

CULTIVATING A HEART FOR CHRIST'S WORLD THROUGH PRAYER

Ephesians 6:10-20

What is the great need of the hour in Christian circles? Is it men? Is it money? Is it communications, organization or facilities? Surely no one would deny that all these things are needed in Christian missions work today. But are these the greatest need of the hour? I think not! The great need of the hour is for Christian men, women, boys and girls to believe God and commit themselves to a life of prayer. We need people who believe in the supernatural and see God as sovereign and in control of this world.

PRAYER WHICH IS TOO ORDINARY

Prayer should be as natural to the true Christian as breathing, for it is his only communication with God. God is ready and available to answer the prayers of His people if His people will pray. Why do Christians fail to pray? They may offer the excuses of cramped time, sickness, busyness, business commitments and so forth, but ultimately it can only be boiled down to one reason: a failure to believe the Living God. Worldly cares and pursuits cloud our vision of God and we fail to see Him as the Sovereign One who controls everything.

Prayer is simply our acknowledgment that God is in control of all circumstances and that we are totally dependent upon Him for everything. This is why Christ said, **“Men ought always to pray and not give up” (Lk. 18:1).**

As Christians our prayers quite often become rote, religious, ordinary prayers because there is no sense of anticipation that we are communicating with a real God who truly exists.

So often our prayers go like this: “I pray for me, my wife, my son John, his wife; us four and no more.”

These ordinary, religious prayers indicate that we have lost contact with a sovereign, supernatural working God. We need a right concept of God.

D.L. Moody said, “I would sooner know how to pray aright than to own all the gold in Alaska. I would rather have power to move the arm that moves the world than to wear the crown of any earthly king.

This failure to believe in a supernatural working God permeates into every aspect of our church life. People often come to church to be entertained – beautiful choir music, tear jerking soloists, shallow messages that make everyone feel good on the inside. There seems to be so little dependence on God; so little acknowledgment of a sovereign God who does all things right and well. Many people mouth Christian words but live like atheists. So much of modern Christianity is organization, programs, methods and entertainment. Men have an outward form of godliness but deny its very power (2 Tim. 3:5).

E.M. Bounds in his booklet entitled, Power Through Prayer says, “Men are God’s method. What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.”

What then does the church need today as we approach the Third Millennium? It needs men and women, boys and girls who are convinced that the God of the universe is in control, and that He is moved by spiritual methods, especially through prayer. **For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3-4).** We need Christians who believe God. We need Christians who take God at His word and stake everything on His promises.

What did the early church have or experience that we seem to be lacking today? The early church experienced God’s power and believed God for the humanly impossible. The early church had no printing presses, no automobiles, no radios, no televisions, no telephones, no computers, no Internet and no church buildings. Yet they reached the then known world for Christ. What did they have? They had Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. **Because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction (1Thess. 1:5).** The first century Christians had a big God, a clinging faith, persistent prayer and total dedication. They believed in a God who works supernaturally and lived in the presence of this reality constantly.

R.A. Torrey, the famous evangelist/preacher of 60 years ago said, “It was a masterstroke of the Devil when he got the church to generally lay aside this mighty weapon of prayer. The Devil is perfectly willing that the church should multiply its organizations, and deftly contrive machinery for the conquest of the world for Christ if it will only give up praying.”

Ordinary prayer can only be changed to extraordinary prayer by a vital, living faith in God. No one can exercise faith for another. Each Christian must determine that he will believe God even if the rest of the world refuses to believe in a supernatural working God. Only the person who has this kind of faith and petitions God will be able to watch God work, for this is the only kind of faith which pleases God.

PRAYER WHICH IS MISSIONARY

Prayer is absolutely essential if we are to see God work for us. If we pray, God will move. If we withhold prayer, God will withhold His blessing. **We have not because we ask not.** Prayer is essential if we claim to believe in the sovereignty of God and are missionary minded. Did you realize that Christ never taught His disciples to preach but He did teach them to pray. Why? Because prayer is the divinely appointed means to move God to move men. If we're truly interested in world evangelism, what should we pray for as God's people?

Pray For The Salvation Of The Lost. **Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved (Rom. 10:1).** It is God who saves men and not men who save men or men who save themselves.

God saves men and one of the basic means for accomplishing this task is prayer. Our only hope in the salvation of souls is that God will work supernaturally in the hearts of the lost. Furthermore, we must never give up praying for the lost because we never know when God might move to save them. When was the last time you asked God to save people in Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Zambia, Holland, Syria, Iceland and so forth? In some mysterious way, God moves through our prayers.

