

PRAYER IS THE MIGHTIEST FORCE • II CHRON. 7:14



Challenging Christians to Pray — April 2008

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*“Intercessors are like eagles, they don’t flock,
you find them one at a time.”*

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Agony of Intercession

Matthew Skariah

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

(Isaiah 62:6-7)

How many of us have given any thoughts to the ministry of intercession? What does it mean to be a watchman on the wall? Do we accept God’s clarion call to weep over a lost world? How can we read the probing words of the prophet and refuse to turn the searchlight on ourselves without being convicted of our paltry prayer life? To a large number of people, prayer has become more of a duty, than a joy; there is no nearness of God when they pray. Most of our prayers are so mechanical, there is no asceticism, no intensity and no depth. Today, we’re trading the glory of God for a dog and phony show. Soul-travail has been placed on the back-burner by many churches and preachers. Oh, they believe it, and have the latest books on prayer in their library to prove it, but do they really travail and agonize? Why is there such an aversion to soul-travail? This article is meant to ‘provoke’ you to PRAYER, not anger.

As Christians, for too long we’ve paid lip service to the power of intercession. Now it’s time to put

our money where our heart is and meet with God in the ‘prayer furnace.’ In many churches, prayer meeting is virtually extinct and mere theological reference is being made to the power of prayer. Today’s church promotes all kinds of programs, seminars and book studies, but not prayer. Why? I have a hunch. Because it would never draw the crowd and the turn out would be so pitiful and embarrassing. To some degree, today’s evangelical Christianity is more into holistic spirituality and the promotion of Christian narcissism.

The Prayer Furnace speaks death to the person of self and pleasure. In agonizing prayer, one comes to know how insignificant he really is when compared to the holiness of God. Today we depend too much on the arm of the flesh. The tenacity to stand, to fight, to conquer and to drive the foe from the field will be discovered by those who spend much time in the Prayer Furnace. Today’s Church is filled with “casual worshipers, and religious excursionists” who think they can rush into the presence of the living God and treat Him as if He is their best buddy. May I remind you

that He is high and holy and lifted up. Suppose, if our Lord should make an appearance in our church next Sunday morning, nobody should rush up to Him to shake His hand, no one should be too eager to chat with Him. The moment we see Him in all His glory, we should go down on our faces before Him. For example, John, the apostle was beloved of God and was very familiar with the Master. But, dear friend, when he saw the glorified Christ on the Isle of Patmos, he fell at His feet as if dead (Rev. 1:17). He knew the true meaning of ‘reverential worship’ and did not rush into His holy presence. Beloved, our God is infinite and holy and pure. He speaks in the stillness. When we wait upon the Lord in the ‘Prayer

Furnace,’ it gives us the opportunity to forge an intimate union with Him, and exhilarate our spiritual passion. Let’s pray with real urgency

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and importunity! Importunity invites God's intervention. Imagine, God, the creator asks us to wait in His presence with a sense of awe and pure delight. Every life needs a 'prayer altar'! What we whisper in the prayer closet shall be reverberated from the housetops. Yes, when we spend time in the closet, others may not see or applaud us but the impact of our prayers will be felt around the world. We may never go beyond one room, and yet we may become one of the most awesome forces for good in our country and in the world. We may never see the powerful work we do, but God sees it, evil sees it. Oh, it is a blessed life, the life of the one who stays in the furnace. It is amazing how many people would love to claim the victory when they have never been in battle. If we would know what ignites our passion for Christ, we must certainly pass through the fire of His holiness.

Does not the sin of our nation and the world, ever "slouching toward Sodom and Gomorrah," propel us to plead with God for renewal and restoration? Does not the present-day carnality among God's people cause us to agonize before the God of heaven Who alone has the power to awaken us from our ubiquitous slumber? The lack of perseverance in the 'prayer closet' holds back the blessings of God. Let's cry mightily unto the God of heaven: "O, Lord, my house is in ruin, my church is lukewarm, my nation is rebellious, please come and repair them." Where is the "mourners' bench" in our churches! Let's not talk about "spiritual awakening" unless we're willing to light up the 'prayer furnace' in our churches and homes.

The 'Ministry of intercession' is the steadfast, unflinching desire to sacrifice personal comforts

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and run risk and not be sidetracked by seminars and programs that are popular among generic Christians. It is in the 'prayer furnace' we come to know God and ourselves better than any of our earthly friends. The praying people don't wait for the next evangelical program or book to sweep us into glory. Prayer is more about knowing God than getting things or enlarging one's territory. Seeking God's face is not a matter of spending two minutes a day asking Him to bless us. It means waiting in His presence until we're inebriated with His majestic presence.

