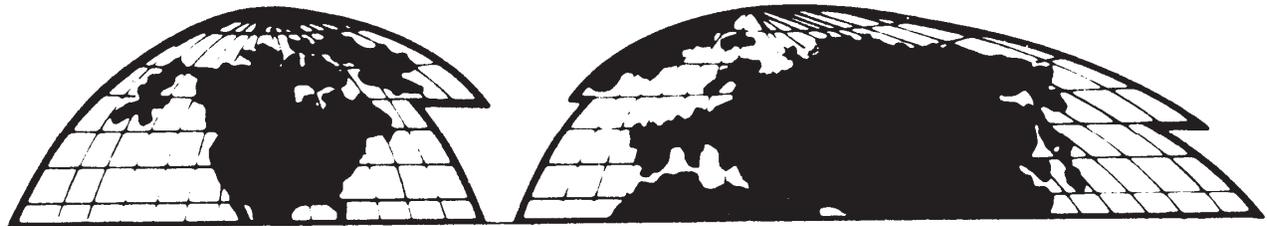
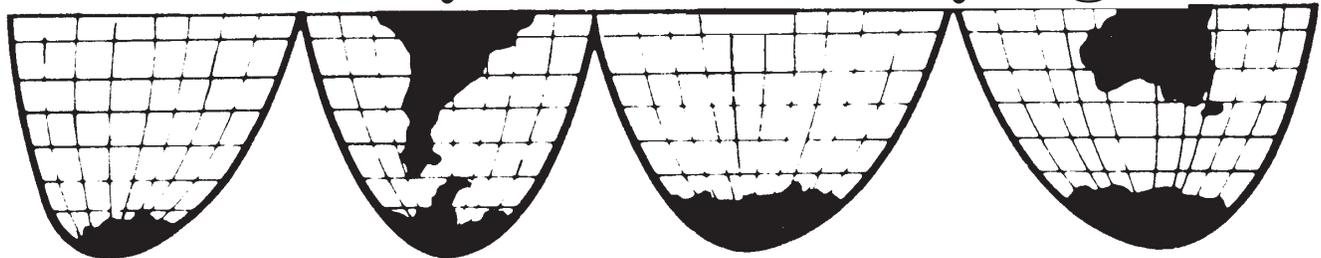


PRAYER IS THE MIGHTIEST FORCE • II CHRON. 7:14



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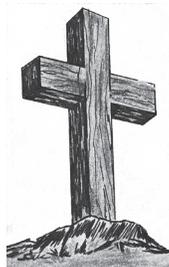


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Featured Articles In This Issue . . .

PAGE 2
A NATION
IN PERIL

PAGE 4
CULTURE
WATCH



PAGE 4
SPEAKING
CANDIDLY

PAGE 4
VOICE
FROM THE
PAST





Matthew Skariah

A Nation in Peril

Hand writings on the wall! The nation had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. What does it mean to you as a Christian? Does it seem at times that everything is squeezing in upon you? How do you react when you see the ongoing debacle of America? What can you say? What can you do? Stop for a second,

don't read any further, let your mind wander through some of history's troubling periods. Take a deep breath and see where you are at this point in history. What images do you see? Are you being devoured by the ever-increasing cascade of pessimism on television night after night? It seems to me that we are moving from a phase of great moral outrage and spiritual fervor into a phase of rather deep cynicism. What role do we play as Christians in shaping America's spiritual heritage? America must place her faith in God, not in politicians no matter how inventive or proficient they may seem, not in technology or fading materialism, or fickle people; but the Light that never flickers. Ours is a faith that never surrenders, hope that never dies, and joy that never dissipates. The liberal media in our nation is eager and ready to celebrate the demise of God, not realizing that surrender is not in our Christian Creed. Christians, stand up for your faith and quit being like children, crying over spilled milk.

Most Christians are not interested in reclaiming America's tattered spiritual tapestry. The world does its best to wear us down and hoping at some point we'll throw up our hands and quit, and that's the strategy the enemy applies and let's not be fooled. In the last several years we were introduced to a popular theology which paraded doubts and cynicism—moving from "God is winning" to "God is a problem" to a brief flirtation with "God is dead." Good and evil in the world. Who's winning? It has been said that the vital question of our time is, "Is God in charge of our affairs, or are we?" I propose there is one other vital question to ponder: "Is this God completely and victoriously on the side of truth and righteousness?"

Our nation was founded by men who believed in, and practiced the power of prayer, Benjamin Franklin, who served as the Chairman of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia said, "I have lived, Sir, a long time, the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men." No one is truly conversant in the historical affairs of man can deny what happens when Christians unite

themselves in prayer! When Christians pray together, work together, and co-operate together in the Spirit of Christ's love everything becomes possible. For years, we've placed our trust in the ability of man to save us, but man's plans have utterly failed. It is time for us to place ourselves once again in the hands of God, and in this hour of need, not to look to man, but to God and say, "In God we trust."

