



Open Water Ministries

~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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Worship Music

[I Want The People To See Jesus In Me- Carroll Roberson](#)

[I Will Follow Him- Carroll Roberson](#)

[One Pair Of Hands- Carroll Roberson](#)

[How Great Thou Art- Carroll Roberson](#)

Prayer

Lord, I am sorry for the times I've allowed my anger to rise up and take control of me. I realize that I have no excuse, for the Spirit of God inside me is present to restrain me and to produce the fruit of the Spirit in me. I now see that I have opened the door to the devil in the past by allowing wrong attitudes to be pervasive in my life. I want to shut the door to the devil so he can no longer find access to me, to my family, to my business, to my church, or to any part of my life. To shut that door tight, I am asking You to help me remove uncontrolled anger from my life, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

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Francis Chan

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If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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1 SAMUEL TOLD Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel. Now listen and heed the words of the Lord. 2 Thus says the Lord of hosts, I have considered and will punish what Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him in the way when [Israel] came out of Egypt. 3 Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey. 4 So Saul assembled the men and numbered them at Telaim—200,000 men on foot and 10,000 men of Judah. 5 And Saul came to the city of Amalek and laid wait in the valley. 6 Saul warned the Kenites, Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7 Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8 And he took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, though he utterly destroyed all the rest of the people with the sword. 9 Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but all that was undesirable or worthless they destroyed utterly. 10 Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, 11 I regret making Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not performed My commands. And Samuel was grieved and angry [with Saul], and he cried to the Lord all night. 12 When Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, he was told, Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up for himself a monument or trophy [of his victory] and passed on and went down to Gilgal. 13 And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the Lord. I have performed what the Lord ordered. 14 And Samuel said, What then means this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15 Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16 Then Samuel said to Saul, Stop! I will tell you what the Lord said to me tonight. Saul said to him, Say on. 17 Samuel said, When you were small in your own sight, were you not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed you king over Israel? 18 And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites; and fight against them until they are consumed. 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord, but swooped down upon the plunder and did evil in the Lord's sight? 20 Saul said to Samuel, Yes, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag king of Amalek and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took from the spoil sheep and oxen, the chief of the things to be utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal. 22 Samuel said, Has the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim (household good luck images). Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king. 24 And Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now, I pray you, pardon my sin and go back with me, that I may worship the Lord. 26 And Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel. 27 And as Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of Samuel's mantle, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you. 29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie or repent; for He is not a man, that He should repent. 30 Saul said, I have sinned; yet honor me now, I pray you, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God. 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord. 32 Then Samuel said, Bring here to me Agag king of the Amalekites. And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33 Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. 34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death, though Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord repented that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Chapter 15

Now as we get into chapter fifteen,

Samuel came to Saul, and said, The Lord sent me to anoint you to be king over his people, over Israel: now hearken unto the voice of the words of the Lord (1Sa 15:1).

Now he has shown a pattern of disobedience up to this point. He has become self-willed, doing his own thing. So the prophet is coming and warning him. This to me is very significant, because God does seek to warn us from our self-willed path of destruction. God doesn't just let you trip off into the path of destruction, without coming and giving you fair warning, oftentimes, repeated warnings.

The Bible said, "He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck"(Proverbs 29:1). So God is faithful and God comes and He warns you, "Hey the path you're choosing, the way of self-will is destroying you. Don't do it." Now listen to God, pay attention, obey the voice of the Lord.

So Samuel is coming with a warning for him and telling him of a mission that God is sending him on. "Now hearken to the voice of the words of the Lord."

For the Lord said, I remember the Amaleks that when you were trying to come into the land, they withstood you. And therefore God wants you to go down and utterly wipe out the Amaleks; every man, woman, child, animal. [Don't take anything back alive, utterly slay everything] (1Sa 15:2-3).