While I cannot prove it scripturally, it is my conviction that no one is saved unless someone prayed for that person to be saved whether particularly or in some generic way. Our prayers move God to carry out His own plan!

Pray For Governmental Rulers. **I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Tim. 2:1-2).** We must pray for the governmental rulers of all nations that they might treat the Christians kindly. Why? So the church in these countries can get on with the work of evangelism. We must pray for kings, dictators, prime ministers and presidents. We need to pray for leaders in the Communist world, the third world and the closed world, as well as the free world. We Christians have one task—to make the gospel known to the whole world.

Pray For Boldness in the Lives of All Christians **And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:18-19).** Paul pleaded with the Ephesian Christians to pray for him.

If the Apostle Paul needed boldness to proclaim the gospel, how much more do we need this boldness? The Apostle Paul understood that he was not just fighting against human prejudice, ignorance and tyranny but that he was locked into a spiritual struggle with the very forces of Satan. **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).**

Christians need to pray for one another that we should be bold for Christ in our witness. We must pray for the church in other lands that Christians will not fall into the trap of Satan which makes men think it is spiritual to remain silent about one's faith in Christ. Prayer could be compared to an artillery barrage out in front of the infantry as they advance on the enemy. Prayer is a barrage of spiritual power that destroys the fortresses of hell and builds the morale of Christians to declare the gospel with more enthusiasm.

The Book of Acts, which is the book of evangelism, records many prayers but not one prayer is for the lost nor are Christians exhorted to pray for the lost. The emphasis is upon the saint's prayers for one another so they might be bold to proclaim Christ to others.

Pray For Saints Undergoing Persecution For Their Faith. **Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith (2 Thess. 3:1-2).** At this very hour, Christians in various parts of the world, are being persecuted for their faith in Christ. In Russia, China, North Korea and various countries of Africa like the Sudan multiple millions are being put to death or imprisoned because they are Christians.

In many Muslim and Roman Catholic countries, evangelicals are suffering much social persecution, and radical Muslims are killing Christians at the drop of a hat. *There have been more martyrs for Christ in the last 100 years than in all of previous history.* The true church suffers in this world and we must pray that the saints will endure this suffering graciously so they may have a glorious witness before all unsaved people.

Pray That God Will Raise Up Laborers. **When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Matt. 9:36-38).** There are multiple millions in this world whom God is going to save. The harvest is plentiful but there are very few laborers. Christ told us to pray to God that He would raise up the laborers. We must pray that God will call dedicated men and women into full time Christian work and that He will also call laymen to dedicate themselves to reaching the lost masses. We need laborers to reach the world for Christ. When was the last time you prayed for God to call someone into the ministry? Have you asked God to call your children? Have you asked God to call you? If you pray earnestly for laborers for the harvest, God just may tap you on the shoulder and say, “I want you.” Are you willing and ready to go?

PRAYER WHICH IS VISIONARY

Since we Christians pray to the Sovereign God, our motto must ever be: “God reigns.” He is in control of all things and does as He pleases in heaven and earth. We Christians must think big because we have a God who

works supernaturally and does the humanly impossible. We must forever believe God for great things, for we are told that we Christians shall accomplish greater works for God numerically than did the Lord Jesus when He was on this earth. **I tell you the truth anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father (John 14:12).**

We must be bold in our prayers. Always dreaming, always planning, always working out new methods and means of reaching people for Christ. The Apostle Paul said, **“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (I Cor. 9:22)**. There is nothing too hard for God. When our God is small, the world looks big, but when our God is big, the world looks small. We have not because we ask not. In the KJV it says in Jeremiah 33:3: **“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”**

God is involved in world evangelism and God wants His people to believe that He is God, and that He is more interested in saving people than we are in winning people. We must believe and petition God to unleash His sovereign power to enable us to reach the world for Christ. Our vision must not just be for our families, or _____ or _____ or America but for the world. Are the souls of your children any more valuable than the souls of children in Peru, Portugal and Paraguay? Are there not people in Iran, Iraq, India, Israel and Indonesia who are in need of the Savior? Our prayers must be visionary so as to include the whole world.

When we get to heaven, there will be people of every race and nationality who will come up to us and say, “You prayed for me and I was saved. You gave money and the gospel came to my country and I believed.”

Our visionary prayer must expect God to do great things through us. There must be a constant anticipation that God will work mightily in each of us and through our local church. When we pray, we must ASK BIG; we must ASK WITH ANTICIPATION; we must ASK WITH EXPECTATION.

ASK great things of God.

ANTICIPATE great things from God.

ATTEMPT great things for God.