problem didn't originate in earth or on earth. For God troubled them with every kind of distress. In the Old Testament, you ran into the active wrath of God when God would directly bring pain about.

He would rain down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. He would flood the earth with water. He would open up the earth and swallow up rebellious people.

That would be the active wrath of God when God directly addressed things on earth, bringing about distress. When Jesus died on the cross, God's relationship to the world shifted. The Bible says that with the death of Christ, the world was reconciled to God.

So, some people believe the God of the Old Testament has to be different than the God of the New Testament, because the God of the Old Testament, they say, seems so mean and judgmental, while the God of the New Testament seems so nice and full of love. Well, there are two gods, but there are two relationships. In the Old Testament, before the permanent solution to sin was addressed, there was only a temporary solution, and God directly dealt with things.

In the New Testament, because the death of Christ reconciled the whole world to God, God could now relate to the world differently, not because he changed, but because his relationship to the world changed, but predicated on the death of Christ, which is why Jesus Christ is the key and the center of all of life. So now, you do not face the active wrath of God. You face the passive wrath of God.

Now that's spoken of in Romans chapter 1, verse 18 to the end of the chapter, where it says the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men who don't want to retain the knowledge of God, and then Romans 1, verse 24, 26, and 28 say the same thing. It says, therefore God turned them over, therefore God turned them over, therefore God turned them over. That means God released them to life without him.

Stay with me here, because you'll discover how the world works. It says because they did not want to retain the knowledge of God, God, like a dog on a leash, let the leash go so the dog could run away. So, when men don't want God, he lets you not want him, and he lets go of the leash, and you can go your own way.

But when you do that, you also invite in the space between where God is and between where you want to go, that space becomes occupied with consequences. And so the consequences we are dealing with in our lives, in our homes, in our culture, we are dealing with them because there is a gap between where God is and where we are. Because they no longer wanted to retain the knowledge of God, it says God turned them over or released them to the consequences of their decision to be separated from him.

And the built-in side effects that are the result. So the problems that people were facing on earth were predicated on what God was allowing to happen. Now the question is why? They were in distress.

In other words, troubles they couldn't fix. And I know in this house today, there are troubles we can't fix, and you know you can't fix them because you've been trying to fix them for a long time, and they either stay broken or look like they're fixed but still break. He gives three reasons in verse three for this calamity.

For many days, that is for an extended period of time, Israel was without the true God. Okay? Problem number one, for many days, an extended period of time, Israel was without the true God. One of the great offers of our Savior Jesus Christ is life plus abundant life.

That means a fulfilled life (life eternal). So many people are existing because they don't possess the life of God. If you don't know that you possess the life of God, let's get that fixed right now.

Jesus Christ is offering you His life. The Bible says, he that hath a son hath life. So, if you want life, not existence, the forgiveness of sins, the guarantee of heaven, and having Jesus Christ involved with your life on earth, all of that is in this package called life, and He's offering it to you for free.

Now not a lot is for free today, but this is. Life for free. How do you get it? You simply go to Jesus Christ and trust Him alone for it.

Israel was not without religion, Israel was not without church attendance, Israel was not without choir singing, Israel was not without religious programming. It says Israel was without the true God. The key word is the word true.

They kept the name of God, they kept praying to God, they kept religious activity. They were doing all of that without the true God. So, evidently you can have church without God.

The biblical word for a false god is idol. That's the biblical word for a false god. An idol is any noun, person, place, thing, or thought that you look to as your source.

Now in third world countries, we would condemn their idolatry. In third world countries and in backward nations that haven't come into the 20th and 21st century, they may worship trees or rocks or nature, the sun, okay, we would condemn that. But in the West we have designer idols.

We don't worship trees and rocks; we have American idols. Let me look at some of the idols that we have that have replaced the true God. We got the idol of, oh, let's see, race, where my color trumps God, where people get offended when you correct their blackness with the

Bible, where folk get offended when you correct their whiteness with the Bible, because their race is more important than God's rules, where they wind up worshiping black being beautiful or white being right rather than both having to be biblical.

Whenever your race is the source of your ultimate identity, your race is an idol and you are a false worshiper. Oh, let's look at another designer idol. Politics is a designer idol, where you think God rides the backs of a donkey or an elephant.

Politics is a designer idol when you're more Democrat than godly, when you're more Republican than God. When God says one thing, but you still talking about what your party says. In Ezekiel 43, God says, how dare you bring the throne of your king and set it next to my throne, like we are equals.

