

Chapel Flock



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

[He's Alive-](#)
[Don Francisco](#)

[The Traveler-](#)
[Don Francisco](#)

[Thief On The Cross-](#)
[Don Francisco](#)

Prayer

Lord, I am so blessed to know that You want me to eat the sweet fruit of victory. That knowledge makes me want to work my ground even harder to produce a great harvest for Your Kingdom. I know that in my own flesh, I will never be able to fulfill the dream You've given me. But by Your Spirit, I can do all things! So I ask You to fill me with so much strength and motivation that I'll never stop until I finally reap the harvest, in Jesus' name. Amen.....

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

" Stopping The Power Of Darkness"

Leonard Ravenhill

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[KLOV](#)

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[Through The Bible](#)

[Bob Coy/Teachings](#)

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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 BUT DAVID said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any more within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand. 2 So David arose and went over with the 600 men who were with him to Achish son of Maach, king of Gath. 3 And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. 4 When it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he sought for him no more. 5 And David said to Achish, If I have now found favor in your eyes, let me be given a place to dwell in some country town; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you? 6 Then Achish gave David the town of Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag belongs to the kings of Judah to this day. 7 The time David dwelt in the Philistines' country was a year and four months. 8 Now David and his men went up and made attacks on the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites [enemies of Israel Joshua had failed to exterminate]. For from of old those nations inhabited the land, as one goes to Shur even to the land of Egypt. 9 And David smote the land and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, oxen, donkeys, camels, and the apparel, and returned to Achish. 10 Achish would ask, Against whom have you made a raid today? And David would reply, Against the South (Negeb) of Judah, or of the Jerahmeelites, or of the Kenites. 11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive to bring tidings to Gath, thinking, Lest they should say about us, So did David, and so will he do as long as he dwells in the Philistines' country. 12 And Achish believed David, saying, He has made his people Israel utterly abhor him; so he shall be my servant always.

Chapter 27

Now David made a negative confession in chapter twenty-seven, and if what these people are preaching today, David would've been killed by Saul. If what they say is true, "If you are what you say," if words have a creative force, and words become a creative force, and you can say it into existence, and so forth, then you've got God's divine fiat power and you've become as God.

But David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul (1Sa 27:1):

What a negative confession. "One day Saul's gonna get me." Now if what they teach is true, then it should follow that Saul one day killed David. But that didn't happen. Don't let people lay a trap on you because you may have a negative personality, and say negative things. "Oh, that's gonna happen to you. You shouldn't be saying that. That's just what's gonna take place." That's not true. There are a lot of negative people that have positive things happen to them, and a lot of positive people that have negative things happen to them. The Bible says, "The sun shines on the just and the unjust alike, and the rain falls on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). I don't care who you are, you're gonna have problems in your life, and you're gonna have good times in your life. You can say negative things and not have to go around cringing, fearing, "Oh, I said it and now it's gonna happen." David said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

there's nothing better for me than I should speedily escape the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of seeking me any more in the coast of Israel: and I'll escape out of his hand. So David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him to Achish, the king of Gath (1Sa 27:1-2).

Now Gath is one of the major five Philistine cities. It lies about ten miles inland from Ashdod. and Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ashkelon both being on the coast, and Gath made sort of a triangle about ten miles inland from these two Philistine cities, down in the southern part, fifty kilometers from Beersheba, this city of Gath.

The ruins are still there today. We stopped by just the other day, and looked at the ruins of the city of Gath. In my mind I tried to picture David as he first came to Achish and let the spit run down his beard, and slobbered all over, and acted like a madman, scrabbling on the walls. I could see the walls of the ancient city of Gath, and I could in my mind picture old David there doing his little scene in front of Achish.

Now this time he comes to Achish again and he is seeking actually political asylum almost because Saul was after him. So Achish received David, and David said, "Look, I don't need to dwell in this city, but just give me a city around here.

I don't need to dwell in the royal city. So he gave him Ziklag (1Sa 27:5-6):

So David then and his men began to invade areas around them. Now though I admire David for a lot of things, yet I don't admire David for other things. This I cannot really find any real excuse for David's actions. He would go out and he would totally wipe out a city, and he'd kill everybody so that there'd be no one to come back and tell people what was happening. He was making excursions against these cities.

And when Achish would see him, he'd say, [Well, where you been?] Where have you been building a road today? And he said, Over against Judah (1Sa 27:10).

Actually he was wiping out a lot of these little Philistine villages, and Canaanite villages and making out to king Achish that he was fighting against Judah.

So he thought [Oh boy] they're gonna utterly hate David over in Judah now (1Sa 27:12).

