



~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

“come just as you are”

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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[What Love Is This-Kari Jobe](#)

[Everyone Needs A Little-Kari Jobe](#)

[Healer-Kari Jobe](#)

[One Desire-Kari Jobe](#)

Prayer

Lord, I ask You to help me change the way I've been looking at the hardships and challenges in my life. Yes, it's true that I don't enjoy them, but since I'm in this time of my life, help me use my time to the maximum by strengthening my faith and exercising myself spiritually. Rather than be broken by this difficult season, I want to come out of it stronger than ever. Holy Spirit, please help me today to change the way I am looking at life. I want to make a firm commitment to exercise myself unto godliness until I am so strong spiritually that nothing in life can stop me from fulfilling the dreams God has put in my heart, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Charles Stanley

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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 WHEN SAUL returned from following the Philistines, he was told, Behold, David is in the Wilderness of En-gedi. 2 Then Saul took 3,000 chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men among the Rocks of the Wild Goats. 3 He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the cave's innermost recesses. 4 David's men said to him, Behold the day of which the Lord said to you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hands and you shall do to him as seems good to you. Then David arose [in the darkness] and stealthily cut off the skirt of Saul's robe. 5 Afterward, David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6 He said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this to my master, the Lord's anointed, to put my hand out against him, when he is the anointed of the Lord. 7 So David checked his men with these words and did not let them rise against Saul. But Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way. 8 David also arose afterward and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, My lord the king! And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and did obeisance. 9 And David said to Saul, Why do you listen to the words of men who say, David seeks to do you harm? 10 Behold, your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hands in the cave. Some told me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, I will not put forth my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. 11 See, my father, see the skirt of your robe in my hand! Since I cut off the skirt of your robe and did not kill you, you know and see that there is no evil or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, yet you hunt my life to take it. 12 May the Lord judge between me and you, and may the Lord avenge me upon you, but my hand shall not be upon you. 13 As the proverb of the ancients says, Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness; but my hand shall not be against you. 14 After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog? After a flea? 15 May the Lord be judge and judge between me and you, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of your hands. 16 When David had said this to Saul, Saul said, Is this your voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, You are more upright in God's eyes than I, for you have repaid me good, but I have rewarded you evil. 18 You have declared today how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord gave me into your hand, you did not kill me. 19 For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away unharmed? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done for me this day. 20 And now, behold, I well know that you shall surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hands. 21 Swear now therefore to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22 David gave Saul his oath; and Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Chapter 24

Now it came to pass, when Saul was returned from the Philistines, they told him, David's in Engedi. So Saul took three thousand of his chosen men out of all of Israel, they went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. [Engedi means, "wild goats".] And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to cover his feet: [That is to go to sleep.] and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. [So David was hiding in this cave, and Saul came to, and you know went to sleep in the very cave where David and his men were hiding up in the sides of the thing.] And the men of David said unto him, [Aha,] Behold, the day of which the Lord said unto you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good unto thee. So David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe secretly. Now it came to pass after, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. [He did it and then he thought, "Oh that's not right. This guy's a king and shouldn't have his skirt cut off." and he felt bad about it.] And David said, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is anointed of the Lord. So David stayed his servants with these words, and he would not allow them to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up and went out of the cave and went his way. [The men of course wanted to do Saul in, and David forbid them to do it.] And after Saul had gotten down the hill away, David arose also afterward, and he went after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Why do you listen to men's words, saying, Behold, David is seeking to hurt you? Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today in my hand in the cave: and some of them were begging me to kill you: but I said, I will not put forth my hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, here is the skirt of your robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of your robe, and I didn't kill you, you ought to know, and see that I have neither evil nor transgression in my hand, I've not sinned against you; and you're hunting my soul to take it. And the Lord judged between me and thee, and the Lord avenged me of thee: but my hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but my hand shall not be upon thee (1Sa 24:1-13).

Here's an interesting proverb. "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." It is the same as saying, "A man sins because he is a sinner." You see we often think, "Because I sin, I am a sinner." No. Because I'm a sinner, I sin. You say well what difference—it's an important difference. Only horsethieves steal horses. If you were not a horsethief you couldn't steal a horse, no matter what the circumstances are. Stealing a horse doesn't make you a horsethief. It only proves you are. If you weren't a horsethief to begin with, you could never have stolen it. The same with sin; sinning doesn't make you a sinner; it only proves that you are. I am a sinner by nature. If I try to deny the sinful nature, I'm calling God a liar. His truth isn't in me. All of us are sinners by nature, and because we are sinners by nature, sin is the fruit, or the effect, or the result of what I am. I sin because I'm a sinner.

