

# TIPPING THE BALANCE

by M. Basilea Schlink



Natural disasters, unprecedented in force, are occurring with growing frequency. Despite these visible signs of divine judgment, there is no limit to man's hatred towards God and towards his fellow man. We are living in an era when everything seems to be heading towards ruin, and Satan is on the rampage, conquering one stronghold after the other. But God, who loves us, does not want us to sink in fear and suffering. His Word shows us how His help avails for us: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you" (Psalm 50:15 RSV).

At such a time as this our Lord Jesus Christ longs to find sacrificial souls who will stand against the destructive forces of evil.

Where do we turn in these days of trouble? We can find an answer in the book of Daniel. **Daniel was a man of prayer who set his face towards the Lord during great affliction.** Chapter 9 reveals the nature of God and shows us how we can reach His heart with our prayers and receive His help during a time of crisis.

Daniel's starting point is prayer and supplication with sackcloth and ashes. The phrase "sackcloth and ashes" signifies deep contrition and repentance for sins. Daniel

faces up to his own sins and confesses them. Here the secret of answered prayer is revealed. Daniel accepts the truth about himself and his people. Acknowledging that "our" sins are the cause of the calamity which has befallen them, he prays: "We have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and ordinances... Righteousness is on your side, O Lord, but open shame, as at this day, falls on us...because we have sinned against you"(Daniel 9:5-9 NRSVA).

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I will deliver you. Psalm 50:15 RSV***

Such a courageous and honest confession, such a humble admission of personal and national guilt, reaches the heart of God. We too have sinned, done wrong and failed to live according to the commandments of God. Like Daniel, we cannot but declare that God is just and righteous in everything He has now allowed us to experience.

We need to accept God's verdict upon our personal lives and admit: "I have not humbled myself in the dust before God and man, as Daniel did. I have not humbled myself beneath the sins of others in the awareness that I am just as great a sinner, failing in other respects."

Let us hear the Lord's summons today: "**More sacrificial souls are needed.**"

Such souls would help to save our country, even though it is ripe for judgment. Then God would be able to hear our prayers, just as He did in Daniel's case.

What a responsibility has been placed on our shoulders at a time like this!

We can make a difference and tip the balance. Daniel, by praying with a priestly attitude and humbling himself beneath his sins, arrives at a moving conclusion: God's mercy is even greater than His righteousness. Thus Daniel can pray, "To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness" (Daniel 9:9 RAV). What a consolation! To be sure, in his prayer Daniel repeatedly humbles himself before the holy God: "The Lord our God is righteous in all the works which he does, though we have not obeyed his voice... We have sinned, we have done wickedly!" (Daniel 9:14-15 RAV). It would seem that further calamities are inevitable. But Daniel is not filled with resig-