

# The Berea Baptist Banner

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" (Psalms 60:4)

## The Preacher's Private Prayer

By Charles Spurgeon

(1834-1892)

Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians, else he were



Charles Spurgeon disqualified for the office which he has undertaken. "It would be wholly monstrous," says Bernard, "for a man to be highest in office and lowest in soul; first in station and last in life."

Over all his other relationships the pre-eminence of the pastor's responsibility casts a halo, and if true to his Master, he becomes distinguished for his prayerfulness in them all. As a citizen, his country has the advantage of his intercession; as a neighbor those under his shadow are remembered in supplication. He prays as a husband and as a father; he strives to make his family devotions a model for his flock; and if the fire on the altar of God should burn low anywhere else, it is well tended in the house of the Lord's chosen servant — for he takes care that the morning and evening sacrifice shall sanctify his dwelling. But there are some of his

prayers which concern his office, and of those our plan in these lectures leads us to speak most. He offers peculiar supplications *as a minister*, and he draws near to God in this respect, over and above all his approaches in his other relationships.

I take it that as a minister *he is always*

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## A Godly Man Is A Praying Man

By Thomas Watson

(1620-1686)

This is in the text, "**Everyone that is godly shall pray unto thee.**" As soon as grace is poured in, prayer is poured out: "**but I give myself unto prayer**" (Psa. 109:4). In the Hebrew it is, "but I pray." Prayer and I are all one. Prayer is the soul's traffic with heaven. God comes down to us by His Spirit, and we go up to Him by prayer. Caligula placed his images in the



Capitol whispering in Jupiter's ear; prayer whispers in God's ear. A godly man cannot live without prayer. A man cannot live unless he takes his breath, nor can the soul, unless it breathes

Thomas Watson forth its desires to God. As soon as the babe of grace is born, it cries; no sooner was Paul converted than "**behold, he prayeth**" (Acts 9:11). No doubt he prayed before, being a Pharisee, but it was either superficially or superstitiously. But when the work of grace had been done in his soul, behold, now he prays.

A godly man is on the mount of prayer every day; he begins the day with prayer; before he opens his shop, he opens his heart to God. We burn sweet perfumes in our houses; a godly man's house is 'a house of perfume'; he airs it with the incense of prayer; he engages in no business without seeking God. Scipio never entered the Senate House without first ascending the Capitol, where he did his devotions. A godly man consults God in everything; he asks His leave and His blessing. The Greeks asked counsel at

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## The Man Who Knocked At Midnight

By Alexander Whyte

(1836-1921)

"**Lord, teach us to pray**" (Luke 11:1). "**Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight...**" (Luke 11:5-8).

It is night. It is midnight. The night is dark. All the lights are out, and everybody is in bed. "Friend! Lend me three loaves! For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him!" He knocks again. "Friend! Lend me three loaves!" He waits awhile and then he knocks again. "Friend, friend! I must have three loaves!" "Trouble me not: the door is now shut; I cannot rise and give thee!" He is dumb, for a time. He stands still. He turns to go home. But

he cannot go home. He dare not go home. He comes back. He knocks again. "Friend!" he cries, till the dogs bark at him. He puts his ear to the door. There is a sound inside, and then the light of a candle shines through the hole of the door. The bars of the door are drawn back, and he gets not three loaves only but as many as he needs. "**And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.**"

1. Our Lord Himself was often like that importunate poor man, out at midnight, knocking for bread. When He

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## Points About Prayer

By Milburn Cockrell

(1941-2002)

Read Matthew 6:5-13. Note verse 6: **But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.** The Savior does not here condemn public prayers, but He does condemn public prayers offered by the spirit of ostentation. Also here He teaches the need of secret prayer. Prayer is the conscious communion of the saved soul led by the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, with God our Heavenly Father. Prayer is not



Milburn Cockrell making a speech to God; it is not merely a flood of words; it is not merely a form for a display of piety. The Christian has no greater privilege than approach to God. But how is it possible for a mere man to approach God and to gain His attention? Do our prayers actually ascend to heaven? The answer to the first question will be answered

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## A Blessed Union

By Jeff Short

Mantachie, Mississippi

"**Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much**" (Jas. 5:16). A blessed promise, and something near a formula is set forth in our text. The verse is divided into two parts. The first exhorts us, "**Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.**" This is given within the context of the body of the people of God—verses 13 and 14 speak of those "**among you**" and calling for "**the elders of the church.**"



Jeff Short the church has power in united prayer (Matt. 18:19), but that power is dependent upon worship and fellowship, which can be hindered. So, the first part of the text implies that we may be hindered from deliverance because of a lack of confession and intercession. These words are reminiscent of the words of Jesus

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## The Preacher's

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praying. Whenever his mind turns to his work, whether he is in it or out of it, he ejaculates a petition, sending up his holy desires as well-directed arrows to the skies. He is not always in the act of prayer, but he lives in the spirit of it. If his heart be in his work, he cannot eat or drink, or take recreation, or go to his bed, or rise in the morning, without evermore feeling a fervency of desire, a weight of anxiety, and a simplicity of dependence upon God; thus, in one form or other he continues in prayer. If there be any man under heaven, who is compelled to carry out the precept — **"Pray without ceasing,"** surely it is the Christian minister. He has peculiar temptations, special trials, singular difficulties, and remarkable duties, he has to deal with God in awful relationships, and with men in mysterious interests; he therefore needs much more grace than common men, and as he knows this, he is led constantly to cry to the strong for strength, and say, **"I will lift up**

### mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Alleine once wrote to a dear friend, "Though I am apt to be unsettled and quickly set off the hinges, yet, methinks, I am like a bird out of the nest, I am never quiet till I am in my old way of communion with God; like the needle in the compass, that is restless till it be turned towards the pole. I can say, through grace, with the church, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night and with my spirit within me have I sought thee early.' My heart is early and late with God; 'tis the business and delight of my life to seek him." Such must be the even tenor of your way, O men of God. If you as ministers are not very prayerful, you are much to be pitied. If, in the future, you shall be called to sustain pastorates, large or small, if you become lax in secret devotion, not only will you need to be pitied, but your people also; and, in addition to that, you shall be blamed, and the day cometh in which you shall be ashamed and confounded.

It may scarcely be needful to commend to you the sweet uses of private devotion, and yet I cannot forbear. To you, as the ambassadors of God, the mercy-seat has a virtue beyond all estimate; the more familiar you are with the court of heaven the better shall you discharge your heavenly trust.

Among all the formative influences which go to make up a man honored of God in the ministry, I know of none more mighty than his own familiarity with the mercy-seat. All that a college course can do for a student is coarse and external compared with the spiritual and delicate refinement obtained by communion with God. While the unformed minister is revolving upon the wheel of preparation, prayer is the tool of the great potter by which he molds the vessel. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, we prevail in private-prayer.

Your prayers will be your ablest assistants *while your discourses are yet upon the anvil.* While other men, like Esau, are hunting for their portion, you, by the aid of prayer, will find the savory meat near at home, and may say in truth what Jacob said so falsely, "The Lord brought it to me." If you can dip your pens into your hearts, appealing in earnestness to the Lord, you will write well; and if you can gather your matter on your knees at the gate of heaven, you will not fail to speak well. Prayer, as a mental exercise, will bring many subjects before the mind, and so help in the selection of a topic, while

as a high spiritual engagement it will cleanse your inner eye that you may see truth in the light of God. Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer. How wonderfully were the books opened to Daniel when he was in supplication! How much Peter learned upon the housetop! The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author Himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to Him and enlists Him in our cause. It is a great thing to pray one's self into the spirit and marrow of a text; working into it by sacred feeding thereon, even as the worm bores its way into the kernel of the nut. Prayer supplies a leverage for the uplifting of ponderous truths. One marvels how the stones of Stonehenge could have been set in their places; it is even more to be inquired after whence some men obtained such admirable knowledge of mysterious doctrines: was not prayer the potent machinery which wrought the wonder? Waiting upon God often turns darkness into light. Persevering inquiry at the sacred oracle uplifts the veil and gives grace to look into the deep things of God. A certain Puritan divine at a debate was observed frequently to write upon the paper before him; upon others curiously seeking to read his notes, they found nothing upon the page but the words, "More light, Lord," "More light, Lord," repeated scores of times: a most suitable prayer for the student of the Word when preparing his discourse.

You will frequently find fresh streams of thought leaping up from the passage before you, as if the rock had been struck by Moses' rod; new veins of precious ore will be revealed to your astonished gaze as you quarry God's Word and use diligently the hammer of prayer. You will sometimes feel as if you were entirely shut up, and then suddenly a new road will open before you. He who hath the key of David openeth, and no man shutteth. If you have ever sailed down the Rhine, the water scenery of that majestic river will have struck you as being very like in effect to a series of lakes. Before and behind the vessel appears to be enclosed in massive walls of rock, or circles of vine-clad terraces, till on a sudden you turn a corner, and before you the rejoicing and abounding river flows onward in its strength. So the laborious student often finds it with a text; it appears to be fast closed against you, but prayer propels your vessel, and turns its prow into fresh waters, and you behold, the broad and deep stream of sacred truth flowing in its

fulness, and bearing you with it. Is not this a convincing reason for abiding in supplication? Use prayer as a boring rod, and wells of living water will leap up from the bowels of the Word. Who will be content to thirst when living waters are so readily to be obtained!

The best and holiest men have ever made prayer the most important part of pulpit preparation. It is said of M'Cheyne, "Anxious to give his people on the Sabbath what had cost him somewhat, he never, without an urgent reason, went before them without much previous meditation and prayer. His principle on this subject was embodied in a remark he made to some of us who were conversing on the matter. Being asked his view of diligent preparation for the pulpit, he reminded us of Exodus 27:20. 'Beaten oil —beaten oil for the lamps of the sanctuary.' And yet his prayerfulness was greater still. Indeed, he could not neglect fellowship with God before entering the congregation. He needed to be bathed in the love of God. His ministry was so much a bringing out of views that had first sanctified his own soul, that the healthiness of his soul was absolutely needful to the vigor and power of his ministrations." "With him the commencement of all labor invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness and of his tears, as well as of his cries."

Prayer will singularly assist you in the delivery of your sermon; in fact, nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf. It is said of Alleine, "He poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching. His supplications and his exhortations were so affectionate, so full of holy zeal, life and vigor, that they quite overcame his hearers; he melted over them, so that he thawed and mollified, and sometimes dissolved the hardest hearts." There could have been none of this sacred dissolving of heart if his mind had not been previously exposed to the tropical rays of the Sun of Righteousness by private fellowship with the risen Lord. A truly pathetic delivery, in which there is no affectation, but much affection, can only be the offspring of prayer. There is no rhetoric like that of the heart, and no school for learning it but the foot of the cross. It were better that you never learned a rule of human oratory, but were full of the power of heavenborn love, than that you should master Quintilian, Cicero, and Aristotle, and remain without the apostolic anointing.

Prayer may not make you eloquent after the human mode, but it will make you truly so, for you will speak out of the heart; and is not that the meaning of the word eloquence? It will bring fire from

## Berea Baptist Broadcast

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## The Preacher's

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heaven upon your sacrifice, and thus prove it to be accepted of the Lord. As fresh springs of thought will frequently break up during preparation in answer to prayer, so will it be in the delivery of the sermon. Most preachers who depend upon God's Spirit will tell you that their freshest and best thoughts are not those which were premeditated, but ideas which come to them, flying as on the wings of angels; unexpected treasures brought on a sudden by celestial hands, seeds of the flowers of paradise, wafted from the mountains of myrrh. Often and often when I have felt hampered, both in thought and expression, my secret groaning of heart has brought me relief, and I have enjoyed more than usual liberty. But how dare we pray in the battle if we have never cried to the Lord while buckling on the harness! The remembrance of his wrestlings at home comforts the fettered preacher when in the pulpit: God will not desert us unless we have deserted him. You, brethren, will find that prayer will ensure you strength equal to your day.

As the tongues of fire came upon the apostles, when they sat watching and praying, even so will they come upon you. You will find yourselves, when you might perhaps have flagged, suddenly upborne, as by a seraph's power. Wheels of fire will be fastened to your chariot, which had begun to drag right heavily, and steeds angelic will be in a moment harnessed to your fiery car, till you climb the heavens like Elijah, in a rapture of flaming inspiration.

After the sermon, how would a conscientious preacher give vent to his feelings and find solace for his soul if access to the mercy-seat were denied him? Elevated to the highest pitch of excitement, how can we relieve our souls but in importunate pleadings. Or depressed by a fear of failure, how shall we be comforted but in moaning out our complaint before our God? How often have some of us tossed to and fro upon our couch half the night because of conscious shortcomings in our testimony! How frequently have we longed to rush back to the pulpit again to say over again more vehemently, what we have uttered in so cold a manner! Where could we find rest for our spirits but in confession of sin, and passionate entreaty that our infirmity or folly might in no way hinder the Spirit of God! It is not possible in a public assembly to pour out all our heart's love to our flock. Like Joseph, the affectionate minister will seek where to weep; his emotions, however freely he may express himself, will be pent up in the pulpit, and only in private prayer can he draw up the sluices and bid them flow forth.

If we cannot prevail with men for God,

we will, at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men. We cannot save them, or even persuade them to be saved, but we can at least bewail their madness and entreat the interference of the Lord. Like Jeremiah, we can make it our resolve, "**If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears.**" To such pathetic appeals the Lord's heart can never be indifferent; in due time the weeping intercessor will become the rejoicing winner of souls. There is a distinct connection between importunate agonizing and true success, even as between the travail and the birth, the sowing in tears and the reaping in joy. "How is it that your seed comes up so soon?" said one gardener to another. "Because I steep it," was the reply. We must steep all our teachings in tears, "when none but God is nigh," and their growth will surprise and delight us.

Could any one wonder at Brainerd's success, when his diary contains such notes as this: "Lord's Day, April 25th — This morning spent about two hours in sacred duties, and was enabled, more than ordinarily, to agonize for immortal souls; though it was early in the morning, and the sun scarcely shone at all, yet my body was quite wet with sweat." The secret of Luther's power lay in the same direction. Theodorus said of him: "I overheard him in prayer, but, good God, with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to his friend." My brethren, let me beseech you to be men of prayer. Great talents you may never have, but you will do well enough without them if you abound in intercession. If you do not pray over what you have sown, God's sovereignty may possibly determine to give a blessing, but you have no right to expect it, and if it comes it will bring no comfort to your own heart.

I was reading yesterday a book by Father Faber, late of the Oratory, at Brompton, a marvelous compound of truth and error. In it he relates a legend to this effect. A certain preacher, whose sermons converted men by scores, received a revelation from heaven that not one of the conversions was owing to his talents or eloquence, but all to the prayers of an illiterate lay-brother, who sat on the pulpit steps, pleading all the time for the success of the sermon. It may in the all-revealing day be so with us. We may discover, after having labored long and wearily in preaching, that all the honor belongs to another builder, whose prayers were gold, silver, and precious stones, while our sermonizing, being apart from prayer, were but hay and stubble.

When we have done with preaching, we shall not, if we are true ministers of God, have done with praying, because the whole church, with many tongues, will be

crying, in the language of the Macedonian, "**Come over and help us**" in prayer. If you are enabled to prevail in prayer you will have many requests to offer for others who will flock to you, and beg a share in your intercessions, and so you will find yourselves commissioned with errands to the mercy-seat for friends and hearers. Such is always my lot, and I feel it a pleasure to have such requests to present before my Lord. Never can you be short of themes for prayer, even if no one should suggest them to you. Look at your congregation. There are always sick folk among them, and many more who are soul sick. Some are unsaved, others are seeking and cannot find. Many are desponding, and not a few believers are backsliding or mourning. There are widows' tears and orphans' sighs to be put into our bottle, and poured out before the Lord. If you are a genuine minister of God you will stand as a priest before the Lord, spiritually wearing the ephod and the breast-plate whereon you bear the names of the children of Israel, pleading for them within the veil. I have known brethren who have kept a list of persons for whom they felt bound especially to pray, and I doubt not such a record often reminded them of what might otherwise have slipped their memory. Nor will your people wholly engross you; the nation and the world will claim their share. The man who is mighty in prayer may be a wall of fire around his country, her guardian angel and her shield. We have all heard how the enemies of the Protestant cause dreaded the prayers of Knox more than they feared armies of ten thousand men. The famous Welch was also a great intercessor for his country; he used to say he "wondered how a Christian could lie in his bed all night and not rise to pray." When his wife fearing that he would take cold, followed him into the room to which he had withdrawn, she heard him pleading in broken sentences, "Lord, wilt thou not grant me Scotland?" O that we were thus wrestling at midnight, crying, "Lord, wilt thou not grant us our hearers' souls?"

The minister who does not earnestly pray over his work must surely be a vain and conceited man. He acts as if he thought himself sufficient of himself, and therefore needed not to appeal to God. Yet what a baseless pride to conceive that our preaching can ever be in itself so powerful that it can turn men from their sins, and bring them to God without the working of the Holy Ghost. If we are truly humble-minded we shall not venture down to the fight until the Lord of Hosts has clothed us with all power, and said to us, "Go in this thy might." The preacher who neglects to pray much must be very careless about his ministry. He cannot have comprehended his calling. He cannot have computed the value of a soul, or estimated the meaning of eternity. He must be a mere official, tempted into a

pulpit because the piece of bread which belongs to the priest's office is very necessary to him, or a detestable hypocrite who loves the praise of men, and cares not for the praise of God. He will surely become a mere superficial talker, best approved where grace is least valued and a vain show most admired. He cannot be one of those who plough deep and reap abundant harvests. He is a mere loiterer, not a laborer. As a preacher he has a name to live and is dead. He limps in his life like the lame man in the Proverbs, whose legs were not equal, for his praying is shorter than his preaching.

I am afraid that, more or less, most of us need self-examination as to this matter. If any man here should venture to say that he prays as much as he ought, as a student, I should gravely question his statement; and if there be a minister, deacon, or elder present who can say that he believes he is occupied with God in prayer to the full extent to which he might be, I should be pleased to know him. I can only say, that if he can claim this excellence, he leaves me far behind, for I can make no such claim: I wish I could; and I make the confession with no small degree of shamefacedness and confusion, but I am obliged to make it. If we are not more negligent than others, this is no consolation to us; the shortcomings of others are no excuses for us. How few of us could compare ourselves with Mr. Joseph Alleine, whose character I have mentioned before? "At the time of his health," writes his wife, "he did rise constantly at or before four of the clock, and would be much troubled if he heard smiths or other craftsmen at their trades before he was at communion with God; saying to me often, 'How this noise shames me. Does not my Master deserve more than theirs?' From four till eight he spent in prayer, holy contemplation, and singing of psalms, in which he much delighted and did daily practice alone, as well as in the family. Sometimes he would suspend the routine of parochial engagements, and devote whole days to these secret exercises, in order to which, he would contrive to be alone in some void house, or else in some sequestered spot in the open valley. Here there would be much prayer and meditation on God and heaven."