But he would kill everybody so that there'd be no one to tell what he was doing. That is not at all right, it isn't admirable. I don't have any excuses for David in these actions. The only thing I think that it does point out is that God can use men that aren't perfect. David

was far from perfect. I think that many times we have some kind of a concept that only God, God only uses perfect people. That isn't so. Many times we disqualify ourselves from serving the Lord, being used of God, because we're so conscious of our own imperfections. But God used David and that's always an encouragement to me. If God could use a guy like David, then God can use a guy like me because I'm far from perfect also. He can also use a person like you, because I don't think you're so perfect either. (Through The Bible; C2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Commentaries; 1979 – 1986)

VIII. PRAYERLESSNESS IN THE PULPIT

"Henry Martyn laments that 'want of private devotional reading and shortness of prayer through incessant sermon-making had produced much strangeness between God and his soul.' He judges that he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations and too little to private communion with God. He was much impressed with the need of setting apart times for fasting and to devote times to for solemn prayer. Resulting from this he records 'Was assisted this morning to pray for two hours.'"—E. M. B.

All God's saints came to their sainthood by the way of prayer. The saints could do nothing without prayer. We can go further and say that the angels in heaven can do nothing without prayer, but can do all things by praying. These messengers of the Highest are largely dependent on the prayers of the saints for the sphere and power of their usefulness, which open avenues for angelic usefulness and create missions for them on the earth. And as it is with all the Apostles, saints and angels in heaven, so is it of preachers. "The angels of the churches" can do nothing without prayer which opens doors of usefulness and gives power and point to their words.

How can a preacher preach effectively, make impressions on hearts and minds, and have fruits to his ministry, who does not get his message first-hand from God? How can he deliver a rightful message without having his faith quickened, his vision cleared, and his heart warmed by his closeting with God?

It would be well for all of us, in this connection, to read again Isaiah's vision recorded in the seventh chapter of his prophecy when, as he waited, and confessed and prayed before the throne, the angel touched his lips with a live coal from God's altar:

"Then flew one of the seraphim unto me," he says, "having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged."

Oh, the need there is for present-day preachers to have their lips touched with a live coal from the altar of God! This fire is brought to the mouths of those prophets who are of a prayerful spirit, and who wait in the secret place for the appointed angel to bring the living flame. Preachers of the same temper as Isaiah received visits from the angel who brings live coals to touch their lips. Prayer always brings the living flame to unloose tongues, to open doors of utterance, and to open great and effectual doors of doing good. This, above all else, is the great need of the prophets of God.

As far as the abiding interests of religion are concerned, a pulpit without a closet will always be a barren thing. Blessed is the preacher whose pulpit and closet are hard by each other, and who goes from the one into the other. To consecrate no place to prayer, is to make a beggarly showing, not only in praying, but in holy living, for secret prayer and holy living are so closely joined that they can never be dissevered. A preacher or a Christian may live a decent, religious life, without secret prayer, but decency and holiness are two widely different things. And the former is attained only by secret prayer.

A preacher may preach in an official, entertaining and learned way, without prayer, but between this kind of preaching and the sowing of God's precious seed there is distance not easily covered.

We cannot declare too often or too strongly that prayer, involving all of its elements, is the one prime condition of the success of Christ's kingdom, and that all else is secondary and incidental. Prayerful preachers, prayerful men and prayerful women only can press this Gospel with aggressive power. They only can put in it conquering forces. Preachers may be sent out by the thousand, their equipments be ever so complete, but unless they be men skilled in the trade of prayer, trained to its martial and exhaustive exercise, their going will be lacking in power and effectiveness. Moreover, except the men and women who are behind these preachers, who furnish their equipment, are men and women in whose characters prayer has become to be serious labour, their outlay will be a vain and bootless effort.

Prayer should be the inseparable accompaniment of all missionary effort, and must be the one equipment of the missionaries as they go out to their fields of labour, and enter upon their delicate and responsible tasks. Prayer and missions go hand in hand. A prayerless missionary is a failure before he goes out, while he is out, and when he returns to his native land. A prayerless board of missions, too, needs to learn the lesson of the necessity of prayer.

Prayer enthrones God as sovereign and elevates Jesus Christ to sit with Him, and had Christian preachers used to its full the power of prayer, long ere this the "kingdoms of this world would have become the kingdom of God and of his Christ." Added to all the missionary addresses, the money raised for missions, to the scores being sent out to needy fields, is prayer. Missions have their root in prayer, must have prayer in all of its plans, and prayer must precede, go with and follow all of its missionaries and labourers.

