



IDENTIFICATIONAL REPENTANCE

(POWER TO HEAL THE PAST HEALING THE WOUNDS OF A NATION)

Revd. Niall & Mrs. Geraldine Griffin

Christian teachers, preachers, leaders all over the world are saying that before God comes in revival power the Holy Spirit will call many people to repent, fast and pray and that every wave of the Holy Spirit, every move of God begins with 2 Chronicles 7 vs 14.

Of course, we accept that if an individual commits a sin, that person must confess his sin to God and repent; but if a sin has been committed by a church, a city, a nation, or family then praying people, intercessors, can come before God, stand in the gap.... that is represent the people and confess and repent of corporate sin. We can represent certain groups of people when we come before God in prayer. As a couple and with our background, we can represent couples, Northern Irish, British and Irish, clerical and lay people, white Europeans, missionaries, teachers, preachers, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, Church of Ireland (Anglican) counsellors, because each or both of us are or have been all of these things. Each person has his or her own list of identifiable groupings.

When the Holy Spirit enables, nudges or calls us to identify ourselves with the sins of our country or church we can believe that God is choosing us to come before Him on behalf of the people and pray for forgiveness as King David, Nehemiah and Ezra etc., did in Old Testament times. However, we do need to ask God to show us how to go about doing this and about which sins.

As we humble ourselves and turn away from our evil ways the Lord can come with His healing and restoration, and we need to be willing to allow Him to do this in ourselves before seeking His face for the nation. When there is an honest dealing with sin, there follows the strongest and most lasting answers to prayer leading to spiritual breakthrough.

At this point it might be helpful to put the often quoted verse 2 Chronicles 7 v 14 into context.....

“If my people, who are called by my Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

King David has died and his son Solomon has inherited the job of building the Temple. This work has been completed and then Solomon experiences a personal visit from God, who explains the purpose of the Temple. Its purpose is to be the place where the blood is presented for removing guilt. Hebrews 9 v 22 tells us that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (of sins). In 2 Chronicles 7 before v 14, God refers to the curses of Deuteronomy 11v17, and then talks about the conditions of heart and attitude that God wants to see in His people, the sort of heart response He wants to find in us, the Church. It would seem that our nation will be cursed or blessed according to the obedience or disobedience of

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the Church. Michael Cassidy of “African Enterprise” says that a church gets the country it deserves. John Dawson, YWAM leader In the United States writes in his book “Healing America’s Wounds”, that God sees to it that we get the government we deserve. He also writes, “If we have broken our covenants with God and violated our relationship with one another, the path to reconciliation must begin with the act of confession”

I John 1 v 9 “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

It is the role of the Church to make repentance for the nation. The unredeemed cannot do this. God’s people are responsible for standing in the gap to present the shed blood of the Lord Jesus. The blood of the perfect Lamb has been shed but the Church must apply it. We must put the past behind us but we must, Christians together, do this in a biblical way.

St. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 10 vv 4-5, that we have weapons that have divine power to pull down strongholds and amongst these weapons are confession, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and restitution.

Nehemiah I v 6 says “I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you.” Nehemiah was able to recognise that he was part of a group that had broken its covenant with God, that the walls of Jerusalem, a city known and spoken of by his parents and grandparents’ generations but not known or seen by him personally, were broken down and needed to be rebuilt. He took upon himself the responsibility to gather people together to rebuild these walls. Surely the walls of our Jerusalem, Ireland are broken down as in Nehemiah’s day and our enemy, common to us all - Satan - has come through the gaps.

This nation’s hope lies in a sincerely repentant Church confessing the sins of the nations before God and seeking His forgiveness - for we are all guilty.

In Jeremiah 8 v 19-21, we read of God saying, “Listen to the cry of my people far away: ‘Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?’ Since my people are crushed I am crushed; I mourn and horror grips me.”

God is broken-hearted over what has been allowed to happen in Northern Ireland over the years and generations. Intercessors will often experience something of the grief of God and we can identify with the sins of the people because we have all contributed personally to God’s grief and we need to identify with the sins of the nations in personal and corporate repentance.

One very important concept being grasped today worldwide, (it’s not new but it is being rediscovered in the Church) for healing communities and releasing whole groups into salvation and healing is identificational repentance.

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Since 1993 open events held for repentance and reconciliation have been taking place all over the world, and Christians have been apologising to groups of people for the sins of the Church towards them down through the years.

