

Voice of Thanksgiving

Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer

For the Week of July 26, 2009

Prayer, and more prayer, adds to the fighting qualities and the more certain victories of God's good fighting-men. The power of prayer is most forceful on the battle-field amid the din and strife of the conflict. Paul was preeminently a soldier of the Cross. For him, life was no flowery bed of ease. He was no dress-parade, holiday soldier, whose only business was to don a uniform on set occasions. His was a life of intense conflict, the facing of many adversaries, the exercise of unsleeping vigilance and constant effort. And, at its close—in sight of the end—we hear him chanting his final song of victory, "I have fought a good fight," and reading between the lines, we see that he is more than conqueror!

From *Necessity of Prayer* by E. M. Bounds

The Life of Prayer

Closed Doors

David Williamson

We just got back from the grocery store. To make it easier to carry the bags of groceries from our car to the house, we propped the storm door open. Just before we closed the door a house finch made a wrong turn and came in to our porch. Although the door was still open the finch could not find the opening. The windows looked like a good way to escape, but it proved impossible for a bird to pass that way. We were not sure what to do; we did not want to hurt the bird, but knew it needed to get out. It also was great to sit and watch this finch up close. Finally after trying to find an opening through many of the windows of our porch, the finch saw the open door and flew off.

For the last few weeks we have looked at the importance of open doors and the components of using an open door opportunity. However, for this finch that came on our porch, and often for people as well, what is needed is not an open door, they need a closed door. If the door had been closed, when the finch first came near the porch, then there would not have been those terrifying moments of captivity. Equally important is the closed door for people. We tend to get excited about open doors and praying for doors to open can be a very important part of a successful Christian life. Praying for open doors is a necessary part of an effective prayer life. However, there are times when it is important to have doors closed.

One such time is dealing with the past. All of us have things we have said and done that are not good. We have sown unrighteousness, sin, and evil; we have reaped or will reap the things we have sown. We must deal with this aspect of life. The grace of God is available to help us. Part of the goodness of God is His willingness to forgive.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

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The beauty and value of forgiveness is illustrated by the story of the Prodigal Son. In this story the process of repentance is presented as well as the great love, mercy, and grace of our Father. In this story we also see one of the values of the closed door, closing the door on our past.

Repentance has two parts; they correspond with the Hebrew and Greek words for translated into English as repentance. First in Hebrew, repentance requires a change of mind. The Prodigal Son “came to himself”. This was a change of mind. The second part is the Greek word for repentance it requires a change of direction. We must act on our change of mind. It is not enough to just say I am sorry; we must have a change in our thinking and in our actions. We must come to the place where we do not want to do the things or think the way we did. My thinking, planning, understanding, and wisdom must change, I long to be like Jesus and fully seek God and His righteousness. Then, with this new way of thinking, I must act. I cannot continue to act as I did before I had a new way of thinking. The Prodigal Son “came to himself” and then he acted. Our new actions are not just random acts, but should be in line with God’s word and will in the area of repentance. Our new thinking and acting is to be that of an obedient son or daughter, seeking to do God’s will.

But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Luke 15:17-20 (NKJV)

The Prodigal Son went back to his father to be a servant; his father received him back as his son. Our Heavenly Father, like the father in the story, is out looking for us every day and would love to receive us back in whatever area we need have repentance. This is a wonderful thing, far better than the best the world has to offer with its therapy sessions, step programs, and government plans and entitlements. Our Father takes us back as part of His family, joint heirs with Jesus!

There is more to this. To be successful we need to close the door. When we have repented, both thinking and actions, we then need to close the door on the past. It would have been easy for the son of the story to consider himself as no longer part of the family. He could have been viewed as some sort of second class part of the family or even as a servant as he had planned. His brother tried to make a case for some negative position.

