



# Prayer that Prevails

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*A White Paper by:*

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Alive Ministries: PROJECT PRAY

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*Doug often says that he “backed into” the prayer movement. After almost two decades of offering teaching-training ministry to local churches, prayer, he discovered was the missing element in both the life of the church and the personal daily life of the typical believer. For that reason, Alive Ministries refocused much of its attention to prayer training, offering Schools of Prayer and coaching in the area of prayer ministries.*

## Prayer That Prevails

*P. Douglas Small*

**A**ssyria was gobbling up nations. Several years after capturing Israel, the Assyrians— led by King Sennacherib —were camped outside Jerusalem, capital of Judah.

Although King Hezekiah paid Sennacherib a heavy tribute with gold and silver from the Temple (2 Kings 18:13-16), it was not enough. A demand letter called for national surrender. The letter was not a mere political, economic, or military matter; it taunted the Lord God. Sennacherib charged that trusting Yahweh was futile—that He was offering false hope to the people of Judah.

### God and the Nations

The United States is in the midst of a veritable war against Christianity to enshrine pluralism and privatize faith. Since faith has a corporate dimension, sequestering it can destroy it.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,” says Psalm 33:12. Heaven declares, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34 NKJV). Surely, if God gathers and judges nations (Zeph. 3:8), He also protects them. Paul urges “supplications, prayers, intercessions . . . for kings” (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Indeed, God’s hand is “stretched out over all the nations” (Isa. 14:26 NKJV), and “all the nations that forget God” perish (Ps. 9:17). In Ezekiel

14:12-21, the Lord warns, “If a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness,” judgment will follow—reaching a point where the righteous will be able to “deliver only themselves,” not their nation (NASB). God “makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them” (Job 12:23 NIV).

### Desperate Appeal to God

In 2 Kings 18:19, Sennacherib’s threatening letter to Hezekiah began, “What confidence is this in which you trust?” (NKJV).

Hezekiah was unlike the former faithless kings of Judah. Bolstered by encouragement from the prophet Isaiah, King Hezekiah “trusted in the Lord God. . . . He held fast to the Lord” (vv. 5-6 NKJV).

With Sennacherib’s demand letter in his hand, Hezekiah went to the Temple and spread it out before the Lord in prayer. Alone with God, the king pleaded for the nation of Judah. He began, “O Lord, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth” (19:15 NASB).

This is not a superficial appeal; it is full of profound implications. Note the affirmations:

- The Lord has made a national covenant—He is “the God of Israel” (which included Judah).
- God is sovereign—He is “enthroned.”
- The Lord is incomparably singular—He is “God . . . alone.”
- The Lord reigns everywhere—He is God of “all the kingdoms of the earth.”
- God is the Life-giver—Creator of “heaven and earth.”

Assyria’s threat put God on trial. The words of Sennacherib did not merely question Jerusalem’s strength or Hezekiah’s resolve; they “insult[ed] the living God” (v. 16 NIV). With the honor of God in question, note the heart of King Hezekiah’s prayer: “O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone” (v. 19 NKJV).

That night, following the appeal specifically tied to the honor and glory of God, the angel of the Lord struck the camp of the Assyrians (v. 35). God fought the battle for the nation and sent Sennacherib home (v. 36).

On August 10, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met on the deck of HMS Prince of Wales for consultation and prayer. They bowed their heads and belted out hymns... During the years in which London was bombed, it was said that every eye searched the horizon as dawn came and the smoke cleared, and if the spire

of Saint Paul's Cathedral could still be seen pointing heavenward, there was hope...On D-Day, June 6, 1944, President Roosevelt read a prayer to the United States, "Let Our Hearts Be Stout," as Allied troops invaded Europe.

## **National Revivals**

In the Bible, national revivals rose only with righteous or repentant kings. Without righteousness or repentance by leaders, there was little hope. Israel's national leaders inaugurated 11 of the 12 renewals in the Old Testament. They called solemn assemblies for national repentance, and spiritual renewal followed.

National sins are not merely the collective sins of its people. Personal and corporate sins are on different ledgers; the judgments of individuals and nations differ. Corporate sins demand corporate repentance to avert the threatening national judgment.

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Three exceptions appear in the Old Testament, however, when God acted in His own behalf, for His own glory, for His name's sake. In Egypt, enslaved and experiencing genocide, without hope, baptized in Egyptian paganism, Israel cried out and God intervened. Every one of the 10 plagues was a declaration of His superiority over pagan deities. Wooing His people, the Lord redeemed and emancipated Israel.

In Elijah's day, Baalism had become the state religion in Israel. Righteous prophets had fled; the godly were persecuted. A day of decision for the nation took place on Mount Carmel. There, holy fire fell and Baalism proved futile.

During the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, a wave of miracles took place, apparently designed by God to show Himself as the true and living One. Yet, Israel did not turn to Him.

Decades after Sennacherib's threat failed, Judah fell to the Babylonians, leaving Jerusalem and the Temple decimated. Then God acted again. The miracles in the lives of Daniel and his three Hebrew friends encouraged the exiles. A remnant returned from captivity. The nation survived. Here is the miraculous birth of a nation, its call to revival, and its resurrection from the dead—all pointing to Christ.

## **Deep Repentance**

The thesis is simple: When the purposes of God are threatened and the people who carry God's name are at risk, God acts in His own behalf, for His own name! That may be our only hope. So much repentance today is self-interested, and it will never affect either a lasting revival in the church or a change in the culture.

