

Prayer: God's Great Gift

Prayer and Action

Read: Nehemiah 1:1-2:8; Psalm 137; 1 John 1:8-9; James 2:15-17.

1. Do you think that a miracle happened at Dunkirk? Might William Temple's, now famous, words of "When I pray coincidences happen, when I don't they don't!" apply?

2. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zbUgeYnyxw> Could you imagine those words being said on national news today?

3. Read Nehemiah 1:1 through to 2:8 then consider the following questions. What does this passage tell us about the link between prayer and action?

- ~ What is going on? Basically, what is the background to this reading?
- ~ 1:5— In which way might these words inform us about prayer?
- ~ 1:6-7— Is it right for Nehemiah to confess the sins of his ancient ancestors?
- ~ 1:8-9—Is it appropriate to remind God of his promises?
- ~ 1:10-11—Nehemiah speaks of the King as "this man". Thoughts?
- ~ 2:1-8—what do you make of Nehemiah's growth in confidence? What caused this?

4. Edmund Burke once said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. All that tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent." Do you think that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was correct to rebuke some fellow German Christian leaders for retreating into prayer, and not being willing to challenge Hitler? He also had a challenge to those who were actively opposed to Hitler. What was that?

5. "Seven prayerless days makes one weak!" (No it's not a spelling mistake!). Why is prayer so important alongside action?

6. The New York Daily News ran a story of "God isn't fixing this" in response to politicians who offered to pray for victims and families of mass shootings. The strapline was astonishingly direct—"As latest batch of innocent Americans are left dying in pools of blood, cowards who could truly end gun scourge continue to hide behind meaningless platitudes." Thoughts?

7. Steve said that prayer can be a risky thing to do? What was Steve's point? In which ways has God challenged you to action when you were praying for someone or something? In which way is God presently challenging you to action?