

PRAYING FOR ISRAEL IN GROUPS

Helpful notes from Ken Burnett

“For where there are two or three gathered in my name, there am I in the midst.” Matt 18:20

At this time of mounting world decadence, depravity and deception – not to mention Israel’s need – how can Christians ignore this divine incentive to meet regularly for prayer? The Lord honours the general assembly, but here He promises His presence to the lowest multiple number who gather in His Name. And who is He?

He is the One to whom all power and authority have been delivered. He is the One who shaped the heavens and flung into space the quadrillions of stars – not one of which is missing! And He says, “There am I in the midst of you.” Condescension fails to describe it!

1. Note that the emphasis is put on union in prayer, not merely on getting together.

The context is – *“If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.”* (v19) At this point, Jesus gives the greatest encouragement to us – to span the distance between earth and heaven by prayer! – Incredible!

Surely, as His children and offspring, we must swiftly, not apathetically, respond to such a promise as this. Is it not an affront to the King, to not only sideline what He offers, but to hinder His desire for us to be His channels of faith, prayer and authority? Purchased by His blood, we owe it to Him to be ‘Him/Christ centred’ – rather than ‘Me – centred.’

2. Deep in my spirit, I know that the Lord is calling Britain into much more of this kind of group prayer today (in addition to whatever we are involved with in our local Assembly.)

In the hardships ahead, His purpose is to take us through, rather than around them, to make us ‘overcomers.’ This is the essence of each of Jesus’ seven messages to the churches in Revelation 2 & 3 – not to give head knowledge of events but to equip us by His Life, Love, Word and Spirit to be vessels for His glory. Is there a cost to pay? Yes – but what a privilege!

3. For those of you (and there may be many) who do not have one or two others to link and pray with for an hour or two a week, for the Church, for the country, for Israel and for yourselves, let me bring some of the many scriptures that exhort or command to that very end.

We have lost out on these, blinded to their deep import. They may be especially relevant to those who do not belong to any prayer group and who may find travelling difficult. I especially seek to bless and encourage you with this article. God wants to bring the 2's and 3's together to multiply the power within you, strengthen you and make you a strength to others.

"And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over unclean spirits." Mk 6:7

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour. For if either falls, the one will lift up his companion." Eccles 4:9-10

"The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you..." 1 Cor 12:21

"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the Law of Christ." Gal 6:2

"Confess your sins one to another and pray for one another." James 5:16

4. Underlining the intrinsic value of the two or three, even Jesus took three with Him in the last hours before He began to agonise in Gethsemane. Matt 26:37 If Jesus Himself felt such a need, even though they fell asleep, how much more should we? Do you see this?

Conversely, to conform to our lead text, amongst the three who were so ruthlessly cast into the furnace, a fourth was seen in the midst of the fire, having the form of the Son of God. Dan 3:35

Long before they had said, "We will not bow down – we will not worship your Gods", how much Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego must have knit together in prayer? This is what God is wanting from us today for our nation and for Israel. "Two are better than one!"

5. However, it is not merely agreeing in prayer but being specific. "If any two of you agree about any thing..." Not vague prayer, not a cosy oneness, but a specific goal sought after. Most of us know that the mind of the Spirit is more readily found with the 2 or 3 than in the self-struggling. And we all know it is far easier to pray for Israel with another prayer partner, rather than being on our own. Does this not confirm – "Two are better than one?"

6. Moreover, it is more than 'agreeing' as the English translation puts it. In the Greek, it is 'symphonising' – a musical term meaning to harmonise. This can take time to accomplish, as the Holy Spirit simultaneously deals with us as well as the matters we bring in prayer. The writer recalls an occasion when 24 of the 25 strings of his autoharp were very carefully tuned, but one string was overlooked. The resulting discord was really quite appalling, even to the partially trained ear. So, Let God tune our hearts, firstly with Himself (a life-long process) and then with one another. God's hands are so skilful.

7. It is significant that, after emphasising “Gathered together in My Name”, Jesus adds, “*There am I, in the midst*”. He does not say, “*There I am*”, which would have been wonderful, but He is to be in the centre! Hallelujah! He makes it clear that, because of this, what is asked for – “...shall be done by My Father who is in heaven.” So, it is by prayer in the spirit, through Jesus, to the Father, to whom our prayers should be addressed. John 14:6

While in the wilderness, the Tabernacle was placed in the midst of the Israelites, NOT on the perimeter. Similarly, in His first appearance to the sad disciples, (all had forsaken Him and fled) “*...Jesus came and stood in their midst.*” What marvellous grace John 20:19

In the situation today, which looks so impossible for Jerusalem, Zechariah prophesies, “*Jerusalem will be inhabited as a city without walls...for I (the Lord) will be a wall of fire around her and ...the glory in her midst.*” Zech 2:4-5. In exactly the same way today, the Lord waits to dwell in the midst of those who gather in His Name, especially for the purpose of prayer.

8. One final thing about the importance of the two in prayer, rather than the one. Nowhere is this clearer in scripture than in the classic battle against Israel by the Amalekites. Ex 17

Here are two men, Aaron and Hur, each of them priests, sent to hold up the wearied hands of the leader, Moses – one on one side, and one on the other.

The three of them go to the top of the hill – to gain discernment and spiritual insight. “*They (Aaron and Hur) took a stone and put it under him.*” By ‘Spirit-led’ prayer, they brought the stone of Israel into the situation, of whom Jacob had prophesied in His closing words Gen 49:24 – the one who became the chief corner stone. And Moses sat down.

With Moses thus strengthened to hold up his hands with the Rod of Authority (The Word of God – the Sword of the Spirit) the Amalekites were overwhelmed. Thus Moses hands were steady (Heb. ‘Emunah’ = of faith) till sunset – the end of the day.

If it is anything at all, the heart of Prayer for Israel has always been as ‘Aaron and Hur’ for the believers in Israel (Gal 6:10) Would you see yourself in that role of encouragement?

9. But if you are of those without the one or two to join you, why not simply ask the Lord today to bring to you, or bring you to the one or two others? We are told we do not have because we do not ask, or we ask for the wrong reason. So, come and ask.

10. Remember, that the battle against the Amalekites symbolises our battle against the flesh, the self-life that constantly battles against the Spirit – the biggest for each one of us. “*Then, those who feared the Lord spoke often to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him.*” Mal 3:16