In order that God might be avenged against the Amaleks. Now you think, "Oh that's a horrible command of God." You would think so until historically you would study the practices and all of the Amaleks. They were so corrupt. They were going to wipe out themselves. God was just ordering really the eradication of a cancer within the society. They were like mad dogs. If you don't destroy them, they're gonna hurt innocent people. So God ordered the utter destruction of the Amaleks.

Now another factor here is that the Amaleks are always a type of the flesh in the scripture. The Amaleks being a type of the flesh; God is ordering the utter destruction of the flesh. "Wipe it out completely, don't give any place for the flesh."

The Bible says, "to fulfill the desires thereof. Crucify the old man, the old nature. If you by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, put it to death" (Romans 8:13). God says, "don't give place for it, utterly wipe it out."

Now Saul went down with the armies, and God gave victory over the Amaleks. However, they saw some of the cattle and some of the sheep were really good stock, and so they set them aside. He spared the king alive, but the sickly sheep, the sickly cows they really hacked them to pieces, didn't give them a chance. That which was sickly and that which is not so good, they just utterly destroyed that, but the good, the healthy, the strong, they preserved them.

Now whatever this is, it is disobedience to the command of God. It is again another opportunity for Saul to redeem himself in obeying the command of the Lord. But it is disobedient, his failure to utterly wipe out the Amaleks, all of their cattle, and all of their sheep and so forth.

Now as we progress in history, and we're gonna go into the time machine now, and we're gonna go ahead in history a few hundred years. The story that is familiar with many of you, all of you have read the Bible, how that when Ester was chosen queen in Persia, there was one man in the kingdom of Persia that was seeking to destroy all the Jews because he could not stand this Jew "Mordecai", who refused to bow to him. He had such a hatred for this man, he perpetrated a scheme whereby all of the Jews were to be wiped out and he had the king sign a decree that on a given day, all the Jews would be wiped out in all the kingdom of Persia.

And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said to him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord (1Sa 15:13).

Liar. But notice the spiritual language. "Blessed be thou of the Lord." Now a lot of people can use spiritual jargon, but it really doesn't mean anything. They go around saying, "Oh, praise the Lord. Oh bless God." while they're picking your pocket.

That's right. There's a young boy in Israel. He meets us always at the—he's an Arab boy, and he meets us always when we're coming down the path of the Mount of Olives. "Oh, Christians. America. Oh praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Oh, Christians from California? Oh yes. Brother, brother." Watch out. Your wallet or your pen or something will be gone after his embrace. "Praise God. Hallelujah." "Fat wallet, praise the Lord." Spiritual jargon, it doesn't prove anything. You can be a crook and use spiritual language. Often it is used as a disguise. "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I've done everything, I've performed all the Lord commanded me."

This wicked man's name was Haman. Now soon the Jews are gonna have, I think March second, the feast of Purim. The feast of Purim is in celebration of God's delivering them from the hand of this wicked "Haman".

Now in Israel, it is like Halloween almost, in that the little children dress in costumes. The boys dress in the costumes of the villain Haman, ugly mask, and their costumes. The little girls dress up like Ester, and all the little girls are so beautiful, and of course they have their masks and their little wands and everything else. It is like a Halloween. They'll gather together and they have a sort of a party actually. They have the cookies and so forth, the Haman's hat, cookies, and all of this, and it's quite a thing over there. It's actually a Holiday, the feast of Purim.

But the thing I want to point out is the nationality of Haman. He was a descendant of the king of the Amaleks, "Agag". He was an Agagite. A descendant from Agag, so that Saul failing to completely obey God, almost cost Israel its whole national existence later on because he failed to completely obey the command of God. It almost cost the Jews in later history their very existence. This Haman the Agagite almost wiped them out completely.

Which if you do not bring your flesh to the cross, if you do not mortify the deeds of the flesh, if you seek to make allowances and tolerances, and say, "Well, that's a pretty good part of me, it isn't too bad," your flesh will come back to destroy you. We must bring the old man to the cross. We must not give place to the flesh to fulfill its desires. We must reckon the old man to be dead, and failure to do so can create real problems down the line. Your flesh will come back to haunt you and it will come back to destroy your relationship with God. God wants you to bring your flesh to the cross and there reckon the flesh, the old man to be dead.