So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' Luke 15:29-30 (NKJV)

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After we repent, our past will try to return and destroy our life. This is one of the ways the devil works to hinder the working of God in our life. He hates God and does not want anything associated with God to succeed. If we walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus, if we walk in God's provision and blessing, this brings glory to God and makes the devil mad. The devil will use many means to stop God's blessing; one very common method is using our past.

If we leave the door open, the devil will remind us of all the bad things we have done. He will explain that we are not worthy of receiving the blessings of God. The devil will throw anything he can at us to get us to doubt what God has said. To fight this we need to close the door. We need to say and act on what God has said and done. The past is past! I am now living in the present, in the presence of God and His forgiveness. The past is buried in the blood of Jesus and is no longer a part of my life. We must shut the door.

A second area where the closed door is important is dealing with our soul. The soul includes the mind, will, and emotions. These areas were not born again like our spirit, they must be transformed. Too often we are conformed to the ways of the world, we act, think, and talk like the world. It is no wonder that we have problems like the world. We must close the door on the worldly input into our soul. With that input closed off, we can receive the renewing of the Word of God and be transformed. By renewing our mind and thinking God's thought after Him, acting as God directs, and we can be blessed as God longs to bless us. We close this door by prayer and meditating on the Word of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

Another area of need for the closed door is the wall or hedge around our life. Our heart is much like a field in this area. A good farmer will put a hedge or wall around his field to protect against attack. The field where the walls are broken down or it has gaps, is open to many attacks and likely will have great problems or even fail. In the natural, time and effort must be spent protecting the field; the same is true for our heart. The Devil is looking for ways to attack Christians and destroy their work and testimony. He is searching for gaps in their hedge.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV)

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When Jesus was tempted by the devil, Jesus overcame the devil by the Word. Matthew's Gospel mentions that after he had tempted Jesus, the devil left Him, until an opportune time. Christians, with gaps in their hedges, with parts of their walls down, present opportune times to the devil. He is always finding openings through which to attack. We need to close the door for attacks by filling the gaps and build up our walls. Success in the Christian life requires our dealing with the hedge and wall around our heart. A strong and effect hedge around our heart, protects our heart and gives us opportunities to pray effectively.

In our ministry of prayer, praying for closed doors is very important. As parents we know we should be praying regularly for the closed door for our children, just as we pray for open doors. We pray for open doors of opportunity for them and closed doors for protection. We need to be praying these same prayers for others. The opportunities of life require the open door of opportunity, complete with being it the right place at the right time, having a right mind, and with the resources to step through the door. These same opportunities require prayer for closed doors so we are not unable or prohibited from making use of the opportunity. We must keep our past from swamping us, we must keep our soul with all diligence, and we must protect our heart. These protections come from closed doors. Let us pray for opportunities and success by praying for open doors and closed doors.

Let us Pray!

A Call for Prayer

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem Pray for the Jewish people and their homeland. Pray for peace that comes through knowing the Messiah. Pray for hearts to be softened so when He is revealed, they will receive Him. Pray for understanding and wisdom so they will respond to His gift of salvation and life.

Pray for Churches Pray for your church and others, such as the churches listed on the section *Continuing Faithful in Prayer*. Churches that preach the Gospel are under fire in many places. The world does not like to hear the message and works to keep others from hearing so it attacks churches. Pray for protection, for provision, and for people. Pray for closed doors to the attacks of people, governments, and the devil. Pray for open doors of opportunity for the Gospel to reach and change people.

Basic Prayer Focus

Remember to be always in prayer for the following:

For Israel and the Peace of Jerusalem

For the reaching of souls from every nation

For governments of your country and other countries to be open to the Gospel

For your home Church and the people of the church and community

Voice of Thanksgiving

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Continuing Faithful in Prayer

Remember to be in prayer for these ministers and ministries. Ask the Holy Spirit to each week guide and direct the specifics of 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 (Bill) 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.

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Prayer: A Force that Causes Change – Volume 1 – A Call to Prayer

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