

Voice of Thanksgiving

Calling a Company of Believers Together for Prayer

For the Week of November 29, 2009

“If pain afflict or wrongs oppress, If cares distract, or fears dismay; If guilt deject, or sin distress, In every case still watch and pray.” E. M. Bounds

The Life of Prayer

Prayer Mask

David Williamson

Several times each year, students from the high school where I worked, presented a play or musical. Last spring the play presented was a western. There were not enough male students for all the male parts. One of the larger parts was that of the sheriff and this role was played by a female student. With her hair pulled back and tucked under her cowboy hat and a big paste on mustache, she looked the part. She is a good actor and did a great job with this role. After the play all of the members of the cast, still in costume, and stage crew come out to the lobby of the auditorium to meet with parents and visitors. This is always a fun time with students and parents glowing with the excitement of the completed production. As an administrator of the school I was there to support the students and to supervise the event and enjoy time with the students.

The girl who played the sheriff greeted her family members and several friends and then came to see me. In character as the sheriff she said in her gruff voice, “Thank you for coming tonight. I am happy you are here, but my mustache is better than yours!” Her handlebar mustache was very impressive and I had to agree that her mustache was better than mine. We laughed about this and then about once a week throughout the rest of the year, she would come up to me in the hallway and remind me that her mustache was better. One time as we joked back and forth, I teased her that her mustache was better, but mine was real.

We live in a time when people love the show. People like to put on a show and give the impression of success. The image has become more important than reality and if a person can look successful, then they are viewed as being successful, even if everything is falling apart. It is common today for people to put on a mask of wealth, strength, beauty, power, or influence, and give the impression that this is who we are. Much of life today is working on presenting the impression. We want things that make us look good.

Everyone is affected by this problem. At work or play, presenting an image drives life. Some people recognize this mess and try to stay out from under its control. However, this is very difficult because the trouble is everywhere; the pressures of the presented image are even prevalent in the Church. Often even the choice of a church to attend is directed by striving for a good image. What we say and do is governed by how we will look and how it will affect our image. This even affects our

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prayer life. It is easy to take a role in prayer and present an image of whom or what you want to look like over whom or what you are.

We easily recognize this in others, they talk different in prayer; they act different at the prayer meeting. Sometimes this is blatant, other times it is subtle and hidden, but their prayers and prayer life is style over substance, image over reality. They put up an image that is not the real person that they are at other times. They are like the girl in the play with the better mustache than I have, but her mustache was not real.

Let me give you an example of three roles of people in prayer. For this I will use a well known story from the Bible, Jesus tells us the story of the Prodigal Son. The role options are, the Prodigal Son when he got his inheritance, the older brother, or the Prodigal Son when he returned to his father.

The Prodigal Son took all that was his. In the division of property the portion for the older son and for all other sons was set by specific rules. The Older son got a double portion, but he also received responsibility for taking care of his father and the household. The Prodigal Son did not steal, but took what would be his. He took it not for the glory of his father that is to be a successful son; he took his portion to consume it on the things he lusted for.

And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. Luke 15:12 (NKJV)

The older brother wore the mask of religion; he worked hard, but also made sure that everyone knew he worked hard. He worked hard, but it was a duty. His wage was what was due to him for his work. His work gave him an image of being successful, but he did not have real success. His work was not for the glory of his father that is to be a successful son. So while he was rich, he failed to receive the blessing that could have been His.

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.' Luke 15:29 (NKJV)

Too often people take on a form of one of these roles in their prayers and prayer life. Among the people who do pray, there are people who want prayer to be like a good credit card from a rich uncle, card with unlimited usage and unlimited balance. People never admit this, being careful to adorn their prayers with good sounding religious words and pious expressions. However, their prayers, even their prayers for other people, are just a mask. Their true desire and fervency in prayer is reserved for getting what they want.

Please note that God desires to bless us, He is pleased to see His children prosper in all things (see 3 John 1:2), but what is our priority and heart attitude? Jesus commands seeking first the things of God over our personal wants and needs. We need to ask ourselves: Are we like the Prodigal Son.

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Making our demands and seeking first our wants? Does this type of covetousness reside in us? Are our prayers tainted with seeking our good first and foremost?

The second role, the older brother type, is also very common. He is an example of a person caught up into religion, a religion of works. He is earning his way to what he wants. Did you notice what he says, “***I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time.***” He is all about rules and work. He also sees himself as righteous because of what he has done. This is the mask of religion; people working and trusting in their rules and position.

In prayer this is common as well. Jesus spoke of this position in relationship to prayer, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The Pharisee prayed, “**God I thank you that I am not like other men.**” This is just like what the older brother was expressing. Thank God I am not like that other son, how can you honor him. The older son’s perceived righteousness was based on what he did. In prayer this position may be covered by good sounding prayers, but the heart is proud of self. The position and various other expressions of this position are forms of hypocrisy.

