

Voice of Thanksgiving

Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer

For the Week of September 21, 2008

Let me burn out for God. After all, whatever God may appoint prayer is the great thing. Oh that I may be a man of prayer.—Henry Martyn

The Life of Prayer

Obedience

David Williamson

In the Old Testament we read of a Syrian man named Naaman, he was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Naaman heard that there was a prophet of God living in Israel who healed people. Naaman, with the blessing of his king and a great amount of gold and silver, went to Israel to be healed.

Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper. 2 Kings 5:1 (NKJV)

Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 2 Kings 5:9-12 (NKJV)

We have been studying a list of the essentials of a meaningful prayer life. E. M. Bounds listed: faith, trust, desire, fervency, persistence, good character and conduct, obedience, and vigilance as keys to our success. Much of the list is relatively straight forward. Faith comes by the Word of God. Character comes by spending time with the Lord. But, one is more difficult, we must be obedient and this can be hard.

Naaman this man of valor was offended by the prophet and what he asked Naaman to do. This is the basis of all test of obedience. God will command us to do something and then the world, circumstances, and our old nature will bring things to cause us to be offend. Too often people do not obey because they know better, they are somebody, they would be embarrassed, they are wise, they are strong, they are mighty, they are better, or they have some great reason why they do not have to obey. The blessings of God are missed because people refuse to obey.

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So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 1 Samuel 15:22 (NKJV)

Naaman was ready to return to his home a leper, with no hope of ever being healed. It is so sad that often people are willing to suffer loss rather than obey God. Read the words of Naaman's servant and hear the wisdom.

And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. 2 Kings 5:13-14 (NKJV)

Obedience was better than sacrifice! When Naaman did what he was told to do, he was healed. Too often the answer to our prayers is stopped or delayed because we are like Naaman had been and we refuse to obey. We are too proud or too whatever and we missed the answer. Our prayers are weak because of disobedience. Our prayer life is anemic because of disobedience. If we want to be successful in prayer and could only change one thing, it should be obedience, we should obey God. This one thing would radically change our life and our prayers.

However, you say, "I am obedient". I work hard to do what God says to do. I say, "Good, I hope this is true". How about in prayer, do you do what God says to do? Perhaps we should take a look at your practice and be sure. What has God said to do in obedience in prayer? By the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, thus presenting God's command on the matter, Paul writes.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle--I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying--a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 1 Tim. 2:1-8 (NKJV)

Therefore I exhort first. God via the hand of Paul commands that first we pray. Writing to Timothy, Paul sets forth the core value on prayer. He writes of the business of prayer, its energy, and the many sides of a complete and powerful prayer life. He explains that prayer is the first of all duties, first of all practices, first of all occupations. E. M. Bounds explains the importance and supremacy of prayer.

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“He that prays not, is not at all. He is naught, less than naught. He is below zero, so far as Christ and God and heaven are concerned. Not simply among the first things does prayer stand on a level with other things, but first of the first, to the very forefront, does Paul put prayer with all his heart. “I exhort that first of all.”

His teaching is that praying is the most important of all things on earth. All else must be restrained, retired, to give it primacy. Put it first, and keep its primacy. The conflict is about the primacy of prayer. Defeat and victory lie in this one thing. To make prayer secondary is to discrown it. It is to fetter and destroy prayer. If prayer is put first, then God is put first, and victory is assured. Prayer must either reign in the life or must abdicate. Which shall it be?”

Have you been obedient to this requirement of prayer? People put all sorts of things in front of prayer. Everything is more important than the first thing and we wonder why our plans are not successful. The answer far too often is failure to be obedient to the first command, first of all prayer. We begin with disobedience and then wonder why our enterprise does not succeed. We have God's word on our success, yet we choose not to walk in His ways or by His requirements. How foolish we are, we go about determined that we can do whatever we want, our way. Then we are angry when it seems that prayer does not work. Obedience, so often, is a test of trust, patience, and commitment. Do we trust God or do we have to help Him out. Do we trust Him even when He seems to be late? Do we trust Him even when everything says not to? Obedience is all the time or it is disobedience.

Obedience reveals our heart and mind. It makes demands and then reveals our true answer. In prayer many people make claims and ascertain of their skills and practices. Obedience makes plain and simple our true beliefs and practices. Is prayer first in our life? Does obedience declare that prayer is first in our life? Do we always and in every situation, first pray? Or is prayer secondary, neglected, or ignored?

I hope prayer is first in your life. If not, then do not be condemned, but repent of your ways and turn to the Holy Spirit who will teach you to pray. He is willing and able to teach the willing man or woman how to pray. He teaches the simple basic of the truth about prayer: His teaching is that first of all pray.

Let us Pray!

A Call for Prayer

Pray this week for us. Pray that we would step into the life of prayer as never before. Today there is great need for men and women of prayer. God has called us to pray; now we need to be all that we can be in prayer. The success of our ventures, secular and spiritual, is bound to the efficacy of our prayers and the strength of our prayer life. As a ship can go no faster than the design of the sail and keel allow, so the minister or laborer, manager, or worker, can have no more success than their

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prayers allow and provide. Pray that we will become a great ship of prayer, able to carry great loads and sail through the waters of life with power, strength, and skill.

Basic Prayer Focus

Pray for Israel and the Peace of Jerusalem

Pray for the reaching of Souls from Every Nation

Pray for the government (so we can live peaceably and the Gospel can be preached)

Pray for your home Church

Continuing Faithful in Prayer

Pray for these ministers and ministries. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your prayers.

Joyce Abrahamson – Head of school in Brazil

John Coon – Ministry in Europe and the USA

Churches in Belarus – Growing number of churches in Belarus

Churches in Lithuania – Growing number of churches in Lithuania

DK Limbu Daniel – Pastor of a church in Nepal and church planting among Nepalese people

Marianne and David Dean – Missionaries on college campuses in East Asia

Jacek Gromadzki – Pastor of a church in Kolobrzeg, Poland

Marek Kaminski – Pastor of church in Kaszalin, Poland, leader in Polish churches, and co-founder and leader of BBB Conference

Bernd and Heike Pastor – Ministry in Germany

Mark Spencer – Pastor of church in Longmont, Colorado, worldwide ministry, and co-founder and leader of BBB Conference

Patty Spencer – Pastor in Longmont, Colorado, worship leader, and artist with a great new CD

William Williamson – Pastor of church in Holly, Colorado

Charles and Janice Wilson – Pastors in Wyola, Montana

David Williamson – Editor of *Voice of Thanksgiving* and author of books on prayers

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