Now even so in Christ Jesus, I am now righteous, therefore the righteousness that I do doesn't make me righteous, I do it because I am righteous. Because of God's work in my life in making me righteous, I do now the deeds of righteousness. But we've got to keep in our minds from this fallacy of thinking, "Because I do deeds of righteousness, I am righteous." Not so. "But wickedness proceeds from the wicked." If you're wicked, wickedness is gonna proceed from your life. It doesn't make you wicked, it only proves that you are wicked. So it's an interesting proverb of the ancients. It is a true proverb indeed. It's in keeping with the basic doctrines of the scriptures.

After whom [David said] is the king of Israel come out? who are you pursuing? you're looking for a dead dog, you're looking for a flea. The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and you, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of your hand. It came to pass, when David had made an end of his speech, that Saul said, Is this the voice, of my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. ["Oh my son David, oh my son."] And he said to David, You are more righteous than I: for you have rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded you evil. And you have shewed this day how that you have dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away well? wherefore the Lord reward thee good for thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand (1Sa 24:14-20).

He knew it and yet he sought to fight it all the way. He knew what God's will was and still he sought to fight the will of God. The Bible says, "Woe unto him who strives with his Maker"(Isaiah 45:9). How many times people are trying to fight what they know to be the will of God. Sad but true. Saul expresses now, "I know that some day God's gonna make you king, the kingdom's gonna be established in your hands."

Swear now therefore by the Lord, that you will not cut off my children after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house. And so David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men went into the hold (1Sa 24:21-22). (Through The Bible; C2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Commentaries; 1979 – 1986)

“ The Weapon Of Prayer “ EM Bounds

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I. PRAYER ESSENTIAL TO GOD

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. 14th verse: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—Isaiah 58:9.

It must never be forgotten that Almighty God rules this world. He is not an absentee God. His hand is ever on the throttle of human affairs. He is everywhere present in the concerns of time. “His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.” He rules the world just as He rules the Church by prayer. This lesson needs to be emphasized, iterated and reiterated in the ears of men of modern times and brought to bear with cumulative force on the consciences of this generation whose eyes have no vision for the eternal things, whose ears are deaf toward God.

Nothing is more important to God than prayer in dealing with mankind. But it is likewise all-important to man to pray. Failure to pray is failure along the whole line of life. It is failure of duty, service, and spiritual progress. God must help man by prayer. He who does not pray, therefore, robs himself of God's help and places God where He cannot help man. Man must pray to God if love for God is to exist. Faith and hope, and patience and all the strong, beautiful, vital forces of piety are withered and dead in a prayerless life. The life of the individual believer, his personal salvation, and personal Christian graces have their being, bloom and fruitage in prayer.

All this and much more can be said as to the necessity of prayer to the being, and culture of piety in the individual. But prayer has a larger sphere, a more obligated duty, a loftier inspiration. Prayer concerns God, whose purposes and plans are conditioned on prayer. His will and His glory are bound up in praying. The days of God's splendour and renown have always been the great days of prayer. God's great movements in this world have been conditioned on, continued and fashioned by prayer. God has put Himself in these great movements just as men have prayed. Present, prevailing, conspicuous and mastering prayer has always brought God to be present. The real and obvious test of a genuine work of God is the prevalence of the spirit of prayer. God's mightiest forces surcharge and impregnate a movement when prayer's mightiest forces are there. God's movement to bring Israel from Egyptian bondage had its inception in prayer. Thus early did God and the human race put the fact of prayer as one of the granite forces upon which His world movements were to be based. Hannah's petition for a son began a great prayer movement for God in Israel. Praying women, whose prayers like those of Hannah, can give to the cause of God men like Samuel, do more for the Church and the world than all the politicians on earth. Men born of prayer are the saviours of the state, and men saturated with prayer give life and impetus to the Church. Under God they are saviours and helpers of both Church and state.

