

Sermon: “It’s Not Too Late to Pray!” © 2009

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER 6:00 P.M. – MAY 3, 2007

Minister Elaine Y. Sanford

Tonight, I would like to use two familiar texts in Scripture.

Nehemiah 1:4-11 and also...

II Chronicles 7: 14 -- [which is the theme Scripture for the National Day of Prayer].

As I prayed and pondered what the Lord would have me to say to His people tonight....

My mind drifted back to my childhood in the days when I first learned to pray.

I can remember my grandmother’s rule: NEVER go to bed – OR EAT - without saying your prayers.... So, at an early age, she taught me to pray:

“Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep...

If I should die before I wake... I pray the Lord my soul to take...

And, that was the prayer that we prayed until we got to be 6-years old... then you had to learn “what was called” the Lord’s Prayer.... – taken from Matthew 6 (some of us know it as the Disciples Prayer)...

Then, after I turned 11 years old... and had gotten baptized, my grandmother told me that I needed to learn how to just **“have a little talk with Jesus... and to tell him all about my troubles...”** She wanted me to know that when I prayed, I was talking to God (and not to men)... **The important thing, she always said was: Never forget to pray.**

As children sometimes do, I tried to go to bed a few times without saying my prayers.....

And, she would come right in... and get me up...no matter how late it was...

And, I remember her words:

“Get up. It’s not too late to Pray.”

So, Saints... Our subject tonight are words from my grandmother:

“Get up. It’s Not too Late to Pray...”

The Pew Center for Research in Washington D. C., conducted a survey not long ago to find out the prayer habits of people in the United States. **And, the Center found some very interesting, and surprising information:** For example, they said that an overwhelming majority of Americans say they pray on a regular basis.

According to this research, 9 out of 10 people say they pray at least one time a week.

They say that religion plays a very important role in the lives of most Americans....

and that the number of people who claim to be religious has been steadily climbing since the 1960s...

All of this is surprising information.....

Because, judging from this survey, America is a very religious country.

Even our politicians say they are religious.

Just as many Republicans say they are religious... as do Democrats.

So, America claims to be a nation of very religious ... and, praying people.

But, there was ONE MORE interesting fact in this research...

A lot of the people who said they prayed... do not profess to be Christians...

So, who are the people that are praying?

Could they be praying for America?

Prayer is a very misunderstood phenomenon...

Prayer is often misunderstood by people of the world...

and, it is sometimes, misunderstood – even by Christians...

The Bible says we don't know how to pray as we ought to...

And, we don't know what to pray for....

Yet, God commands us to pray...

We see many examples of fervent prayer throughout Scripture...

And, one of the key characteristics of those who pray is “MOST OFTEN” their

“obedience” and submission to the Will of God...

.... submitting their Will... to the Will of the Father.

And, Prayer involves “heart” work... and everybody **doesn't want** do it!

Prayer is about obedience...

And about opening up our hearts to Lord...

The writer of Proverbs said... “My son, give Me your heart.”

Prayer is about communing with God... it is a form of worship...

It is the **personal and intimate interaction** that God has

”set up” JUST for **His People** to communicate with Him....

It's a **Private Line** that is only available to those who know Him, We can dial Him up at any time...1-1-1....

So, in our text tonight....

Nehemiah realizes he needs to make a personal phone call to God....

You see, **the people had gotten out of step ... and now they were in trouble...**

So, they were now reaping the reward of their labor of disobedience ...

Nehemiah knew that the people had sinned ... and now they were suffering the consequences of their actions....

Most of the people had been carried away into captivity...

The few that had been able to come back were Now trying to survive **in the wreckage of (what had once been) a beautiful city ...**

The people were living in disease and poverty with little food.

The walls of the city had been burned down ... leaving the people vulnerable to anybody that wanted to prey upon them....

So, now God was allowing the people to experience what it felt like to live without the shelter and the refuge of a Loving God.

The sight of their struggles broke Nehemiah's heart... and it drove him to make that important telephone call to Heaven....

Nehemiah recognized that God was not pleased with His people, and He decided to do something about it...

Saints, God is not pleased with America today...

Do you see any signs that God might not be pleased....?

How about: wars and rumors of wars...

How about: natural and man-made disaster that is occurring almost on a daily basis...

How about: Nature seemingly out of control with earthquakes, land slides, Tsunamis, and flood...

What about: The hearts of men that have grown cold. Men kill each other with the least little provocation...