But many in this supposedly Christian nation are bent on rebellion and mischief, forgetting the God of their fathers. As the prophet Jeremiah said, "Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines... Why criest thou for thine affliction? Thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee" (Jeremiah 30:12-15). We're fascinated with cultural pollution; we shamelessly lift our eyes in delighted inquisitiveness. Sin attracts us but does not bother us; it raises our curiosity but does not offend us. Some Christians have grown increasingly tolerant of accepting the pernicious views of the world when it comes to morality and biblical purity and salvation through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. For example, one preacher in the South was recently fired because he insisted that Christ alone was the way of salvation. This offended those in his church that wanted him to "leave room for other systems." In this sad juncture of moral and social collapse, America needs more than "snack-bar sermons" hatched out

In this sad juncture of moral and social collapse, America needs more than "snack-bar sermons" hatched out of the brains of men who put polls above the Word of God. We do not follow a culture or system, we follow a Savior who bled and died on a cruel cross. Stand up servants of God, let your message be that grand old message of the cross, not feel-good, Mother-Hubbard, politically correct, psychosomatic, health-and-wealth, touch everything and cover nothing, New Age lectures.

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We should refuse to accept actions and words that harm society morally and socially. In the midst of a growing anti-Christian sentiment, God's people must be courageous and willing to stand firm and remain rooted in a moral and spiritual permanence. Prayer is the real dynamism that excites the believer, and

yet, how few find time for prayer—the greatest spiritual atom known to mankind. Make no mistake, the praying people will conquer. The conquering spirit is never defeated. Let's face all our trials and difficulties in the spirit of conquest. Tenacious spiritual quality is the result of inward strength and stamina, it is no exaggeration to say that "prayer passion" has died in the heart of many professing Christians. Where is the soul-passion of yester years, the broken heart, the sleepless nights, the anguish and agony, the sobs and tears? My heart aches when I write these words as I witness the moral depravity of America and

the coldness of professing Christians and preachers who only pay lip service to the power of 'prevailing prayer.' We've lost the capacity to come fervently before God; we simply use prayer as an insurance policy or an escape mechanism. What America needs at the moment is not a "National Day of Prayer" but a "National Day of Repentance and Brokenness" because we've broken the heart of Jehovah God who never breaks our heart. Western civilization is crumpling morally and spiritually because it's blatant disregard to the Word of God.

The words of President Woodrow Wilson come to mind, "We cannot redeem this society materially unless we redeem it spiritually."

History tells us how a small group of believers with a vision of the risen Lord were able to topple hate; how they had the tenacity and courage to tear down the tides of evil that have plummeted multitudes into eternal separation from God, shake off the inertia of the past and usher in a better future—a future built upon love, faith and common decency. Without doubt, this is an enviable task and God's praying people are equal to the task of praying down the awesome power of God upon this generation. Our godly predecessors knew the agony and pain of intercession. They lived it and breathed it incessantly. God did not ask us to pray because he needed our help, but because he knew that seeking His face would make us complete in Him. We do not have to have a need or catastrophe or crisis to approach the One Who loves our souls. Child of God, let's live prayerfully, not fearfully! Remember, the praying minority will never retreat from a challenge and they are always ready to wage an unrelenting torrent of prayer warfare on their knees.

I firmly believe that with the fervent and united prayers of God's people, we can reclaim and revitalize our tattered spiritual heritage. I salute the Christians who remain faithful to the idea that one day God will visit his people in mighty power—that their posterity would sing His praises. Such a day can visit America again—a day when God's praying people stand unbowed and unmoved, proud of their Christian heritage, earnest in our sacred beliefs, empowered by the blessed Holy Spirit that we can and must remain as God's positive people in a negative world. When trials come, let's keep our spirit calm and unruffled. No evil can befall us, if God is with us. To go along with every wave of secularism would deny us our proper niche to forge ahead with the Christian ideals we honor and cherish. May I remind you that those who hold pure biblical values are not antiquated or archaic thinkers—but they are reasonable and committed men and women who know how to walk in

the power of the Spirit of God. Our Christian values are the bedrock of our nation. Together, with prayer and faith, we can make a profound difference. We live as we pray.

We've every reason to be jubilant because our God reigns supreme. Intercession results in action and action makes history. Sanctified prayers are powerful spiritual atoms. What we whisper in our prayer closet shall be reverberated from the housetops. Yes, when we pray in secret, others may not see us but our prayers will be felt around the world. Don't let the world get under your skin! As Christian soldiers, we don't shift into neutral when trials come, but stand tall and face every trial in the power of the risen Lord. When the world is in turmoil, we don't sit on our laurels admiring our beautiful facilities, but rather we take the weapon of the "power of prayer" and get the ball rolling. Let's fight for our soul the way we would fight to save our heart, our mind, even our body. Let's use the weapon of the "power of prayer" NOW judiciously!