When God speaks, elephants got to sit down, and donkeys got to back up. It's okay to be a Democrat, it's okay to be a Republican, as long as the Bible can overrule either or both. That's why ultimately you should be an independent because nobody should own you but the kingdom of God.

Let's see, do we have another designer idol, let's see, oh yeah, science. Science is a designer idol because science teaches your kids not an evolutionary theory but an evolutionary fact. Atheistic evolution is, let's, fairytales for adults, it's a fairytale for adults because in the name of science, they deny God and they set up a whole system of divine denial based on that science.

So, because of that science, man becomes the ultimate definer of life, man becomes the ultimate definer of meaning, man becomes the ultimate definer of where God should be placed in the culture. When people elevate science, and science is a beautiful thing, but all science does is show how God does stuff. He says there were idols, they're economic idols, they're class idols, because of a certain amount of money or where a person lives or the car they drive, they have elevated themselves to the height of pride where they're better than other people who have been equally created in the image of God.

So, I can come in shapes and forms, so you don't have to be an overt God denier to be an idolater. All you've got to do is place anything or anybody in the place or the position of

being the source of your identity. Then it doesn't matter how much you pray because you're praying to a false God, not the real God because the real God is not listening if you have another idol.

Now why, why, why were they worshipping a false God? Well verse 3 tells us, because the second thing it tells us is there was not a teaching priest. There was no teaching priest. It didn't say there were no preachers.

He just said they weren't talking about anything. They were talking smack. A lot of these problems that we have in our culture is because the church, Christians, have not risen to the occasion to be what God has called us to be and it's just showing up in the public square.

Now, if your life is falling apart and you're in personal distress, then my responsibility, a leader's responsibility, even another believer's responsibility, is to take the Word, show you what God says about whatever you're dealing with, then give you practical steps to apply what God said, then ask the Holy Spirit to take your practical steps of obedience based on what God said to bring change in your life. But what we got is a generation of folk who change books. They use this book for some things, they use human understanding for other things, they use popular opinion for other things, and they wind up living in distress.

The third thing it says is there was no law. There was no law. You see, when there's no true God, no teaching priests, there are no rules.

People make up their own rules, you see. They either have no rules, or they have their own made-up rules, you know. People come up with their own, you know, they walk around saying, I know my truth. You know your truth.

No, it's either truth or it's not truth. We want to adjust truth; we want to make truth relevant. It's okay to be relevant as long as you're not changing the truth.

And truth is whatever God says on any subject about what He speaks. That's the truth. So, if God says it, that is the word about it.



Science just has to catch up. No rules, wrong rules, your own rules, no standard. Was there a solution? Now that you understand how the world works, the spiritual governs it.

If God has caused it, you don't know anybody who can fix it unless it's God using that person. Verse 4 gives us a solution. Because verse 4 says, but in their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel, they sought Him and He let them find Him.

Ah, key word, distress. In their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel. That's the same word of verse 6. God caused their distress.

Verse 4 says, but in their distress they turned to the Lord God, which means God will let it get bad enough, long enough, till you wake up, because it was in their distress. See God will let it get worse. He'll let us get addicted.

He'll let us get into all the consequences of our sins. He will let you go down and down and down and down till the only way you can look is up. He won't let anybody fix it, any money be able to get you out of it.

He will let the distress go down. But in their distress, when things got deep enough, bad enough, long enough, it says they called on, here it is, the Lord God. Oh, watch this now.

When they returned to the Lord God, He let them find Him.

So, if you're in distress, don't let that drive you away, draw you near, closer, so that you're like Jacob and say, I'm not going to let you go until you answer me. When you do that, when you get close and want to live for Him, want to please Him, want to honor Him, want to exalt Him, want to draw near to Him, then heaven opens up and He lets you find Him. He lets you find Him.

We often go to earth to fix earth. When things in our physical world begin to shatter, fall apart, we look for physical solutions. That's our natural tendency since we're physical beings.

But we're not just physical beings if we're Christians. We're spiritual beings as well. And that means that we have the privilege and opportunity to contact heaven in order to see things change on earth.

You know what our problem is? We often go to heaven last rather than to go to heaven first. Because earth is so tangible and touchable, we can grab it quickly. The spiritual seems to be often esoteric, and we can't grab it.

Well, try going to heaven first, and then let's see what happens on earth. Because heaven is situated to invade and transform our physical realities. That's what it is.