Could we read Jonathan Edwards' description of David Brainerd and not blush? "His life," says Edwards, "shows the right way to success in the works of the ministry. He sought it as a resolute soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labor always fervently, not only in word and doctrine, in public and private, but in *prayers* day and night, 'wrestling with God' in secret, and 'travailing in birth,' with unutterable groans and agonies, 'until Christ were formed' in the hearts of the people to

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## The Preacher's

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whom he was sent! How did he thirst for a blessing upon his ministry, 'and watch for souls as one that must give account!' How did he 'go forth in the strength of the Lord God, seeking and depending on the special influence of the Spirit to assist and succeed him! And what was the happy fruit at last, after long waiting and many dark and discouraging appearances: like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day."

Might not Henry Martyn's journal shame us, where we find such entries; as these; "Sept. 24th — The determination with which I went to bed last night, of devoting this day to prayer and fasting, I was enabled to put into execution. In my first prayer for deliverance from worldly thoughts, depending on the power and promises of God, for fixing my soul while I prayed, I was helped to enjoy much abstinence from the world for nearly an hour. Then read the history of Abraham, to see how familiarly God had revealed himself to mortal men of old. Afterwards, in prayer for my own sanctification, my soul breathed freely and ardently after the holiness of God, and this was the best season of the day." We might perhaps more truly join with him in his lament after the first year of his ministry that "he judged he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations, and too little to private communion with God."

How much of blessing we may have missed through remissness in supplication we can scarcely guess, and none of us can know how poor we are in comparison with what we might have been if we had lived habitually nearer to God in prayer. Vain regrets and surmises are useless, but an earnest determination to amend will be far more useful. We not only ought to pray more, but we *must*. The fact is, the secret of all ministerial success lies in prevalence at the mercy-seat.

One bright benison which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something, better understood than named; it is a dew from the Lord, a divine presence which you will recognize at once when I say it is "an unction from the holy One." What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by *preaching with unction*; yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence; Samaria, in famine, typifies a discourse without it; Jerusalem, with her feasts of fat things full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Every one knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much less produce it of itself? Such is the mystery

of spiritual anointing; we know, but we cannot tell to others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish to counterfeit it, as some do who use expressions which are meant to betoken fervent love, but oftener indicate sickly sentimentalism or mere cant. "Dear Lord!" "Sweet Jesus!" "Precious Christ!" are by them poured out wholesale, till one is nauseated. These familiarities may have been not only tolerable, but even beautiful when they first fell from a saint of God, speaking, as it were out of the excellent glory, but when repeated flippantly they are not only intolerable, but indecent, if not profane.

Some have tried to imitate unction by unnatural tones and whines; by turning up the whites of their eyes, and lifting their hands in a most ridiculous manner. M'Cheyne's tone and rhythm one hears from Scotchmen continually: we much prefer his spirit to his mannerism; and all mere mannerism without power is as foul carrion of all life bereft, obnoxious, mischievous. Certain brethren aim at inspiration through exertion and loud shouting; but it does not come: some we have known to stop the discourse, and exclaim, "God bless you," and others gesticulate wildly, and drive their finger nails into the palms of their hands as if they were in convulsions of celestial ardor. Bah! The whole thing smells of the green-room and the stage. The getting up of fervor in hearers by the simulation of it in the preacher is a loathsome deceit to be scorned by honest men. "To affect feeling," says Richard Cecil, "is nauseous and soon detected, but to feel is the readiest way to the hearts of others."

Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless; yet it is in itself priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Jesus. To the secret pleader with God this secret is committed; upon him rests the dew of the Lord, about him is the perfume which makes glad the heart. If the anointing which we bear come not from the Lord of hosts we are deceivers, and since only in prayer can we obtain it, let us continue instant, constant, fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the threshing-floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven. Go not to minister in the temple till you have washed in the laver. Think not to be a messenger of grace to others till you have seen the God of grace for yourselves, and had the word from His mouth.

Time spent in quiet prostration of soul before the Lord is most invigorating. David "sat before the Lord;" it is a great thing to hold these sacred sittings; the mind being receptive, like an open flower drinking in the sunbeams, or the sensitive photographic plate accepting the image before it. Quietude, which some men cannot abide, because it reveals their inward poverty, is as a palace of cedar to

the wise, for along its hallowed courts the King in His beauty deigns to walk.

*"Sacred silence! thou that art  
Floodgate of the deeper heart,  
Offspring of a heavenly kind;  
Frost o' the mouth,  
And thaw o' the mind."*

Priceless as the gift of utterance may be, the practice of silence in some aspects far excels it. Do you think me a Quaker? Well, be it so. Herein I follow George Fox most lovingly; for I am persuaded that we most of us think too much of speech, which after all is but the shell of thought. Quiet contemplation, still worship, unuttered rapture, these are mine when my best jewels are before me. Brethren, rob not your heart of the deep sea joys; miss not the far-down life, by for ever babbling among the broken shells and foaming surges of the shore.

I would seriously recommend to you, when settled in the ministry, the celebration of extraordinary seasons of devotion. If your ordinary prayers do not keep up the freshness and vigor of your souls, and you feel that you are flagging, get alone for a week, or even a month if possible. We have occasional holidays, why not frequent holy days? We hear of our richer brethren finding time for a journey to Jerusalem; could we not spare time for the less difficult and far more profitable journey to the heavenly city? Isaac Ambrose, once pastor at Preston, who wrote that famous book, "Looking unto Jesus," always set apart one month in the year for seclusion in a hut in a wood at Garstang. No wonder that he was so mighty a divine, when he could regularly spend so long a time in the mount with God. I notice that the Romanists are accustomed to secure what they call "Retreats," where a number of priests will retire for a time into perfect quietude, to spend the whole of the time in fasting and prayer, so as to inflame their souls with ardor. We may learn from our adversaries. It would be a great thing every now and then for a band of truly spiritual brethren to spend a day or two with each other in real burning agony of prayer. Pastors alone could use much more freedom than in a mixed company. Times of humiliation and supplication for the whole church will also benefit us if we enter into them heartily. Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heavengate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central glory. I look forward to our month of special devotion, as mariners reckon upon reaching land. Even if our public work were laid aside to give us space for special prayer, it might be a great gain to our churches. A voyage to the golden rivers of fellowship and meditation would be well repaid by a freight of sanctified feeling and elevated thought. Our silence might be better than our voices if our solitude were spent with God. That was a grand action of old

Jerome, when he laid all his pressing engagements aside to achieve a purpose to which he felt a call from heaven. He had a large congregation, as large a one as any of us need want; but he said to his people, "Now it is of necessity that the New Testament should be translated, you must find another preacher: the translation must be made; I am bound for the wilderness, and shall not return till my task is finished." Away he went with his manuscripts, and prayed and labored, and produced a work — the Latin-Vulgate — which will last as long as the world stands; on the whole a most wonderful translation of Holy Scripture. As learning and prayerful retirement together could thus produce an immortal work, if we were sometimes to say to our people when we felt moved to do so, "Dear friends, we really must be gone for a little while to refresh our souls in solitude," our profiting would soon be apparent, and if we did not write Latin Vulgates, yet we should do immortal work, such as would abide the fire.

## A Godly Man

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their oracles; so a godly man enquires at the divine oracle (Gen. 24:12; I Sam. 23:3-4). A true saint continually shoots up his heart to heaven by sacred ejaculations.

*Question:* Is prayer a sign of a godly man? May not a hypocrite pray eloquently and with seeming devotion?

*Answer:* He may: "**they seek me daily**" (Isa. 58:2). But a hypocrite does not pray "**in the Spirit**" (Eph. 6:18). A man may have the gift of prayer, and not have the spirit of prayer.

*Question:* How shall we know that we have the spirit of prayer?

*Answer:* When the prayer which we make is spiritual.

*Question:* What is it to make a spiritual prayer?

*Answer 1:* When we pray with knowledge. Under the law, Aaron was to "**light the lamps**" when he burned the incense on the altar (Exo. 30:7). Incense typified prayer, and the lighting of the lamps typified knowledge. When the incense of prayer burns, the lamp of knowledge must be lit: "**I will pray with the understanding**" (I Cor. 14:15). We must know the majesty and holiness of God, so that we may be deeply affected with reverence when we come before Him. We must put up such petitions as are exactly adequate and agreeable to God's will. "**Be not rash with thy mouth, to utter anything before God**" (Ecc. 5:2). The Lord would not have the blind offered to him (Mal. 1:8). How can we pray with affection when we do not pray with judgment? The Papists pray in an unknown tongue. Christ may reply to them as he did to the mother of Zebedee's

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## A Godly Man

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children, **“Ye know not what ye ask”** (Matt. 20:22). He that prays he knows not how, shall be heard he knows not when.

*Answer 2:* A spiritual prayer is when the heart and spirit pray; there are not only words but desires. It is excellent when a man can say, “Lord, my heart prays.” Hannah prayed **“in her heart”** (I Sam. 1:13). The sound of a trumpet comes from within and the excellent music of prayer comes from within the heart. If the heart does not accompany duty, it is speaking, not praying.

*Answer 3:* A spiritual prayer is a fervent prayer: **“The effectual fervent prayer . . . availeth much”** (Jas. 5:16). The heart, like the mainspring, should carry the affections in a most zealous and rapid manner; fervency is the wing of prayer by which it ascends to heaven. Prayer is expressed by sighs and groans (Rom. 8:26). It is not so much the gifts of the Spirit as the groans of the Spirit which God likes. Prayer is called a **“wrestling”** (Gen. 32:24) and a “pouring out of the soul” (I Sam. 1:15). Prayer is compared to incense (Psa. 141:2). Incense without fire makes no sweet smell. Prayer without fervency is like incense without fire. Christ prayed with **“strong crying and tears”** (Heb. 5:7); crying prayer prevails. When the heart is inflamed in prayer, a Christian is carried as it were in a fiery chariot up to heaven.

*Answer 4:* A spiritual prayer is such as comes from a broken heart: **“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit”** (Psa. 51:17). The incense was to be beaten to typify the breaking of the heart in prayer. It is not the voluble tongue but the melting heart which God accepts. “Oh,” says a Christian, “I cannot pray like others.” As Moses said to the Lord, **“I am not eloquent.”** But can you weep and sigh? Does your soul melt out at your eyes? God accepts broken expressions when they come from broken hearts. I have read of a plant that bears no fruit, but it weeps forth a kind of gum which is very costly. So, though you do not flourish with those gifts and expressions like others, yet if you can weep forth tears from a contrite heart, these are exceedingly precious to God, and He will put them in His bottle. Jacob wept in prayer and had **“power over the angel”** (Hos. 12:4).

*Answer 5:* A spiritual prayer is a believing prayer: **“whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”** (Matt. 21:22). The reason why so many prayers suffer shipwreck is because they split against the rock of unbelief. Praying without faith is shooting without bullets. When faith takes prayer by the hand, then we draw near to God. We should come to God in prayer like the leper:

**“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”** (Matt. 8:2). It is a disparagement to Deity to have such a whisper in the heart, that “God’s ear is heavy and cannot hear” (Isa. 59:1). What is said of the people of Israel may be applied to prayer—**“They could not enter in because of unbelief”** (Heb. 3:19).

*Answer 6:* A spiritual prayer is a holy prayer: “Wherefore lift up pure hands” (I Tim. 2:8). Prayer must be offered on the altar of a pure heart. Sin lived in makes the heart hard and God’s ear deaf. Sin stops the mouth of prayer. It does what the thief does to the traveler— puts a gag in his mouth so that he cannot speak. Sin poisons and infests prayer. A wicked man’s prayer is sick of the plague, and will God come near him? The lodestone loses its virtue when it is spread with garlic; so does prayer when it is polluted with sin. **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”** (Psa. 66:18). It is foolish to pray against sin and then to sin against prayer. A spiritual prayer, like the spirits of wine, must be refined and taken off the lees and dregs of sin: **“that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness”** (Mal. 3:3). If the heart is holy, this altar will sanctify the gift.

*Answer 7:* A spiritual prayer is a humble prayer: **“LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble”** (Psa. 10:17). Prayer is the asking of an alms, which requires humility: **“the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner”** (Luke 18:13). God’s incomprehensible glory may even amaze us and strike a holy consternation into us when we approach near to Him: **“O my God, I . . . blush to lift up my face to thee”** (Ezra 9:6). It is comely to see a poor nothing lie prostrate at the feet of its Maker. **“Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes”** (Gen. 18:27). The lower the heart descends, the higher the prayer ascends.

*Answer 8:* A spiritual prayer is when we pray in the name of Christ. To pray in the name of Christ is not only to name Christ in prayer, but to pray in the hope and confidence of Christ’s mediation. As a child claims his estate in the right of his father who purchased it, so we come for mercy in the name of Christ, who has purchased it for us in His blood. Unless we pray thus, we do not pray at all; no, we rather provoke God. As it was with Uzziah, when he wanted to offer incense without a priest. God was angry and struck him with leprosy (II Chr. 26:16-19). So when we do not come in Christ’s name in prayer, we offer up incense without a priest, and what can we expect but to meet with wrath?

*Answer 9:* A spiritual prayer is when we pray out of love to prayer. A wicked man may pray, but he does not love prayer. **“Will he delight himself in the**

**Almighty?”** (Job 27:10). A godly man is carried on the wings of delight. He is never so well as when he is praying. He is not forced with fear but fired with love. I will **“make them joyful in my house of prayer”** (Isa. 56:7).

*Answer 10:* A spiritual prayer is when we have spiritual goals in prayer. There is a vast difference between a spiritual prayer and a carnal desire. The goals of a hypocrite are secular and carnal. He looks askint in prayer. It is not the sense of his spiritual needs that moves him but rather lust. **“Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”** (Jas. 4:3). The sinner prays more for food than for grace. This, God does not interpret as praying but as howling: **“They howled upon their beds: they assemble . . . for corn and wine”** (Hos. 7:14). “Give me only riches” (Ovid).

Prayers which lack a good aim lack a good answer. A godly man has spiritual goals in prayer. He sends out his prayer as a merchant sends out his ship, so that he may have large returns of spiritual blessings. His design in prayer is that his heart may be more holy and that he may have more communion with God. A godly man engages in the trade of prayer so that he may increase the stock of grace.

*Answer 11:* A spiritual prayer is accompanied with the use of means. There must be works as well as prayer. When Hezekiah was sick he did not only pray for recovery, but he laid “a lump of figs to the boil” (Isa. 38:21). Thus it is in the case of the soul when we pray against sin and avoid temptations. When we pray for grace and use opportunities to the full, this is laying a fig on the boil which will make us recover. To pray for holiness and neglect the means is like winding up the clock and taking off the weights.

*Answer 12:* A spiritual prayer is that which leaves a spiritual mood behind upon the heart. A Christian is better after prayer. He has gained more strength over sin, as a man by exercise gets strength. The heart after prayer keeps a tincture of holiness, as the vessel favors and relishes the wine that is put into it. Having been with God on the mount, Moses’ face shone. So, having been on the mount of prayer, our graces shine and our lives shine. This is the sign of a godly man—he prays in the Spirit. This is the right kind of praying. The gift of prayer is ordinary, like culinary fire. But spiritual prayer is more rare and excellent, like elemental fire which comes from heaven.

*Use 1:* Is a godly man of a praying spirit? Then this excludes from being godly:

1. *Those who do not pray at all.* Their houses are unhallowed houses. It is made the note of a reprobate that “he calls not upon God” (Psa. 14:4). Does that poor creature who never asks for alms think that he will get any? Do those who never seek mercy from God think that they will receive it? Truly, then God should befriend them more than He did His own

### MARK OF THE BEAST

Look at your name on the front page of this month’s paper. If you see the mark 3-05, so detestable to a Baptist, wash it out by renewal of greenbacks. If not your paper will stop next month. We are not able to credit. It is not a good plan.



Son. “He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries” (Heb. 5:7). None of God’s children are tongue-tied. **“Because ye are sons. God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”** (Gal. 4:6). Creatures by the instinct of nature cry to God: **“the young ravens which cry”** (Psa. 147:9). “The lions seek their meat from God” (Psa. 104:21). Not to cry to God is worse than brutish.

2. *Others pray, but it is seldom* – like that profane atheist of whom Heylin speaks, who told God that he was no common beggar; he had never troubled Him before and if He would hear him now, he would never trouble Him again.

3. *Others pray, but not “in the Holy Ghost”* (Jude 20). They are more like parrots than weeping doves. Their hearts do not melt in prayer: they exercise their inventiveness more than their affection.

*Use 2:* As you would prove the new birth, cry **“Abba, Father”**; be men of prayer. Pray at least twice a day. In the temple there was the morning and evening sacrifice. Daniel prayed three times a day. No, he so loved prayer that he would not neglect prayer to save his life (Dan. 6: 10). Luther spent three hours every day in prayer.

*Objection:* But what need is there of prayer, when God has made so many promises of blessings?

*Answer:* Prayer is the condition annexed to the promise. Promises turn upon the hinge of prayer: **“I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel”** (Eze. 36:37). A king promises a pardon, but it must be sued for. David had a promise that God would build him a house, but he sues for the promise by prayer (II Sam. 7:25). Christ Himself had all the promises made sure to Him, yet He prayed and spent whole nights in prayer.

Therefore if you would be counted godly, be given to prayer. Prayer sanctifies your mercies (II Tim. 4:5). Prayer weeds out sin and waters grace.

That I may encourage Christians and hold up their heads in prayer, as Aaron and Hur held up Moses’ hands (Exo. 17:12), let me propound these few considerations:

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## A Godly Man

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1. *Prayer is a seed sown in God's ear.* Other seed sown in the ground may be picked up by the birds, but this seed (especially if watered with tears) is too precious to lose.

2. *Consider the power of prayer.* The apostle, having set out the whole armor of a Christian, brings in prayer as the chief part (Eph. 6:18). Without this (says Zanchius), all the rest are of little value. By prayer, Moses divided the Red Sea. Joshua stopped the course of the sun and made it stand still (Josh. 10:13). No, prayer made the Sun of righteousness stand still: **"And Jesus stood still"** (Matt. 20:32). Prayer is the entrance to all blessings, spiritual and temporal. When Aurelius Antonius went against the Germans, he had in his army a regiment of Christians, who upon their earnest prayer obtained rain for the refreshment of his army and because of the power of their prayers, he called them "the thundering regiment." Prayer has a power in it to destroy the insolent enemies of the church. We read that **"the two witnesses"** have a flame on

their lips—fire proceeds out of their mouths which devours their enemies (Rev. 11:3, 5). This fire is certainly to be interpreted of their prayers. David prayed, **"Lord . . . turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness"** (II Sam. 15:31). This prayer made Ahithophel hang himself. Moses' prayer against Amalek did more than Joshua's sword. Prayer has a kind of omnipotency in it; it has raised the dead, overcome angels, cast out devils. It has influence upon God Himself. Jacob's prayer held God: **"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me"** (Gen. 32:26). Prayer finds God free, but leaves him bound.