What about Morality – which has sunken to its lowest level... making indecent behavior common place....

What about the fact that: A man cannot trust another man with anything of value...

People are doing what they want to do...

People are saying what they want to say...

Every man is doing what HE THINKS is right in his own eyes...

In fact, it looks like the “world” is converting the Saints....

Instead of the Saints, converting the world...

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But, God is giving us a wake up call.

There is still time for us to turn back to Him...

America's walls have not yet been burned...

America's people have not yet been scattered....

America has not yet faced the kind of poverty that people in other nations are facing...

But, **America is in trouble...**

And, America needs to get back on track with God.

It's not too late to pray for America. If the Saints would only pray.

God is listening for the prayers of the Saints...

If the Saints would pray, then God would stop the robberies - the carjackings, and home invasions that are occurring in our cities...

If the Saints would pray...

God can stop the murderer who is making headlines every night...

If the Saints would pray...

God would break the yoke of alcohol and drugs that has gripped so many of our young men and women ...

If the Saints would pray..., we could reach the hearts of wayward young men who would walk into a classroom and kill their fellow class mates...

If the Saints would only pray for our nation ... this War could be stopped....

And, if we would pray, we could change the minds of men and women would not blow themselves up for a cause that has no meaning....

Saints, it's not too late to pray...

The bible says that God is listening for the prayers of those who are called by HIS NAME...

God has not changed ..and His Word has not changed...

His word says "Man ought to always pray... and not faint."

And, God expects HIS PEOPLE to pray

He is listening for the "effectual and fervent" prayers of the righteous men and women of God.

In Second Chronicles....

God was answering Solomon's prayer about how the people could get back into step with God after they messed up – and failed to obey...

Solomon – "just like Nehemiah" – had prayed a long and fervent prayer as he was dedicating that Temple to God...

And, God answered Solomon with some "GOD ADVICE"

(After they mess up, Solomon, and come into this Temple crying before the Lord – because they are suffering under the punishment which results from their sin....

THEN, "If my people that are called by my name... would humble themselves, and pray... and seek my face...AND TURN from their wicked ways...., then will they hear from Heaven,

I will forgive their sins..., and I will heal their land...

In other words, if the people would "get back into step with God"...

.....they could hear from Heaven

THEN, God would forgive, and heal their land...

Saints, it's not too late to pray for America

God wants to forgive sin

And God wants to heal our land...

But, is a “just God”... and He must deal with all sin...
So, just as God said to Solomon....

“If my people that are called by my name... would humble themselves and pray...

It’s interesting that Solomon prayed this prayer -- BEFORE his people messed up with God... because he knew they would mess up...

**And, Nehemiah prayed... AFTER the children of Israel had already messed up...
But, God heard Nehemiah’s prayer..... and God heard Solomon’s prayer... because both of these God-men realized that it was NOT too late to pray...**

America needs the effectual and fervent prayers of some “**Nehemiah Prayer warriors**”
Right now...

Yes, America is NOW at war in two countries... and the average person can’t tell you what we are fighting for...

But, it’s not yet... too late to pray...

We sit and wring out hands.. and worry about our children who are fighting and dying in a strange land...

But, it’s not too late to pray...

Our leaders are making decisions for the wrong reasons... and the people don’t know who to trust...

But, Saints...

It’s still not too late to pray...

Many of our Churches are losing members because the people are getting discouraged and disheartenedBut, Saints... it’s still not too late to pray...

We have violence, corruption, confusion, hate, and a lack of moral decency...

But, I tell you today Saints...**It’s still NOT too late to pray...**

If America were REALLY a nation of praying people – **THAT** would be a VERY good thing ...

But, God has NOT COMMANDED AMERICA to pray.... GOD Has commanded the Saints to pray....

“If MY PEOPLE (that are called by MY NAME) would humble themselves and pray ...
(Are you called by His name, TODAY?)

If the Saints would pray, **Then, we could “hear from heaven”** and God would heal our land...

But, the Truth is Middle Baptist...we’re not praying as we ought to pray ...

(story)

I saw a sign on a Church building the other day... and had to turn around and drive by again to read that sign...

The sign said: If you are too busy to pray...
Then you ARE too busy...
Some of us are too busy saints...