In the face of all difficulties which face the Church in its great work on earth, and the almost superhuman and complex obstacles in the way of evangelizing the world, God encourages us by His strongest promises: "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show great and mighty things which thou knowest not." The revelations of God to him who is of a prayerful spirit go far beyond the limits of the praying. God commits Himself to answer the specific prayer, but He does not stop there. He says, "Ask of me things to come concerning

my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me." Think over that remarkable engagement of God to those who pray, "Command ye me," He actually places Himself at the command of praying preachers and a praying Church. And this is a sufficient prayer. discouragement, He declares by the mouth of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that ye can ask or think."

It is unquestionably taught that preachers in going forward with their God-appointed tasks, in their prayers, can command God, which is to command His ability, His presence and His power. "Certainly I will be with thee," is the reply to every sincere inquiring minister of God. All of God's called men in the ministry are privileged to stretch their prayers into regions where neither words nor thought can go, and are permitted to expect from Him beyond their praying, and for their praying, God Himself, and then in addition, "great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

Real heart-praying, live-praying, praying by the power of the Spirit, direct, specific, ardent, simple praying—this is the kind of praying which legitimately belongs to the pulpit. This is the kind demanded just now by the men who stand in the pulpit. There is no school in which to learn to pray in public but in the closet. Preachers who have learned to pray in the closet, have mastered the secret of pulpit praying. It is but a short step from secret praying to effectual, live, pulpit praying. Good pulpit praying follows from good secret praying. A closed closet with the preacher makes for cold, spiritless, formal praying in the pulpit. Study how to pray, O preacher, but not by studying the forms of prayer, but by attending the school of prayer on your knees before God. Here is where we learn not only to pray before God, but learn also how to pray in the presence of men. He who has learned the way to the closet has discovered the way to pray when he enters the pulpit.

How easily we become professional and mechanical in the most sacred undertakings! Henry Martyn learned the lesson so hard to learn, that the cultivation and perfection of personal righteousness was the great and prime factor in the preacher's true success. So likewise he that learns the lesson so hard to learn, that live, spiritual, effective pulpit praying is the outgrowth of regular secret praying, has learned his lesson well. More-over: his work, as a preacher, will depend upon his praying. The great need of the hour is for good pray-ers in the pulpit as well as good preachers. Just as live, spiritual preaching is the kind which impresses and moves men, so the same kind of pulpit praying moves and impresses God. Not only is the preacher called to preach well, but also he must be called to pray well. Not that he is called to pray after the fashion of the Pharisees, who love to stand in public and pray that they may be seen and heard of men. The right sort of pulpit praying is far removed from Pharisaical praying, as far distant as light is from darkness, as great as heat is from cold, as life is from death. Where are we? What are we doing? Preaching is the very loftiest work possible for a man to do. And praying goes hand-in-hand with preaching. It is a mighty, a lofty work. Preaching is a life-giving work sowing the seeds of eternal life. Oh, may we do it well, do it after God's order, do it successfully! May we do it divinely well, so that when the end comes, the solemn close of earthly probation, we may hear from the Great Judge of all the earth, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

When we consider this great question of preaching, we are led to exclaim, "With what reverence, simplicity and sincerity ought it to be done!" What truth in the inward parts is demanded in order that it be done acceptably to God and with profit to men! How real, true and loyal those who practise it ought to be! How great the need to pray as Christ prayed, with strong cryings, and tears, with godly fear! Oh, may we as preachers do the real thing of preaching, with no sham, with no mere form of words, with no dull, cold, professional utterances, but give ourselves to prayerful preaching and prayerful praying! Preaching which gives life is born of praying which gives life. Preaching and praying always go together, like Siamese twins, and can never be separated without death to one or the other, or death to both.

This is not the time for kid-glove methods nor sugar-coated preaching. This is no time for playing the gentleman as a preacher nor for putting on the garb of the scholar in the pulpit, if we propose to disciple all nations, destroy idolatry, crush the rugged and defiant forces of Mohammedanism, and overcome and destroy the tremendous forces of evil now opposing the kingdom of God in this world. Brave men, true men, praying men—afraid of nothing but God, are the kind needed just now. There will be no smiting the forces of evil which now hold the world in thralldom, no lifting of the degraded hordes of paganism, to light and eternal life, by any but praying men. All others are merely playing at religion, make-believe soldiers, with no armour and no ammunition, who are absolutely helpless in the face of a wicked and gainsaying world. None but soldiers and bond servants of Jesus Christ can possibly do this tremendous work. "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," cries the great Apostle. This is no time to think of self, to consult with dignity, to confer with flesh and blood, to think of ease, or to shrink from hardship, grief and loss. This is the time for toil, suffering, and self-denial. We must lose all for Christ in order to gain all for Christ. Men are needed in the pulpit, as well as in the pew, who are "bold to take up, firm to sustain, the consecrated cross." Here is the sort of preachers God wants. And this sort are born of much praying. For no man is sufficient for these things who is a prayerless preacher. Praying preachers alone can meet the demand and will be equal to the emergency.