Our English words hypocrite and hypocrisy are derived directly from the Greek word *hupokrites*, which means “actor.” This is the essence of hypocrisy: putting on a religious act. Probably no sin is more common among religious people than hypocrisy. In fact some forms of religion almost demand it. From *Rules of Engagement* by Derek Prince

There is a third position we can take. The Prodigal Son when he returned and chose to be a servant. Before he could ask for a position as a servant, he was restored by his father, as a son, but the heart attitude came without the pride of life because he was seeking to be a servant. Suddenly, by the actions of the father, this son has taken on two of the most powerful roles possible in life and prayer, servant and son. Jesus walked in these two and has made provision so we can walk in them as well.

Walking honestly and fully in these roles is an important key to success in prayer. God has made us to be a son or daughter, this is not something we can earn, but is a gift from God by grace. There is no position that can compare to this. Jesus is seated beside the Father in Heaven, and we as joint heirs with Him, are seated with Him. Jesus’ role as son is to ever live to make intercession for people. He is asking the Father for us. Our role as sons and daughters is to join in His intercession and ask of the Father. The successful son or daughter does all to the glory of the Father.

Jesus chose to be a servant. One of the interesting positions in a Jewish home was the position of a servant. There is much we can learn by studying this position, but for this application we take one small part. If a servant chose he could choose to be a bondservant. The master would bore through his ear with an awl place there a ring and the servant would serve the master forever (see Exodus 21:5-6 and Deuteronomy 15:16-17). This is what Jesus did, He is a Son and a servant forever and we are invited to join with Him. A servant does not choose his work, he serves. A servant has no glory in himself; his glory is in the success and glory of the Father.

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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." ' Luke 15:18-19 (NKJV)

Which of these roles best describes you in prayer? Unless we are careful, our prayer life can be consumed with the covetousness of this consumer world. Unless we take vigilant care, our prayer life will be religious pretence and show. Either or both of these will render powerless our prayers. However, we can be like the returning Prodigal Son and choose to be a servant and let God make us sons or daughters. The true servant and son role, well played, yields great answers to prayer.

So how can we have more of the servant and son and less of covetousness and religious pretense? There are many things we can do, but here I will mention just three. If we work at these three we can have great success in removing hypocrisy from our prayer life and prayers.

To start with, the servant son or servant daughter will desire God's will over our own will. This is so logical; God knows all and His will is for our best interest, so why would we seek our own will? This is a big question, but note three basic answers. First, I do not know, trust, or believe that God has my best interest in mind. Second, is rebellion, mankind has, since the time in the Garden of Eden, sought to do its own thing. The third is closely tied with the second, it is pride. People love to congratulate themselves because of something one is, has or has done or achieved. Yielding to God's will is a battle best fought with the aid, direction, and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Every day, often several times a day we must be tested and seek God's will over our own. Jesus was tested in the wilderness and the Devil is looking for opportune times to test you.

Secondly, the servant son or servant daughter will seek the truth. This is a big problem today. People claim almost anything as truth. Black is called white and black and lies are called truth. Truth for many people is what ever they want to call truth and so all foundations and standards for individuals, families, groups, and institutions have been broken down. Without the walls of truth protecting us, we are open to a wide range of attacks by the Devil, and he is having a field day. Jesus is the living Word of God and the Bible is the written Word of God and they always agree and are truth. Seeking truth frees us from deception and trickery that leads men and women astray. Truth guides us and protects us, but only if we are honestly seek truth.

And third, the servant son or servant daughter will do all for the Glory of God. This should be our goal and our measuring rod. The goal of our life is to be like Jesus and do all for the glory of God. And this is to be the measuring rod of testing the success of our walk with Him. This is imperative in our daily walk, and if we desire success in prayer, it must be true in our prayer life. If we test all we say and do by this measure, is this done or said to the glory of God, we will walk in servant hood and son ship?

Let us Pray!

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A Call for Prayer

Pray for Marianne and David Dean – Pray for more men to be actively and regularly involved in the graduates and young professionals' fellowship. Pray for the upcoming service project Christmas program at local old folks home. Pray for wisdom in parenting for David and Marianne.

Pray for Mark Spencer – Pray that his three books, *A Portrait of Intercession*, *The Cry for Spiritual Reality* and *Surely God Will Do Me Good*, which have just gone to the publisher, may be used by the Lord for His purposes and glory.

Continue Faithful in Prayer

Please pray; your faithful prayers change situations, remove hindrances, and empower ministry

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

Joyce Abrahamson – Head of a Christian 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 – Bishop of Poland and co-founder and leader of the 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 – Writer and editor of *Voice of Thanksgiving*

Calling Christians to Effective Fervent Prayer

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