We must believe that the divine record of the facts about prayer and God are given in order that we might be constantly reminded of Him, and be ever refreshed by the faith that God holds His Church for the entire world, and that God's purpose will be fulfilled. His plans concerning the Church will most assuredly and inevitably be carried out. That record of God has been given without doubt that we may be deeply impressed that the prayers of God's saints are a great factor, a supreme factor, in carrying forward God's work, with facility and in time. When the Church is in the condition of prayer God's cause always flourishes and His kingdom on earth always triumphs. When the Church fails to pray, God's cause decays and evil of every kind prevails. In other words, God works through the prayers of His people, and when they fail Him at this point, decline and deadness ensue. It is according to the divine plans that spiritual prosperity comes through the prayer-channel. Praying saints are God's agents for carrying on His saving and providential work on earth. If His agents fail Him, neglecting to pray, then His work fails. Praying agents of the Most High are always forerunners of spiritual prosperity.

The men of the Church of all ages who have held the Church for God have had in affluent fullness and richness the ministry of prayer. The rulers of the Church which the Scriptures reveal have had preeminence in prayer. Eminent, they may have been, in culture, in intellect and in all the natural or human forces; or they may have been lowly in physical attainments and native gifts; yet in each case prayer was the all potent force in the rulership of the Church. And this was so because God was with and in what they did, for prayer always carries us back to God. It recognizes God and brings God into the world to work and save and bless. The most efficient agents in disseminating the knowledge of God, in prosecuting His work upon the earth, and in standing as breakwater against the billows of evil, have been praying Church leaders. God depends upon them, employs them and blesses them.

Prayer cannot be retired as a secondary force in this world. To do so is to retire God from the movement. It is to make God secondary. The prayer ministry is an all-engaging force. It must be so, to be a force at all. Prayer is the sense of God's need and the call for God's help to supply that need. The estimate and place of prayer is the estimate and place of God. To give prayer the secondary place is to make God secondary in life's affairs. To substitute other forces for prayer, retires God and materializes the whole movement. Prayer is an absolute necessity to the proper carrying on of God's work. God has made it so. This must have been the principal reason why in the early Church, when the complaint that the widows of certain believers had been neglected in the daily administration of the Church's benefactions, that the twelve called the disciples together, and told them to look out for seven men, "full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom," who they would appoint over that benevolent work, adding this important statement, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." They surely realized that the success of the Word and the progress of the Church were dependent in a preeminent sense upon their "giving themselves to prayer." God could effectively work through them in proportion as they gave themselves fully to prayer. The Apostles were as dependent upon prayer as other folks. Sacred work,—Church activities—may so engage and absorb us as to hinder praying, and when this is the case, evil results always follow. It is better to let the work go by default than to let the praying go by neglect. Whatever affects the intensity of our praying affects the value of our work. "Too busy to pray" is not only the keynote to backsliding, but it mars even the work done. Nothing is well done without prayer for the simple reason that it leaves God out of the account. It is so easy to be seduced by the good to the neglect of the best, until both the good and the best perish. How easily may men, even leaders in Zion, be led by the insidious wiles of Satan to cut short our praying in the interests of the work! How easy to neglect prayer or abbreviate our praying simply by the plea that we have Church work on our hands. Satan has effectively disarmed us when he can keep us too busy doing things to stop and pray. "Give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word." The Revised Version has it, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer." The implication of the word used here means to be strong, steadfast, to be devoted to, to keep at it with constant care, to make a business out of it. We find the same word in Col. 4:12, and in Romans 12:12, which is translated, "Continuing instant in prayer."

The Apostles were under the law of prayer, which law recognizes God as God, and depends upon Him to do for them what He would not do without prayer. They were under the necessity of prayer, just as all believers are, in every age and in every clime. They had to be devoted to prayer in order to make their ministry of the Word efficient. The business of preaching is worth very little without it be in direct partnership with the business of praying. Apostolic preaching cannot be carried on unless there be apostolic praying. Alas, that this plain truth has been so easily forgotten by those who minister in holy things! Without in any way passing a criticism on the ministry, we feel it to be high time that somebody or other declared to its members that effective preaching is conditioned on effective praying. The preaching which is most successful is that ministry which has much of prayer in it. Perhaps one might go so far as to say that it is the only kind that is successful. God can mightily use the preacher who prays. He is God's chosen messenger for good, whom the Holy Spirit delights to honour, God's efficient agent in saving men and in edifying the saints.

In Acts 6:1-8 we have the record of how, long ago, the Apostles felt that they were losing—had lost—in apostolic power because they did not have relief from certain duties in order that they might give themselves more to prayer. So they called a halt because they discovered to their regret that they were too deficient in praying. Doubtless they kept up the form of praying, but it was seriously defective in intensity and in point of the amount of time given to it. Their minds were too much preoccupied with the finances of the Church. Just as in this day we find in many places both laymen and ministers are so busily engaged in "serving tables," that they are glaringly deficient in praying. In fact in present-day Church affairs men are looked upon as religious because they give largely of their money to the Church, and men are chosen for official positions not because they are men of prayer, but because they have the financial ability to run Church finances and to get money for the Church.