The healing power of prayer is immeasurable. People of God don't panic but pray. Let's rise to higher heights than we have known before. Prayer is inestimable. So keep on praying, incessantly. The moral climate of America needs our prayers now. So let's live prayerfully, not fearfully. Let's cry out to our Father and we will be heard. Suffice it to say, there is a loving and caring Father who waits to hear from His children. Oh, Lord, build the "fires of passion," in our hearts and set our lives ablaze with Your majestic presence as we wait upon You in the 'Prayer Furnace.' Preachers and fellow Christians, please do not despise or minimize the ministry of prayer. Intercession is quintessential to the survival of the modern church.

Intercession is not fluff and bluff. It is not pabulum, or over-cooked, pre-digested and filtered religious fast food, dished out to provide minimum satisfaction to maximum number of religious customers. Intercession is always satisfying and up-lifting. What is the secret of intercession? Perseverance and passion, of course!

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We're long on sermons and seminars but short on intercession. One should never approach "intercession" on the basis of easy emotionalism, fuzzy feeling or cheap sentimentality. Intercession is touching the hand that touches the world.

What we applaud is what we approve. What we approve is what we celebrate. When we turn our back on the “God of Glory,” we remove all fences of moral responsibility. When we break the laws of God we only break ourselves.

When conscience is removed—hell is leashed. Secularism has managed to push conscience aside by ways beyond our imagination. The devil has used pseudo learning to convince many in our society and even some Christians that “ethics, morality and decency” are a carry-over from the puritanical era, and therefore, we can joke about conscience. Our society is inundated with sacrilegious jokesters, and no wonder our conscience has gone into deep sleep. Hitler wanted to raise a generation of young people devoid of conscience. Today, our conscience has gone into deep sleep and America has lost her moral mirror.

The ultimate test of our civilization is what we do with our children. For example, Manasseh, the king led an entire

CULTURE WATCH

Seared Conscience

by Matthew Skariah

nation away from God. He was only 12 years of age when he began to reign. On the other hand, Josiah, was crowned king at the age of 8, and he reigned in Jerusalem 31 years. At the age of 16 he began to seek the Lord, and purged Judah/Jerusalem and cut down the high

places. He repaired the house of the Lord in the eighteenth year of his reign. He challenged the spiritual leadership of the nation. The book of the law was discovered and gave it to the people. The book of the law provided moral foundation to the nation. Furthermore, he restored the integrity of worship.

America must return to the precepts of the Holy Book, the Bible. The Word of the Lord does not change. God’s truth cannot be destroyed. Daniel Webster, America’s foremost orator was profound when he said: “If we abide by the laws that are taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering, but if we go against God’s written and revealed Word, no man can tell the sudden catastrophe that may overwhelm us.” Is it any wonder?

Do not laugh at something that God takes seriously. Conscience is God’s gift to man. Do not blow up the boiler!

VOICE FROM THE PAST

A Prayer of St. Augustine

BEFORE thy eyes, O Lord, we bring our sins, and with them compare the stripes we have received.

If we weigh the evil we have done, we find what we suffer to be much less than what we deserve. What we have committed, far outweighs what we endure.

We feel the punishment of sin, and yet we turn not from our willfulness of sinning. Our diseased mind is racked with pain; and our neck is as stiff as ever.

Our life is spent in sighs and grief; in our actions we are not reformed. When we are chastised, we acknowledge what we

have done; but when thy visitation is over, we forget what we have wept for.

Here, O Lord, are thy criminals, confessing their guilt; we know, that unless thou forgive, thou mayest justly destroy us.

Grant without merit, what we ask, O Almighty Father: who out of nothing didst ask thee; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

St. Augustine (353-430)

Bishop of Hippo

Universally esteemed Scholar

and a humble follower of Christ

Conquer, the Unconquerable Christ by Matthew Skariah

People in general, have baptized themselves with the “oil of self-sufficiency and self-importance.”

It is ludicrous to suggest that man is self-sufficient; man is not self-sufficient for any of his basic needs. Man is attempting to alter the human soul to fit his preferences, rather than changing his preferences to fit his soul.

Man is, in reality, like an automobile whose electrical system is disconnected. He has all the components, but they do not function. He has an inbred capacity

for immortality; he yearns for self-transcendence, a desire to exhilarate beyond and above himself. But

the more he attempts to propel himself to be the “top banana” – he is frustrated because he has not been able to conquer the unconquerable Christ. Thus, he is constantly at odds with his Maker. Let’s never forget that God alone has the power to hold infinity in the palm of His hand!

PUNCHLINE

When man argues with God, he is trying to establish his own righteousness.