

Voice of Thanksgiving

Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer

For the Week of April 5, 2009

“The greatest and the best talent that God gives to any man or woman in this world is the talent of prayer,” writes Principal Alexander Whyte. “And the best usury that any man or woman brings back to God when He comes to reckon with them at the end of this world is a life of prayer. And those servants best put their Lord’s money ‘to the exchangers’ who rise early and sit late, as long as they are in this world, ever finding out and ever following after better and better methods of prayer, and ever forming more secret, more steadfast, and more spiritually fruitful habits of prayer, till they literally ‘pray without ceasing,’ and till they continually strike out into new enterprises in prayer, and new achievements, and new enrichments.”

The Life of Prayer

Mention of You Always

David Williamson

When I was teaching a history course, at least once a year and sometimes more, I would ask the students to plan a dinner. Some students would get very involved in this and plan the menu and everything, but the main activity of the assignment was to decide who to invite to the dinner, who would sit by whom, and what would be some points of interest that you as host would ask of your guests. One great part of the assignment was to think about the conversations between the various people. Some students would invite men and women they admire, others would invite people they thought would conflict with one another, setting up an exciting dinner. Some students would invite based on wanting to hear the conversation between rivals, others to see what a man or woman would say about how things are now. It was great because it made students think and to speculate about what would be said and how various people would react to the others around the table. Sometimes we would have arguments in class over how two guests would relate to one another and which dinner party would be the most fun to attend. It was wonderful for the students to think about these people and their views on politics, social issues, religion, war and peace, business, and other aspects of life.

Sometimes we treat life like those dinner parties from this school assignment I just described. We invite the people we want to have at the party. However, life is also a little different from these contrived dinners, some of the people we meet are not of our choosing; we work with them, conduct general business with them, and in various ways run into them on the byways of life. Some people we like to be with and others not as much, but with each person we meet, for those we invite into our life and those we just met, we have a choice. We can give them a cold shoulder and push them aside or we can invite them in to our life and be friends. People make these choices on a regular basis, there are people that we connect with on some level and enjoy their company, so they are friends and we invite them into our life at some level of intimacy; and there are others.

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For weeks now we have been reviewing and studying Paul's prayer recorded in the book of Romans. The inclusion of this prayer has been informative as a study on prayer and valuable as a review for comparing our prayer practices and Paul's. This is a great way to learn to pray, epically when our goal is to pray effective, fervent prayers that avail much. The lessons of the Holy Spirit, this one given here through Paul's example, are a rich source of guidance, correction, and encouragement to strive for mastery.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. Romans 1:8-10 (NKJV)

I think that Paul would have been one of those people who would have been perfect to invite to a dinner party, like those I had my students prepare. Not only was Paul well educated, well traveled, and well versed in the affairs of men and nations, he was a people person. When Paul traveled he was so loved by people that Luke records that they had to tear themselves from the people of the town when they left. He records that they wept bitterly that Paul was leaving. And although travel was hard and often very dangerous, Paul loved to go and see people of the towns throughout the region. In some towns his reception was less than positive, being beaten and left for dead is not positive, but still Paul traveled and met people. Paul, the people person was also a man of prayer. In Paul these two mixed well; the result was great prayer and ministry.

Another great people person was and is Jesus. One year when the Passover feast was near, Jesus was on a mountain when many people came to Him, to be with Him, hear Him speak, and to receive from Him, healing, deliverance, or even food to eat. Jesus lived and died for people and lives now to intercede for people and when He saw the multitudes He wanted to provide for their needs, such as food to eat. In the book of John we read about this experience and the work that Jesus did, in addition to the blessing of the people, He had a little test for Philip.

And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

John 6:3-6 (NKJV)

The disciple of Jesus Christ will recognize this type of test; it is common to all who seek to be disciples. The cares and needs of the day come up and present an opportunity for an investigation of our faith, as well as our willingness to trust and obey Jesus. It came to Philip as, "Where shall we buy bread", but the current test, the one we face, is just as daunting. There is a need that we cannot meet in the natural; we do not have enough money, time, or we do not have the abilities or opportunities we need. There is something that Jesus wants us to do and in the natural it is impossible. When the

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test comes, things may look bleak for us. The answer is, look to Jesus; however, when we are in the mist of the problem it is hard to do this.