Now these Apostles, when they looked into this matter, determined to put aside these hindrances growing out of Church finances, and resolved to "give themselves to prayer." Not that these finances were to be ignored or set aside, but ordinary laymen, "full of faith and the Holy Ghost" could be found, really religious men, who could easily attend to this money business without in the least affecting their piety or their praying, thus giving them something to do in the Church, and at the same time taking the burden from the Apostles who would be able now to pray more, and praying more, to be blessed themselves in soul, and at the same time to more effectually do the work to which they had been called.

They realized, too, as they had not realized before, that they were being so pressed by attention to material things, things right in themselves, that they could not give to prayer that strength, ardour, and time which its nature and importance demanded. And so we will discover, under close scrutiny of ourselves sometimes, that things legitimate, things right in themselves, things commendable, may so engross our attention, so preoccupy our minds and so draw on our feelings, that prayer may be omitted, or at least very little time may be given to prayer. How easy to slip away from the closet! Even the Apostles had to guard themselves at that point. How much do we need to watch ourselves at the same place! Things legitimate and right may become wrong when they take the place of prayer. Things right in themselves may become wrong things when they are allowed to fasten themselves inordinately upon our hearts. It is not only the sinful things which hurt prayer. It is not alone questionable things which are to be guarded against. But it is things which are right in their places, but which are allowed to sidetrack prayer and shut the closet door, often with the self-comforting plea that "we are too busy to pray."

Possibly this has had as much to do with the breaking down of family prayer in this age as any other one cause. It is at this point that family religion has decayed, and just here is one cause of the decline of the prayer meeting. Men and women are too busy with legitimate things to "give themselves to prayer." Other things are given the right of way. Prayer is set aside or made secondary. Business comes first. And this means not always that prayer is second, but that prayer is put entirely out. The Apostles drove directly at this point, and determined that even Church business should not affect their praying habits. Prayer must come first. Then would they be in deed and truth God's real agents in His world, through whom He could effectually work, because they were praying men, and thereby put themselves directly in line with His plans and purposes, which was that He works through praying men.

When the complaint came to their ears the Apostles discovered that that which they had been doing did not fully serve the divine ends of peace, gratitude, and unity, but discontent, complainings, and division were the result of their work, which had far too little prayer in it. And so prayer was put prominently to the front.

Praying men are a necessity in carrying out the divine plan for the salvation of men. God has made it so. He it is who established prayer as a divine ordinance, and this implies men are to do the praying. So that praying men are a necessity in the world. The fact that so often God has employed men of prayer to accomplish His ends clearly proves the proposition. It is altogether unnecessary to name all the instances where God used the prayers of righteous men to carry out His gracious designs. Time and space are too limited for the list. Yet one or two cases might be named. In the case of the golden calf, when God purposed to destroy the Israelites because of their great sin of idolatry, at the time when Moses was receiving the law at God's hands, the very being of Israel was imperilled, for Aaron had been swept away by the strong popular tide of unbelief and sin. All seemed lost but Moses and prayer, and prayer became more efficient and wonder-working in behalf of Israel than Aaron's magic rod. God was determined on the destruction of Israel and Aaron. His anger waxed hot. It was a fearful and a critical hour. But prayer was the levee which held back heaven's desolating fury. God's hand was held fast by the interceding of Moses, the mighty intercessor.

Moses was set on delivering Israel. It was with him a long and exhaustive struggle of praying for forty days and forty nights. Not for one moment did he relax his hold on God. Not for one moment did he quit his place at the feet of God, even for food. Not for one moment did he moderate his demand or ease his cry. Israel's existence was in the balance. Almighty God's wrath must be stayed. Israel must be saved at all hazards. And Israel was saved. Moses would not let God alone. And so, today, we can look back and give the credit of the present race of the Jews to the praying of Moses centuries ago.

Persevering prayer always wins; God yields to importunity and fidelity. He has no heart to say No to such praying as Moses did. Actually God's purpose to destroy Israel is changed by the praying of this man of God. It is but an illustration of how much just one praying is worth in this world, and how much depends upon him.

When Daniel, in Babylon, refused to obey the decree of the king not to ask any petition of any god or man for thirty days, he shut his eyes to the decree which would shut him off from his praying room, and refused to be deterred from calling upon God from fear of the consequences. So he "kneeled upon his knees three times a day", and prayed as he had before done, leaving it all with God as to the consequences of thus disobeying the king.