3. *Jesus Christ prays over our prayers again.* He takes the dross out and presents nothing but pure gold to His Father. Christ mingles His sweet odors with the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8). Think of the dignity of His person—He is God; and the sweetness of His relationship—He is a Son. Oh then, what encouragement there is here for us to pray! Our prayers are put in the hands of a Mediator. Though, as they come from us, they are weak and imperfect, yet as they come from Christ, they are mighty and powerful.

4. *The sweet promises which God has made to prayer: "he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry"* (Isa. 30:19). **"Then shall . . . ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart"** (Jer. 29:12,13); and **"before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"** (Isa. 65:24). These promises keep the head of

prayer above water. God is bound with His own promises, as Samson was bound with his own hair.

Let us, then, close ranks and with our Saviour pray yet more earnestly (Luke 22:44). Let us be importunate suitors, and resolve with Bernard that we will not come away from God without God. Prayer is a bomb which will make heaven's gates fly open.

*Question:* How shall we go about praying aright?

*Answer:* Implore the Spirit of God: **"praying in the Holy Ghost"** (Jude 20). The Holy Ghost both indites prayer and inflames it. God understands no other language but that of His Spirit. Pray for the Holy Ghost that you may pray in the Holy Ghost.

## The Man Who

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was a child, He had lain, full of fear, and had heard all that knocking at midnight at Joseph's door. And, when He became a man. He remembered that sleepless midnight, and spiritualized it and put it into this parable. And often, when He was full of all manner of labors, and all manner of temptations all day, He called to mind that midnight in Nazareth, and knocked again and again till He got as much as He needed.

There are things in the Gospels written there—without emotion and without exclamation—at which our hearts stand still, when we suddenly come upon them. **"He went up into a mountain to pray: and when the evening was come He was there alone."** And, again, **"He departed again into a mountain Himself alone."** And, again, **"It came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."** He continued all night. Do you see Him? Do you hear Him? Can you make out what He is asking? He stands up. He kneels down. He falls on His face. He knocks at the thick darkness. All that night He prays, and refuses to faint, till the sun rises, and He descends to His disciples like a strong man to run a race. And in Gethsemane all His past experiences in prayer, and all He had ever said to His disciples about prayer,—all that came back to His mind till His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. No,—we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. **"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears . . . And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."** And in nothing more than in importunate prayer.

2. And then, just as He was when He was in this world, and just as this importunate poor man was, so are we while the day of our mercy lasts in this world. A friend of ours—so to call him—comes to us in his journey; and we have nothing to set before him. God's law comes and says to us. Do this, and do that to that man, pointing him out to us. And we set out to do what we are told from God to do: but the thing that we would, we do not: while the thing that we would not, that we do. A temptation that we had not expected, and that we were not prepared for, comes upon us. A heart-searching, a heart-scorching temptation,—till our hearts are as dark as midnight, and as dead as the grave. Duties that we cannot perform as we ought, and cannot escape, are laid upon us. Trials to test and to sift us; and crosses to which to nail our hands and our feet, till, all day, and every day, and every night, like the man in the parable, we have nothing to set before them.

And then, in our famine of life, and peace, and strength, we think—oh, so unwillingly!—of God. How unwelcome is the thought that He has all that we need; and that, if we ask it aright of Him, He will give us all we need! It may be so. But if we could make any other shift we would make it. We have grace enough left to be ashamed to go to God in our need. It is so long since we have been at His door, or in His house, or at His table, or He at ours. He might very well say to us, I do not know you. He might very well say to us. Get some of your own friends to help you. We anticipate that, and also far worse upbraids than that. And we turn back, we simply cannot go to God. But the intolerable pangs go on. The awful faintness and sinking go on: till very death itself, and worse than death, is at the door, and till we say like the four lepers at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; **"Why sit we here until we die? Now, therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die."** It is not a very becoming mind in which to arise and go to our Father. But any of you that is a father does not stand upon points with his son, which was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

3. When the Books are opened it will be discovered that more importunate and prevailing prayer has been offered at *midnight* than at all the other hours of the day and the night taken together. Look back at your Bible,—that book of importunate and prevailing prayer,—and see! Jacob is the father of all men of importunate prayer. Jacob was called no more Jacob, but Israel, because of his all-night importunity in prayer. A friend of his, his brother Esau, indeed, was to meet him tomorrow, and Jacob felt that he must have all night with God if his life was to be preserved. The sin of his youth had found Jacob out. And it took Jacob

all night to see the sin of his youth as God saw it, and as Esau saw it. But he *did* see it as the night went on. And he called the name of the place Peniel.

What midnights David had with sin, and with prayer also, all his Psalms testify. But, best of all, David's son. The midnight mountains and the midnight olive-yards of Galilee and Judea will all rise against us when the Books are opened,—the Books about our Lord's life of prayer, and the books about our own life of prayer. His Books are all closed against that day, but not *ours* yet. If, tonight, then, a friend of yours should come to you, and you have nothing to set before him: if, in your Savior's words, you should come to yourself tonight: and, amid your fear, or your want, or whatever form your awakening may take, if you hear over you and within you this voice saying to you: **"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"** then do it. Do it, as if the Books were to be opened before the world is awake tomorrow morning. Do it, as if already the thief were at your window. Keep your candle burning till you read once more the parable of the friend at midnight. Go through the parable: and go through it on your knees, if not yet on your face. Read it; see it. See Himself,—the Son of God,—praying in a certain place. Attend to Him as He teaches His disciples to pray. See the man at midnight. Imitate that man. Act it all alone at midnight. Leave nothing of it that you do not do over again. See him in his straits. Hear his knocks sounding in the silence of the night. Hear his loud cry, and cry it after him. He needed three loaves. What is your need? Name it. Name it out. Let your own ears hear it. And should some ear in the house overhear it, it will do them good to hear that sound in your room at midnight. Never mind the lateness of the hour: think of the untimeous man in the parable: think of your untimeous Intercessor, and continue in importunate prayer.

4. **"Importunity,"**—**"because of his importunity,"**—does not do justice to our Lord's style,—to call it style. What our Lord said was far more to the purpose than "importunity," excellent as that is. What He said was "shamelessness." This was what our Lord really said: "I say unto you," He said, "though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his shamelessness he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." "Think shame!" the man cried out, who was in bed, with his door shut. "Think shame!" the disturbed neighbors cried out. "Think shame!" the late passers-by said. "Hold your peace," they said, "and let honest men's doors alone at this time of night." "Never mind," says our Lord on the other hand. "Never you mind them: they have bread enough at home: and easy for them to cry shame to a starving man.

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## Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher

Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

### PREVAILING PRAYER

II Kings 19

Hezekiah began his reign in a noble fashion. He expected much from God, and attempted much for God. Through faith he **“rebelled against the king of Assyria,”** and **“prospered whithersoever he went”** (18:7). But thirteen years after, through fear of the Assyrian monarch, he cowardly recanted, and now we see him stripping the **“house of the LORD”** of its silver and gold to atone for the offence of his independence (18:14-15). A backslider in faith becomes a weakling in testimony. Now, three years after this attempt to satisfy his enemy with silver and gold, he returns with a **“great host,”** demanding the surrender of all (18:17-25). Give the world and the flesh an inch, and they will want a mile. To compromise with evil on one point is to endanger the citadel of our strength for God. However, Rabshakeh’s blasphemous letter seems to have brought Hezekiah back to a sense of divine wisdom and power.

Only one of two courses is open for him: either submit himself to Sennacherib or submit himself to God. He cannot serve two masters; no more can we. He chose the better part, and spread out his case before the Lord.

Hezekiah’s prayer was—

#### I. URGENT (vv. 3-4).

1. The issues at stake were vital and tremendous—national liberty or bondage—false worship or true worship! His people were few and despised and God had been dishonored. He is in a fearful extremity!
2. Prayer is the passionate outcry of conscious need (v. 4). The more vividly we realize our peril, the more sincere will be our prayer.
3. Prayers have their histories. Their ancestry is trouble, struggle with circumstances, and helplessness. Misery sees miracles. Prayer is a great relief to a troubled heart.
5. Do we realize our situation today? It is an evil time. It is a day of trouble and tribulation, blasphemy and backsliding, etc.

#### II. UNRESERVED (v. 14).

1. He referred the matter entirely to God, seeing that His honor was assaulted and He must defend Himself.
2. God knew the contents of this letter. He does this to show that he acknowledges God in all his ways. He placed himself and his trouble entirely in the hands of the Lord (Pro. 3:5-6; Ps. 37:5).
3. Let us deal with all evil reports as Hezekiah did this letter. When trouble comes let us go to church and pray.

#### III. GOD-HONORING (vv. 15-16).

1. He prayed to the God of his nation: **“O LORD God of Israel.”**
  - (1) Jacob as a prince had prevailed with God. He wanted Jacob’s power in prayer. What God has been to our fathers in times past He will be to us.
  - (2) His nation was Jehovah’s peculiar dwelling place. Surely God would protect His own dwelling place.
  - (3) Where God dwells there is perfect safety. When He departs there is ruin. Go to church in a storm! I say yes.
2. He recognizes the sole supremacy of Jehovah: **“Thou art the God, even thou alone.”**
  - (1) Polytheism is a foolish delusion. None can be associated with Him nor compared to Him. All other gods are “no” gods at all.
  - (2) He addresses and adores the God Sennacherib had blasphemed.
3. He prays to Him as the universal Lord of all kingdoms: **“the God . . . of all the kingdoms of earth,”** not just Israel.
  - (1) Being Creator of all, He is owner and ruler of all.
  - (2) He created all forces, all laws, all agencies, all worlds, all angels, all men, etc. They are all under His control.
  - (3) Large conceptions of God will ever give large expectations in prayer. The wider our view of God, the more confidence we shall have in Him in trouble.
4. His personal interest was connected to the honor and glory of God (v. 16; John 14:14). Hezekiah associated the glory of Jehovah to Israel’s deliverance. This is the strong, unfailing basis of all prevailing prayers! Selfishness must be crucified.

#### IV. EARNEST (v. 16).

1. He craves the attention of God. Heart cries to heart, deep to deep, soul to soul. Earnestness is the living spirit of prayer.
2. Our prayers may have order, beauty, and eloquence, but without earnestness they are vain. Cold prayers are not prayers!
3. Prayer is striving and straining (I Sam. 1:10; Job 7:11; Heb. 5:7). Bunyan said, “It is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.”

#### V. HEARD (v. 20).

1. This was according to God’s promise (Ex. 22:23; Ps. 20:6-7).
2. Not only was Hezekiah’s prayer heard, but the rage of his enemy had come up before God (v. 27). **“I have heard”** (v. 20) is followed by **“I will do”** (v. 28).
3. I John 5:15.

#### VI. ANSWERED (vv. 35-36).

1. Israel’s enemies had become an army of pale-faced corpses. No one can stand before God (Deu. 32:39-41). God will vindicate His name and power!
2. The prayer of a man of God proved more powerful than Sennacherib’s host.
3. Prayer is the mightiest weapon ever put within the reach of man!

## The Man Who

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Never you mind, knock you on. I have been in your place Myself, till they said that I was beside Myself. Knock you on: and I will stand beside you till I see the door open. He must rise if you go on knocking. Give him no rest. Well done! Knock again!”

Yes,—shamelessness! “What a shameless wretch I am!” you will say about yourself, “to ask such things, to have to ask such things at my age: to knock so loud after the way I have neglected prayer, and neglected and forgotten the Hearer of prayer.” “At my age,”—you will number your days and will blush with shame,—“at my age, and only beginning to pray in any earnest! How many nights have I had no time to give to God! And, now, to expect that when I lift up my finger, and go down five minutes on my carpeted knees, God Almighty is to hasten and set everything aside to hear me!” Yes: you are right: it needs some forehead: it needs some face: it needs, as Christ says, some “shamelessness” in you and me to come in that manner and for these things at midnight. Yes,—it is this that so increases and so aggravates the shamelessness of your case. The shameful things you have to ask for. The disgraceful—the incredible things you have to admit and confess. The life you have lived. The way you have spent your days and nights. And what all that has brought you to. It kills you to have to say such things even with your door shut. Yes,—but better say all these things in closets than have them all proclaimed from the housetops on the day of judgment. Knock, man! knock for the love of God! Knock as they knock to get into heaven after the door is shut! Knock, as they knock to get out of hell!

5. And then,—oh! what an experience it is, what a more than heavenly joy it is, when the door is at last opened, and the loaves are handed out! What an indescribable feeling is that in our hearts, when, after years of prayer, followed with midnight after midnight of importunity and agony, light begins to break through: and God’s hand is reached out, and our souls taste the strength and the sweetness of the Bread from heaven. Jacob does not feel his thigh any more. David’s couch, wet with his tears, is all answered now. The bloody sweat of Gethsemane itself is all forgotten now.

6. And, then, just before He shuts up His sermon on prayer, our Lord in one word touches the top and the perfection of all prayer,—importunate prayer, that is, for *the Holy Spirit*. It is no longer a prayer for bread, or for a fish, or for an egg: it is no longer for long life, or for riches, or for the life of our enemies: it is no longer, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? It is now for the Holy Spirit, and for the Holy Spirit alone. Our Lord would fain hear us saying at the end of His sermon: **“One thing do I desire, and that will I seek after.”**

We have all wrestled at midnight, when we saw Esau coming to meet us with his armed men. We have all made our couch to swim with tears when our sin found us out. We have all fallen on our face when death, with his cords and his torches and his weapons, was seen crossing the Kedron. But have we ever been like this man in the parable for the Holy Spirit? For the Holy Spirit, and for His holiness in our hearts? Do we ever—do we often—do we without ceasing knock for holiness? For the death and the destruction of sin in our souls? For faith

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## The Man Who

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in God,—to believe that He is when we come to Him? For love to Jesus Christ? For love to our neighbour? For love to our false friends? and to our enemies? For the complete cleansing of our hearts of all hatred, and variance, and emulation, and wrath, and strife, and envy, and such like?

Is there, this morning of God, within the walls of this House of God, one man who last night knocked and knocked, and returned after he was in bed and half asleep, and knocked again for more love, for more long-suffering, for more gentleness, for more meekness? For a clean heart? For a heart clean of envy and ill-will? For a heart dead to sin, and to his own besetting and indwelling sin? Is there one? My brethren, God is your witness: for the darkness hideth not from Him: but the night shineth before Him as the day. **“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which seeth in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”** When the Books are opened—that is to say. When your secret place of prayer is opened. When your midnight is no longer. When the Holy Spirit has finished His midnight work in you. As you pray at midnight, in the thick, and dark, and lonely, and slothful, and all-men-asleep midnight of this evil life, so shall it be answered and fulfilled to you in the morning. Only, understand, and be instructed—not till the morning. Understand this well, that you will get earnest and foretastes before the morning,—but they will only be earnest and foretastes. Submit to this and lay it to heart, that the full answer to your best prayer is not given in this life. You will get the full answer to all your other prayers in this life. Peace with Esau: long life, and riches, and the lives of your enemies: corn, and wine, and oil: what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed. But if your heart is carried on to pray for the Holy Spirit, and for the Holy Spirit alone, you will have to continue in prayer till the morning. Every man in his own order, and in his own time. But then,—when the day breaks:

**“What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. . . . For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”** Amen.

## Points About Prayer

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later. But here and now I want to answer the latter. Our prayers do ascend up to heaven. In II Chronicles 30:27 we read: **“Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.”**

Notice now:

### THE PERIOD OF PRAYER

Our Savior said: **“When thou prayest . . .”** In that statement Christ presupposes that Christians are praying people. As soon as Saul of Tarsus was converted, it is said of him: **“Behold he prayeth.”** The Bible tells us that Christians are **“instant in prayer”** and that they are **“always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit”** (Eph. 6:18). Luke, the beloved physician said, **“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint”** (Luke 18:1). If they are prayerless, then they are graceless. I would just as soon expect to find a living man without breath, than a quickened soul who never prays to God.

Christ does not here specify the times we should pray in secret. This probably was because He desired that His religion should be voluntary. There is no better test of piety than a disposition to engage in secret prayer. Had He specified the times when we are to pray, this would have tended to make religion formal and heartless. The seasons of secret prayer vary so much that it would have been hard to fix rules when this should be done.

Although Christ gave no specific times, the Scriptures seem to suggest that there can be stated times of prayer by the Lord's people. The Psalmist said, **“Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.”** Daniel prayed three times each day the Scripture tells us. We should call upon God in times of embarrassment and perplexity. Let us cry unto Him in the hour of temptation and the hour of prosperity. May we pray when the Spirit prompts us to pray; when we feel like praying; when nothing else can satisfy the soul but prayer. At such a time the Christian's heart is full; the soul tender; the son of glory shines with unusual splendor; no clouds intervene; the Christian rises above the world and enjoys unspeakable things.

### THE PLACE OF PRAYER

Christ said, **“Enter into thy closet.”** Every Jewish house had a place of secret prayer. Over the porch, or the entrance of the house, there was frequently a small room the size of the porch, raised a story above the rest of the house, expressly appropriated for the place of retirement. Here, in secrecy and solitude, the pious Jew offered his prayers, unseen by any but the Searcher of hearts. It is to such a place the Lord referred to when He said, **“Enter**

**into thy closet.”** This place was often called the **“upper room”** in the New Testament.

Instead of praying in the **“synagogues”** and the **“corners of the streets,”** we Christians are to enter into some place of privacy and retirement.

### THE PRIVACY OF PRAYER

Jesus said, **“In secret . . .”** Secret prayer is to be performed in retirement where we may be unobserved, and so may avoid ostentation; undisturbed, and so may avoid distraction; unheard, and so we may use the greatest freedom. Therefore, let us find a place where we can be alone with God, a place where no ear will hear us but His ear and no eye can see us but His eye.

In the Bible there are numerous examples of secret prayer. When Samuel received word that God had rejected Saul as King, **“He cried unto the LORD all night”** in secret prayer (I Sam. 15:11). It is written that Isaac **“went out to meditate in the field at the eventide”** (Gen. 24:63). It is said of the Prophet Daniel that **“he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God”** (Dan. 6:10).

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of secret prayer. In Mark 1:35 we read where Christ rose up **“a great while before day,”** and went into a solitary place and prayed. In Luke 6:12 it is written **“that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”** In the garden of Gethsemane Christ withdrew a stone's cast from Peter, James and John and **“kneeled down, and prayed”** (Luke 22:41). If Christ felt the need of the secret prayer, how much more should we weak and frail creatures who are but unprofitable servants?