Saul failed to obey the command of God keeping the best cattle and sheep and so forth. So as he came back with the spoils of war. Old Samuel, who is now an old man, can't see very well, he comes out to meet Saul.

Oh Samuel was not deceived, he said,

[If you've done everything that the Lord commanded you,] then what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the cows that I hear? ["Don't give me that business."] And Saul said, Oh they brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed (1Sa 15:14-15).

Now again remember Saul has developed a pattern of making excuses. When faced with his wrong, rather than repenting, when he offered the sacrifices in disobedience to God and Samuel called him for it, he said, "Oh, the people, you know, they were scattered and I forced myself. It was because of the people." Now again faced "What do you mean that you've done everything? If you have, how come I hear the sheep and the cattle?"

"Oh well, the people, they kept the best. They brought them back to sacrifice." Religious excuses are the most damnable of all.

And Samuel said unto Saul, [Just wait a minute pal,] I'm going to tell you what the Lord said to me tonight. [And Saul said,] Say on. And Samuel said, When you were little in your own sight, you were made the head over the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed you to be king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, [Notice the sinners, the Amalekites.] and fight against them until they be consumed. Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord, but you did fly upon the spoil, and you did evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yes, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and I've gone the way which the Lord sent me, and I've brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites (1Sa 15:16-20).

He was lying; he was not repenting. But you see when he was little in his own sight, there was a difference then, but now he's become puffed up. Pride has filled his life and it's about to destroy him.

Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken to God is better than the fat of rams [which is burned in the sacrifices] (1Sa 15:22).

Flimsy excuse. God isn't interested in the sacrifices from a disobedient heart and life. God would much rather you obey Him than offer sacrifices. Many times people are giving to God in order to cover their feelings of guilt. Giving to God is not a sign necessarily of great spirituality. People can feel very guilty, "Oh, I'm gonna make a sacrifice unto God" because they feel so guilty for their disobedience. God would rather have your obedience than your sacrifice. "To hearken to the voice of God is better than to offer the fat of rams upon the altar."

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry (1Sa 15:23).

In other words, if you're rebelling against God, that's just as bad as if you were into witchcraft. If you have a stubborn spirit, you're no better off than the person who is worshiping an idol. This business of rebellion and stubbornness is something that God is not pleased with in our lives. Rebellion is just as bad as witchcraft. Stubbornness is just as bad as idolatry.

And because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king. [The official rejection, "That's it God has rejected your kingship"] And Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: [But notice it isn't a full repentance.] because [he said] I feared the people, and obeyed their voice (1Sa 15:23-24).

Oh, he didn't fear the people. Again he's just offering a lame excuse for his disobedience. God would rather have just a straight, frank confession. "God, I blew it. I was wrong. I sinned. God, I'm sorry, I repent." God wants—there's no sign of repentance in this at all. Some people think it's cute to say, "Oh, I'm a sinner." That isn't repentance, it's only a declaration of a blasphemous truth. "Oh, I sinned." Doesn't make anything out of you, forsaking the sin is what is important. Turning from the sin, the repentance is what God is seeking.

Now therefore, [he said] I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that we might worship the Lord. And Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with you: for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being the king over Israel. And Samuel turned to go away, and he grabbed hold of him, and tore his coat. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord has torn the kingdom from you this day, and has given it to a neighbour that is better than you are. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent (1Sa 15:25-29).

Now the "Strength of Israel", here being a reference to God. Notice, "The Strength of Israel will not lie or repent." Now in Numbers we read, "For God is not a man that He should repent. Hath He not spoken? Shall He not make it good?" But in just a few verses we're gonna read where he says, "God repented that He made you king." How come this kind of a dichotomy? "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent, for He is not a man that He should repent."