We are too busy to “intervene” like Nehemiah intervened....
We are too busy to seek the face of God for **ourselves and for our families...**
We are too busy to seek the face of God for our cities and our neighborhoods – **instead of standing around and complaining about what didn’t get done...**
We are too busy to ask God to guide our leaders and to keep HIS hands upon our nation –
We are too busy ... We are just tooo busy....

But, It’s still NOT too late to pray...

Saints, God is calling us to come out of these buildings and from behind these shiny walls and cushioned seats...
He wants us to “go ye therefore... into all the world...

God is calling on the Church today to be that bright light **shining in the darkness that must be seen because it sets up on a hill...**

Nehemiah wanted the people to get back into step with God...
The bible says, that Nehemiah Wept.... and

Nehemiah mourned...
Nehemiah fasted... and
Nehemiah prayed...
Nehemiah was not haughty and prideful... nor did he strut around talking about what God had promised to do for Israel)

Instead, Nehemiah humbly submitted himself and, He got involved in some “heart work” for His people...

Have you ever had to pour out your heart before the Lord...
Is anybody willing to do some **“heart work” tonight...**
Will anyone pray for our children
Will anyone pray for our families
Will anyone pray for our churches
Will anyone pray for our neighborhoods
Will anyone pray for our cities
Will anyone pray for a sinful nation...
Will anybody pray... Saints, **before** it’s too late to pray....

God said, Give me your heart...
The very soul of your prayers lies in the pouring out of our hearts to God...
God is not listening to our prayers to find out what we are going to say...

For, the bible says... “He already knows what you stand in need of even before you ask....

God is not listening to our prayers to see how much you know...

Because the bible says that if any man desires wisdom... let Him ask it of the Father who will give it to Him liberally...

In fact, as the Saints of God -- are to admonished to guard our tongues and the words that we speak... and avoid speaking empty words – especially -- before the Lord...

God is not listening for the melody of our prayers to see how sweet they may sound...,
In fact, I doubt that Our prayers could ever compete with the splendor of the Heavenly Chorus....

God is not concerned about grammar and making sure your prayers have the right punctuation and syntax....

God is “more concerned” about the sincerity of your heart ...

So, if we want God to hear and to answer our prayers....

“We need to put some more “heart work” into our prayers...

Because -- It’s not too late to pray....

Nehemiah prayed... and God heard his prayer...

Nehemiah knew he had no money...but, **he could still pray...**

Nehemiah knew that he had no workers... or carpenters to build a wall around a city...
but, he could still pray...

Nehemiah couldn’t do anything to get Israel out of the predicament that she was in...

But, he could still pray...

Nehemiah used the power of prayer...

to an All powerful God!

Somebody in this Church has been praying for a long time....

and you’ve been wondering whether you will ever see the answer to your prayer.....

Well, God has heard your prayer... because God hears every prayer...

You’ve been asking yourself the question: “What can one man or one woman do?”

Well,

Nehemiah was one man ... But, through the power of prayer... He was able to help his people... **What can one man or one woman do? One man or woman CAN pray.... just like Nehemiah prayed...**

Nehemiah threw himself on the mercy of the Lord....

acting as an “intercessor” for his people....

Things were looking pretty bad, when Nehemiah cried out to God ...

... But, Nehemiah knew that it **wasn’t too late to pray...**

The psalmist said, “Lord, all my desire is before You; and my groaning is not hidden from you. **You can groan before the Lord.... – and God will hear you...**

I Peter 3:12 says: For the eyes of the Lord are ‘on the righteous’ and His ears are attentive to their prayers....”

**God hears every sigh and he hears every moan...
God hears the secret tear...
...for when it falls, its sound can be heard throughout Heaven...**

**God knows your secret desire...and the words that you can't speak...
God knows every breath that you take...
He knows all of your sorrows... and he knows that you are lonely...
God knows your pain... and he knows what you are going through....**

**So, be of good courage my brothers and my sisters...
Because it's not too late to pray....**

**Somebody might say... well...
I'm not sure how to pray... and I don't know what I ought to say...**

**Well, that's alright. Because the bible says that:
"The Spirit of the Lord will help with our weaknesses..."**

**Because we DO not know what we ought to pray for ... and how we ought to pray...
But, what we are commanded to do – is be obedient and to pray....**

**God is listening for the intentions of your heart...
He is listening for what your heart is saying....**

**One writer said, that if your heart is dumb....Then, the Lord is deaf to your prayers...
What is your heart saying?**

**Flowery words have no value to the Lord.... They only impress men...
If the Holy Spirit is not in your heart... then the words from our words are like...
SOUNDING BRASS and TINKLING CYMBALS...
... or as the world might say:**