After this test, He fed the people; after they had all eaten Jesus dismissed the people. He also sent His disciple across the lake to Capernaum, but Jesus did not go with them. Later He came to the disciples in a boat, out on the lake. Jesus was walking on the water. Peter, once he realized who it was, asked to come out on the water with Jesus. As long as Peter kept His eye on Jesus he walked on the water, but when he looked at the wind and the waves he sank. This is how tests come to us, it is so easy to be successful; we must keep our eyes on Jesus. If we trust fully on His faithfulness, promises, and power there is nothing too difficult for Him. But, the wind and the waves of life try to take our eyes from Jesus and focus us on the problem, the need, or the situation and we sink.

However, we need to notice what Jesus said about the test of Philip and the need for food for the multitude, ***for He Himself knew what He would do.*** We can trust Jesus with the answer, even before the test, Jesus knows what He will do. He is able and willing to do what He promises and this should give us great encouragement to bring our requests to Him and trust Him for the answers.

If you and I are going to be effective in prayer, one of the tests we will face will concern people. Answers to prayers are not about the money, the building, the clothes, the things of life, it is about people. There is no need for any of the stuff of life except for how it concerns people. There is no need for money except to meet the needs of people. There is no need for a building except to meet the needs of people. There is no need for clothes except to meet the needs of people. This is true for all needs of life; the answer to the need is for helping people. The test for Philip was for food, but the food was only important for the people of the multitude. When our prayers are not about helping people, meeting the needs of people, bringing faith and salvation to people then we weaken our prayers and may make them of no effect.

Paul models this for us in this prayer from Romans. First he prays and his power in prayer is through Jesus Christ, but he is successful because he prays for people. Without ceasing Paul asked God if he could go and see the Romans. Why did Paul want to go to Rome? Was it to add a stamp on his passport? Was it to get away from the problems and cares of the day? No, he longed, ***to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established-- that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me*** (Romans 1:11-12 (NKJV)).

Paul poured out his heart in prayer, he was tested often, he prayed always, for these people at Rome. His witness to us is supported by, God as his witness that he longed to be a blessing to the Romans. His example is a great lesson for us. Every day we meet people, every day we have opportunities to pray. Some people we will like and some we may not, but the question is how will we respond to these opportunities? Will we pick and choose who comes to our dinner party; that is who we pray for? Will we get caught up in praying for things instead of for people (remember things are for people)? Paul always prayed and Jesus always prays; what about you and me? Can we say, “***For God***

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is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers”Romans 1:9 (NKJV).

This is the test that is before us. Will we pray? Jesus already knows what He is going to do; He is going to pray for people and meet their needs. Will we join with Him? This week examine your prayers. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you and review with you what you pray and for whom you pray. Do you need to make changes? The wind and waves of life will be boisterous all around you, giving you cause to sink from this test, but if we keep our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith we can pass this test and pray. The world is waiting, desperate for prayer, their needs only God can meet and He has asked you to pray. Remember He knows what He is going to do, but He gives you a test, asking you what should be done. Pass the test, pray!

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV)

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

1 John 2:1-6 (NKJV)

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 1 John 2:9-11 (NKJV)

Let us Pray!

A Call for Prayer

Pray for Israel. Pray for the safety of the people of Israel. Pray for protection from the nations of the world aligning against Israel. Pray for salvation to come to the Jews.

Pray for the Lost. Pray for men and women to come to know Jesus as Lord. Pray for outreaches to the lost. Pray for bold ministry to people, both to the lovely and to those that are not our first choice to invite to dinner.

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Pray for young people. Pray for children in schools like the one in Brazil run by Joyce Abrahamson. Also pray for the children of our churches, there is great pressure on them to go the way of the world. Pray for ministry and outreach to young people in the world. Those children far from God are only an answered prayer from being saints.

Basic Prayer Focus

Pray for Israel and the Peace of Jerusalem
Pray for the reaching of Souls from Every Nation
Pray for the government of your country
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

Lori Farquhar – Children’s Ministry Director

Jacek Gromadzki – Pastor of a church in Kolobrzeg, Poland

Marek Kaminski – Pastor of a 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 a 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 a church in Cedaredge, Colorado

Charles and Janice Wilson – Pastors in Wyola, Montana

David Williamson – Editor of *Voice of Thanksgiving*

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Voice of Thanksgiving is published in a weekly version in English. *Voice of Thanksgiving* is also published monthly in German and Polish and is available in book form, *Prayer: A Force that Causes Change – A Call to Prayer*.

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