

March 12, 2022 - Prayer & Fasting to Seek God's Deliverance or Protection

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles 20: 1-17

Ezra tells us in chapters 7-10 how he led a second group of Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity, a journey of approximately 900 miles. The group expected to encounter both enemies and hardships along the way. They just didn't know the forms these troubles would take. Our lives, too, are often compared to a journey where we don't know what difficulties we'll face. We can only be certain that they will come.

Ezra chose to trust in God rather than the king for their protection, but he also put his faith into action. He prepared himself and his companions. In verse 21, Ezra ordered a time of fasting and prayer. That is *WHAT* Ezra did, but we should also understand *WHY*. He tells us that the fasting and prayer was so "that we might humble ourselves before God."

Like Ezra, humbling ourselves before God means that we are willing to surrender our will to Him and give up control. It is admitting to Him and to ourselves that only God can truly meet all our needs, both spiritual and physical. We spiritually humble ourselves through prayer, and we physically humble ourselves through fasting. Both actions focus our attention on God and help us hear Him more clearly.

We too often fail to hear God, listening instead to the cares of the world. We covet his love and protection but instead lean upon our own understanding. And, so, we find ourselves in hardships and in pain. Thank God for pain. Like many others, our family struggled with the pain of opioid addiction and its accompanying fear, uncertainty and shame. But in our pain and weakness, God strengthened us as we humbled ourselves and surrendered to His will. C. S. Lewis said that God whispers in our pleasures but shouts in our pain. We're so thankful that God shouted to us that His grace is more than enough.

Dear Lord, we stand amazed before you. Amazed by your love and grace. You continually offer us forgiveness and healing when we turn to you. We ask that you help us to take this special time of prayer and fasting to humble ourselves and draw closer to you. We love you. In Jesus name, AMEN.

By: Bob & Deb Gray

Pray the 4 prayer points on page 1 or stop by the war room at the church building for prayer.