There was nothing impersonal about Daniel's praying. It always had an objective, and was an appeal to a great God, who could do all things. There was no coddling of self, nor looking after subjective or reflex influences. In the face of the dreadful decree which is to precipitate him from place and power, into the lion's den, "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks to God as aforetime." The gracious result was that prayer laid its hands upon an Almighty arm, which interposed in that den of vicious, cruel lions and closed their mouths and preserved His servant Daniel, who had been true to Him and who had called upon Him for protection. Daniel's praying was an essential factor in defeating the king's decree and in discomfiting the wicked, envious rulers, who had set the trap for Daniel in order to destroy him and remove him from place and power in the kingdom.

II. PUTTING GOD TO WORK

"For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside thee who worketh for him that waiteth for him."—Isaiah 64:4.

The assertion voiced in the title given this chapter is but another way of declaring that God has of His own motion placed Himself under the law of prayer, and has obligated Himself to answer the prayers of men. He has ordained prayer as a means whereby He will do things through men as they pray, which He would not otherwise do. Prayer is a specific divine appointment, an ordinance of heaven, whereby God purposes to carry out His gracious designs on earth and to execute and make efficient the plan of salvation.

When we say that prayer puts God to work, it is simply to say that man has it in his power by prayer to move God to work in His own way among men, in which way He would not work if prayer was not made. Thus while prayer moves God to work, at the same time God puts prayer to work. As God has ordained prayer, and as prayer has no existence separate from men, but involves men, then logically prayer is the one force which puts God to work in earth's affairs through men and their prayers.

Let these fundamental truths concerning God and prayer be kept in mind in all allusions to prayer, and in all our reading of the incidents of prayer in the Scriptures.

If prayer puts God to work on earth, then, by the same token, prayerlessness rules God out of the world's affairs, and prevents Him from working. And if prayer moves God to work in this world's affairs, then prayerlessness excludes God from everything concerning men, and leaves man on earth the mere creature of circumstances, at the mercy of blind fate or without help of any kind from God. It leaves man in this world with its tremendous responsibilities and its difficult problems, and with all of its sorrows, burdens and afflictions, without any God at all. In reality the denial of prayer is a denial of God Himself, for God and prayer are so inseparable that they can never be divorced.

Prayer affects three different spheres of existence—the divine, the angelic and the human. It puts God to work, it puts angels to work, and it puts man to work. It lays its hands upon God, angels and men. What a wonderful reach there is in prayer! It brings into play the forces of heaven and earth. God, angels and men are subjects of this wonderful law of prayer, and all these have to do with the possibilities and the results of prayer. God has so far placed Himself subject to prayer that by reason of His own appointment, He is induced to work among men in a way in which He does not work if men do not pray. Prayer lays hold upon God and influences Him to work. This is the meaning of prayer as it concerns God. This is the doctrine of prayer, or else there is nothing whatever in prayer.

Prayer puts God to work in all things prayed for. While man in his weakness and poverty waits, trusts and prays, God undertakes the work. "For from old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside thee, which worketh for him that waiteth for thee."

Jesus Christ commits Himself to the force of prayer. "Whatsoever ye ask in My Name," He says, "that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it." And again: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what he will and it shall be done unto you."

To no other energy is the promise of God committed as to that of prayer. Upon no other force are the purposes of God so dependent as this one of prayer. The Word of God dilates on the results and necessity of prayer. The work of God stays or advances as prayer puts forth its strength. Prophets and apostles have urged the utility, force and necessity of prayer. "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."

Prayer, with its antecedents and attendants, is the one and only condition of the final triumph of the Gospel. It is the one and only condition which honours the Father and glorifies the Son. Little and poor praying has weakened Christ's power on earth, postponed the glorious results of His reign, and retired God from His sovereignty. Prayer puts God's work in His hands, and keeps it there. It looks to Him constantly and depends on Him implicitly to further His own cause. Prayer is but faith resting in, acting with, and leaning on and obeying God. This is why God loves it so well, why He puts all power into its hands, and why He so highly esteems men of prayer. Every movement for the advancement of the Gospel must be created by and inspired by prayer. In all these movements of God, prayer precedes and attends as an invariable and necessary condition. In this relation, God makes prayer identical in force and power with Himself and says to those on earth who pray: "You are on the earth to carry on My cause. I am in heaven, the Lord of all, the Maker of all, the Holy One of all. Now whatever you need for My cause, ask Me and I will do it. Shape the future by your prayers, and all that you need for present supplies, command Me. I made heaven and earth, and all things in them. Ask largely. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. It is My work which you are doing. It concerns My cause. Be prompt and fall in praying. Do not abate your asking, and I will not wince nor abate in My giving."