We need to pray in secret because our Father **“seeth in secret.”** The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of those who call upon His great name. You will remember that Christ told Nathaniel: **“under the fig tree, I saw thee”** (John 1:48). The Lord saw Paul in prayer at the house of Judas on the street called Straight. By secret prayer we give God the glory of His universal presence.

### THE PERSON OF PRAYER

Our Lord said, **“To thy Father.”** Only those who actually have God as their Father can truly do this. God is not the Father of the masses of mankind; they are of their father the Devil and the lusts of their father they will do. If the Spirit of Christ in us cried **“Abba, Father,”** then we can approach the throne of grace in confidence. We can pray to the great God as the son would talk to his earthly father. Our Heavenly Father is ready to hear and answer our prayers. He is willing to help and succor.

The Scripture nowhere admonishes us to pray to the virgin Mary as some believe we ought to do. Neither are we

taught in the Bible to have a human priest to pray for us. Instead the Scripture teaches that each believer is a member of a **“royal priesthood”** and can boldly approach the throne of grace when he so desires. We do not need a human mediator, for Paul said, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”** (I Tim. 2:5).

### THE PROMISE OF PRAYER

It is said that our Heavenly Father shall reward us openly for praying in secret to Him. Sometimes this reward is the answer to our prayer. At other times it is not, but all true prayer will ultimately be rewarded, for God is **“a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”** (Heb. 11:6). They will be rewarded when we appear before the Great Intercessor. Let the hypocritical Pharisees have their reward **“before all the town,”** for true Christians shall have theirs before **“all the world,”** angels and men. Our secret prayer shall be a **“weight of glory”** in the eternal age.

Oh, may the words which I have spoken move each child of God to **“Pray without ceasing”** (I Thess. 5:17).

## A Blessed Union

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in Matthew chapter 5: **“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”** (Matt. 5:23-24). We cannot address ourselves unto God nor approach Him while we refuse to be reconciled to our brother—**“Confess your faults one to another.”**

The second part of the text is what we are primarily concerned with in this message. The words are pointed: **“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”** There is a blessed union set forth here. When **“effectual fervent prayer”** is joined with a **“righteous man,”** the result is a powerful prayer that **“availeth much.”**

Verses 17 and 18 furnish an example of this very truth: **“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”** Elijah was indeed a **“righteous man”** and his prayers were obviously **“effectual fervent.”** Therefore, his prayers **“availed much”** because he shut up the heavens from raining and he prayed again and the rain descended. Oh, that we today might take up the mantle of this godly man; then we might also

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## A Blessed Union

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smite the waters with our prayers and see them **“parted hither and thither”** (II Kings 2:14)!

Let us now turn to our text and examine this blessed union and its glorious offspring. How could we bring more glory to God in the church than when **“righteous”** men offer **“effectual fervent prayer”** that **“availeth much.”**

**I. In the first place, the prayer is qualified.** It is not any sort of prayer that is under consideration. Rather, it is an **“effectual fervent prayer.”** **“Effectual fervent”** is rendered from a single word in the Greek. It means to be operative, to work, to be active and it indicates a very important aspect of successful prayer. This word speaks of faith in action. The noun form appears in Ephesians 3:7, where it is translated **“effectual working.”**

An **“effectual fervent prayer”** is *one that begins with faith.* Faith looks to God and believes His Word. Remember the father who came to the Lord with his son. His son was possessed of a devil and he thought it was going to destroy him. The disciples of Jesus could not help and he was at an end of himself. Christ told this exasperated man, **“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to them that believeth”** (Mark 9:23). He confessed his unbelief and cast himself on the Lord. His son was healed.

Beginning with faith, even **“faith as a grain of mustard seed,”** gives great power to prayer such that **“nothing shall be impossible unto you”** (Matt. 17:20). Jesus often commented about the faith of His petitioners. He went so far as to say on more than one occasion that their faith had made them whole. The Lord said many times as He healed people that their faith had made them whole. He told the blind man, **“as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee”** (Matt. 8:13). We may learn from how Christ dealt with the different cases. He would often ask them what they wanted and then ask them if they believed He was able to do it.

The **“effectual fervent prayer”** seeks a specific request from God and believes He is able to do it. The prayer is one of faith **“unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”** (Eph. 3:20).

Such prayer begins with faith and *works follow this faith.* Without works there really is no faith—not the faith of the Bible. James described biblical faith in his epistle: **“Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”** (James 2:17). Without works, faith is nothing. A man cannot say he believes yet does not put his hand to the plow. The faith that does not work is dead faith.

We can turn to Hebrews chapter 11 for a thorough description of faith. Faith is there illustrated and exemplified in the

lives of the faithful people of God. We read that **“By faith Abel offered;”** **“By faith Noah . . . moved . . . prepared . . . condemned;”** **“By faith Abraham . . . obeyed; and he went out;”** **“By faith he sojourned;”** **“Through faith also Sara . . . was delivered of a child;”** **“By faith Abraham . . . offered;”** **“By faith Isaac blessed;”** **“By faith Jacob . . . blessed;”** **“By faith Joseph . . . made mention;”** **“By faith Moses . . . was hid;”** **“By faith Moses . . . refused;”** **“By faith he forsook;”** etc. We cannot objectively read this chapter without concluding that scriptural faith in God works. Such faith believes God and responds to Him and this is the working faith needed in **“effectual fervent prayer.”**

Working faith *requires diligence.* One will search the Word in vain to find any positive comments about idleness. There are legitimate seasons of rest and even recreation, but idleness is tantamount to laziness. Studying the life of Christ, one must conclude He was a tireless, hard-working servant. God **“is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”** (Heb. 11:6). **“Effectual fervent prayer”** is not in word only but also in diligent deed.

The diligent work of faith also *requires perseverance* if it is to issue to much avail. We often begin as a ball of fire and ere long, we are hardly even smoldering. Charles Spurgeon once remarked that through perseverance the snail reached the ark and was spared. What a reproach it is to the Lord and His church for us to dwindle in our labor for Him! Paul once reprimanded the Galatians who **“did run well.”** They ran well for a season and somehow got off track.

In prayer and in work, we must persevere. We must be like the widow whose continual coming eventually availed with the unjust judge. It was not the credibility of her case, nor the eloquence of her pleas that persuaded him. Rather, it was her **“continual coming”** that finally won her case. Christ told this parable **“to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not faint”** (Luke 18:1).

All of this labor is qualified in that it *must be in the Lord.* The Psalmist said, **“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it”** (Ps. 127:1). The apostle Paul told the Corinthians to **“be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (I Cor. 15:58). To the Colossians he said, **“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”** (Col. 3:17). These verses, and others, point to the fact that we can be busy, diligent, persevering, yet if our labor is not **“in the Lord,”** we are laboring in vain. We must not do things just for the sake of activity but work in the name of the Lord.

**II. Secondly, the petitioner is**

**qualified.** Just as the prayer was of no ordinary sort, the petitioner was no common Joe. He was a **“righteous man.”** We certainly cannot expect the diligent cries of an unrighteous man to avail anything with God. This does not make effectual prayer inaccessible; rather it clearly describes the qualifications.

In order to be a righteous man one *must be wise.* Biblical wisdom does not refer to a head stuffed with academic facts. The Psalmist remarked of wisdom, **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”** (Psa. 111:10). Wisdom does not require a high IQ, but it does require reverential fear of God. The righteous man is happy to be thought a fool by the world and to be wise in the Lord.

The righteous man is wise and not terminally interested in the frivolous, approaching God with items that are not worthy of His attention. We are bidden to approach His **“throne of grace”** (Heb. 4:16). Do not stay on the grace and forget about the throne. A throne is a place where a king sits. The throne room is a place of honor, dignity, and respect. One does not just saunter into the throne room in any condition.

The righteous man is wise in the way that he conducts himself before God and the seriousness of his request before the august King. The apostle Paul told Timothy to be very careful to avoid **“foolish and unlearned questions . . . that do gender strifes”** (II Tim. 2:23). The Pharisees majored on minors and **“omitted the weightier matters of the law”** (Matt. 23:23). We must weigh carefully what we take to the Lord, to be sure it is worthy of His hearing. This demonstrates wisdom in prayer.

The righteous man’s *senses are exercised.* He discerns good and evil because he is skillful **“in the word of righteousness”** (Heb. 5:12-14). This means he is a Berean student of the Word and partakes of the strong meat with the milk. In this way, he discerns good and evil; he discovers God’s will and finds answers to his prayers. We have been given a Word that is a revelation of God’s person and will and we are required to *“shew ourselves approved unto God”* through the diligent study of His Word (II Tim. 2:15). It is possible for us to cry to God most vehemently and yet have no answer from Him because we neglect to search His Word. It is sinful to ask God if we may do something He has expressly forbidden in His Word, or to ask leave not to do something He has commanded us to do. That sort of prayer can never be thought to be effectual. At the least, it is a very ignorant prayer and the righteous man in our text would not offer such a prayer for he has his senses exercised.

Additionally, the righteous man *does not ask amiss.* James pointed to this as grounds for failure in prayer: **“Ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that**

**ye may consume it upon your lusts”** (James 4:2-3). This sort of selfish prayer does not have an eye to God’s glory in asking. This is the prayer of the man who is a lover of his own self; he prays to God to be increased of possessions or knowledge for selfish reasons. The motive of his heart is not pure. Consequently, he does not receive those things because he has asked amiss. He prayed, but he did not pray aright—he missed the mark. However, the righteous man does not petition God to fulfill his own lusts. If you consult the case of Elijah, you will find that he requested God’s judgment upon Israel because of their idolatry. This was hardly a self-serving prayer, for he did not ask for personal deliverance and he knew he would be included in the judgment.

The righteous man’s prayer is effectual because he aims first at God’s glory and even in the fulfilling of his own needs. I am reminded of Bro. Fortner’s hymn of prayer for our children (Donald S. Fortner, *Songs of Grace*, hymn 101 “For Our Children We Are Pleading”):

*Lord, we would not be demanding,  
Or presume upon Your grace,  
But our hearts for them are bleeding,  
Our dear children need Your grace.  
We commit them to Your mercy,  
And we leave them in Your care:  
If it can be for Your glory,  
God, we pray, our children spare!*

Moreover, the righteous man offers an *humble prayer.* The Pharisee prayed, yet in his prayer, he lauded his own praises unto God. He declared, **“I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican”** (Luke 18:11). He so far excelled the publican in grace and virtue, or so he thought. The publican was of a different sort. He **“would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner”** (Luke 18:13). It was the publican’s prayer that was effectual. The Pharisee did not avail much. The righteous man in our text is not as **“Most men”** who **“will proclaim every one his own goodness”** (Pro. 20:6). The **“effectual fervent prayer”** is a humble prayer of sincerity and the offerer prays humbly unto his God.

**III. Finally, our text gives the result of the blessed union of “effectual fervent prayer” and a “righteous man.”** The result, the glorious offspring of this union, is prayer that **“availeth much.”** *“Availeth”* means “has power.” The result is a powerful and successful prayer. Do not be deceived about the power of this sort of prayer. It is written, **“The prayer of faith shall save the sick”** (Jas. 5:15). Elijah **“prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not”** (Jas. 5:17). **“He prayed again, and the heaven gave rain”** (Jas. 5:18).

The power latent in prayer is power

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

The Forum is a regular feature of this publication where readers' questions are answered by a panel of writers. The views expressed herein are the views of the writer to whom they are attributed. They do not necessarily represent the views of the editor, the sponsor, or the readers of this paper. Readers are encouraged to submit questions on any Bible topic to: The Berea Baptist Banner, P. O. Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855.

## 1. Does the Bible answer the question of how the different races of people originated? — Kentucky



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Yes, the Bible is clear about the origin of races. The Apostle Paul said that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). There is really therefore only one race of people and it is the human race. We all go back to Noah and ultimately to Adam. To the astonishment of some, the greatest distinction the Bible makes between different kinds of humans is not the different races, but the distinction between God's people and the world (II Cor. 6:14-17). It is sad that in general, Christians pay far too little attention to this important distinction, and far too much attention the lesser and relatively insignificant distinction of races (Col. 3:11).

Nonetheless, the Bible does tell us why there are different languages, cultures, and nationalities in the world today. It happened at the Tower of Babel when God multiplied the languages and scattered humans throughout the earth. **"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth"** (Gen. 11:9). This not only explains the different languages, but this gives us an answer for different cultures, and nationalities. When groups of people live in isolation from each other, they begin to develop unique characteristics that are distinguishable from other peoples. These characteristics include differences of behavior as well as biological variation. Since other peoples speak different languages, inter-cultural marriage is not as likely as marriage within the same culture. You can easily see why people of different languages would develop these unique characteristics over just a few generations.

It is interesting to note in the study of genetics that all humans, regardless of nationality, have the same basic genetic makeup. There is just about as much

genetic variance between two individuals of the same nationality as there is between two individuals of different nationalities. For example, in all humans there is only one melanin (which is a brownish pigment in the cells of our skin). If our skin produces small amounts of melanin, we will be white, and if our skin produces large amounts of it, we will be black. Those who produce none are albino. Since children inherit one set of genes from each parent, their skin color as well as many other physical characteristics will be like their parents.

This is obviously a basic and oversimplified answer, but for a much more thorough study on this subject, I highly recommend the literature from Answers in Genesis. There is a chapter in "The Answers Book" dealing with races, and another book called "One Blood" which deals with the issue of modern racism.

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All men, regardless of the color of their skin, trace their existence ultimately back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is through our link to Adam that all men are born fallen, depraved, and spiritually dead as Romans 5:12 declares: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on upon all men, for that all have sinned." As far as I know, the Bible does not clearly reveal what the color of Adam's skin was. I do know that all men are of one blood according to Acts 17:26, which declares: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."

As far as I know, skin color is determined by the amount of pigment one has in the dermal layers of the skin. The Good Housekeeping Medical Guide page 52 states: "...The melanocytes, are also of great importance, because they manufacture and distribute melanin (a black protein pigment) throughout the epidermis. Interestingly, it is not the

number of these cells that determines our skin color, but how the protein is packaged within the cell. Melanin protects us from many of the damaging effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays." I assume, in the wisdom of God, those whose bounds were appointed in hot, sunny climates were given more of the melanin protein to protect their skin from the harmful rays of the sun.

Technically, after the worldwide flood, all people trace their existence through Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth who survived the worldwide flood by entering the ark. Arthur Custance in one of his books has gone to great lengths to show how the various races descended from Shem (Indian & Asians), Ham (Black or Negro), and Japheth (Caucasian). I have casually read portions of the book, but to be honest, it is not a subject that really lights my fire.

To be frank, all men descending from Adam have an immortal soul regardless of their skin color or race. Our concern and focus should be on preaching the Gospel of the grace of God to all men, praying that the Holy Spirit will regenerate and the Word will convert poor sinners. This is our mission and we should be fervently engaged in fulfilling it.

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The Bible does not *directly* state how the races were formed. We do know that all of the races descended from **"one blood"** (Acts 17:26).

There are several theories that claim to be based on the Scriptures concerning this question. The first is that black people are descendants of Cain. Proponents of this theory claim that Cain's mark is that he was a black man. This belief is not supported by even one verse of the Bible. It is the belief of this forum writer that this belief comes directly from racist ideas. Sovereign Grace Baptist people (and any Christian people for that matter) should have nothing to do with racism.

The second theory is that the races

came from the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham and Japheth. Though this theory sounds good on the surface, it does not account for the fact that there are more than three races. Some would tell us that a fourth race comes from Ham's son, Canaan, when a curse was placed on him. Some say that this curse is that he was made to be a black man. Again, there is not a hint of this in the Bible. This belief, as with the first, comes directly from racist ideas. The fact that there is no race today recognizable as Canaanites should be enough to prove that this theory is wrong. Also, there is nothing in the Scripture to prove that there is a cursed race. Surely, there are races that have had more benefits than others because of their place in the world and God's blessing. However, to state that there is a cursed race is simply going further than the Scriptures will allow.

The third theory is the belief that this writer holds to as it seems to fit the Scriptures best. That is, that the races come from the dispersion at the Tower of Babel. Just following the dispersion, the entire world was still one race. However, as people of the same language congregated together and begin to marry and produce a gene pool, distinguishing traits (skin color, eye differences, etc.) began to show up producing the races. This is both Biblically sound as well as scientifically feasible. We have often used techniques such as this with plants and animals.

TODD BRYANT

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# The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

The Forum is a regular feature of this publication where readers' questions are answered by a panel of writers. The views expressed herein are the views of the writer to whom they are attributed. They do not necessarily represent the views of the editor, the sponsor, or the readers of this paper. Readers are encouraged to submit questions on any Bible topic to: The Berea Baptist Banner, P. O. Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855.

## 2. What is the origin and symbolism of church steeples? — Alabama




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Most people surely have never considered such a question as this. Today's Christian world just assumes that churches have had steeples since the early centuries of Christianity. However, this is not true.

Actually, steeples have no connection to Christianity at all. They did not originate with Christians just as many other practices of our day did not. Steeples were around before Christ in pagan lands as a symbol of idolatry. However, they were not just a general symbol of idolatry. They were symbols of specific forms of false worship that practiced sexual perversions as a form of "worship." As with many pagan practices that we find in churches today, this was brought into the realm of Christianity by the "Great Whore" (Rev. 17)—The Roman Catholic Church. Information about this can be found in various books about Babylonian Mysticism and its link to Catholicism.

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A church steeple is basically a modern form of an ancient obelisk formerly used in pagan religions to pay homage to the sun. Church steeples are aesthetic traditions that are rarely questioned as far as their spiritual significance. I doubt seriously if anyone who has a church steeple associates it in any way with sun or phallic worship practiced by pagan religions. For a detailed explanation of how church steeples originated I recommend a couple of books that can be purchased from the Berea Baptist Bookstore: "Babylon Mystery Religion" by Ralph Woodrow (easy to read) and "The Two Babylons" by Alexander Hislop

(more extensive, but harder to read). Woodrow states on pages 39-40, & 46: "Originally, the obelisk was associated with sun-worship, a symbol of "Baal" (which was a title of Nimrod). The ancients—having rejected the knowledge of the true creator—seeing that the sun gave life to plants and to man, looked upon the sun as a god, the great life giver. To them, the obelisk also had a sexual significance. Realizing that through sexual union life was produced, the phallus (the male organ of reproduction) was considered (along with the sun) a symbol of life. These were the beliefs represented by the obelisk... In order for the obelisks to carry out their intended symbolism, they were placed upright—erect. Thus they pointed up—toward the sun. As a symbol of the phallus, the erect position also had an obvious significance. Bearing this in mind it is interesting to notice that when divine judgment was pronounced against this false worship, it was said that these images (obelisks) 'shall not stand up; but would be cast down (Isaiah 27:9)... At the top of many church towers, a spire often points to the sky! Several writers link, and perhaps not without some justification, the steeples and spires with the ancient obelisk. "There is evidence," says one, 'to show that the spires of our churches owe their existence to the uprights or obelisks outside the temples of former ages.' Another says: "There are still in existence today remarkable specimens of original phallic symbols... steeples on the churches... and obelisks... all show the influence of our phallus-worshipping ancestors."