**We are just talking loud... but we ain't saying nothing~!!!!
The bible says that, WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR....
But, God will send His Spirit to inhabit our prayers...
All WE have to do is be obedient... and to Pray.
For the bible says that "Man ought to always pray, and not faint.."**

**So,
Pray – until your prayers are inhabited by the Holy Spirit...
Pray – until self falls under the subjection of His power...
Pray – until the inner secrets of your soul begin to communicate with the Lord...
Pray – until your mind is one with the mind of God...
Pray and pray... as you are led by the Spirit to pray...
Pray, because we need to pray – to have a closer walk with God...
Hallelujah!**

**But, I know that somebody in this room says, "I'm sorry," But... I just can't pray...
Isaiah says that you are like a blind man groping along the dark walls of life.**

You are blind... and you don't know where you are going...

You cannot be an effective Christian... if you don't ever pray to God...

You are like a man who has no eyes...

And, the bible says you are just stumbling along through life ... having no direction

So, you ought to start praying today.... because it's not too late to pray...

Somebody said that prayer is the key...And, faith unlocks the door...

Prayer is the answer for "whatever the problem is...

Prayer is your protection as you walk along life's dangerous highways...

Prayer is your comforter on a long and lonely night...

Prayer is the salve that bathes and soothes the heart when somebody you love has gone...

Prayer is the anchor that holds you in place while storms of life are raging...

Prayer will fix it... for you....

Prayer is your opportunity to have a little talk with Jesus...

And to tell Him all about your troubles....

Whatever condition this world might be in...

And whatever situation you might personally be facing...

It's not too late to pray

All YOU have to do is call on Him.. and listen to His voice...

You can call on Him in the morning...

And you can call on him... in the Noon day...

You can Call on him in the midnight hour....

And you can...

Call on him when you can't sleep....

You can Call on him when you're up...

And, you can call on Him when you're down...

You can Call on him when you feel like it...

And, you can call on him when don't feel like it...

The bible says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities... **but, who was ... in all points ... tempted** as we are... and,

YET, without sin. (Hallelujah)

"So, let US therefore come boldly to the throne of grace where we may obtain "mercy and find grace to help" in the time of need...

All we need is faith (just the size of a mustard seed – and the bible says... **you can move mountains...**)

(story) -----

I am reminded of the story about the Saints at Jerusalem who had been praying when **Peter** got thrown in jail ...

The bible says, that while they were praying... God sent his angel and he got Peter out of the jail...

Saints, you need to know that God hears and He answers the prayers of a praying Church...The bible says that while they were still praying... Peter knocked on the door...

But, the Saints of God didn't let Peter come in right away... **because they didn't believe that he was "really" out of jail...**

All you need is a little bit of faith – the size of a mustard seed – and you can move mountains!!!!

(Hallelujah)

So, **don't be like the Saints** at Jerusalem who had been praying all night for Peter.... If you've praying and asking God for a miracle... **then Get up off of your knees and start** thanking Him for a miracle.... (Hallelujah)

If you're gonna worry... don't pray...

But, If you're gonna PRAY... don't worry....(Hallelujah)

God hears ... and he answers prayer - - -

And you "might still be praying" when your answer comes through...

Are you looking for answers to prayers today, Saints....

Well, take a look around you...**God might have already** answered your prayer...

Why do you say that Sister Elaine? Well I'm glad you asked:

The Jews are still looking for a Messiah because they didn't recognize the EVIDENCE OF answered prayer...

Yes, "He came unto His Own, but His own received Him not!"

They had prayed for Messiah to come, ... and when he came... they were still looking for **another...**

The bible says: **"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us... and we beheld His glory...**

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth..."

The Jews' denial led to the fulfillment of Scripture and that blessed hope bore the agony of the Cross...

But, Thank God... **Jesus said...** "No man takes my life... but I lay it down freely.

And, if I lay it down... (hallelujah) I have the power to take it up again...

But, he would not come down from the Cross just to save Himself ...

He decided to die just for you... and for me ...

He died so that you could come boldly to the throne of grace...

He died so that you might have life..... and have it more abundantly....

He died so that you could GO HOME ONE DAY...

After you get through traveling through this old barren land...

Yes, he died for you and He died for me.

Oh, yes, he died... but that's not the end of the story. My bible says, he got up out of grave...