Everywhere in His Word God conditions His actions on prayer. Everywhere in His Word His actions and attitude are shaped by prayer. To quote all the Scriptural passages which prove the immediate, direct and personal relation of prayer to God, would be to transfer whole pages of the Scripture to this study. Man has personal relations with God. Prayer is the divinely appointed means by which man comes into direct connection with God. By His own ordinance God holds Himself bound to hear prayer. God bestows His great good on His children when they seek it along the avenue of prayer.

When Solomon closed his great prayer which he offered at the dedication of the Temple, God appeared to him, approved him, and laid down the universal principles of His action. In 2 Chron. 7:12-15 we read as follows: "And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself, for a house of sacrifice. "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among the people; if my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now my eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place." In His purposes concerning the Jews in the Babylonish captivity (Jeremiah 29:10-13) God asserts His unfailing principles: "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished, at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

In Bible terminology prayer means calling upon God for things we desire, asking things of God. Thus we read: "Call upon me and I will answer thee, and will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3). "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee" (Psalm 50:15). "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:9). Prayer is revealed as a direct application to God for some temporal or spiritual good. It is an appeal to God to intervene in life's affairs for the good of those for whom we pray. God is recognised as the source and fountain of all good, and prayer implies that all His good is held in His keeping for those who call upon Him in truth. That prayer is an application to God, intercourse with God, and communion with God, comes out strongly and simply in the praying of Old Testament saints. Abraham's intercession for Sodom is a striking illustration of the nature of prayer, intercourse with God, and showing the intercessory side of prayer. The declared purpose of God to destroy Sodom confronted Abraham, and his soul within him was greatly moved because of his great interest in that fated city. His nephew and family resided there. That purpose of God must be changed. God's decree for the destruction of this evil city's inhabitants must be revoked.

It was no small undertaking which faced Abraham when he conceived the idea of beseeching God to spare Sodom. Abraham sets himself to change God's purpose and to save Sodom with the other cities of the plain. It was certainly a most difficult and delicate work for him to undertake to throw his influence with God in favour of those doomed cities so as to save them. He bases his plea on the simple fact of the number of righteous men who could be found in Sodom, and appeals to the infinite rectitude of God not to destroy the righteous with the wicked. "That be far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" With what deep self-abasement and reverence does Abraham enter upon his high and divine work! He stood before God in solemn awe, and meditation, and then drew near to God and spake. He advanced step by step in faith, in demand and urgency, and God granted every request which he made. It has been well said that "Abraham left off asking before God left off granting." It seems that Abraham had a kind of optimistic view of the piety of Sodom. He scarcely expected when he undertook this matter to have it end in failure. He was greatly in earnest, and had every encouragement to press his case. In his final request he surely thought that with Lot, his wife, his daughters, his sons, and his sons-in-law, he had his ten righteous persons for whose sake God would spare the city. But alas! The count failed when the final test came. There were not ten righteous people in that large population. But this was true. If he did not save Sodom by his importunate praying, the purposes of God were stayed for a season, and possibly had not Abraham's goodness of heart over-estimated the number of pious people in that devoted city, God might have saved it had he reduced his figures still further. Praying men are essential to Almighty God in all His plans and purposes. God's secrets, councils and cause have never been committed to prayerless men. Neglect of prayer has always brought loss of faith, loss of love, and loss of prayer. Failure to pray has been the baneful, inevitable cause of backsliding and estrangement from God. Prayerless men have stood in the way of God fulfilling His Word and doing His will on earth. They tie the divine hands and interfere with God in His gracious designs. As praying men are a help to God, so prayerless men are a hindrance to Him. We press the Scriptural view of the necessity of prayer, even at the cost of repetition. The subject is too important for repetition to weaken or tire, too vital to be trite or tame. We must feel it anew. The fires of prayer have burned low. Ashes and not flames are on its altars. No insistence in the Scriptures is more pressing than prayer. No exhortation is oftener reiterated, none is more hearty, none is more solemn and stirring, than to pray. No principle is more strongly and broadly declared than that which urges us to prayer. There is no duty to which we are more strongly obliged than the obligation to pray. There is no command more imperative and insistent than that of praying. Art thou praying in everything without ceasing, in the closet, hidden from the eyes of men, and praying always and everywhere? That is the personal, pertinent and all-important question for every soul. Many instances occur in God's Word showing that God intervenes in this world in answer to prayer. Nothing is clearer when the Bible is consulted than that Almighty God is brought directly into the things of this world by the praying of His people. Jonah flees from duty and takes ship for a distant port. But God follows him, and by a strange providence this disobedient prophet is cast out of the vessel, and the God who sent him to Nineveh prepares a fish to swallow him. In the fish's belly he cries out to the God against whom he had sinned, and God intervenes and causes the fish to vomit Jonah out on dry land. Even the fishes of the great deep are subject to the law of prayer. Likewise the birds of the air are brought into subjection to this same law. Elijah had foretold to Ahab the coming of that prolonged drouth, and food and even water became scarce. God sent him to the brook Cherith, and said unto him, "It shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. And the ravens brought bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." Can any one doubt that this man of God, who later on shut up and opened the rain clouds by prayer was not praying about this time, when so much was at stake? God interposed among the birds of the air this time and strangely moved them to take care of His servant so that he would not want food and water. David in an evil hour, instead of listening to the advice of Joab, his prime minister, yielded to the suggestion of Satan, and counted the people, which displeased God. So God told him choose one of three evils as a retribution for his folly and sin. Pestilence came among the people in violent form, and David betakes himself to prayer. "And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that hath sinned and done evil indeed. But as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued" (1 Chron. 21:17). And though God had been greatly grieved at David for numbering Israel, yet He could not resist this appeal of a penitent and prayerful spirit, and God was moved by prayer to put His hand on the springs of disease and stop the fearful plague. God was put to work by David's prayer.