If we're to leave a legacy of spiritual passion and godly heritage to our posterity, each of us must do our part. If we want a hope-filled world, we are the force that can implement such hope in a negative world. People who experience the power of prayer daily aren't deterred by opposition or trials but are optimized and energized by it. When we do His will and walk in the power of the spirit, the mouths of critics, the legions of demons—for they will attack—will not prevail. This is the hour to blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a fast, and proclaim a day of humiliation and repentance. Do not falter. Do not be bamboozled by the world. "We shall reap, if we faint not." "If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small."

The immortal words of Dr. William Barclay, the famous British theologian worth remembering: "Look for opportunities in every difficulty rather than difficulties in every opportunity. Don't look to the bigness of your need; look to the bigness of your God." It's well worth remembering the words of our 16th President of the United States, Lincoln who said, "My great concern is not whether God is on our side, my great concern is to be on God's side." Are we on God's side, if not, we've no hope as a nation. Remember, "Where the Lord leads there is no risk." As for me, I've sworn on the altar of God to proclaim the message of the cross courageously and unapologetically. I claim no special skills, talents, or expertise but only total love and devotion to my King Who has saved me from sin. Now you know the rest of the story.

The weapon of prayer is powerful, wouldn't you say? Let's be pertinacious in our supplications to the Father. May we show no resignation on our part when it comes to faith and prayer! America is a country with extraordinary spiritual heritage with great future if we build on our proper foundation, earnestly content for the faith of our fathers and truly implements the power of prayer, and accepts the Lord's invitation, "Come now, and let's reason together."

Speaking Candidly

by Matthew Skariah

Preacher and his Praying

Preaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit is not to be confused with political/social lectures, positive thinking, global warming, health and wealth diatribe and clowning around. When I see Christian's seek humor more than the visitation of the holy One of Israel, I know we're in real trouble. Come and hear this Christian humorist—he will make you laugh and giggle and shower you with warm and fuzzy feelings. *God help us!*

Preaching that's surgical under the unction of the Holy Spirit carries within its own merit and power. Sometimes after the message, people come up to the preacher and say, "You are witty, very clever, well informed and know your stuff." Well, it's not about being witty or clever. It is about being broken, humble, obedient and reverential about being in His holy presence.

The message of the cross is not about us, it is all about Him Who bore our sins and bled and died on a cruel cross. Preaching is a 'holy art,' one that is sweetened by the holiness of God, modulated by the

*"Put the men to praying,
then politics will be cleansed,
business will be thriftier, the
Church will be holier, the home
will be sweeter."
(E. M. Bounds)*

influence of His grace and surrendered to His pristine honor and glory. Robert Murray McCheyne, the famous preacher of Dundee, Scotland, was a saintly person of prayer. In an ordination service he said to the preacher: "Give yourself to prayers and the ministry of the Word. If you do not pray, God will probably lay you aside from your ministry, as He did me, to teach you to pray."

E. M. Bounds was profound when he said, "Whenever there is little praying in the pulpit or in the pew, spiritual bankruptcy is imminent and inevitable." Is it any wonder many of our churches have filed for spiritual bankruptcy? It's very hard for the world to defeat a 'prayerful preacher' because where there is prayer there is power.

Culture Watch

by Matthew Skariah

Cunning Skepticism

Many of us who consider ourselves Christians are cunningly skeptical about God's power and the infallibility and veracity of His Word. We slander God by our constant nagging, complaining and pandering. Biblical precepts cannot be determined by the changes in our mood and culture.

The words are written—Jesus said: "It's written." It does not matter how man looks at the Word. Man can slice it, dice it and still be lost. God's Word is not subject to dissection, modification and subtraction. Isaiah said, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord stands forever." Many are trying to exclude God from their lives indi-

*What has skepticism done
for you lately?
Skepticism is a negation of our
God-infused optimism.
"God's peace is
'loving faith' at rest."*

dually and collectively. We do not have to understand God. No one does. If we understand God, then we are like Him—but we are not. God is God and man is man. Don't try to rearrange God's Word to our liking. God owes us no explanation, none whatsoever. We always would like to analyze things, explain things to our satisfaction, take things apart—piece by piece . . . but we cannot change the unchangeability of God's infallible Word, can we? Man likes to control things because it gives him power and power makes him powerful, he thinks. Death is not a man-made event. Can he (man) change the data on death; death is God's creative plan from the beginning of time. Man has no control over death, and I am sure it has become frustrating to him beyond measure.

As long as we are self-sufficient, we do not ask God for anything. God said to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country and kinsman?" Suppose, if God comes to us and say, "Give up thy success, ministry, comfortable pew and religious position?" What would we say to Him? Faith must be tested to be real. What is your faith up against just now?



Voice from the Past

I almost shrink from hearing the expression, 'the deeper life,' because so many people want to talk about it as a topic—but no one seems to want to know and love God for Himself! God is the deeper life, and as I plunge on into the knowledge of the triune God, my heart moves on into the blessedness of His fellowship. This means that there is less of me and more of God—thus my spiritual life deepens, and I am strengthened in the knowledge of His will.

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor, Author and a 20th century prophet