

Wednesday Devotional and Prayer

June 24, 2020

Thank you for joining me for our last devotional in our series “Praying in Exile.” If you can remember, we began this series back in March when we first started experiencing the effects of COVID-19. And over the past several months, we’ve all experienced, at least in some degree, that feeling of being separated. That’s why this series is “Praying in Exile.” We have been cut off from one another and from many of the familiar places that give us comfort, peace, and assurance. And way back in March, we said that exile was a defining time for God’s people. It wasn’t a season of great joy or prosperity, but it was meaningful and purposeful and instructive.

And most of all what exile accomplished in God’s people was to reveal their utter and absolute dependency on God. You see, it tends to be the case that when we are in our familiar places, going about our daily routines, we subtly and implicitly begin to cement our trust and our identity not in God but in the other things that fill up our lives. So, our security is our job that brings an income. Our identity is found in the things we accomplish. Our status is located in where we live. Our future is anchored in our ability to control and make decisions. And what exile does is reveal the wrong and empty places our hearts have taken root. In other words, exile can bring our idols into focus. We can see things that we didn’t see when we were busy going about our routines in our familiar places.

You see, exile can look like the absolute end and destruction to all we’ve known and enjoyed. Or it can be the beginning of something far better than all we’ve ever known. That’s why when God spoke to His people in their exile, He could say, **“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it”** (Isa. 43:18-19)? You see, exile directs our eyes not to what came before. Instead, exile directs our eyes to what only God can accomplish.

But isn’t true that we tend to give most of our attention to those “former things”? Isn’t true that we often believe we can make our lives work if we can just get back to the way things were? But you see, God brought His people into exile to expose their need for something greater. They needed something far greater than just being back in their old homes and old routines. And that’s just as true for us as it was for them. What we need cannot be reduced to getting back to the former things. What we need is to become new.

And the only real new beginning is found in Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, **“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new”** (2 Cor. 5:17). And one of things Paul is saying here is that separation from God is now over for those in Christ. And what that means for us is that in this life, no matter the circumstances or trials or sufferings, those in Christ can never lose their home. In Christ, there is no more exile.

And so, if we are in Christ, where are we looking this evening? Are we setting our hearts on the former things? Or are we looking ahead to the glory that awaits those who utterly and absolutely depend on the Lord Jesus? Throughout this pandemic, perhaps God has been whispering to us along, **“Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”** Amen.