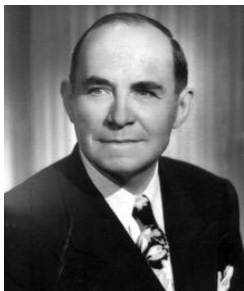


REMINDER

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Seeking the Right Way

by Dr. Joe Henry Hankins
(1889–1967)

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right of way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."—Ezra 8:21.

Ezra is giving an account of the return of a little band of refugees who for seventy years have been in captivity in the land of Babylon. Their city has been lying desolate all these years. The Holy City Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed seventy years prior to this by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Thousands, yea, hundreds of thousands, of Jews had been carried away captive a thousand miles from home into a strange land to serve strangers. Now, after seventy years, a little struggling band of sixteen hundred men, out of all those thousands carried away into captivity, have gathered themselves together and have set their hearts on going back to their native land to rebuild their homes, the temple, and the Holy City of God. What a task!

What a contrast there is in this people of God now and in the days of their glory! In the time of King David and King Solomon, their glory was such that the report of it had gone out through all the earth. People came from far and near to view the glory of Israel and sit at the feet of Solomon!

When the Queen of Sheba from far-off Ethiopia heard of the glory of Israel and the magnificence of her temple of worship and her wonderful laws and great prosperity and how the hand of God was upon her, she was so enraptured with the report that she made a journey of thousands of miles to see if the thing could be true that she had heard. When she came, so wonderful was it that she said, "The half has not been told me."

Now the glory of Israel is gone. Multitudes of her people have perished. Her city lies in waste. The temple is gone, and sixteen hundred stragglers are trying to make their way back home.

Why did Ezra call for a fast and for the people to humble themselves before God and to seek His face? Because Ezra realized that their plight now was the result of their sins and disobedience to God—the result of their pride and feeling of self-sufficiency.

When God had blessed and prospered them, when they had become rich and powerful and their fame had spread throughout the world, they forgot that they owed it all to God. When Israel became proud and began to feel that she was sufficient within herself, she turned away from God.

How we need to draw that parallel with America today! Back yonder when America was small, when we were a struggling nation, when our forefathers were hewing out this nation from the wilderness, facing the perils of a strange land and of a hostile people and the dangers of the wilderness, they realized their insufficiency without God, and they built upon the foundation of faith in God. They wrote it in their Constitution, put it on their currency, inscribed it on their buildings, taught it to their children, and anchored their homes and their nation on it. They risked their all upon God Almighty, and America became a great nation.

The reason for all the distress and confusion and turmoil in America today is that we have forgotten God. The call of God to us today would be (if we would hear it), *"Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord" (Mal. 3:7).*

I repeat what I have said before—it cannot be said too often—America can build airplanes, warships and tanks, and pile up her arms and munitions, and train millions of soldiers, but America's security does not lie therein. If America would just call a halt this morning, as Ezra did at the river Ahava, if we would take stock and humble ourselves before God, seek His way for ourselves and

(continued inside)

our little ones, seek His way for all our substance and follow Him, it would be a different story in America in a very short while.

O America, return unto the Lord! O people of God, our security is in God, and in God alone!

In this story, there are a number of things that I call to your attention:

I. THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP -

First, there is a note of disappointment. As Ezra halts and looks over his crowd, he finds that none of the Levites, the religious leaders, are there. The crowd that he should have been able to depend on was absent. They had failed him.

Some things in a pastorate are almost too heavy for any human heart to carry. One thing that breaks the heart of preachers today is that many of the leaders are not consecrated to the Lord. Many of the crowd that you feel you must lean on are not there when you need them most.

I was talking yesterday afternoon to the janitor who takes care of our building. He made a most significant statement: "Brother Hankins, one of the greatest things a preacher ever had is a good armor-bearer."

See Moses when he is in the battle: Aaron is on one side and Hur on the other holding up his hands—not for a little while, but until victory is complete.

What we need today is for those who are charged with the responsibility of leadership to step in there for God and, like Joab, say, "**Let us play the men for our people**" (II Sam. 10:12). Let us let the world know that we still believe in the religion of Christ; that we still believe it can solve every problem of the human race; that we still believe that the greatest thing on earth is to follow God and live for God; that we still believe that Christ can make human life glorious, wonderful and worthwhile.