Here are some examples On August 6th 1993 the Anglican Archbishop of Canada, Michael Peers, apologised to the Inuit and Cree Indian peoples in the Arctic (about 90% of the Anglicans are Indigenous people) at the second National Native Convocation in Minaki, Ontario, for abuses spiritual, emotional, sexual, cultural and wounds caused by the Anglican Church. He said "I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity. I am sorry more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada I offer our apology."

Since that day several of the Indigenous communities in the Arctic have been released, opened and made ready to receive God's grace and mercy to know Him and to be healed by Him. On S.O.M.A. team visits we have seen their openness to amazing healing of things like sexual abuse and suicidal tendencies and roots, and they have grown in this healing because, we believe, of the spiritual release the Archbishop's repentance brought to them.

The Lord taught us about Identificational Repentance in 1996 when three of us went to Nebbi diocese in NW Uganda on a second visit to Bishop Henry Orombi and the Anglican diocese there. As soon as we arrived we spent several hours in prayer and praise and asking God what He wanted us to teach with the clergy and lay leaders we would meet.

As a S.O.M.A. (Sharing of Ministries Abroad) team we would usually teach on the Holy Spirit, ministry of healing, team ministry etc. but we'd been learning already that we needed to inquire of God as to what he wanted in each place we visited as S.O.M.A. We felt that He gave us two passages of Scripture; 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. It seemed that God was revealing to us that the white church had never asked the African church what Elisha asked the widow, "what do you have in your house?" with a view to using that small contribution and allowing God to multiply. It seemed that therefore the African church has developed a dependency on the white church almost like a spirit of poverty and although we didn't know then quite how much input Irish missionaries had had in that area we felt God was calling us to repent before the clergy as white, Irish missionaries, male and female. We were excited and relieved to learn that Bishop Henry had been preaching throughout the diocese on Elijah and the widow and was already asking God why the people were so poor since the land is fertile.

In each of the four archdeaconries we knelt before the clergy and repented before them for the sins of our forefathers and we were both moved and amazed at what the clergy revealed as a result. One elderly clergyman had had a field away back in 1937 and he had sown crops to feed the family. An Irish lady missionary had taken his field, dug up his crops and planted Irish potatoes. He had sought justice from her missionary organisation. At first nothing was done but then they gave him another field but he had lost his crops that year and had resented Irish missionaries ever since. He said he was able to forgive for the first time. Another

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clergyman said he'd never before seen a white person kneel before a black person. There were obvious blessings as a result of our act of repentance and in that visit even though we've been to Africa lots of times, we really felt there was no black or white, we were one in Christ and with one another. Genuine love and joy followed.

Before we made repentance for the fourth time we experienced eight hours of rainfall in the dry season. We felt that this was a natural sign of blessing so we asked Bishop Henry to look out for spiritual blessings too.

We discovered some three months afterwards that Bishop Henry had visited a neighbouring diocese to preach at their centenary celebratory service attended by an American bishop, an English clergyman, the P.M. of Uganda, the King of the Bunyoro Kitara tribe and other dignitaries. Bishop Henry preached on the man with the withered arm and likened Africa to this man, and in his sermon mentioned the repentance made by the Irish team in his diocese and the blessings which followed. At the end of his sermon the English clergyman stood up and asked if he could say something. He asked the Ugandans to forgive English missionaries for generational sins and no sooner had he done so when the King of the Bunyoro Kitara tribe stood up, asked to speak and said that he hated English missionaries ever since they had demoted his tribe, the biggest then, and killed their king. He forgave the English clergyman representing the missionaries and there was great reconciliation in that service.

We met Bishop Henry in June 1998 and he told us that all the opposition to him from some of the clergy had melted away, and that there is a great sense of unity amongst his church leaders, because, he feels, of the act of identificational repentance made by the Irish S.O.M.A. team in Nov/Dec '96.

We are praying that acts of identificational repentance might be made by interdenominational gatherings of Christians in towns and cities throughout Ireland either in Advent '99 or Pentecost 2000. Please God we might see 2 Chronicles 7 v 14 taking place by the church and God's answer in Ireland in response. AMEN

Acknowledgement to following authors and their books:

- "Healing America's Wounds" by John Dawson
- "Intercessory Prayer" Dutch Sheets
- "Restoration a direction for Prayer" by Kjell Sjoberg
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- "The Voice of God" by Cindy Jacobs
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- "Praying with Power" by Peter C. Wagner

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Can we join this Prayer? It is still needed.

Recently this verse has seemed important:

Rom 8:19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

When will we acknowledge that we are the sons/daughters of God?