This is a representative case illustrative of Old Testament praying, and disclosing God's mode of working through prayer. It shows further how God is moved to work in answer to prayer in this world even when it comes to changing His purposes concerning a sinful community. This praying of Abraham was no mere performance, no dull, lifeless ceremony, but an earnest plea, a strong advocacy, to secure a desired end, to have an influence, one person with another person. How full of meaning is this series of remarkable intercessions made by Abraham! Here we have arguments designed to convince God, and pleas to persuade God to change His purpose. We see deep humility, but holy boldness as well, perseverance, and advances made based on victory in each petition. Here we have enlarged asking encouraged by enlarged answers. God stays and answers as long as Abraham stays and asks.

To Abraham God is existent, approachable, and all powerful, but at the same time He defers to men, acts favourably on their desires, and grants them favours asked for. Not to pray is a denial of God, a denial of His existence, a denial of His nature, and a denial of His

purposes toward mankind. God has specifically to do with prayer promises in their breadth, certainty and limitations. Jesus Christ presses us into the presence of God with these prayer promises, not only by the assurance that God will answer, but that no other being but God can answer. He presses us to God because only in this way can we move God to take a hand in earth's affairs, and induce Him to intervene in our behalf.

"All things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive," says Jesus, and this all-comprehensive condition not only presses us to pray for all things, everything great and small, but it sets us on and shuts us up to God, for who but God can cover the illimitable of universal things, and can assure us certainly of receiving the very thing for which we may ask in all the Thesaurus of earthly and heavenly good? It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who makes demands on us to pray, and it is He who puts Himself and all He has so fully in the answer. He it is who puts Himself at our service and answers our demands when we pray. And just as He puts Himself and the Father at our command in prayer, to come directly into our lives and to work for our good, so also does He engage to answer the demands of two or more believers who are agreed as touching any one thing.

"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything, that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." None but God could put Himself in a covenant so binding as that, for God only could fulfill such a promise and could reach to its exacting and all controlling demands. God only can answer for the promises.

God needs prayer, and man needs prayer, too. It is indispensable to God's work in this world, and is essential to getting God to work in earth's affairs. So God binds men to pray by the most solemn obligations. God commands men to pray, and so not to pray is plain disobedience to an imperative command of Almighty God.