The quality of repentance rising out of shame and guilt, out of the fear

of consequences, is different from repentance out of a heart broken because it has offended the holiness of God. To repent to make our life better, to start afresh, and/or to get out of trouble is the lowest quality of repentance. It uses faith for one's own narrow self-interest, only pretending to love God and righteousness. To repent in view of God's holiness, with deep contrition at our offense to God, is noble repentance.

Repentance in hopes of restoring the national economy and strengthen our freedom is too shallow. However, repentance as a nation preserved and blessed by the God we have abandoned and a Christ we have dishonored is different. It is the repentance that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that the Lord is God alone! These are the stakes; the world is watching.

### **Our Desperate Condition**

Sadly, we are living in an increasingly pagan cultural climate. For example, when 5-year-old Gabriella Perez bowed her head to pray in her Oviedo (Florida) school lunchroom last spring, a teacher allegedly told her praying was not allowed. When Sam Turner knelt down to say a quick prayer after scoring a touchdown for Fort Myers (Florida) High School last November, a referee flagged him for “unsportsmanlike conduct.” Attorneys for the Alliance Defending Freedom have defended these cases and many more:

- An Arizona pastor ordered to stop holding Bible studies in his home
- Five Christian men threatened with arrest for sharing their faith on a public sidewalk in Virginia
- A Christian student at a Missouri university pressured to write a letter to the state legislature expressing her support for homosexual adoption or not receive her degree.

Affirmation of secular, anti-Christian values appears under new noble rubrics such as “the child values initiative,” “the world citizen enterprise,” “one standard for all,” and “the empowerment campaign.” There are clear, bold efforts to de-Christianize society. Regrettably, we shrink back, quickly surrender public expressions of faith, trying to keep the peace.

Yet, revivals take place in climates hostile or cold to the gospel—the first Great Awakening (1730s), the Great Revival of New York (1857), Camp Creek and Azusa Street revivals (1896 and 1906), the Hebrides Revival (1949). In every case, a humble but bold catalyst, often unknown, dared to call for repentance.

We are now desperate for divine intervention. Five social conditions are so morally decadent that God packs His glory and leaves. America is guilty of all five:

1. Shedding innocent blood (Num. 35:33-34; Ezek. 7:23-24; 36:17-18)
2. Treating the dead (death) with disrespect (implication: the sacredness of the body; belief in the resurrection; Deut. 21:22-23)
3. The breakdown of the family (Lev. 18:20, 24-30; Ezek. 33:26; Deut. 24:1-4)
4. Sexual deviation (identity confusion bringing social disorder, Lev. 18:22, 24-30)
5. Idolatry (pluralism, Lev. 18:21, 24-30; Ezek. 36:17-18; Jer. 2:7-13; 3:9; 16:17-19).

Nations have purposes. John Adams believed God orchestrated the founding of America to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. The Puritans saw the fledgling nation as a “city upon a hill.” Such notions now seem like faint dreams.

Nevertheless, consider the multiculturalism of our country—the nations are here. If a national great awakening came, it could trigger a global spiritual explosion. A national revival would be on the American stage that the world watches. If a truly sovereign visitation came . . . who could withstand God?

The problem is not political. The only hope is a national great awakening. History teaches that spiritual revolutions come by violent, passionate, relentless prayer from people who are desperate for holiness.

## **What Alive Ministries is Doing in Hopes of Sparking a National Revival**

1. **Doug continues his speaking ministry** – to churches and pastor’s conferences, as well as, Schools of Prayer and training events.
2. We have launched the **‘Praying Church Movement’** – and have produced significant materials to assist local church pastors and prayer leaders transform their churches into houses of prayer. Hundreds of churches are now a part of that movement.
3. The National Prayer Committee has endorsed the **“Community Prayer Teams”** model conceptualized by Doug Small, as one of its official projects. There are 30,000 cities and towns in the US and the goal is to see a significant number of them connect by gathering their prayer leaders – and getting them to the same table, creating a community prayer team, one that is diverse, and representative of the different national prayer organizations and churches, to steward a city-wide prayer effort in behalf of their community and the nation. Funding for the project is estimated to be \$250,000 over a three year period. What we can’t do separately, we can do together.
4. **Alive Publications**, our publishing arm, continues to publish resources including *The Praying Church Handbook - Volume I and II*, a collection of thoughtful compositions on prayer; and *Principles of Worship and the Study of the Tabernacle of Moses* – a pattern for prayer. We anticipate the release of *The Praying Church Handbook - Volume III* and *The Great Exchange - Why Your Prayer Requests May Not Be Getting Answers* by the end of the year.
5. We continue to champion the **‘One Cry Movement,’** a national interdenominational intercessory prayer movement, now thousands strong with the goal of a million. Our goal is to raise up 25,000 intercessors across the nation to be a part of that movement.
6. We are working with **the Billion Soul initiative** to raise up ‘a billion hours’ of prayer in behalf of those who have never heard the gospel.

Here is how you can help –

***Pray!***

... And pray about becoming ***a financial partner!***

Here are the ways you can give:

- \_\_\_ Use the enclosed envelope.
- \_\_\_ Go to [www.projectpray.org](http://www.projectpray.org) to make an online donation.
- \_\_\_ Call the office with a credit card donation, 1-855-842-5483.

***No gift is too small. No prayer is neglected by heaven.  
And now, major gifts are critical to the mission we have before us!***