O God, that we might have the courage to live our religion every day and that the leadership would step out and say to the rest of the crowd, "Come on!"

II. WE MUST SEEK HIS WAY -

Another thing Ezra said when he stopped and made that pause is: "That we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us"—to seek His way.

Beloved, we ought to settle some things in our thinking once and for all. First of all, I would examine my own heart and life—and ask myself the question, "**Do I believe there is a God? Do I?**" If there is, His way is best, regardless of what it might be; regardless of where it might lead. His way is best. If I believe there is a God, then why should I be afraid of His way? If I believe there really is a God, why should I be afraid of His will?

Just this past week a person said to me, "I have about come to the place where I feel that it is not worthwhile. What's the use of trying to follow God? What's the use of trying to live right?"

That is what Israel once said:

"What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set

up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."—Mal. 3:14,15.

But listen now to what God says:

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."—Vs. 16.

The wicked seemed to prosper, seemed to get along better without God. But regardless of how hard the going may seem for the child of God, one day we will realize that His way is best. And one day we will come to know that God does not forget that. Even though the going is hard now for those who fear the Lord, God is keeping a book of remembrance. In it there is many a cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus. In it there is every tear that God's redeemed have shed. In it is every prayer that has gone up from anxious hearts—praying for the coming of His kingdom and that righteousness shall reign upon the earth, and for the will of God to be done in the hearts of men. God doesn't forget! Let us seek God's way.

I repeat, we ought to settle some things once for all in our lives. If there is a God and I am His child, then I know that whatever God's will is for my life, it is the best. I may not be able to understand it, but may God give me the faith to walk by faith and not to demand of God to walk by sight.

III. A RIGHT WAY FOR OUR LITTLE ONES -

Not only did Ezra stop to seek a right way for the people themselves, but for their little ones—"To seek of him a right way... for our little ones." Many parents today are thinking more about the popularity and financial future of their children, more about the education and preparation for this life, than about God's way and will in the lives of their children.

Friday I went again to Pine Bluff to visit with my mother and dad. That night we gathered around the fireplace and read out of God's Book, knelt and prayed again in the family circle.

After the prayer, we were standing before the fireplace. Mother put one arm around me and the other around my sister and began thanking God for our home and telling us how proud she was of her children:

All my life I have just wanted one thing—that the will of the Lord might be done in your lives. I have never prayed for you to be famous nor prosperous, but from the time the doctor laid you in my arms, my prayer has been that God's will might be done in the life of each of you.

Today one of her children is nine thousand miles away in the heart of Brazil, a lone messenger of the cross in a state twice as large as Texas. Don't think that isn't hard; don't ever imagine that he doesn't get lonely. But Mother said, "I would not have it any other way, because that is God's will for him."

"To seek of him a right way... for our little ones," and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and that our ambition for our children might not be to leave them wealth to squander and curse them, nor try to make for an easy time. How many fathers have I heard say, "I had such a hard time that I want

my boy to have it easier than I did." When a father decides that, he has done the worst thing he could possibly do for that boy—trying to make it easy for him.

O parents, the one thing that we should be most concerned about is that we might find God's way for our homes and children; that we might teach them God's Word and the fear and the respect for God; and that we might see them in the tender years yield themselves to the call of God!

From yonder in faraway South America there came this letter from my brother Clyde: "At the first invitation I gave in the first meeting I held in South America, my little boy, Billie, was saved—the first convert!"

When mothers and fathers seek God's way for their lives and walk in God's will and seek His way for their homes and children, the Holy Spirit will get hold of their hearts in their tender years, and they will step into God's way.

The most beautiful sight on earth to me is a whole family on the way to Glory. That is what I said to my mother in the home Friday night: "Mother, the sweetest thing about it all is that you and Dad have so led the way that every one of us is on the way to Heaven together." Not a single one of the family will be missing. We will join hands together and walk the golden streets of the new Jerusalem with our Saviour where the family circle will never again be broken.

I repeat, the most beautiful sight on earth is a whole family on the way to Heaven together.