Prayer is such a condition without which the graces, the salvation and the good of God are not bestowed on men. Prayer is a high privilege, a royal prerogative and manifold and eternal are the losses by failure to exercise it. Prayer is the great, universal force to advance God's cause; the reverence which hallows God's name; the ability to do God's will, and the establishment of God's kingdom in the hearts of the children of men. These, and their coincidents and agencies, are created and affected by prayer. One of the constitutional enforcements of the Gospel is prayer. Without prayer, the Gospel can neither be preached effectively, promulgated faithfully, experienced in the heart, nor be practiced in the life. And for the very simple reason that by leaving prayer out of the catalogue of religious duties, we leave God out, and His work cannot progress without Him. The movements which God purposed under Cyrus, king of Persia, prophesied about by Isaiah many years before Cyrus was born, are conditioned on prayer. God declares His purpose, power, independence and defiance of obstacles in the way of Him carrying out those purposes. His omnipotent and absolutely infinite power is set to encourage prayer. He has been ordering all events, directing all conditions, and creating all things, that He might answer prayer, and then turns Himself over to His praying ones to be commanded. And then all the results and power He holds in His hands will be bestowed in lavish and unmeasured munificence to carry out prayers and to make prayer the mightiest energy in the world.

The passage in Isaiah 46 is too lengthy to be quoted in its entirety but it is well worth reading. It closes with such strong words as these, words about prayer, which are the climax of all which God has been saying concerning His purposes in connection with Cyrus: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded." In the conclusion of the history of Job, we see how God intervenes in behalf of Job and calls upon his friends to present themselves before Job that he may pray for them. "My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends," is God's statement, with the further words added, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept," a striking illustration of God intervening to deliver Job's friends in answer to Job's prayer.

We have heretofore spoken of prayer affecting God, angels and men. Christ wrote nothing while living. Memoranda, notes, sermon writing, sermon making, were alien to Him. Autobiography was not to His taste. The Revelation of John was His last utterance. In that book we have pictured the great importance, the priceless value, and the high position which prayer obtains in the movements, history, and unfolding progress of God's Church in this world. We have this picture in Rev. 8:3, disclosing the interest the angels in heaven have in the prayers of the saints and in accomplishing the answers to those prayers:

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and there were voices, and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake. "

Translated into the prose of everyday life, these words show how the capital stock by which heaven carries on the business of salvation under Christ, is made up of the prayers of God's saints on earth, and discloses how these prayers in flaming power come back to earth and produce its mighty commotions, influences and revolutions. Praying men are essential to Almighty God in all His plans and purposes. God's secrets, councils and cause have never been committed to prayerless men. Neglect of prayer has always brought loss of faith, loss of love, and loss of prayer. Failure to pray has been the baneful, inevitable cause of backsliding and estrangement from God. Prayerless men have stood in the way of God fulfilling His Word and doing His will on earth. They tie the divine hands and interfere with God in His gracious designs. As praying men are a help to God, so prayerless men are a hindrance to Him. We press the Scriptural view of the necessity of prayer, even at the cost of repetition. The subject is too important for repetition to weaken or tire, too vital to be trite or tame. We must feel it anew. The fires of prayer have burned low. Ashes and not flames are on its altars.

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Numbers of other cases could be named. These are sufficient. God seems to have taken great pains in His divine revelation to men to show how He interferes in earth's affairs in answer to the praying of His saints. The question might arise just here in some over-critical minds as to the so-called "laws of nature," who are not strong believers in prayer, as if there was a conflict between what they call the "laws of nature" and the law of prayer. These people make nature a sort of imaginary god entirely separate of Almighty God. What is nature anyway? It is but the creation of God, the Maker of all things. And what are the "laws of nature" but the laws of God, through which He governs the material world. As the law of prayer is also the law of God, there cannot possibly be any conflict between the two sets of laws, but all must work in perfect harmony. Prayer does not violate any natural law. God may set aside one law for the higher working of another law, and this He may do when He answers prayer. Or Almighty God may answer prayer working through the course of natural law. But whether or not we understand it, God is over and above all nature, and can and will answer prayer in a wise, intelligent and just manner, even though man may not comprehend it. So that in no sense is there any discord or conflict between God's several laws when God is induced to interfere with human affairs in answer to prayer. In this connection another word might be said. We used the form of words to which there can be no objection, that prayer does certain things, but this of course implies not that prayer as a human means accomplishes anything, but that prayer only accomplishes things instrumentally. Prayer is the instrument, God is the efficient and active agent. So that prayer in itself does not interfere in earth's affairs, but prayer in the hands of men moves God to intervene and do things, which He would not otherwise do if prayer was not used as the instrument. It is as we say, "faith hath saved thee," by which is simply meant that God through the faith of the sinner saves him, faith being only the instrument used by the sinner which brings salvation to him.

("The Weapons Of Prayer" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 1-2 ; 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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