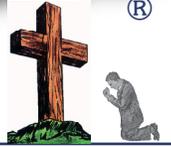




Challenging Christians to Pray

# Prayergram

September/October, 2016



## The 'Agony' of Prayer

***“And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).***

**I**n the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sought the will of His Father by entering into a spiritual activity known as **“agonizing in prayer.”** I do not think the agony of that hour can be explained in mere words; it was an unforgettable occasion in the ministry of our loving Savior. History was in the making; Son of God was in agony, and in that dark hour He sought the fellowship of His disciples, but they fell asleep. They were too tired; too weak to participate in that memorable hour. The disciples could not at first tarry, and so it is the same with many disciples today, and nothing has changed. We speak in glowing terms about **“prayer and revival,”** but when it comes to agony, we shrug our shoulder and walk away.

**The reason why so many fail in this vital ministry of ‘agony’ is because they expect to have it all without a struggle, and when situations are at their worst and the battle becomes furious, they throw in the towel.** Someone has said that there are no cheap goods in the heavenly market. Our salvation cost God the life of His beloved Son, and everything worth having in life is costly. The cost is never greater than the cross. We are soldiers of the cross, not excursionists. The altar fire is flickering or has flickered out in many of our churches. Oh, yes, we have Internet, but no inner peace; have Smart phones but no celestial communication and are well-versed in the latest religious buzz-words and slogans but far from knowing the language of Gethsemane. Someone has said, **“The demons of the world are constantly pouring water upon the altar fire; but thank God that He has his angels in the background constantly pouring ‘oil’ and keeping the flame aglow.”**

**“AGONIZE!”** What an extraordinary word for praying! What a profound word to choose in reference to prayer! It is a costly word, and consequently it is being used very sparingly. It depicts a time of sadness, sorrow, anguish and pain. It is a time of seeking nothing but the perfect will of the Father; it indicates nothing is held back. It means that there is a price to be paid in whatever activity is referred to. In this case, of course, the activity is soul-travail. This spiritual activity transcends all other activities. The word **“agonize”** is commonly used in some parts of the world by the average person when referring to someone dying. They say, “So-and-so agonized.” What an accurate description it turns out to be! When someone dies without Christ, they scream, curse, twist and turn. In one moment they cry out to God for mercy, the next they are cursing God. You can almost smell the smoke, feel the anguish, and see the flames, as they languish over a loved one. It is an awful thing to witness, but that is how multitudes meet their Maker.

Now, let’s look at the word **“REVIVAL!”** What an enthusiastic word! It is an exhilarating word among Christians. It brings out an air of excitement among God’s people at least once or twice a year. **Every time we use the word REVIVAL, we must also use the word AGONY.** Both words are

inextricably interlaced and we cannot separate one from the other. **Revival service bring out the crowd, but agonizing service disperses the crowd.** Remember, it is the agony that gives birth to revival! A great revivalist of the past, Vance Havner, once wrote, **“Today, for all our talk about religious revival, and for all our gigantic church activity, something is still missing. How often we hear that something “new” has been added to this or that. The real trouble with us is that something very “old” has been subtracted. We have the words; we have the status; we have the form; but it is all without the force.”**

Oh, dear friend, we have the “bush” all trimmed, pruned and manicured, but there is no fire in the bush! Lord, send us the fire! The slashing words of Leonard Ravenhill come to mind, **“We do not get Holy Ghost revivals “over the air” or by staging mass crusades. Babies are only born after travail. Revivals are birthed by spiritual giants, not slick talkers and golfing evangelists.”** Charles Finney was mightily used of God in revival in America, but behind him there were two unknown saints, namely Father Nash and Able Clary who supported Mr. Finney through their unrelenting prayers. Imagine, some of our mega churches inviting Father Nash and Abel Clary to speak on revivals! Such men of “agony” would disturb the status-quo, and believe me; the status-quo needs to be disturbed.

We have had too many revival services, but **isn't it time that we start having agonizing services? When we live a life of prayer, we don't wait for an occasional visit from someone to give us a spiritual stimulant concerning the “need and necessity” of “agony” in conjunction with revival.** Do we agonize with our suffering Lord? Do our prayers bleed? Our intercession must touch the point of agony. If we pray in cold blood, we are no longer the ministers of Calvary. Agony is no spiritual picnic. It is excruciating; it is enduring, and toiling with God day and night for the salvation of the lost. Agony is an experience the modern Christians often ignore; frequently bypass thinking that it is an abnormality or a spiritual deficiency in the life of the believer.