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The word steeple comes from the German word "staup" which means high place or high tower.

There appears to be many different views and some controversy over the origin and symbolism of church steeples. Some say they originated in the idolatrous worship of the sun god with man aspiring to reach the heavens. I have not

personally found any proof of this association, though I must confess this is not my area of study.

Others give a more practical view, saying that early churches (usually built of stone and often the strongest structures around) would be used as places of refuge and security in case of attack. High towers would be constructed for lookouts and defense, and they probably would have been used as navigational tools as well, since they could often be seen for miles around. Later, as churches continued to build towers, the use went from being practical to symbolic. Churches would build steeples as a symbol of refuge and inspiration, and sometimes they were used as bell towers as well to alert the community when services began. When steeples became more symbolic, their construction also

became more elaborate and decorative. This seems to be the most probable solution to the origin and symbolism of church steeples.

MATT JAMES

## Thy Name's Sake

Josiah Conder, 1836

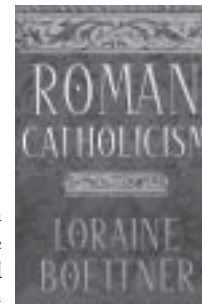
LORD, for Thy name's sake! such the plea,  
With force triumphant fraught,  
By which Thy saints prevail with Thee,  
By Thine own Spirit taught.

Now, for Thy name's sake, O our God,  
Do not abhor our prayer;  
But, while we bow beneath Thy rod,  
Thy chasten'd people spare.

Oh, for Thy name's sake, richly grant  
The unction from above;  
Fulfill Thy holy covenant,  
And glorify Thy love.



**Roman Catholicism**  
by  
Lorraine Boettner  
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Since its publication in 1962 this informative volume has established itself as a classic treatment of traditional Roman Catholicism. Some of the major subjects Boettner discusses are: *The Church, The Priesthood, Tradition, Peter, The Papacy, Mary, The Mass, The Confessional, Purgatory, The Infallibility of the Pope, Penance, Indulgences, Salvation by Grace, Ritualism, Celibacy, Marriage, and Contrasting Moral Standards.*

Although there have been a number of changes in the Roman Catholic Church since this volume first appeared, Boettner's classic work remains a valuable nontechnical resource for understanding historic Roman Catholicism and its major teachings.

**Mystery, Babylon The Great**  
by  
Ian Sadler  
\$12.95



This book is written as a warning to the Christian churches of the danger of the false religion that originated at Babylon. The true successor to the Mysteries of Babylon is shown to be the Church of Rome; but other strands of the Mysteries, such as the Occult, are also exposed. The author takes the classic Reformed position regarding the papacy and its fulfillment of Scripture concerning the "man of sin."

**The Two Babylons**  
by  
Alexander Hislop  
\$12.00

Written in the classical style, this volume is truly one of the great works of Christian apologetics. From a huge depository of ancient historical texts and myths, the author demonstrates that nearly all the dogmas and practices of the Romish church — the celebration of Christmas and Easter, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, the Mass, etc. — have been copied from the Babylonian worship of Nimrod and his wife Semiramis, and that the papacy is the direct descendent of that "mystery of iniquity" which was beginning to corrupt the Christian Church even in the First Century. As an account of the historical war between Christ and Antichrist, and of fallen mankind's revolt against the true knowledge of God, this book is without equal and Hislop's research will also aid the reader in understanding many difficult portions of the Old Testament. Illustrated with 61 woodcuts from Ninevah, Babylon, Egypt, Pompeii, and other heathen cultures.

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## A Blessed Union

*Continued from page 49*

to supply all of our needs. God responded to Paul's prayer with the sure answer, "**My grace is sufficient for thee**" (II Cor. 12:9). These words are direct, personal, and full of comfort. Paul did not need a removal of his trouble so long as grace was supplied sufficient to overcome the impediment. It is no wonder that Paul could later give hope and help to others, stating, "**My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus**" (Phi. 4:19). In prayer, we come to the abundant reservoir of God's grace to draw out mercy and obtain help in the time of trouble. His is a vast supply that is beyond our power to exhaust.

Prayer has the power to cause us to be fruitful laborers. In John chapter 15, Christ spoke of the vine and the branches. He identified Himself as the vine and His people as the branches. He declared plainly, "**As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me**" (John 15:4). In context, He spoke of our fruitfulness in labor and that fruitfulness is impossible apart from union with Jesus Christ. He also links abundant fruit-bearing with effectual prayer by saying, "**If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**" (John 15:7). There is certain power in prayer to bring forth much fruit to the glory of Jesus Christ.

There is power in this sort of prayer to gain a continual hearing ear in the throne room of heaven. Remember the case of Daniel when he wanted to know the meaning of the prophecy. He set his face to cry out unto God and before he had made an end of his speaking, an angel was dispatched from heaven to fly swiftly to Daniel to tell him the answer he sought. He had gained such a hearing in heaven that his prayer was answered before he even finished praying it. We know Daniel was a righteous man and the angel gave this explanation in addressing him, "**O Daniel, a man greatly beloved**" (Dan. 10:11). His effectual fervent prayer availed much.

Daniel's case is amazing to us. Can we even imagine bowing, praying to God and Him hearing us before we form all the words and get them spoken? Can we imagine having a continual ear with God that He hears and answers our prayers? The Lord Jesus Christ said, "**I knew that thou hearest me always**" (John 11:42). He knew that He prayed to God and that God heard Him and was going to answer Him. Why was that? Because He was the Son of God. Yes! Because He came not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him? Most certainly. And, because He abode in the Father and He was greatly beloved. The Father said of Him,

"**this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**" (Matt. 3:17). Jesus certainly had a constant ear with the Father.

The result of this blessed union in prayer is also that we can have power with God. Jacob had power with God. Elijah had power with God. Daniel had power with God. Having power with God means that we are aligned with Him, not that we have power over Him. We are in His will and doing His work all for His glory. We have power with Him because He has made us to "**sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**" (Eph. 2:6). He has lifted us above the world and has set us on high with Jesus Christ at His right hand. Paul told the Corinthians, "**We are labourers together with God**" (I Cor. 3:9). Jesus sent forth His church and they had power with "**the Lord working with them**" (Mark 16:20).

Working with God could be described by Christ's words, "**If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you**" (John 15:7). There is a real union such that we are working together with God and therefore have power with Him. Christ went on to say that the result of this abiding or union is that "**ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you**" (John 15:7). It is not that we abide in Christ and then we can get whatever we want, but that our abiding in Him means that we will want the will of God. We will ask God to do the very thing He wills to do and then we have power with God.

Paul wrote, "**It is God which worketh**

**in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure**" (Phi. 2:13). If we are living in the Lord and are "**dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God,**" then His will will be planted in our hearts just like the tree in the ground that it grows up out of. If the will of God is planted within our soul then our prayer is going to go up and will be clothed in the will of God. Our prayer will be successful and powerful.

Prayer that is powerful with God is the result of a child of God dwelling in Christ, abiding in Him, and God's will being in his heart. The petitions, then, that he takes to God are in accordance with God's will and then we have the promise that it shall be granted. "**And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him**" (I John 5:14-15).

**Conclusion** – Let us evermore desire this blessed union. Let us have righteous men joined with effectual fervent prayer. The promise of God then is that we will have prayer that availeth much. Could it be that we might then experience revival? Could it be that we might then experience an awakening in the United States of America? Could it be that we might then see the reproach taken away from God's people and see them having power with God in prayer? Oh, that God would grant that it might be so! Amen.

## Prayer Meetings

By Harvey Newcomb

(1803-1863)

Prayer-meetings have ever been the life of the church; or rather, the channel through which that life has manifested itself. But, for the most part, they have, until recently, attracted little notice from the world. They have been attended by few except members of the church, and of them, only the most spiritual portion. There may be exceptions to this remark, but in general, so far as my observation extends, it has been true. In times of awakening, it has been otherwise; and yet never to such an extent as in the recent Revival (1858). Of this work of grace, the general disposition of all classes to attend such meetings has been a marked feature. To me it seems to be one of the most encouraging signs of a new era in the churches.

### DEFECTS IN PRAYER

Since these meetings have assumed such importance, a few hints and suggestions to those who conduct them, and to those who take part in them, may not be out of place in this work. They are, however, offered with diffidence; because, "**where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is**

**liberty,**" and this gives interest to a meeting, while nothing else can supply its place. Still, at such times, the good effects of such meetings are often marred by want of judgment and tact in the person who leads, or want of good sense on the part of those who take part in the exercises. The defects of prayer-meetings have been pointed out, and efforts made to correct them, ever since my recollection; and yet, the language applied by Bunyan to his "Slough of Despond," seems equally appropriate here: "It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so bad. His laborers have, by the direction of His Majesty's surveyors, been, for above these sixteen hundred years, employed about this patch of ground, if perhaps it might have been mended: yea, there have been swallowed up at least twenty thousand cart-loads, yea, millions of wholesome instructions, that have at all seasons been brought from all places of the King's dominions, if so be it might have been mended; but it is the Slough of Despond still, and so will be when they have done what they can."

The most common fault in prayer-meetings arises from the tendency of things to fossilize and grow into a stiff, formal routine. This is an evil that it is not easy to remedy, except by a general rising up to a higher spiritual life. Yet this evil itself stands in the way of such a change. A set and stiff formality operates like an iron cap on the head of an infant, to prevent growth. No improvement can be expected till it is broken up.

The common faults, committed by those who lead in social prayer have so often been pointed out, and yet so seldom rectified, that it seems a hopeless task to repeat them. I shall, however, mention a few of the most prominent:

1. *Praying in a circle.* Some men have a certain mould into which they run all their prayers. They must always travel the same round. No matter if they have a specific object set before them, they must travel the circle before they can reach it; and before they get through, they often forget that specific object. I have frequently known special requests for prayers entirely disregarded in this way. Where there are a number of persons to engage in prayer, it is not necessary that every prayer should embrace every object of petition, or even all the parts of prayer. "Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." If a man has any desires that press on his heart, he does not require a set form of words, or a stereotyped phraseology to express them. But he comes with the simplicity and directness of a child to its parent, and expresses the feelings of his heart. If he has no desires, he cannot offer to God what he has not. If he feels his sins, his confessions will gush out of a broken heart. If gratitude is in his heart, it will find a hearty expression. Such incense needs no brazen censer. It rises up from a burning heart, a "sweet-smelling savor" to the Lord.

2. *Preaching prayers.* Some good men undertake to describe all the faults of their brethren, in their prayers, and to set forth the states of mind of all the various classes of sinners. It is impossible not to feel that such prayers are designed for the ears of men rather than of God; nor is it easy to suppress the shock that the mind feels at such unbecoming irreverence.

3. *Use of hackneyed, repulsive, and cant phrases.* An offence against good taste hinders the devotion of a serious mind. However much we may seek to suppress it, disgust is involuntary; and when the sense of propriety is offended, even the effort to suppress this involuntary emotion distracts the mind, and prevents edification. Hence, it is the duty of those who lead in social prayer, to study such propriety of expression as shall prevent anything falling repulsively upon the ears of those who are attempting to join in the

*Continued on page 53*

## Prayer Meetings

*Continued from page 52*

exercise.

4. *Misquoting Scripture.* The use of Scripture language in prayer is profitable, provided it expresses the feelings of the heart, and is not perverted, or made formal by constant use. But misquoting a familiar passage disturbs the devotions of others, by leading the mind away to the correction, and thus distracting the thoughts. For instance: To the passage, **“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,”** the words, *“and that to bless them”* are not unfrequently added—words that are not found in Scripture. This is only one of a multitude. The objection does not lie against mingling Scripture expressions with our own language, but quoting as Scriptures what is not such. By a mind familiar with the Scripture such a thing will be instantly detected, to the distraction of the thoughts and the injury of devotion.

5. *A loud, confident tone.* This reminds us of Elijah’s ironical address to the prophets of Baal: **“Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.”** The venerable Dr. Lyman Beecher says: “Whenever the humble boldness, the brokenness of heart, the prostration of spirit in the dust are gone; the tender inimitable pathos of the soul evaporated; and the still small voice of simple, unaffected importunity, exchanged for loud, confident, unhumbled supplication, we may soon witness the gradual suspension of divine influence.” This was the result of his observation, in a long experience in revivals.

6. *Forced excitement.* This hardly expresses my idea. But men sometimes *work themselves up* into a frenzy, catching the breath, and laboring in a kind of physical agony, painful to others and exhausting to themselves. Paul would say to them, **“Bodily exercise profiteth little.”**

7. *Want of reverence.* An undue familiarity, or addressing God in tones or in a manner which indicates the want of a proper sense of His glorious majesty and infinite holiness, and of our own insignificance and unworthiness, not only shocks the sensibilities of humble Christians, but it must be offensive to Him, “who is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and had in reverence of all them that are about him.” Reverence and awe are in perfect consistency with the true **“spirit of adoption.”**

### CONDUCTING PRAYER-MEETINGS

*Who shall take the lead of the Prayer-Meeting?* This is an important question,

and one that will be answered variously, from different standpoints. One strongly attached to a pastor, and ready to watch his lips as an oracle, will always wish to see him in the chair. This *feeling* is right. And, if the pastor is a man of *tact*, as well as of ability, it is probable that, taking into view only the simple matter of edification, it might be best for him always to be there. The practice in many churches is, for the pastor always to preside when he is present, and in his absence, the senior elder or deacon. In other churches, the chair is occupied by the official members in rotation. And in some, it passes in turn, to all who take part in the services. There are some advantages in each of these practices. The pastor ought to be, and I suppose generally is, better qualified to lead the meeting to edification than any other person. But what is lacking in ability and use, may be made up in variety. And there is an object to be gained by letting this duty pass round among all the brethren, even greater than simply that of edification. This meeting should be regarded partly in the light of a *training school*, to prepare the soldier of the cross for effective action, in their assaults on the kingdom of darkness. This is of incalculable importance. Where there is so much need of lay effort as there is in our cities, and in many parts of the country, no means should be spared to bring out and develop all the talent there is in the churches. In a population so migratory as ours, no one can tell how soon he may be thrown into circumstances where he will be called upon to take the lead in organizing society. And, if this should not happen, there is scarcely a locality, even in the older parts of the country, where a missionary field may not be found by one who “has a mind to work.” In our arrangements, I think this point is too generally overlooked. We are accustomed to look too much to our own edification, and to antiquated ideas of official position and “order,” so as to forget the training of a church to labor in the Master’s vineyard. But, where all the talent in a church is brought out in the prayer-meetings, even though there be some crudities, the defect is more than counterbalanced by the increased life and spirit infused into the meeting. Official gravity and order often settle down like *nightmare* upon a meeting; everything is spell-bound; and the very atmosphere seems enchanted. It is better to be disturbed by a slight indiscretion than by the snore of the sleeper. Even a little excitement will do no harm. A thunder shower is better than a dead calm. There was no rain in paradise, but there went up a gentle mist to water the earth. That was better than thunder showers and storms; but we are not in paradise. We must, in our fallen state, take God’s blessings as He sends them, whether in the gentle dew, the copious shower, or the driving tempest.

And no more can we prescribe the form in which He shall send us spiritual blessings. Let us be thankful for them, in whatever form they come. Nothing is to be dreaded so much as the desolating drought, the powdered dust, the fallow ground, the desert land.

But whatever plan is adopted for conducting the meeting, the leader should be previously designated, that he may make due preparation. He should have his hymns and portion of Scripture selected beforehand, that no delay may occur in the meeting. He should study the portion of Scripture, and get his mind filled with stirring thoughts. But let him not undertake to make a discourse. The most that he should attempt to say is, to throw out suggestions and start trains of thought for the brethren to follow up. He should aim at unity of impression. Therefore, his hymns and Scripture and remarks should, if possible, tend to some point. And all these services should be short. A long hymn: a whole chapter, containing several different subjects; and a long, prosy address, to begin with, will spoil any meeting. The leader should feel that his place is not himself to occupy the time, but to call out and direct others. It is the practice in some meetings to have no person take part except as he is called upon by the leader; in others, for the meeting to be thrown open to all, and none called upon. Neither of these, exclusively followed, works well. If none take part except when called upon, a stiff formality is thrown over the meeting. On the other hand, where none are called upon, we are subject to long and painful pauses; or, the meeting may pass entirely out of the control of the leader, and disorder ensue. Both should be combined. The leader should be quick to discern and prompt to act. Much of the life and spirit of the meeting depend upon him. Having opened the meeting, he may give liberty to all to speak or pray; but he must be ready, if none embrace the opportunity, to call on some one to pray or speak; or he may give out a hymn. But it is by no means essential to the profitableness of a meeting that there should be any speaking at all. It is better to speak to God than to man. And by prompt action, he may prevent the impression of dullness, which fastens on the minds of the people when there is a backwardness in speaking. The person who leads the singing, or others who can sing, may do much towards making a meeting lively and spirited, by striking up a verse or portion of a hymn voluntarily, which relieves the formality and monotony of a meeting. The young people ought to be encouraged to commit to memory the hymns most frequently sung, and to learn the tunes so thoroughly, as to be able to sing both hymn and tune without book. The tendency to routine is so great that I would never pursue a prescribed course, but vary it as much as possible on every occasion. This may the

more easily be done, where there are different persons to lead. If a leader has tact, it is easy to control a meeting, where the feeling is deep, and prevent its running into disorder. But it is hard to wake up dullness and stupidity.

It often happens that there are two or three conceited persons who are disposed to take part in every meeting and to consume the time in “unprofitable talk.” They soon become unacceptable to the people and give the meeting an unpleasant savor. And yet they are the last to perceive it. They ought to be kindly admonished in private; but if this fails, the leader of the meeting should interpose, and at least prevent their occupying an undue portion of the time. If allowed to have full scope, they will drive the people away.

### HINTS TO THOSE WHO LEAD IN PRAYER

1. *Preparation.* If you were going before an earthly governor, to beg for your own life or that of a friend, and he were the only person that had power to pardon the criminal condemned to death, could you help thinking, with intense anxiety, about the object of your petition? Would it not be the absorbing subject of your thoughts? With what consistency, then, can you come before the Creator and Governor of the universe, to ask for the life of your immortal soul or to intercede for that of a fellow-being guilty of high treason against his government and justly condemned to eternal misery, without first thinking, with deep and trembling anxiety, about the object of your petition?