The Gospel of Jesus has neither relish nor life in it when spoken by prayerless lips or handled by prayerless hands. Without prayer the doctrines of Christ degenerate into dead orthodoxy. Preaching them without the aid of the Spirit of God, who comes into the preacher's messages only by prayer, is nothing more than mere lecturing, with no life, no grip, no force in the preaching. It amounts to nothing more than live rationalism or sickly sentimentalism. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word," was the settled and declared purpose of the apostolic ministry. The kingdom of God waits on prayer, and prayer puts wings on the Gospel and power into it. By prayer it moves forward with conquering force and rapid advance.

If prayer be left out of account, the preacher rises to no higher level than the lecturer, the politician or the secular teacher. That which distinguishes him from all other public speakers is the fact of prayer. And as prayer deals with God, this means that the preacher has God with him, while other speakers do not need God with them to make their public messages effective. The preacher above everything else is intellectuality is the only qualification for other public speakers. Spirituality which is born of prayer belongs to the preacher.

a spiritual man, a man of the Spirit, who deals with spiritual things. And this implies that he has to do with God in His pulpit work in a high and holy sense. This can be said of no other public speaker. And so prayer must necessarily go with the preacher and his preaching. Pure

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ often speaks of prayer. It stands out prominently in His utterances on that occasion. The lesson of prayer which He taught was one of hallowing God's name, of pushing God's kingdom. We are to long for the coming of the kingdom of God. It is to be longed for, and must be first in our intercourse with God. God's will must have its royal way in the hearts and wills of those who pray. The point of urgency is made by our Lord that men are to pray in earnest, by asking, seeking, knocking, in order to hallow God's name, bring His will to pass, and to forward His kingdom among men.

And let it be kept in mind that while this prayer-lesson has to do with all men, it has a peculiar application to the ministry, for it was the twelve would-be preachers who made the request of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." So that primarily these words were spoken first to twelve men just entering upon their work as ministers. Jesus was talking as Luke records it, to preachers. So He speaks to the preachers of this day. How He pressed these twelve men into the ministry of prayer! The present-day ministry needs the same lesson to be taught them, and needs the same urgency pressing them to prayer as their habit of life.

Notwithstanding all he may claim for himself, nor how many good things may be put down to his credit, a prayerless preacher will never learn well God's truth, which He is called upon to declare with all fidelity and plainness of speech. Blind and blinding still will he be if he lives a prayerless life. A prayerless ministry cannot know God's truth, and not knowing it, cannot teach it to ignorant men. He who teaches us the path of prayer, must first of all walk in the same path. A preacher cannot teach what he does not know. A blind leader of the blind will be the preacher who is a stranger to prayer. Prayer opens the preacher's eyes, and keeps them open to the evil of sin, the peril of it, and the penalty it incurs. A blind leader leading the blind will be the vocation of him who is prayerless in his own life.

The best and the greatest offering which the Church and the ministry can make to God is an offering of prayer. If the preachers of the twentieth century will learn well the lesson of prayer, and use it fully in all its exhaustless efficiency, the millennium will come to its noon ere the century closes.

The Bible preacher prays. He is filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with God's Word, and is filled with faith. He has faith in God, faith in God's only begotten Son, his personal Saviour, and he has implicit faith in God's Word. He cannot do otherwise than pray. He cannot be other than a man of prayer. The breadth of his life and the pulsations of his heart are prayer. The Bible preacher lives by prayer, loves by prayer, and preaches by prayer. His bended knees in the place of secret prayer advertise what kind of preacher he is.

Preachers may lose faith in God, in Jesus Christ as their personal and present Saviour, become devoid of the peace of God and let the joy of salvation go out of their hearts, and yet be unconscious of it. How needful for the preacher to be continually examining himself, and inquiring into his personal relations to God and into his religious state! The preachers, like the philosophers of old, may defer to a system; and earnestly contend for it after they have lost all faith in its great facts. Men may in the pulpit with hearts of unbelief, minister at the altars of the Church, while alien to the most sacred and vital principles of the Gospel.