IV. A RIGHT WAY FOR OUR SUBSTANCE -

Then *"that we might...seek of him a right way...for all our substance."*

I repeat, if there is a God, His will is best. If there is a God and I am His child, His way for my substance is the best way. If God has any plan about my material substance that He puts into my hands (hear me this morning), to follow God's plan faithfully, lovingly, unquestioningly is the best way for all my substance. The best way is with no quibbling nor trying to dodge. Just say to the Lord, "I see it in Your Word; I believe it; I believe it is the best way for me to handle my finances, the best rule about my giving, the best rule about my possessions."

Does God tell me in His Book His plan for my life? Yes. Does He tell me His plan about my little ones? Yes. Does He tell me how to bring up my children? Yes. Does He tell me how to anchor my home onto God? Yes. And it will work every time.

The Lord said, *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6)*. He did not say he may not depart from it, but he will not. Hear the words of the Lord!

"And these words...shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up....And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."—Deut. 6:6, 7, 9.

Will that plan work for our little ones? Yes. The trouble is, we talk about everything else in the home, and we don't have time to teach our little ones the Word of God. We don't have time for the old family altar. In the quiet of the sanctuary of the home, we should teach our children as we open the Book of God, and then on our knees pray together.

I shall never forget those days of childhood when Dad would reach up and take the old Bible off the mantle and lay it down in Mother's lap. She would open it and begin to read. After she had read, Dad would get down the old songbook and sit down in front of the fire, and we all sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"; "Amazing Grace"; "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood"; or, "When I Can Read My Title Clear."

It was right there I felt the call of God to salvation. It was right there I got my call to preach. Thank God, it was there in the home that all four of us found the Lord!

Yes, God tells us His plan for all our substance if we are willing to pay the price and will recognize it as a stewardship from God and not think of our possessions in terms of something we can buy for ourselves, but think of all our substance as a means of serving God better.

When God prospers me, I think of it as God placing into my hand the means to glorify His name and to spread His kingdom. I am just a steward. And, by the help of God, I am going to be the right kind.

God says, *"The tithe...is the Lord's" (Lev. 27:30)*. God says, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith...if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10)*.

The tithe is the Lord's way, and it is the best way. I believe it, and I will follow it. When you can say that, you will find the greatest joy you have ever known in your Christian life—when you say, "Lord, have Your way about my life, my home, my little ones and all my substance."

There was a fine young woman, about twenty years of age, a member of our church out in Texas. She went to a conference, and there she caught a vision and heard the call of the Lord and surrendered herself for special service.

When she came back home, the first time I saw her in the service (I hadn't heard what she had done), I noticed how happy she was. Her face was so radiant that, when she looked up at me, I felt that I was looking up into Heaven.

That night she told me and the church about it. "I didn't know anybody could be as happy as I have been since I made that unconditional surrender. It's wonderful and glorious, and I am thrilled throughout my soul to know that I am in His will! I did not know that life could be so happy."

Yes, His will is best. His way is best. It is best for us. It is best for our little ones. It is best for our substance.

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NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK

10:50 a.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Caryn Quinnelly
 Cradle Roll 2: Kayla Avey
 Helper: Derek Quinnelly

6:30 p.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Janet Bridges
 Cradle Roll 2: Bertha Segebarrt
 Helper: NEED VOLUNTEER!

Wed. Evening Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Shirley White
 Cradle Roll 2: LeAnna White
 Helper: Seth White

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of February 27, 2011

Sunday School ----- 21
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 42
 Sunday Evening Service ----- 36
 Wed. Evening, 0//02/11 Service ----- 28

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

Week of February 27, 2010

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 2,156.00
 Insurance Fund ----- \$ 32.00
Total Received for Week of 02/27/11: \$ 2,188.00

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00

INSURANCE FUND REPORT THIS MONTH:

Monthly Requirement ----- \$ 273.08
 Amount Received since 02/06/11 ----- \$ 183.00
Amount Still Needed By 03/06/11: \$ 90.08

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. **Admit that you are a sinner.**
2. **Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.**
3. **Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.**
4. **You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).**
5. **By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.**

Please Remember To Be Faithful to Give!



As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go **up**. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithe (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start **today - OK?** Thank you.

www.southheightsbaptist.com

Church Directory

Todd W. White ----- Pastor
 Mickie Shatwell ----- Pianist
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian
 Larry Mathews, Caryn Quinnelly, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford,
 Dwayne English, Lou & Vicki Martin ----- Outreach
 Flowers ----- Hannah and Shirley White



How long will it hold?