Being Salt and Light May Require Us to Lead

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On September 23, 1857, a missionary / businessman by the name of Jeremiah C. Lanphier started lunch time prayer meeting with six men at the North Dutch Reformed Church on 100 Fulton St in New York City. These few men started to meet during lunch to pray because they were concerned about the spiritual health of America and their city. Then, in October of the same year, the New York Stock Market crashed leading to bank failures, high unemployment, and severe economic anxiety among the people of this nation. Now, this small meeting started to grow. Other meetings started to form. These lunch meetings contained about a 5-to-10-minute prayer with Scripture reading and personal testimonies. Plus, these meetings were laymen led. A Spiritual Revival was taking place. The revival traveled by telegraph, newspapers, and traveling merchants that had traveled to New York from Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and other cities. These business men brought back the revival to their own cities. It is estimated that 50,000 people allowed Jesus into their heart in New York City. Over 1 million people nationwide were reborn through Jesus Christ. This revival was credited for helping America to get through the Civil War it was going to face in a few years. We can read about these types of revivals in history and dream about them happening now. This revival was a true movement of God. A few business men were greatly concerned about the economy and the spiritual health of their city. Plus, much hatred was spreading through the nation because of the slave issue. So, these few business men decided to meet during lunch for a few minutes to pray and read Scripture. These men made a decision to be salt and light for their fellow business men. This simple task that they did, God would use to spread the Gospel Message. Now, we have to understand here, this revival was God led. You can't force a revival. It is on God's timing because it is the working of His spirit among the people. However, I believe there is something that we can do in the meantime. These men were concerned about what was going on with the people around them. Maybe we can say these business men had true Jesus compassion for the hurting people around them. Do we? So, what must we do when our society starts to drift toward paganism?

They're two things we'll look at this morning. First, they started to pray together. They lifted up their concern to the Lord. Last week, I opened the service with Daniel's prayer which gives us a great view of someone who was truly concerned for the people around him. In Daniel 9: 1-6, "**9** In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— **2** in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed as* the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years. **3** So I gave my [a]attention to the Lord God, to seek *Him by* prayer and pleading, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. **4** I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed, and said, "Oh, Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and faithfulness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, **5** we have sinned, we have done wrong, and [b]acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. **6** Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our leaders, our fathers, and all the people of the land. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)"

Daniel was so upset by what he read from Jeremiah about how the Israelites were being punished for their horrible sin that it made him start fasting, throw ash on himself, and to put on a sackcloth. Would you put on a sackcloth in mourning for the people around you? Our prayers for the people around us needs to change from praying so I can look like a good Christian to praying because we hurt for those around us. Daniel was in spiritual pain for the people around him. Those few business men didn't meet because it made them look good, they did it because they didn't like to see their fellow business men suffer without Jesus. That is being salt and light in this sinful world. Praying in compassion is what is needed for the Church today in America. We're missing this important spiritual ingredient today. Daniel had it. Those few business men in New York City had it. Let's look at what happens after Daniel prays in Daniel 9: 20-23, "**20** While I was still speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and [o]presenting my plea before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, **21** while I was still speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision [p]previously, [q]came to me [r]in *my* extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. **22** And he instructed *me* and talked with me and said, "Daniel, I have come now to give you insight with understanding. **23** At the beginning of your pleas the [s]command was issued, and I

have come to tell *you*, because you are [t]highly esteemed; so pay attention to the message and gain understanding of the vision. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" Here we see Daniel is getting weary from praying in compassion. He is confessing the sins of the nation and himself. He is pleading / petition to the Lord. Some translations have supplication. In Hebrew, the term here means the same – plead or petition. Daniel is doing what Moses did with Israel every time God's anger blazed against the people of Israel because of their sin. Daniel here is pleading for himself and the people of Israel. We can actually say Daniel is humbling himself as Moses did before the people and his God. We too need to be praying for ourselves and for those around us. Instead of passing judgment on everyone that doesn't fit into our mold, we need to change our judging people into pleading for people before our Lord. We need to pray for compassion prayer.

The second item these business men in New York City did can be found in another story in the Old Testament. Let's turn to 2 Kings 18: 1-7 where we read this, "**18** Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. **2** He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. **3** He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that his father David had done. **4** He removed the high places and smashed the memorial stones to pieces, and cut down the [a]Asherah. He also crushed to pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel had been burning incense to it; and it was called [b]Nehushtan. **5** He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; and after him there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *among those* who came before him. **6** For he clung to the LORD; he did not desist from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. **7** And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he was successful. And he revolted against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

Hezekiah becomes king of Judah and he doesn't like what he sees in his nation. He removed the places of false worship and Scripture tells us that he clung to the Lord, did not desist from following Him and kept God's commandments. So, because of this, the Lord was with the king. You see, Hezekiah took action. Prayer and action are two important ingredients that we can do for our nation. Hezekiah was compassionate about the people of Israel having a good

relationship with God. One of the items that was causing issues in this relationship was the false worship of gods. So, the king removed these evil things. Not only that, but we read this as well in 2 Chronicles 29: 3-7, "[3] In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. [4] He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them into the public square on the east. [5] Then he said to them, "Listen to me, you Levites. Consecrate yourselves now, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry the uncleanness out of the holy place. [6] For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and they have abandoned Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and have [a]turned *their* backs. [7] They have also shut the doors of the porch and extinguished the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. (NASB – wwwbiblegateway.com)" The king then focuses on the Temple leadership. He takes action by having them reopen areas of the Temple that should have never been closed. The king takes more action in 2 Chronicles 29: 27-30, "[27] Then Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD *also* began with the trumpets, [f]*accompanied* by the instruments of David, king of Israel. [28] While the whole assembly worshiped, the singers also sang and the trumpets sounded; all this *continued* until the burnt offering was finished. [29] Now at the completion of the burnt offerings, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshiped. [30] Moreover, King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed down and worshiped. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com) The king took action by getting everyone involved in focusing on God. When the king took action, then this happened in 2 Chronicles 30: 25-27, "[30:25] All the assembly of Judah rejoiced, with the priests and the Levites and all the assembly that came from Israel, both the strangers who came from the land of Israel and those living in Judah. [26] So there was great joy in Jerusalem, because there was nothing like this in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel. [27] Then the Levitical priests stood and blessed the people; and their voice was heard and their prayer came to His holy dwelling place, to heaven. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)" This is considered a revival in the Old Testament. God used a king that was willing to take action for God. We read how the people rejoiced and was in great joy. Nothing was seen like this

since the days of King Solomon. Thank God for a king that was willing to step out of his comfort zone and take action for God. The business men in New York City took action by starting a small prayer group because they were truly compassionated about the people and for what was going on around them. The Church can not continue to remain silent and just wait to die or for Jesus' second coming. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to give us compassion which can drive us into action. What that action can be is unlimited. It could be leading a Bible study or meeting with homeless people or reaching out to children in some way. Without compassion for people, we will not take action or step out of our comfort zone for Jesus. Jesus is looking for compassionate and obedient people. He needs more Daniels and Hezekiah's today. He also needs laymen and laywomen like those in 1857 who took action to meet and pray. God used them to spread the Gospel Message throughout the nation. God can still use people today. Maybe He would like to use us?