Then Saul again said, I have sinned, yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, [In other words, "Make me look good in front of the people, I've sinned."] and before Israel, turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God. [Notice not the Lord my God, the Lord thy God.] So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshiped the Lord. Then said Samuel, Bring hither Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is passed. And Samuel said, As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Then Samuel went back to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel (1Sa 15:30-35).

So God there "the Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent." Then what does it mean it repented the Lord that He made Saul king over Israel? There is always a difficulty in expressing God and the characteristics of God and the actions of God in human language, but all we have is human language.

Now God has characteristics, abilities, that we have no human language for, for we have no way of experiencing these things. I cannot even think how God thinks, because He knows everything. How does He even think when He knows everything to begin with? Now how can I even express the way that God thinks? How can I express the actions of God? I can only express them with human terms, as they appear to be from my human standpoint, but yet I am bound with human language.

Now I'm certain that there is a vocabulary of heaven that is far broader, and capable of expressing these things in languages, that if we heard it, we wouldn't know it because we have nothing that will equal it in human experience. So we are seeking to describe now an action of God, and that is the action of turning away His favor from Saul, the change of God's attitude towards Saul.

Now the word "repent," meaning change, God is changing now His attitude towards Saul. We have only one word to describe that change, "repent." But yet we have just read in a true sense, "God is not a man that He lies, or repents." But yet we have this human language barrier. So we have to express the activities of God with human language. The only word we have to express this particular action of God's obvious change in attitude towards Saul, the only word we have to express this obvious change is "repent." Yet because it is God's action, it isn't a "repentance" as we think of repent in our human minds. But it is the only vocabulary word that we have to express this change of attitude, so we use the word. But it isn't "repent" in the same way that a man repents from his decisions or his doings. I hope I've helped you. I don't know. (Through The Bible; C2000 series; Chuck Smith; Bible Commentaries; 1979-1986)

XIII. PAUL AND HIS PRAYING

"In the life of Frank Crossley it is told how one day in 1888 he had said good-bye at the station to his friends, General and Mrs. Booth; but before they steamed out he handed a letter to them giving details of a sacrifice he had resolved to make for the Army. He came home and was praying alone. 'As I was praying,' he said, 'there came over me the most extraordinary sense of joy. It was not exactly in my head, nor in my heart, it was almost a grasping of my chest by some strange hand that filled me with an ecstasy I never had before. It was borne in on me that this was the joy of the Lord.' So this servant of God made in his pilgrimage to God an advance from which he never fell back. He thought it likely at the time that the Booths had read this letter in the train and this was an answer to prayer of theirs; afterwards he heard they had prayed for him in the train just after getting wess out of Manchester."— Rev. Edward Shillito.

He who studies Paul's praying, both his prayers and his commands about prayer, will find what a wide, general, minute, and diversified area it covers. It will appear that these men like Wesley, Brainerd, Luther, and all their holy successors in the spiritual realms, were not guilty of fanaticism nor superstition when they ordered all things by prayer great and small, and committed all things, secular and religious, natural and spiritual, to God in prayer. In this they were but following the great exemplar and authority of the Apostle Paul.

To seek God as Paul did by prayer, to commune with God as Paul did, to supplicate Jesus Christ as Paul did, to seek the Holy Spirit by prayer as Paul did, to do this without ceasing, to be always a racer, and to win Christ as Paul did by prayer—all this makes a saint, an apostle, and a leader for God. This kind of a life engages, absorbs, enriches, and empowers with God and for God. Prayer, if successful, must always engage and absorb us. This kind of praying brings Pauline days and secures Pauline gifts. Pauline days are good, Pauline gifts are better, but Pauline praying is best of all, for it brings Pauline days and secures Pauline gifts. Pauline praying is worth all its costs. Prayer which costs nothing gets nothing. It is beggarly business at best.

Paul's estimate of prayer is seen and enforced by the fact that Paul was a man of prayer. His high position in the Church was not one of dignity and position to enjoy and luxuriate in. It was not one of officialism, nor was it one of arduous and exhaustless toil, for Paul was preeminently a praying man.