Paul said, "But now, Christ is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."
(Hallelujah)

And, Now God has given him a name that is above every name...

That at the name of Jesus, every knee is going to bow (in earth, and in heaven)...
and every tongue is going to confess that He is Lord... to the glory of the Father..."
Oh, one day he's coming back again....

And, it'll be too late to pray...

So, I'm going to work the work of Him that sent me **while it is yet day...** because when night comes... no man can work...

And, it'll be too late to pray...

Yes. One day, he's going to pierce the clouds and we'll all see Him as he is....

And, it'll be too late to pray...

The bible says, that "The Lord, Himself....will descend from the Heavens with a shout ...
and the trumpet is going to sound... and the voice" of the arch angel will be heard....

And, it'll be too late to pray..

The bible says that the dead in Christ are going to rise first.....

And, we who are alive and remain will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air....
(Hallelujah)...

and **"It will be too late to pray..."**

Paul said, "**Beloved, now are we sons of God.** And it does not yet appear

....what we shall be, **but we know** that when HE shall appear,

.... we shall be like HIM, for **we shall see HIM as he is..."**

But, it'll be too late to pray...

One day its going to all be over... Because the time IS winding up...

So, I'm going to be about my Father's business...How about you?

Because when Our Father comes...**It will be too late to pray...**

So I'm going to pray while I CAN pray Saints....

And, I'm gonna pray because he has **commanded** me to pray.....

I'm gonna pray, because Jesus died, so I could pray....

I'm gonna pray because I know that's he's coming back again...

I'm gonna pray because - One day... I want to see Jesus face to face...

I'm gonna pray... because "I love Jesus... who first loved me..."

I'm gonna pray because I know that my Redeemer lives...

I'm gonna pray because I know that ... **all of my help** cometh from the Lord...

I'm gonna pray because I know that "without Him," I can do nothing...

I'm gonna pray because every good gift and every perfect gift... comes down from the Father of Light ...

I'm gonna pray because it makes me happy when I pray...

I'm gonna pray because I want a closer walk the Lord

I'm gonna pray because I can pray... and because He has allowed me to Pray...

I'm gonna pray because...

I'm bought with a price and I can't do what I want to do...

I'm gonna pray because....I know that Jesus PAID IT ALL....

And all to Him I owe....

I'm gonna pray because...I know it HIS bloooooood...

That set me free! (Hallelujah)...

So, I'm gonna pray... BEFORE..

IT's too late to pray.....

I'm gonna pray...

“Our Father.. which art in Heaven...Hallowed be thy Holy Name...

I'm gonna pray...

Thy Kingdom come...

Thy will Be done... on earth...

As it is done in Heaven...

I'm gonna pray....

Give us this day.... Our daily bread...

I'm gonna pray...

And, forgive us our trespasses... as we forgive those who trespass against us...

I'm gonna pray...Lead us not... into temptation,

but deliver us from all evil...

I pray...ay.... For thine is the kingdom.... The power and the glory... for ever....

I'm gonna pray – because I can pray.. and because he has commanded me to pray..

I'm gonna pray

Our Father... reach out and touch the people of America...

I'm gonna pray...

Show your mighty hand, and let your works be revealed....

I'm gonna pray...

Send your Holy Spirit to direct and to guide all of our leaders....

I'm gonna pray....

Stay the hand of the enemy, and stop these useless wars....

I'm gonna pray...

Keep your hands of protection over the souls of all of your people...

I'm gonna pray...

Look upon us Lord because we are weak and we know that have sinned...

I'm gonna pray....

Forgive us Lord Jesus... and give us one more chance to trust in you...

I'm gonna pray....

O Lord, help our unbelief and increase our faith ...

I'm gonna pray...

Lord forgive us for the work that we have left undone....

I'm gonna pray...

Our Father... incline your ear to hear from a stiff-necked people....

I'm gonna pray...

Lord, remove our pride, our haughtiness... and our attempts to make our OWN selves righteous

I'm gonna pray...

O Lord, Create in me a clean heart...and, renew a right Spirit ...

I'm gonna pray...

O Lord Hear our cry... and pity

Every groan....

I'm gonna pray...

While there's still time to pray...

And, I'm going to pray...

While the Lord will still hear us pray...

I'm gonna pray...

Because it's not too late to pray.

I'm gonna pray...

I'm gonna pray...

I'm gonna pray...

Because it's not too late..... To pray!