But when you go to a prayer-meeting, you must not only be prepared to approach God, but also to *unite* with others in petitions before His throne. Yet many people lose sight, altogether, of this obligation, and go to a prayer-meeting simply to get their own feelings stirred, and their own hearts warmed; and if they fail in this, they complain of the meeting as cold and dull. But the closet is the place to get the heart warm. You, my brother, have no more right to go to the meeting with a cold heart than I have. It is your duty, as much as it is that of any other person, to go there with a warm heart, carrying with you objects of petition which press upon your own soul, and contribute your share to the edification of the meeting. And you, my sister, are under equal obligation to carry with you a spirit of prayer, that your desires may be offered up in unison with the congregation, and help to swell the petition that goes before the Majesty on high. If all would seek preparation in the closet, by prayer and meditation, and go to the meeting with warm hearts, there could not fail of being a running together, a unity of feeling, that would glow and burn and kindle into a flame.

But when one comes to a prayer-meeting with a cold heart, and is called

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## Prayer Meetings

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upon to pray, he does not lead the devotions of others. He has no errand but his own to the throne of grace. He does not *feel in unison* with his brethren. He feels intensely on no point. He wanders over the world; embraces a multitude of objects, entirely foreign to the particular one for which *special* prayer is to be made; prolongs the exercise to a tedious length; introduces vain repetitions in reference to almost every object embraced in his petition, amplifying upon every idea, expressing it in several different forms of speech. Then, perhaps, he begins to feel a little warmed, and returns and goes over the same ground a second time. In this way he chills the feelings of others, and diverts their attention also from the *special* object for which they are assembled. There are **“dead flies”** enough in such a prayer to spoil the savor of the whole meeting.

2. *Constant attendance* upon the prayer meeting is necessary to promote unity of feeling. When a brother has been several times absent he will generally have lost something of his interest. His feeling is not up to the standard which prevails in the meeting. If he leads in prayer he does not lead the feelings of others.

There is something special in the spirit of prayer exercised by a church agonizing for the conversion of souls. But it is seldom that the great body of the church enter fully into this with spirit. It is chiefly confined to a “little band.” When they come together, burdened and **“pressed in the spirit,”** and the prayers are chiefly offered up by persons who are not awake to the feelings that pervade their bosoms, the true state of feeling is not represented in the prayers. A chill is cast over the assembly. Those who were longing for the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit, not meeting with a fellowship of feeling, are grieved and wounded; and perhaps their faith is weakened, and they go away discouraged. Great responsibility rests upon those who direct the exercises on such occasions. The failure of one prayer-meeting at such a time may be attended with disastrous results.

3. *Study the Scriptural examples of Prayer.* The first one we meet with is that of Abraham interceding for Lot. The characteristics of this prayer are, benevolent regard for others, and persevering importunity. The next is that of Abraham’s servant; it is short, simple, fervent, direct; asking without any circumlocution for the thing which he desired (Gen. 24:12-14).

The prayer of Moses in Exodus 32:31, shows deep feeling and self-annihilation; but it is contained in a very few words. The next is a little longer, and expressive of a desire for the presence of the Lord, so intense as to swallow up every other

desire (Exo. 33:13, 15-16). When his sister was stricken with leprosy, the language of his prayer was as simple and direct as it could be: **“Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.”** In Numbers, 14:13-19, when the Lord had threatened to smite His people with pestilence and disinherit them, Moses offered a prayer, which is a perfect specimen of *pleading*. He enters into a concise, direct, and forcible argument, to show that the heathen would exult, and say that God was not able to deliver His people; and then he appeals, with inimitable pathos, to the character of God, as long-suffering and merciful, to forgive them.

The prayer of Joshua, after Israel had turned their backs upon their enemies, expresses intense feeling, but his regard for the glory of God was the great burden of his soul. After briefly rehearsing the evils that had befallen them, and the exultations of the heathen, he concludes, **“And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?”** (Josh. 7:7-9). He was more concerned for the glory of God than for the disasters which had befallen the people. And the intense agony of his spirit found vent in a very few words.

The prayer of Hezekiah, on the occasion of the blasphemous message of the king of Assyria, begins with an acknowledgment of the Lord as the only true God, and an humble request that his petition might be heard (II Kings 19:15-19). He then briefly reviews his case, and concludes with a direct and simple petition for deliverance. It was an emergency on which his kingdom was at stake; and the prayer is complete, covering the whole ground. Yet it would not occupy two minutes in the delivery. Again, when the prophet informed him that he must die, his prayer was still more brief: **“I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.”** And then he turned away and wept. Yet this prayer was heard, and fifteen years were added to his life.

The prayer of Nehemiah, on going in before the king, to ask deliverance for his people, contains an acknowledgment of God; confession of sin; a recital of God’s promise; and a petition for the object desired, all in a simple, humble, fervent spirit, without circumlocution or repetition (Neh. 1:5). It was less than two minutes in length. The prayer of Ezra is a little longer, but it is occupied in confession of sin, the enumeration of which required time (Ezra 9:5-15). Even the prayer of Solomon, on the extraordinary occasion of the dedication of the temple, could not have occupied over five minutes (I Kings 8:22).

The penitential prayer of David, in the fifty-first Psalm, is a perfect model of the outgushing of a broken heart. But it is not more than two or three minutes in length. The prayer of Daniel contains an

acknowledgment of God, adoration of his attributes, particular confession of sin for himself and his people, and fervent petition for pardon and deliverance; yet it is not over five minutes long (Dan. 9:4-19). It was answered while he was yet speaking. I have read severe criticisms on the frequent use of the expressions, **“O Lord,”** and **“O God;”** but they occur eleven times in this prayer, five times in the fifty-first Psalm, and frequently in other prayers recorded in Scripture. They are a natural expression of fervent devotion and confidence of God; though they may be repeated so often as to offend the ear.

The wonderful prayer of Christ, John chapter 17, with His disciples, before His crucifixion, which embraced all the interests of His people to the end of time, would not exceed five minutes in length. It is direct, specific, fervent, and full of devout feeling. The prayer of the apostles, before filling the vacancy in their number occasioned by the treachery of Judas, was brief, pertinent, and embracing the single point that was before them, and nothing else. And that prayer, on which the place where they were assembled was shaken, was not two minutes in length. It invokes God as the Creator and supreme Governor of the universe, recounts the rage and persecution of the Jews, and implores God to grant them boldness, by attesting the truths they uttered by miraculous powers. But above all, the “Lord’s Prayer,” designed as the pattern and model of all prayer, is distinguished for its brevity and comprehensiveness.

The prayers recorded in Scripture may be only a summary of what was said by the speakers; yet, admitting this, we shall still find them characterized by brevity, simplicity of language, directness, and unity of object. They are specific, rather than general; and instead of having the appearance of being made up for the occasion, they are made by the occasion, being the simple expression of pious feeling in the circumstances in which their authors were placed.

4. *It is Scriptural to agree together to pray for specific objects.* But when there is such an agreement, the brother who wanders in his prayer to other objects, does not lead the devotions of the assembly, and therefore hinders the object of the meeting (Matt. 18:19-20).

5. *Long prayers.* Long prayers are apt to be pointless and dull. They distract the associated worshippers with divers impressions, and prevent the concentration of feeling and desire upon the special object agreed upon. They injure the whole effect of a meeting, by preventing that agreeable variety produced by the fellowship of different minds. The expressions of one or two are not so likely to touch the affections of all, as when a greater number are engaged.

6. *Remember your prayers.* Be not like the man who, **“beholding his natural**

**face in a glass . . . goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”** Do what in you lies to secure the answer to your own prayers, by cooperating with God in His work of grace in your own heart, and upon the hearts of others. Let your prayers, your alms, and your obedience, go up before God together.

### EXHORTATIONS

Long exhortations are entirely out of place in a prayer-meeting. The object is to *pray* rather than to *talk* or to *learn*. It is very proper, however, that soul-stirring appeals should be made, and that such truths as have a direct bearing upon the circumstances should be announced. But this should be done in a brief and pungent manner. An exhortation or a remark should come from a full heart, and be directly to the point. And when an idea is expressed, it should generally be left without enlargement. Let it come burning from the heart, to wake up thought and feeling in other hearts. But if diluted and spun out, so as to leave nothing for the mind of the hearer to do in digesting and applying it, the object may be lost.

It is rarely admissible to introduce personal experience into a public promiscuous prayer-meeting. It savors so much of self-complacency that it is dangerous to the person who does it, and not often edifying to others. But a person may express his feelings without any direct allusion to himself, in a way that will be deeply impressive. The truths that he has experienced, and which press upon his heart, may be so announced that every one will feel it to be a personal testimony. It is proper and suitable also for one to express his feelings in view of present circumstances, and of the special objects of prayer proposed. And if Christians are conscious of having so lived as to dishonor Christ and hinder His work, confessions are in place.

But a public meeting is no place for a Christian to rebuke his brethren. A fault-finding spirit will soon destroy the savor of a prayer-meeting. I never knew any good come from *scolding*. I have known brethren scold the empty seats, in a prayer-meeting, till they got out of temper themselves, and put others in ill-humor, and were in a fair way to empty all the seats.

It is a general complaint that prayer-meetings are not well attended. This will inevitably be the case, if they are stereotyped and petrified. When a dull and cold formality broods over a meeting, no one will go to it, except from a sense of duty; and the sense of duty is not strong enough to lead unconverted persons to a meeting where they are not interested. But when a prayer-meeting is spirited and lively, as it ought always to be, it may become a most powerful means of grace to the impenitent. Such it has been in the

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## Prayer Meetings

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revivals of this year; and of many such meetings, it may be said, "This and that man were born there."

### EXAMINE YOUR PRAYERS

When Christians have been praying a long time for the conversion of souls and the revival of religion, and have not received answers to their prayers, it becomes them to examine and see whether they have not been asking amiss. To aid them in this, the following hints are given:

1. Your prayers may be selfish or earthly, without having the *glory of God* as their paramount and ultimate end (Jas. 4:3; I Cor. 10:31).

2. If you are indulging sin or neglecting duty, the Lord will not hear your prayers (Psa. 66:18; Pro. 28:9; Isa. 59:1-2).

3. An unforgiving temper will hinder your prayers (Mark 11:25-26; Matt. 18:35).

4. You may not have been sufficiently humble (Psa. 138:6; Isa. 66:2; 57:15; I Pet. 5:6; Jas. 4:10).

5. You may not have asked in *faith* (Jas. 1:5-8; Mark 11:24).

6. Your supplications may not have been sufficiently earnest and importunate (Luke 22:44; Jas. 5:17; Acts 12:5).

the non-redeemed. I mean to say this as emphatically as I can. Satan does not have a prayer. His demon host does not have a prayer. Haters of righteousness and promoters of iniquity do not have a prayer. The politically correct do not have a prayer. Ungodly politicians do not have a prayer. Advocates of and perpetrators of violence and shedders of innocent blood do not have a prayer. Sexual deviates do not have a prayer. The exponents of greed and avarice do not have a prayer. The list could go on but this will suffice to make the point. The Thrice Holy God of the Bible is approached through but one mediator because there is but one and no man comes unto the Father but by Him. **"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"** (I Tim. 2:5). Apart from the merits and precious shed blood of This Lamb no one has any access to God. Furthermore, even Christians may block their own access through sin not confessed or forsaken. **"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear"** (Is. 59:1-2). **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"** (Ps. 66:18). **"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"** (Prov. 28:9). However, **"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"** (James 5:16). How vitally important it is for God's people to walk in paths of righteousness and maintain this free unhindered access to the throne of grace. Christian brothers and sisters, what a privilege we have to possess such a gift. Let us sincerely bemoan any neglect of it.

Do we realize the advantage of possessing a weapon that the enemy does not have? During the Civil War the North's production of and use of repeating rifles, as opposed to muzzleloaders, was a great advantage. But more recently, during the Gulf War, our ability to intercept those Scud Missiles with the Patriot Missile Batteries is a good case in point. However, with ongoing and ever more sophisticated technology many weapons become obsolete. Some are confined to arms graveyards.

**PRAYER WILL NEVER BE OBSOLETE!** Prayer will never be bettered. Christians will always have the best weapon and the enemies of Christianity will never have it. None will ever have it but the friends of God and lovers of righteousness. None will ever have it but the genuine children of God. None will ever have it but those who have the Surety and the Mediator. This weapon is not carnal but spiritual and alone will suffice to pull down the

strongholds and cast down the proud reasoning of the enemies of truth. O, dear Christian friend, how we need to engage in serious prayer given the strength and craft of our Adversary. If the beloved land we love ever returns to God and righteousness you can be sure God's people have been earnestly praying. God save America! Let us unite in use of a weapon the destroyers of America will never have. Let us pray that the Lord's church will recover its savor as the salt of the earth. Our God encourages us to pray and provides us with numerous incentives to do so. No one is greater than the Christian's God and He, being sovereign, is able to make good on every promise He gives us.

Is it any wonder then that Satan always endeavors to stifle all tendency and urgency to pray? He had rather you do most anything else dear Christian. Are you cooperating with Him? Do you find it easier and more desirable to do most anything else in the realm of good works? Paul's epistles state clearly that prayer is labor and striving (Col. 4:12; Rom. 15:30). We must understand this and accept this or we will faint quickly. Christ, having told His disciples that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, still insisted that they pray (Luke 22:46). The weakness of the flesh is no excuse for not praying. Be not weary in this act of well doing for in due time we will reap. Fight then with perseverance every reluctance and every distraction. Be instant in season and out of season.

How desperate does it have to get before Christians begin to seriously pray to God for our beloved American and our beloved children? Is not well over 40 million precious babies slaughtered by abortion, a 9 billion dollar a year pornography industry, glaring homosexual activism, and global terrorism quite enough? Prayer needs to be specific and persistent, not sporadic. Prayer is not a spare tire just for emergencies but who will deny that we have one now. Our backs are against the wall but God **"will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer"** (Ps. 102:17). Should we not always consider ourselves as destitute since that without Him we can do nothing? Let us then *stir ourselves to take hold of God* (Is. 64:7). Let us faithfully use this unique weapon we have in these perilous times. Jesus said, **"men ought always to pray, and not to faint"** (Luke 18:1).

### The Neglect of Prayer

By Charles Spurgeon

Live and die without prayer, and you will pray long enough when you get to hell.

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Could you read the story of Abraham's interceding for Sodom and say that you have interceded for London like that?

Can you read of Jacob at the brook Jabbok and say that you ever spent an hour, much less a night, in wrestling with the angel? The prayerlessness of this age is one of its worst signs.

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A prayerless church member is a hindrance. He is in the body like a rotting bone or a decayed tooth. Before long, since he does not contribute to the benefit of his brethren, he will become a danger and a sorrow to them.

### BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 1-1-2005 to 1-31-2005

Beginning Balance .....	\$1,338.52
RECEIPTS:	
Berea M.B. C., Westpoint, TN .....	50.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	150.00
Anonymous .....	1,000.00
TOTAL .....	1,500.00
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time .....	535.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....	535.00
.....	\$2,303.52
Bank Charge .....	-10.00
Interest .....	+41
.....	2,293.93
Less Corbin, KY fund balance .....	-1,651.52
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$642.41

### CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance .....	\$1,811.52
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT .....	160.00
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$1,651.52

### BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 1-1-2005 to 1-31-2005

Beginning Balance .....	\$2,040.89
RECEIPTS:	
Arthur D. Richardson, Cedarville, WV .....	100.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	1,100.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL .....	60.00
Berea M. B. C., Mansfield, OH .....	50.00
Berea M. B. C., Westpoint, TN .....	150.00
Bethel M. B. C., Pasadena, TX .....	100.00
Bible B. C., Sullivan, IL .....	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne WV .....	300.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	150.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....	25.00
Faith M. B. C., Clarksville, TN .....	100.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR .....	25.00
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME .....	20.00
Gerald Price, Johnson City, TN .....	15.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC .....	50.00
Grace M. B. M., Marion, IL .....	25.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK .....	45.00
Joseph Jurzec, Lake-in-the-Hills, IL .....	25.00
Hillcrest B. C., Winston-Salem, NC .....	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....	100.00
Landmark M. B. C., Moncks Corner, SC .....	50.00
Leroy Bullard, Albuquerque, NM .....	100.00
Morris St. B. C., Hobbs, NM .....	300.00
New Testament B. C., Bristol, TN .....	10.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN .....	50.00
Ocoonita M. B. C., Keokee, VA .....	40.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL .....	100.00
South Park B. C., Seattle, WA .....	25.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS .....	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Columbus, MS .....	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Galena, OH .....	150.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL .....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX .....	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wake Forest, NC .....	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Warren, OH .....	75.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA .....	25.00
West Milton B. C., West Milton, OH .....	50.00
Subscriptions .....	109.00
Anon. ....	180.00
Dividing Checks .....	150.00
Sub Total .....	\$4,359.00
TOTAL .....	\$6,399.89
EXPENDITURES:	
Wages .....	3,680.00
Printing (2 months) .....	845.63
Postage .....	691.56
FICA taxes .....	299.83
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Supplies .....	93.00
Total Expenditures .....	5,760.02
.....	639.87
Bank charge .....	-19.18
ENDING BALANCE .....	\$620.69



### A Uniquely Christian Weapon

By Bill James

**"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"** (Eph. 6:18). You will note that our text fails in a portion of Scripture that describes the Christian's complete armor. Prayer is a weapon that belongs exclusively to the Christian and not to the unbelieving world. The "alls" in our text explore certain characteristics of praying. **"All prayer"** has to do with the *composition* of the prayer. **"All perseverance"** has to do with the *constancy* in prayer. **"All saints"** has to do with *charity* in prayer. The obvious goal in prayer is to stand faithful in the good fight and speak boldly of the Gospel of Christ.

Prayer is an integral part of the Christian warfare and an indispensable weapon in our arsenal. You will note that the words *uniquely* and *exclusively* were purposely used in our title and comments. Christian brothers, mark this critical point well! This weapon belongs only to God's redeemed people and not at all to

# THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read. Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

## CHRISTIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE SAYS MINISTRY LOST DONOR CHECKS IN MAIL MIX-UP; POST OFFICE DISPUTES CLAIMS

(EP) – The Christian Research Institute (CRI) – home of Hank Hanegraff's the Bible Answer Man radio show – says several months worth of donations were thrown away due to a post office error, potentially costing the ministry hundreds of thousands of dollars. The post office disputes the claim.

The Calif.-based CRI says its mail was mistakenly sent to a local company that inadvertently threw out CRI correspondence that probably included donor checks. The ministry issued an urgent plea for more contributions, saying the loss came at a time when it receives 17 percent of its income.

Hanegraff told donors on CRI's Web site that the local post office "accepted full responsibility for this error," and then asked supporters to make sure their checks had been cashed, or to mail a "sacrificial gift" to cover a budget shortfall caused by the mix-up. But post office officials say they're unaware of any major problem with CRI's mail, and that no manager at the local branch had spoken with ministry officials.