He began his great career for Christ in the great struggle and school of prayer. God's convincing and wonderful argument to assure Ananias was, "Behold he prayeth." Three days was he without sight, neither eating nor drinking, but the lesson was learned well.

He went out on his first great missionary trip under the power of fasting and prayer, and they, Paul and Barnabas, established every Church by the very same means, by fasting and prayer. He began his work in Philippi "where prayer was wont to be made." As "they went to prayer," the spirit of divination was cast out of the young woman. And when Paul and Silas were put in prison, at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God.

Paul made praying a habit, a business and a life. He literally gave himself to prayer. So with him praying was not an outer garb, a mere coloring, a paint, a polish. Praying made up the substance, the bone, the marrow, and the very being of his religious life. His conversion was a marvel of grace and power. His apostolic commission was full and royal. But he did not vainly expect to make full proof of his ministry, by the marvels of conditions and by wonderful results in the conversion, nor by the apostolic commission signed and sealed by Divine authority, and carrying with it all highest gifts and apostolic enrichments, but by prayer, by ceaseless, wrestling, agonizing and Holy Spirit praying. Thus did Paul work his wrok, and crown his work, his life and the death with martyr principles and with martyr glory.

Paul had a spiritual trait which was very marked and especially promised, and it was that of prayer. He had a profound conviction that prayer was a great as well as a solemn duty; that prayer was a royal privilege; that prayer was a mighty force; that prayer gauges piety, makes faith mighty and mightier; that much prayer was necessary to Christian success; that prayer was a great factor in the ongoing of God's kingdom on earth; and that God and heaven expected to pray.

Somehow we are dependent on prayer for great triumphs of holiness over sin, of heaven over hell, and of Christ over Satan. Paul took it for granted that men who know God would pray; that men who lived for God would pray much, and that men could not live for God who did not pray. So Paul prayed much. He was in the habit of praying. He was used to praying, and that formed the habit of prayer. He estimated prayer so greatly that he fully knew its value, and that fastened the habit on him. Paul was in the habit of praying because he loved God, and such love in the heart always finds its expression in regular habits of prayer. He felt the need of much grace, and of more and more grace, and grace only comes through the channels of prayer, and only abounds more and more as prayer abounds more and more.

Paul was in the habit of praying, but he prayed not by mere force of habit. Man is such a creature of habit that he is always in danger of doing things simply by heart, in a routine, prefatory manner. Paul's habit was regular and hearty. To the Romans he writes, "For God is my witness, that without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers." Prison doors are opened and earthquakes take place by such praying as Paul did, even by such melodious Pauline praying. All things are opened to the kind of praying which was done by Paul and Silas. All things are opened by prayer. They could shut up Paul from preaching, but this could not shut him up from praying. And the Gospel could win its way by Paul's praying as well as by Paul's preaching. The apostle might be in prison, but the Word of God was free, and went like the mountain air, while the apostle is bound in prison and abounds in prayer.

How profound their joy in Jesus which expressed itself so happily and so sweetly in praise and prayer, under conditions so painful and so depressing! Prayer brought them into full communion with God which made all things radiant with the Divine presence which enabled them to "rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, and to count it all joy when they fell into divers trials." Prayer sweetens all things and sanctifies all things. The prayerful saint will be a suffering saint. Suffering prayerfully he will be a sweet saint. A praying saint will be a praising saint. Praise is but prayer set to music and song.

After that notable charge to the elders at Ephesus, as he tarried there while on his way to Jerusalem, this characteristic record is made in Acts:

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him."

"He kneeled down and prayed." Note those words. Kneeling in prayer was Paul's favorite attitude, the fitting posture of an earnest, humble suppliant. Humility and intensity are in such a position in prayer before Almighty God. It is the proper attitude of man before God, of a sinner before a Saviour, and of a beggar before his benefactor. To seal his sacred and living charge to those Ephesian elders by praying was that which made the charge efficient, benignant and abiding.