In the ministry of agony, **“we die to self”** so that we are free to live for our Lord alone. The words of A. B. Simpson come to mind. **“Lord, crowd us out by Thy fullness even as thy glory left no room for Moses in the Tabernacle.”** Beloved, the Tabernacle was not built for Moses but for Jehovah, our glorious El-Shaddai (God Almighty). **Some of the loveliest people in the world are the ones who live in obscurity. All God's men and women rose to their prominence from a point of agony. For example, Moses had his wilderness; Paul had his Arabian desert; and Hudson Taylor had five years of obscure living in one of the purest sections of London, and it was during that time, shut up in ‘agony and anguish,’ persevering in prayer—Taylor gave birth to the China Inland Mission. As Christians, far too long we've paid lip service to the power of “agonizing prayer.” Now, it is time to put our money where our mouth is and cry out to God in “anguish and agony.”**

**ABRAHAM** was an intercessor who agonized over Sodom and Gomorrah. You might recall when the judgment upon the cities of the plain was impending; there were two (2) believers who figure largely in the story. One was inside the city of Sodom, namely Lot, the other was outside the city, namely Abraham. Although Lot was vexed every day by the sin which surround him (2 Peter 2:7), we have no record of any agonizing prayer on his part on behalf of Sodom, and finally we know that God had to drag him out that he might not be involved in its doom. Oh, Beloved, just think about what is happening in the cities of America now is a ‘shocking reminder’ of what happened in Sodom!

Lot is a type of the believer who is not only in the world but knows very little holiness in practice. He is also a perfect picture of the average Church member who has no prayer burdens when asked for prayer concerns. **We have too many religious experts who are able to name all the sins of America and the world, and yet unwilling to “AGONIZE” over a nation that is about to be withered away spiritually. America is a wounded nation and her wounds need to be healed and only God can lift her from the “moral and spiritual” morass into which she is sinking daily. It is time that every gospel preacher should “weep between the porch and the altar” crying, “Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them” (Joel 2:17). Abraham didn't condem**

**Sodom, but interceded for its restoration. It was left to 'faithful and praying' Abraham, the separated one, to agonize over Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-33).**

Beloved, we must, in practice and in principle, be outside the enemy's camp if we wish to accomplish anything for those who are still inside the camp. Christians must learn to separate themselves from the sins of the world without losing their compassion for sinners. Will you agonize for your church, community, nation and the world? Will you act in time? God forbid that we should fall in this critical hour when our nation is in moral peril!

The destiny of our nation and the world depends upon the prayers of God's faithful and praying minority. **"Agony is the prelude to ecstasy, and pain is the only gateway to praise."** Our ongoing participation in His agony makes us beneficiaries of His strength and power. Can a woman bring forth a child without pain? Can we obtain grape juice without crushing the grapes? Can we receive elevation without humiliation? May I say this truth without being misunderstood, today; many Christians are far more interested the "exhilaration of Pentecost" than the "agony of Gethsemane."

**Beloved, if your calling in God's service is an obscure one. please do not fret, do not be disheartened, and do not attempt to circumvent the will of God, if He has chosen you for such 'ministry of agony.'** The time will come when rewards are given by our Lord, as though some folks may be puzzled and shocked how you (an unknown servant of God) came to merit such a reward, as they had never heard of you before. God knows who you are, and that's all it matters in the final analyses! Lord, please deliver us from the 'dreadful sin' of comparing ourselves with others!

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*Christians who complain that 'agonizing prayer' is too painful; it's simply because they've lost their hunger for God! Agony is, therefore, a blessed spiritual exercise!*

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BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Durant, Oklahoma  
**Oct. 2-7**  
Anthony Williams  
*Pastor*

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WITH  
MATTHEW  
SKARIAH**

**MIDDLE EAST  
PRAYER CONFERENCE**  
**DEC. 2-3**  
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**FILLING THE VOID  
MINISTRY RETREAT**  
**Oct. 21-23**  
Lake House,  
Fort Gipson, OK

**SOUTH INDIA  
PRAYER CONFERENCE**  
**DEC. 9-10**  
Kumbanad,  
Kerala State, India

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## ***Voice from The Past***

"Bring on the fire and the cross. Bring on the packs of wild beasts. Let there be breaking and dislocating of my bones and severing of my limbs. Bring on the mutilation of my whole body. In fact, bring on all the diabolical tortures of Satan. Only let me attain to Jesus Christ! I would rather die for Jesus Christ than to reign over the ends of the entire earth."