The company that allegedly threw out CRI's mail said the mix-up had been exaggerated. Officials at On-Target Marketing said the company received a single tray of CRI's mail, called the ministry the same day, and never threw out the mail. Paul Young, CRI's executive vice president, said he didn't know why the ministry's account of the situation differed from both On-Target Marketing and the local post office, according to the Associated Press.

CRI's recent financial mishap isn't the first for the popular ministry. In March 2003, the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), a financial watchdog agency for Christian ministries, found that CRI had "breached compliance" with key member standards. After a thorough investigation, CRI employees agreed to pay back significant sums of misused ministry funds and formulate a better financial accountability system within the ministry. ECFA said it was satisfied with the steps CRI had taken.

But the non-profit Wall Watchers, a N.C.-based financial watchdog group, has criticized CRI for not fully disclosing the steps it has taken to remedy its accounting practices. Wall Watchers has issued a donor alert for CRI, urging donors to withhold contributions from the ministry until it releases more financial records.

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## CONSERVATIVE SENATORS PROMISE TO PUSH FOR FEDERAL MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

(EP) – Senators supporting a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage say they are determined to press for its passage in the new Congress.

"Who's to say whether we have enough votes or not," said Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., noting that the new two-year Congress has just begun.

He said he expects GOP leaders to call for a vote before the 2006 elections and added, "I think it would be foolhardy to back off when we've got a good head of steam coming out of the election."

The amendment states that marriage "shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman," adding that no state would be required to give legal recognition to same-sex marriages sanctioned by any other state.

Last year, the amendment fell significantly short of the two-thirds majority needed for passage in the Senate. But conservatives hope that increased Republican majorities won in the November elections will boost support for the amendment.

President Bush has been tepid in his comments on the amendment since the election, but says its passage is still a priority. Pro-family voters, who likely played a large role in the president's re-election last year, have promised to press the issue as well.

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## SENATORS RE-INTRODUCE UNBORN CHILD PAIN AWARENESS ACT

(EP) – Pro-life lawmakers in the Senate on Jan. 26 reintroduced the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act, a key pro-life legislative priority for the 109th Congress.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., is similar to a measure that failed to pass the Senate last year. The bill would require abortion providers to notify a woman seeking an abortion 20 weeks or more after becoming pregnant of the growing medical evidence that the unborn child in her womb can feel "severe and extreme pain" during an abortion procedure. "Women should not be kept in the dark," Brownback said. "Women have the right to know what their unborn child experiences during an abortion."

The bill also stipulates that if a woman decides to proceed with an abortion after being informed about the pain her unborn child will experience, the abortionist would be required to offer anesthesia for the baby in order to lessen his or her suffering.

Focus on the Family Chairman James Dobson said that's the very least society should offer.

"Society has humane laws that make it illegal to inflict torture on an animal, relating in great detail the conditions under which they can be trapped or killed," Dobson said. "But no such protection is afforded to human babies, who can be legally dismembered without anesthetic. That must change."

Brownback agreed, noting that unborn children can experience pain, even more so than adults, because babies have more pain receptors per square inch than adults.

"Any woman who has been blessed with a child in the second trimester can attest to the reaction to touch and discomfort felt by the baby," he said.

In a report on fetal development prepared for the partial-birth abortion ban trials, medical expert Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand noted that unborn children can experience pain based upon anatomical, functional, physiological and behavioral indicators that are correlated with pain in children and adults.

"The Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act reflects the growing knowledge and concern among Americans for unborn children," said Wendy Wright, Concerned Women for America's senior policy director. "This legislation applies the most up-to-date scientific information to this issue by requiring abortionists to provide medically-accurate information that, without a law, they simply refuse to give to women."

Carrie Gordon Earll, bioethics analyst at Focus on the Family, said the bill would also help abortion-minded women to connect with their unborn children.

"Abortion requires a woman to disconnect emotionally and psychologically from the fragile life growing in her womb, a separation that is not her natural tendency," she said. "Women should be trusted with this critical information before making an abortion decision."

The legislation appears to be gaining public approval. A recent Zogby poll found that 77 percent of respondents agreed that women who are 20 weeks or more along in their pregnancies should be given information about fetal pain before having an abortion.

Thirty-one Senators have joined Brownback in co-sponsoring the bill. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., is introducing companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

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## CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS RELEASE OF NEW NIV BIBLE

(EP) – "Today's New International Version" (TNIV) of the entire Bible is scheduled for publication on Feb. 4. Zondervan put out the TNIV New Testament in 2002. Now, with the addition of the Old Testament, the translation is complete. And the controversy, which began eight years ago and was apparently resolved, is about to erupt again.

The major difference between Today's New International Version and yesterday's

NIV, the most widely used contemporary Bible translation (which will still be available), is that the new translation features "inclusive language." That is, many words referring to the male gender (the generic "he," "father," "brothers") will be changed to also include the female gender ("they," "parent," "brothers and sisters").

The TNIV publicists, in a bit of Orwellian doublespeak, are calling such revisions "gender-accurate" language. The problem, however, comes when the language is not accurate to the original text.

Sometimes the original biblical languages do use inclusive language, as is reflected in contemporary literal translations such as the English Standard Version (ESV). But the TNIV adjusts the gender even when the Bible is specific, as in translating the word for the clearly male "son" as "child."

The TNIV does not go so far as The Inclusive English Language Lectionary used for Bible readings in many liberal churches, which eliminates male pronouns that refer to God (changing "Our Father" to "Our Father/Mother"). Still, many critics believe that tinkering with the Bible's gendered language obscures what the Bible itself teaches about gender and throws off prophetic and Christological passages. The TNIV also defers to modern sensibilities by changing the word "Jews," when described as plotting against Jesus, to "Jewish leaders," or even "the leaders."

For its critics, the TNIV raises larger questions about the danger of cultural accommodation and the limits of the "dynamic-equivalent" theory of translation in which scholars translate a text according to what they think it means, rather than what it says.

News of plans to revise the NIV in a gender-neutral direction first came in 1997. The NIV in Great Britain had already made those changes in an "inclusive language edition" (NIVI), as did the simplified New International Reader's Version (NIRV), designed mainly as a children's Bible. The news that the revered NIV, which accounts for nearly a third of all Bible sales, was itself on the verge of adopting these controversial changes unleashed a storm of criticism.

On May 27, 1997, in Colorado Springs, James Dobson convened a meeting of evangelical leaders, Bible scholars, and representatives from Zondervan and the NIV translation committee to resolve the disputes. At the end of the meeting, Zondervan agreed not to revise the NIV as had been planned. The participants also signed a document titled the "Colorado Springs Guidelines" that specified how gender-related language in Scripture should be handled. The guidelines indicated where inclusive language may be used and where it should not, upholding the principle of following closely the meaning of the original languages.

But then on May 14, 1999, the International Bible Society (IBS), the group responsible for the NIV, announced plans for a new translation. The group made assurances that the NIV would still be available, but that

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plans for what would become the TNIV would go forward.

On Jan. 28, 2002, the New Testament portion of the TNIV was published. Despite the agreement the IBS and Zondervan entered into with the Colorado Springs Guidelines, the new translation used gender-neutral language, even when it does not appear in the original biblical text.

How could the IBS and Zondervan violate their agreement so flagrantly? The commitment not to do a gender-neutral revision of the NIV could be satisfied by keeping the old NIV in print and calling the "Today's New International Version" a "new translation" rather than a revision of the NIV. But the Colorado Springs Guidelines also offered specific principles for new translations. The IBS agreed to follow them, but then did not do so in preparing the TNIV.

In July 2002, the president of the IBS, Peter Bradley, in an article for the organization's publication "Light Magazine," said that the translators had to "withdraw" from the Colorado Springs Guidelines because they conflicted with the translation guidelines of the Forum of Bible Agencies, to which the IBS subscribes. But Bible scholars Wayne Grudem and Vern Poythress, in their book "The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy," show that the guidelines of the Forum of Bible Agencies do not address the issue of gender language at all.

Bradley also indicated that the Colorado Springs Guidelines were forced on his organization, but Grudem—who was present at the meeting and wrote up an account of the transactions that all the participants approved—cited evidence that IBS representative Ken Barker played an active role in their development.

Zondervan Vice President Paul Caminiti told "Christian Retailing Magazine" that the publisher plans to answer the critics of the TNIV, to call them "to intellectual honesty and integrity." And, yet, at this point, Zondervan is not even answering the phone, refusing to talk to WORLD magazine for this report. "We've been directed not to speak to anyone from WORLD," said Tara Powers, a Zondervan spokesperson. After that conversation, three more phone calls were neither answered nor returned.

Zondervan is also keeping the complete TNIV under wraps. Normally, new translations are circulated to scholars in advance of their release, but no one outside of IBS circles has yet seen the TNIV Old Testament. Until the new Bible is released, a complete assessment is impossible.

But such reticence is not holding back the marketing campaign. Caminiti told "The Christian Post," "The TNIV will be the biggest Bible translation launch in history." If the first TNIV translation came in like then-new Stealth technology, the complete TNIV is tracking with Raptor, an evasive, lightning-fast, next-generation jet fighter.

Caminiti told bookstore dealers that the TNIV would be supported by an "aggressive" marketing campaign. "The product rollout will be spectacular," he told CBA Marketplace. "We'll launch nine Bibles," including devotional Bibles for women and men, a church edition, a novel-like edition with only a quarter of the complete biblical text presented in chronological order with Tolkien-like maps, and a Scripture-sampler for evangelism prepared in conjunction with the Willow Creek Association. The marketing push will feature ads in magazines and websites popular with young people.

For a different reason, LifeWay Christian Stores, the nation's largest religious retailer, refuses to carry the TNIV New Testament. Zondervan is accusing the Southern Baptist chain of hypocrisy, since the stores do sell the New Living Translation, which also uses inclusive language. Zondervan is also insinuating that LifeWay is protecting the Holman Christian Standard Bible, a more literal translation published by the Southern Baptist publisher Broadman & Holman.

But Rob Phillips, the director of communications for LifeWay, said that no one in the company had seen the complete TNIV yet, so no decision has been made about whether or not to carry it. But the decision not to stock the TNIV New Testament was based on three reasons: (1) More than 100 conservative Bible scholars have said they could not recommend it. (2) A resolution at the 2002 Southern Baptist Convention asked LifeWay not to carry the TNIV. (3) Customers are not asking for it.

Brett Venable, a bookstore owner from Milford, Del., agrees with that last point. He said that most of his customers want a Bible that is easy to understand and, above all, accurate. When they learn that a particular translation is gender-inclusive, they typically choose a different one.

Dale Buss, writing in the secular marketing online journal "BrandChannel.com," discussed Zondervan's marketing strategy in the face of such challenges. He said that Cris Doornbos, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Zondervan, "is trying to outsmart his foes by going around them." The company "is trying to bypass Christian bookstores by pursuing mass merchandisers" such as Wal-Mart and Target. Buss also said that the TNIV New Testament is being used "as a bit of a decoy. Executives hope that the TNIV's zealous opposition will have expended all of their flak by the time the Old Testament, which makes up about two-thirds of Scripture, debuts."

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### JAMES DOBSON RESPONDS TO 'SPONGEBOB' CONTROVERSY

(EP) – Focus on the Family Chairman James Dobson sought to set the record straight on Jan. 25 about the onslaught of media reports largely mocking him for comments he allegedly made about the cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants.

"I've been in the public eye for 30-something years and I have never had my words more misrepresented than they were in this

instance," Dobson said on his internationally syndicated radio program. "I was said to be on the warpath for my dislike for SpongeBob, who supposedly has homosexual characteristics. I said no such thing."

What Dobson did say in a speech in Washington during an event sponsored by the Family Research Council was that SpongeBob is one of 100 popular animated characters that may have been co-opted by an innocuous-sounding group to promote acceptance of homosexuality by children. The group, the We Are Family Foundation, has produced a video slated for distribution to 61,000 public and private elementary schools. The video features SpongeBob, Big Bird, Barney and others singing the old disco hit "We Are Family" and spreading a message of "diversity and unity."

Dobson said that while words like "diversity" and "unity" sound harmless, even noble, the reality is that they are often used by homosexual activists as a cover for teaching children that homosexuality is the moral and biological equivalent to heterosexuality. Dobson maintains that there is ample evidence that the We Are Family Foundation shares and promotes that very view.

"Unfortunately," Dobson said, "the We Are Family foundation has very strong homosexual advocacy roots and biases."

For example, a tolerance pledge, which the foundation provides on its Web site, reads in part: "I pledge to have respect for people whose abilities, beliefs, culture, race, sexual identity or other characteristics are different from my own." Dobson said that's not the only piece of pro-homosexual content that has been posted on the group's Web site, though he said some of the material was removed in the wake of the controversy.

The "We are Family" DVD will show up in public schools around the country in March, according to the group's Web site. Dobson said that the accompanying curriculum booklet is likely to contain resources for educators seeking to normalize homosexuality. He cited the curriculum's 2003 manual, which equated homosexuality with immutable characteristics, such as race or gender, and suggested homosexuality deserves limitless tolerance and acceptance.

Another previous curriculum posted on the We Are Family Foundation Web site, called "Writing for Change," includes exercises such as:

- Generating a Description - encourages students to discuss the definition of "lesbian."
- Talking About Being "Out" - offers worksheet questions and a discussion of "perceptions of sexual orientation."
- Uncovering Attitudes About Sexual Orientation - explores the impact of "homophobia" and "heterosexism."
- Developing definitions - presents a list of stereotypical definitions, including "compulsory heterosexuality," which is described as "the assumption that women are naturally or innately drawn sexually and emotionally toward men, and men toward women; the view that heterosexuality is the 'norm' for all sexual relationships."

"The institutionalization of heterosexuality in all aspects of society includes the idealization of heterosexual orientation, romance, and marriage," the guide said. "Compulsory heterosexuality leads to the notion of women as inherently 'weak,' and the institutionalized inequality of power: power of men to control women's sexuality, labor, childbirth and childrearing, physical movement, safety, creativity, and access to knowledge. It can also include legal and social discrimination against homosexuals and the invisibility or intolerance of lesbian and gay existence."

Tom Minnery, vice president of government and public policy at Focus on the Family, said reporters have mocked Dobson for his comments, and have deliberately ignored these details in their quest to marginalize a pro-family leader.

"The media is trying to use this SpongeBob nonsense as a smokescreen, because they're not willing to tell the people what's really at stake," he said. "What's at stake is the forced normalization of homosexuality in the public schools."

Dr. Bill Maier, Focus' psychologist in residence, said he didn't think the media's efforts to undermine Dobson's integrity as a national spokesman for moral values would succeed.

"Clear-thinking Americans won't buy it," Maier said. "They've trusted Dr. Dobson for 27 years and will see through the media's SpongeBob charade."

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### IRAQI CHURCHES ENDURE BOMBINGS IN LEAD-UP TO NATIONAL ELECTIONS

(EP) – A Kirkuk pastor we shall simply call Haytham was traveling the busy four-lane from Baghdad back to his home and stopped at a prominent intersection to buy dates and oranges. Quickly he realized he'd been followed. Two thugs pulled him from his car, stole his cash, and pushed his nose to the pavement. Only a day before, insurgents had shot three Iraqi election workers in broad daylight on a busy street in Baghdad. Haytham was sure he would die.

"Now shoot him," one said to the other. But the seconds passed like long minutes, and finally the other said, "I can't." With that the two were gone, stealing Haytham's car and money but leaving his life intact.

Danger and deliverance appear equally indiscriminate for Christians living in Iraq today. Most remember suffering with their Muslim neighbors under Saddam Hussein, sometimes even improving relations in that grim fraternity. While bigger and better mosques proliferated, Saddam would not allow new churches to be built. But overall he persecuted Christian and Muslim enemies alike.

Now the landscape for the churchgoing minority has changed. Iraq's church leaders are associated with the West and targeted for perceived, or real, ties to the United States. In the early days of war, Haytham (who like many church leaders no longer feels comfortable sharing his name or being quoted in the

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press) met with U.S. chaplains stationed at the air base outside Kirkuk. He encouraged them to visit his church, one of the largest evangelical congregations in Iraq. Meetings and Bible studies followed, an encouragement to Iraqi churchgoers and good cultural immersion for U.S. soldiers in an otherwise restive city. Since his near-death experience, Haytham discourages Western visitors.

At least eight churches have been attacked by suicide bombers or lethal explosive devices in the lead-up to elections. Another clergyman who pastors Iraq's oldest Protestant congregation, founded in 1820 at Mosul (referred to locally as Nineveh), is recovering in Lebanon from the wounds of one of those attacks. Pedestrians in Mosul's old city will find these words in graffiti: "Kurds + Christians = Israel."

Last week gunmen made off with a key church leader, the Syrian Catholic archbishop of Mosul, 66-year-old Basile Georges Casmoussa. He was forced into the trunk of a car as he left a parishioner's home but set free 24 hours later, unharmed. The Vatican called the abduction a "despicable terrorist act."

Under tenuous security interdenominational squabbles for the country's many Christian denominations sometimes fester. What's important, say evangelical pastors, is to forge good ground-level relations with local—and mostly Muslim—government leaders. Attacks on churches have actually not only drawn sympathy from some of Iraq's political leaders but served to remind them that Christians in Iraq are a viable—and long-suffering—voting bloc.

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### ELECTION EXIT POLLS DEEMED MOST INACCURATE IN YEARS

(EP) – Experts for the firms that conducted the ill-fated exit polls for the last presidential election recently conceded that the polls rank as the most inaccurate in a presidential election since at least 1988. The embarrassing report cited a slew of reasons for the results that grossly overstated John Kerry's likelihood of winning, including: Kerry supporters were more willing to participate in the polls than Bush supporters, and interviewers were on average too young, too inexperienced, and poorly trained. Joseph Lenski, head of one of the firms that did the work, said releasing the report was like "hanging out your dirty underwear. You hope it's cleaner than people expected."

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### PRO-ABORTION GROUP MOCKS ABSTINENCE EDUCATION

(EP) – The relentless National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) has sunk to a new low in its opposition to abstinence education. The group is protesting the Pennsylvania Legislature's upcoming designation of "Chastity Awareness Week" by urging NARAL supporters to ask lawmakers to send chastity belts to them. NARAL even pro-

vided a form letter for supporters to sign and send to legislators: "Until you give us real choices, please rush me the only thing that the Pennsylvania State Legislature seems to want to provide to protect my reproductive health: a chastity belt. My address appears below." NARAL spokesman David Seldin said the group is "trying to be more creative in the way in which we communicate and reach out, particularly to younger people." The campaign did not amuse the Urban Family Council, according to the Associated Press. "I think it's quite sad that this organization is speaking negatively about young people being made aware of the healthiest choice they can make," said Jill Page, an abstinence and youth development director for the group.