Paul's religion was born in the throes of that three days' struggle of prayer, while he was in the house of Ananias, and there he received a divine impetus which never slackened till it brought him to the gates of the eternal city. That spiritual history and religious experience projected along the line of unceasing prayer, brought him to the highest spiritual altitudes and yields the largest spiritual results. Paul lived in the very atmosphere of prayer. His first missionary trip was projected by prayer. It was by prayer and fasting that he was called into the foreign missionary field, and by the same means the Church at Antioch was moved to send forth Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Here is the Scripture record of it:

"Now there were in the Church which was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas and Simeon, that was called Niger; and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manean, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrach, and Saul.

"And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and had laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Here is a model for all missionary outgoings, a presage of success. Here was the Holy Spirit directing a prayerful Church obedient to the Divine leadership, and this condition of things brought forth the very largest possible results in the mission of these two men of God. We may confidently assert that no Church in which Paul was prominent would be a prayerless Church. Paul lived, toiled and suffered in an atmosphere of prayer. To him, prayer was the very heart and life of religion, its bone and marrow, the motor of the Gospel, and the sign by which it conquered. We are not left in ignorance, for that spirit established churches, putting in them the everlasting requisite of self-denial, in the shape of fasting, and in the practice of prayer. Here is the Divine record of Paul's work on this line:

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

"And when they had ordained them elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

In obedience to a heavenly vision, Paul lands in Europe, and finds himself at Philippi. There is no synagogue, and few if any Jews are there. A few pious women, however, have a meeting place for prayer, and Paul is drawn by spiritual attraction and spiritual affinities to the place "where prayer is wont to be made." And Paul's first planting of the Gospel in Europe is at that little prayer meeting. He is there the chief pray-er and the leading talker. Lydia was the first convert at that prayer meeting. They protracted the meeting. They called it a meeting for prayer.

It was while they were going to that protracted prayer meeting that Paul performed the miracle of casting the devil of divination out of a poor demon-possessed girl, who had been made a source of gain by some covetous men, the results of which, by the magistrate's orders, were his scourging and imprisonment. The result by God's orders was the conversion of the jailer and his whole household. To the praying apostle no discouragements are allowed. A few praying women are enough for an apostolical field of labor.

In this last incident we have a picture of Paul at midnight. He is in the inner prison, dark and deadly. He has been severely and painfully scourged, his clothing is covered with blood, while there are blood clots on his gnashed and torn body. His feet are in the stocks, every nerve is feverish and swollen, sensitive and painful. But we find him under these very unfavorable and suffering conditions at his

favorite pursuit. Paul is praying with Silas, his companion, in a joyous, triumphant strain. "And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was an earthquake, so that the foundation of the prison was shaken, and immediately all the doors were shaken; and every one's ban was loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

"But Paul cried out with a loud voice saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here."

Never was prayer so beautiful, never more resultful. Paul was an adept at prayer, a lover of prayer, a wondrous devotee of prayer, who could pursue it with such joyous strains, under such conditions of despondency and despair. What a mighty weapon of defense was prayer to Paul! How songful! The angels doubtless stilled their highest and sweetest notes to listen to the music which bore those prayers to heaven. The earthquake trod along the path made by the mighty forces of Paul's praying. He did not go out when his chains were loosed, and the stocks fell off. His praying taught him that God had nobler purposes that night than his own individual freedom. His praying and the earthquake alarm were to bring salvation to that prison, freedom from the thralldom and prison house of sin which was prefigured to him by his body emancipation. God's mighty providence had opened his prison door and had broken his prison bonds, not to give freedom, but to give freedom to the jailer. God's providential openings are often to test our ability to stay rather than to go. It tested Paul's ability to stay.

("Prayer and Praying Men" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 11-12 ; Edward McKendree Bounds (August 15, 1835 – August 24, 1913) was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and author of eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer. Public Domain)

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 424-426)

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