—St. Ignatius, first bishop (overseer) of Antioch,  
Companion of the Apostle John

**Note:** Shortly after penning the above words, Ignatius was brought before a screaming mob in the Coliseum of Rome, where he was torn to pieces by wild animals. Remember, surrender is not in our Christian lexicon. We will go down fighting for the cause of our Lord, and the cost is never greater than the cross. **Those who live in Christ shall never die.**

For more on the subject of Agonizing Prayer, read Matthew Skariah's best selling and heart-warming book, *Talk Less and Pray More*

**ABOUT THE BOOK**

*Talk Less and Pray More* sets an undeniable standard for the practice of prayer. Here is a probing book on prayer that tells it like it really is. This book debunks the myth about conventional religious wisdom on prayer. Enjoy it.

— *The Author*

**FROM THE FOREWORD**

The title of the book, *Talk Less and Pray More* is a challenge by itself. The substance of this book should be digested and demonstrated. Read it and be blessed.

—*Rev. Leonard Ravenhill*

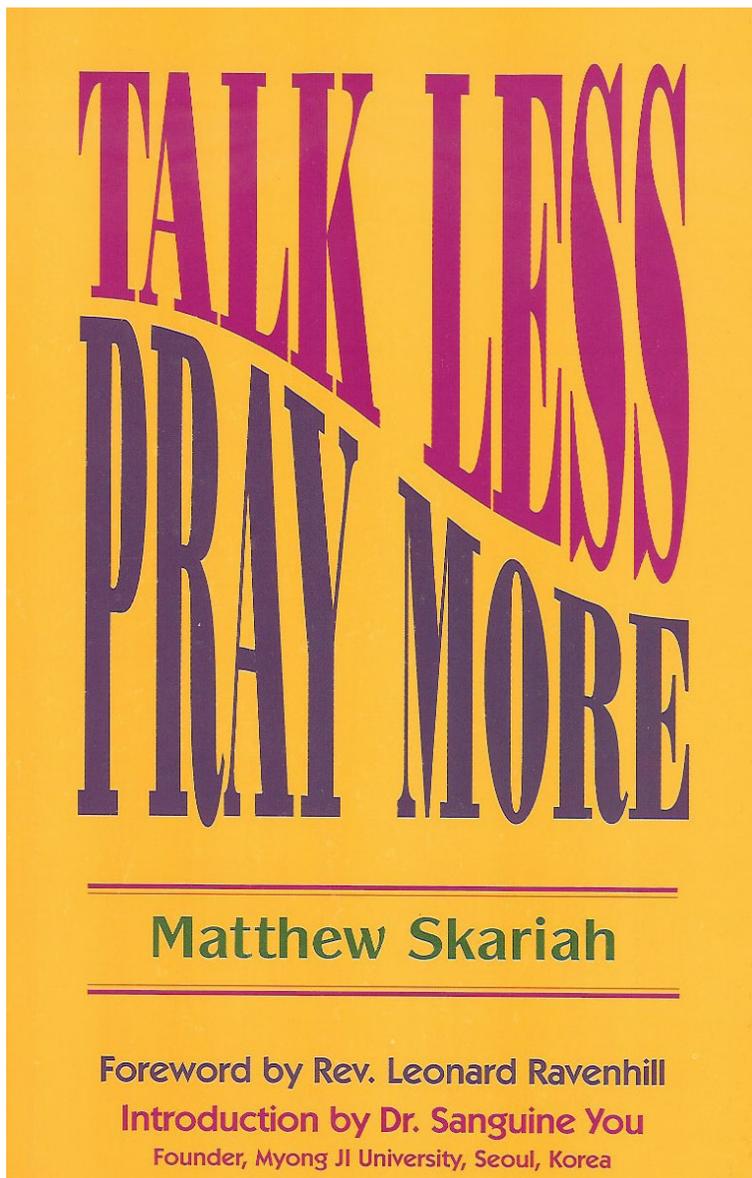
International Author on Prayer and Revival

**FROM THE INTRODUCTION**

Matthew Skariah explains kindly, impressively and systematically the meaning and importance of prayer. I must say that this book should be read by all Christians.

—*Sanguine You, Ph.D. LL.D.*

Founder, Myong Ji University, Seoul, Korea



**TO ORDER THIS AND OTHER BOOKS**

**By Matthew Skariah**

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