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### VATICAN PRAISES WOMAN WHO MADE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

(EP) – The Vatican is praising an Italian woman who died after refusing cancer treatment that would have required her to have an abortion. Rita Fedrizzi died this week, three months after giving birth to a baby boy. The 41-year-old woman, a devout Catholic, found out she had cancer about the same time she learned she was pregnant. Her husband, Enrico Ferrari, said his wife never considered an abortion. "Rita's choice, which I always shared, was a choice of faith," he told a Vatican newspaper. "Whenever someone recommended abortion as the only way to escape death, she would say, 'It's as if they're asking me to kill one of my other two children to save my skin.'" In addition to her three-month-old son, Mrs. Fedrizzi leaves behind two other children, ages 10 and 12.

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### SECRETARY OF EDUCATION BLASTS PBS FOR CHILDREN'S PROGRAM PROMOTING HOMOSEXUALITY

(EP) – Newly appointed U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings drew national attention during her first week in the president's cabinet by denouncing the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) for producing a children's show that promotes homosexuality.

"Postcards from Buster," produced by the federally-funded PBS, is an animated series about the adventures of a rabbit named Buster. In a recent episode about the maple syrup industry that has not yet aired, Buster visits a lesbian couple and the children they are raising in Vermont.

Spellings told PBS that its promotion of homosexuality to children was inappropriate, and that the "Sugartime!" episode does not fulfill the intent Congress had in mind for programming. By law, she said, any funded shows must give top attention to "research-based educational objectives, content and materials."

"Many parents would not want their young children exposed to the lifestyles portrayed in the episode," Spellings wrote in a letter sent to Pat Mitchell, president and chief executive officer of PBS.

"Congress' and the Department's purpose in funding this programming certainly was

not to introduce this kind of subject matter to children, particularly through the powerful and intimate medium of television."

Spellings asked PBS to refund the \$77,000 in taxpayer funds used to produce the episode, and to notify its member stations of the nature of the show so that they could review it or air it. She also asked that the Education Department's seal or any statement linking the department to the show be removed from the episode.

PBS defended the episode, saying the network has "an eye to multiculturalism." But a few days later, PBS announced it would not distribute the episode nationwide. "The department's concerns align very closely with PBS' concerns, and for that reason, it was decided that PBS will not be providing the episode," a PBS spokesman said.

Several PBS stations, however, have said they will air the controversial episode despite Spellings' concerns. At least 21 stations, including ones in Boston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco will air the program, according to Jeanne Hopkins, spokeswoman for Boston's WGBH-TV.

Conservative leaders shared concerns about the episode, and applauded Spellings' actions. "Because homosexual couples raising children are only a tiny percentage of Vermont's population, it's obviously no coincidence that they were highlighted in this episode," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. "Nor is it accidental that cartoon characters are chosen to make the message appealing to kids. But it's only in a make-believe world that a homosexual couple can be equated to a married mom and dad. Mrs. Spellings is to be commended for blocking the use of taxpayer money for such propaganda."

Andrea Lafferty, executive director of Traditional Values Coalition, agreed. "The American people in California voted overwhelmingly against homosexual marriage. Other states have done that as well, not just conservative states," she said. "The American people don't want their children mixed into this subject. The position that I've taken – the position that the Secretary of Education has taken – is a mainstream position."

As for Spellings, the secretary promised PBS more scrupulous oversight of its programming in the future: "You can be assured that in the future the department will be more clear as to its expectations for any future programming that it funds."

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### JUSTICE DEPARTMENT LOSES KEY PORNOGRAPHY CASE

(EP) – The pornography industry recently won a major victory in a federal court in Pittsburgh when a judge ruled that no restrictions should be placed on the distribution of pornography. The case was supposed to be a slam dunk for the Justice Department as it ramps up prosecution of obscenity laws.

Pornographer and defendant Robert Zicari responded to the decision in a video on his Web site.

"This is a big win for us, a big win for the entire business," Zicari said.

The pornography in question was the worst of the worst – depicting extreme sexual violence. The judge ruled that, since it is legal to possess the porn, its distribution channels are also beyond the government's reach.

American Family Association lawyer Steve Crampton was shocked. "It doesn't open gates, it opens floodgates for all kinds of material to be available and even protected as constitutionally guaranteed," Crampton said.

This was the first case in a new Justice Department push to enforce obscenity laws, according to Daniel Weiss, a conservative media and sexuality analyst.

"If the Department of Justice cannot successfully try a case involving the worst of the worst material," Weiss said, "then they're not likely to win a case that involves more mainstream material."

While he's hopeful that an appeal will be successful, Weiss said he's mindful that one can never predict what will happen in U.S. federal courts.

"I think it's too early to say whether this is the end of obscenity laws," Weiss said. "However, we've seen the Supreme Court, in the last three or four years, strike down some very good laws."

A Justice Department statement said the government continues to believe that federal obscenity statutes are constitutional.

The Pittsburgh decision relied on the controversial *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling that threw out a Texas sodomy law.

Weiss said this case demonstrates how difficult it will be to prosecute obscenity after more than a decade of inaction.

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### PROMINENT BLACK PASTOR SUES JESSE JACKSON

(EP) – In a lawsuit that pits two prominent African-American leaders from opposite ends of the philosophical, political and spiritual spectrum, Jesse Lee Peterson is suing Jesse Jackson for alleged acts of physical, psychological and verbal intimidation. Peterson says the abuse took place during a 2001 event to promote economic development in the Los Angeles minority community.

The lawsuit alleges that Jackson stood idly by as Jackson's son Jonathan physically attacked Peterson. The civil action further maintains that Jackson's actions (and non-actions) resulted in Peterson being accosted by an "angry mob" of Jackson supporters.

The altercation took place during a December 2001 public meeting held by Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc. to discuss potential affirmative action and diversity programs available to minority-owned business in the L.A. area. As part of its "21st Century Diversity Strategy" Toyota officials announced they would be awarding \$700 million worth of contracts to minority owned businesses in 2002.

The suit maintains that Jackson and PUSH basically hijacked the "Toyota Strategy" through "implied threats of adverse publicity and/or a possible boycott of Toyota" by

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Rainbow/PUSH supporters. When Peterson attempted to criticize Jackson and PUSH at the meeting, he says Jackson supporters attacked him.

Jackson has long been accused of such corporate "shakedowns. Peterson has chronicled examples of alleged corporate blackmail by Jackson's group in his book "Scam: How the Black Leadership Exploits Black America."

Because of his conservative Christian views, Peterson is not popular with some in both the homosexual and black communities. His outspoken call for moral righteousness, integrity and honesty has resulted in previous threats. Peterson maintains that since the Toyota/Jesse Jackson incident, the threats have increased.

Shortly after the lawsuit was filed Peterson told Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity that he feared for his life on a television segment of "Hannity and Colmes."

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### KANSAS LEGISLATURE PASSES MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT

(EP) - The Kansas House of Representatives on Feb. 2 approved a marriage protection amendment to the state's constitution. The measure passed by a vote of 86-37, three more than the two-thirds majority necessary. The citizens of Kansas will vote on the amendment on April 5. Though Kansas law already recognizes only marriages between one man and one woman, amendment supporters say the measure is necessary to further protect the state's traditional definition of marriage from legal challenges, and to display support for the importance of the institution of traditional families.

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### CATHOLICS PRODUCE 'GENDER-NEUTRAL' BIBLE

(EP) - Following in the footsteps of heretical Protestants, a liberal Catholic group has conspired to produce an awkward, politically correct rewrite of the Bible. Revisers produced the de-gendered "Inclusive Bible" for the Roman Catholic Priests for Equality. The work expunges words like "Father," "Lord," and "Son," and removes or changes the word "kingdom" because it contains the masculine word "king." In some places the word "kingdom" is changed to the made-up word "kindom." The creation account refers to the creation of an "earth creature," to avoid using the word "man." And Scriptural criticism of homosexuality is either removed or radically changed to be no criticism at all. The revisers defended their changes, saying "most scriptures read in worship services are still grossly sexist." They also said: "The Bible is not itself the Word of God, for that would be idolatry. Rather, the Bible contains the Word of God - or better yet, the Bible is the unique document of human beings' encounters with the Living God." Thankfully, the four-volume work costs \$160, and is not

likely to fly off the shelves.

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### POLISH JOURNALIST CONVICTED FOR INSULTING THE POPE

(EP) - A Warsaw court has convicted a magazine publisher of insulting the Polish-born Pope John Paul, and fined him 20,000 zlotys (US \$6,500). The court ruled that Jerzy Urban illegally insulted the pope in the satirical weekly magazine "NIE" - Polish for "no" - when he wrote a piece in 2002 making fun of the pontiff's age and fragility. Urban was found guilty of violating a law that prohibits publicly insulting foreign heads of state. The 71-year-old publisher maintains he is innocent, and that he was exercising the right to free expression. The court's decision sparked criticism from the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, which said Poland had violated the European Union's guarantee of freedom of expression.

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### CANADA INTRODUCES CONTENTIOUS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BILL

(EP) - The Canadian government introduced its contentious same-sex marriage bill in Parliament on Feb. 1, seeking to legalize gay marriage nationwide over the objections of the Roman Catholic Church and other conservative clergy, according to the Associated Press. Canada remains deeply divided on the issue, and the bill's passage appears questionable. The opposition Conservative Party said it would fight the legislation, which defines marriage as a civil union between two people, as opposed to the current definition of marriage between a man and a woman. "Marriage is a historical union that has existed between a man and a woman. It has been recognized in that way by cultures across time," said Vic Toews of the Conservative Party. Roman Catholic Church groups have joined forces with other religious groups to defeat the legislation, with Quebec Archbishop Marc Cardinal Quillet saying the bill "threatens to unleash nothing less than cultural upheaval whose negative consequences are still impossible to predict."

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### GROUPS SEEK TO CHANGE HATE CRIMES LAW

#### CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS WANT GAYS EXCLUDED

HARRISBURG - Two Pennsylvania-based conservative values groups, both of them critics of the "homosexual lifestyle," want to change the state's hate crime law, saying it discourages free speech and is being abused by the Philadelphia district attorney's office.

In so doing, the Pennsylvania branches of Concerned Women for America and the American Family Association are coming to the defense of Michael Marcavage, the 25-year-old Philadelphia evangelist arrested last autumn after preaching and protesting at an annual gay pride event called "OutFest."

Both groups want the references to sexual orientation removed from the state's Ethnic Intimidation Act. Such a change, however, is unlikely as long as Gov. Ed Rendell, a Demo-



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crat who has supported health benefits for same-sex domestic partners and other pro-gay political matters, is in office.

Marcavage and his collaborators, known as Repent America, were arrested essentially for failing to leave the OutFest event. But Philadelphia's district attorney also is prosecuting Marcavage on an ethnic intimidation charge, Pennsylvania's version of a hate crime.

For months, Marcavage's defenders, including many conservative Christian groups, free speech groups, even some liberal columnists, have said that the district attorney's office crossed the line by charging Marcavage with ethnic intimidation, mainly because that charge, if it's to stick, must be accompanied by another serious crime, like arson, trespass-

ing or harassment.

But now, at least two of those groups are criticizing not just the district attorney, but the law itself. Saying the law is flawed, they are using Marcavage's arrest to resurrect previous complaints that the Ethnic Intimidation Act law would target not only violent criminal offenders, but also outspoken Christians who are publicly condemning homosexuality, abortion and other hot-button, religiously tinged topics.

Concerned Women and the American Family Association are both backing a bill introduced last week by a Democratic legislator that wouldn't kill the hate crime law entirely, but would eliminate the protections

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given to homosexuals, as well as to the physically and mentally disabled. The law was amended in late 2002 to specifically include those groups.

"I worked on passing that bill for 10 years. It wasn't easy," said Steve Black, political director for the Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Alliance. "It's unfortunate they have to target gay and lesbians for political purposes."

Their goal, Black said, is not to nurture free speech, but to "eliminate any kind of protections for gay and lesbian people in Pennsylvania."

The hate crime law, under the proposed revision, would remain intact for people who are assailed because of their "race, color, religion or national origin." In other words, the hate crime protections would remain in place for religious victims but not for gay victims, nor handicapped ones, if the bill is passed as it's now written.

Wherever they are debated, ethnic intimidation laws are controversial, because they create a new category of crime, punishing not only a criminal act but also the person's mindset when he commits the crime. Opponents say the laws curtail freedoms of speech and religion.

Proponents say the laws are necessary since a hate crime is fundamentally different than a "regular" crime. Vandalizing someone's house as a prank is different than, for example, vandalizing someone's house just because the owner is black — the latter crime is committed with the intention of intimidating a particular group of people.

That explanation didn't satisfy opponents in 2002, and it doesn't satisfy them now.

"There's no such thing as a 'love' crime," said Nancy Staible, director of the Zelig-nople-based Concerned Women group. "We'd like to take it all out." But because a wholesale demolition of the law is not likely, "we'll do it by bits and pieces."

"These are not ethnic groups in the first place," Staible said, referring to the so-called ethnic intimidation law.

Both groups say they wouldn't mind if the whole law was overturned, but both also say that they are pleased with the amendments, as sponsored by Rep. Tom Yewcic, D-Cambria. Yewcic is the same lawmaker who, along with several House colleagues, sued two gay men in an attempt to prevent them from obtaining a marriage license in Bucks County last year.

In lieu of overturning the whole law, Yewcic said he's content with reverting to the law's original language, which made no mention of "sexual orientation, gender or gender identity."

"When we argued on the House floor in 2002, we [said] this particular amendment would result in hate crime charges geared toward censoring religious speech," Yewcic said yesterday.

"Freedom of speech, that's the bottom line in all of this," said Yewcic. "Philadelphia is a

national embarrassment." (Tuesday, February 08, 2005, Post-Gazette Harrisburg Bureau).

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### SWEDISH PASTOR IS ACQUITTED ON APPEAL

**STOCKHOLM, Sweden** – An appeals court Friday overturned the hate crimes conviction of a Swedish pastor who in a sermon had branded homosexuals a "cancer."

The Goeta Appeals Court said that while Aake Green's views of gays can be "strongly questioned," it was not illegal to offer a personal interpretation of the Bible and urge others to follow it.

"The purpose of making agitation against gays punishable is not to prevent arguments or discussions about homosexuality, not in churches or in other parts of society," the court said.

Green, 63, was the first clergyman convicted under Sweden's tough hate crimes laws, which make it a crime to make inflammatory remarks against racial, religious, or national groups. The laws were ratified in 2003 to include homosexuals.

Green said he was pleased with the verdict, but called it a "partial victory," saying he expects the case to move on to the Supreme Court.

"We'll see how far this gets me," Green told The Associated Press. "But right now I'm very happy."

Green gave his sermon the same year, telling a congregation on the small southeastern island of Oeland that homosexuals were "a deep cancer tumor on all of society." He warned congregants that Sweden risked a natural disaster because of its leniency toward gays.

"Homosexuality is something sick," Green said. He compared it with pedophilia and bestiality, saying gays were more likely to rape children and animals.

He was convicted in June and sentenced to 30 days in jail but the sentence was suspended pending the appeal.

In an interview with the AP, Green said it was not the month in jail that worried him, but "the freedom to preach God's Word."

The appeals court shared that concern, saying statements during sermons rarely qualify as racial agitation.

Green's acquittal brought a sigh of relief from some ministers who saw the case as a challenge to freedom of religion and expression.

"This indicates that the justice system works, and that it gives a certain amount of

protection to us who preach God's word," said Ralph Toerner, a priest from the Swedish branch of the British-based Holy Catholic Church.

"But at the same time, I think this should be a warning signal to preachers overall, that they shouldn't use such coarse language when talking about something sensitive. The Christian faith is not about judging people," he said.

Green said he was being bombarded by phone calls from supporters Friday. "They're calling from the United States and from Sweden," he said. "They're calling on every phone they can. I'm feeling massive support over this."

Others were angry over the acquittal, saying it was an invitation to attack gays and other groups.

"Would we have seen this verdict if his sermon had been about Jews or some other group? I hope not," said Katarina Lindahl, secretary-general of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education.

Lindahl said Green's sermon was a call to action against all homosexuals, by saying that Sweden risked God's wrath by being tolerant toward gays.

"If that's not agitation, I don't know what is," Lindahl said.

Hans Ytterberg, the government-appointed ombudsman against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, said he also disagreed with the verdict, and criticized the court for saying that Green's rhetoric wasn't harsh enough to be criminal.

"I think that's pretty hard to believe, because it can't get much harsher," Ytterberg said. "This means you can say just about anything." (AP, Seattle-Post Intelligencer, February 11, 2005).

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Conferences and Special Meetings

The Northside Baptist Church of Elkton, KY will be having revival services March 28th through April 3rd. Services will begin each night at 7:30 p.m. Bro. William Senich will be preaching the meeting. For more information, you may contact Pastor Irving Cummings at 270-265-9665.

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### Churches in Need of a Pastor

The Unity Missionary Baptist Church of Paron, AR is currently in need of a pastor. Any interested preacher that is strong in the doctrines of God's sovereign grace and not currently pastoring may contact Anthony Johnson at 501-594-5218 for more information.

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The Mount Vernon Baptist Church of Fayetteville, AR is in need of a pastor. Any interested preacher who is strong in the doctrine of God's sovereign grace that is not currently pastoring may contact Martha Inzer at 479-443-7108 for more information.

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The Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Alma, AR is looking for a pastor. Any sound brethren interested in pulpit supply or preaching in view of a call may contact Daniel Pope via email at dfp@compworldnet.com, or by phone at 580-332-6126 from 6-8 p.m. on some weeknights.

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### Miscellaneous

Grace Bible Baptist Church of Denham Springs, LA would like to purchase some copies of the 3rd edition of the *Berea Baptist Hymnal*. If any churches have extra copies they would be willing to sell, please contact Pastor Jerry Dodson at 225-664-3223 or via postal mail at Grace Bible Baptist Church, 26080 Wax Road, Denham Springs, LA 70726.

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The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, Alabama, Pastor W. Doyal Thomas, and all members are thankful to God, and most pleased to announce to everyone that our long awaited building project is underway. A contract has been signed and construction is under way. We anticipate, with God's blessing, to be in the new sanctuary by late spring or early summer, 2005.

We ask all to pray with us that we be faithful to His work, and that we look to Him for every needed provision. Pray for us, and if any are led to join us in this undertaking, your help will be greatly appreciated. We thank you in advance, and we will forever be grateful for your prayers and support.

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The bookstore has a limited supply of bound volumes of the BBB for the years 2003-2004. These volumes sell for \$30 postage paid. We also have about 4 bound volumes for 2001-2002. These also sell for \$30 postage paid.

### Planning a move?

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or fill out the form on our website

www.bereabaptistchurch.org

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