It is a comparatively easy task for preachers to become so absorbed in the material and external affairs of the Church as to lose sight of their own souls, forget the necessity of prayer so needful to keep their own souls alive to God, and lose the inward sweetness of a Christian experience.

The prayer which makes much of our preaching must itself be made much of. The character of our praying will determine the character of our preaching. Serious praying will give serious weight to preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction and makes it stick. In every ministry, weighty for good, prayer has always been a serious business prophetic of good.

It cannot be said with too much emphasis, the preacher must be preeminently a man of prayer.

He must learn to pray, and he must have such an estimate of prayer and its great worth that he feels he cannot afford to omit it from the catalogue of his private duties. His heart must be attuned to prayer, while he himself touches the highest note of prayer. In the school of prayer only can the heart learn to preach. No gifts, no learning, no brain-force, can atone for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, no amount of social service, will supply its lack. Talking to men for God may be a great thing, and may be very commendable. But talking to God for men, is far more valuable and commendable.

The power of Bible preaching lies not simply or solely in superlative devotion to God's Word, and jealous passion for God's truth. All these are essential, valuable, helpful. But above all these things, there must be the sense of the divine presence, and the consciousness of the divine power of God's Spirit on the preacher and in him. He must have an anointing, an empowering, a sealing of the Holy Spirit, for the great work of preaching, making him akin to God's voice, and giving him the energy of God's right hand, so that this Bible preacher can say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. For I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts."

IX. PRAYER-EQUIPMENT FOR PREACHERS

"Go back! Back to that upper room; back to your knees; back to searching of heart and habit, thought and life; back to pleading, praying, waiting, till the Spirit of the Lord floods the soul with light, and you are endued with power from on high. Then go forth in the power of Pentecost, and the Christ-life shall be lived, and the works of Christ shall be done. You shall open blind eyes, cleanse foul hearts, break men's fetters, and save men's souls. In the power of the indwelling Spirit, miracles become the commonplace of daily living."—Samuel Chadwick.

Almost the last words uttered by our Lord before His ascension to heaven, were those addressed to the eleven disciples, words which, really, were spoken to, and having directly to do with, preachers, words which indicate very clearly the needed fitness which these men must have to preach the Gospel, beginning at Jerusalem: "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem," says Jesus, "till ye be endued with power from on high."

Two things are very clearly set forth in these urgent directions. First, the power of the Holy Ghost for which they must tarry. This was to be received after their conversion, an indispensable requisite, equipping them for the great task set before them. Secondly, the "promise of the Father," this "power from on high," would come to them after they had waited in earnest, continuous prayer. A reference to Acts 1:14 will reveal that these same men, with the women, "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," and so continued until the Day of Pentecost, when the power from on high descended upon them.

This "power from on high," as important to those early preachers as it is to present-day preachers, was not the force of a mighty intellect, holding in its grasp great truths, flooding them with light, and forming them into verbal shapeliness and beauty. Nor was it the acquisition of great learning, or the result of an address, faultless and complete by rule of rhetoric. None of these things. Nor was this spiritual power held then, nor is it held now, in the keeping of any earthly sources of power. The effect and energy of all human forces are essentially different in source and character, and do not at all result from this "power from on high." The transmission of such power is directly from God, a bestowal, in rich measure, of the force and energy which pertains only to God, and which is transmitted to His messengers only in answer to a longing, wrestling attitude of his soul before his Master, conscious of his own impotency and seeking the omnipotency of the Lord he serves, in order more fully to understand the given Word and to preach the same to his fellow-men.

The "power from on high" may be found in combination with all sources of human power, but is not to be confounded with them, is not dependent upon them, and must never be superseded by them. Whatever of human gift, talent or force a preacher may possess it is not to be made paramount, or even conspicuous. It must be hidden, lost, overshadowed by this "power from on high." The forces of intellect and culture may all be present, but without this inward, heaven-given power, all spiritual effort is vain and unsuccessful. Even when lacking the other equipment but having this "power from on high," a preacher cannot but succeed. It is the one essential, all-important vital force which a messenger of God must possess to give wings to his message, to put life into his preaching, and to enable him to speak the Word with acceptance and power.

A word is necessary here. Distinctions need to be kept in mind. We must think clearly upon this question. "Power from on high" means "the unction of the Holy One" resting on and abiding in the preacher. This is not so much a power which bears witness to a man being the child of God as it is a preparation for delivering the Word to others. Unction must be distinguished from pathos. Pathos may exist in a sermon while unction is entirely absent. So also, may unction be present and pathos absent. Both may exist together; but they are not to be confused, nor be made to appear to be the same thing. Pathos promotes emotion, tender feeling, sometimes tears. Quite often it results from the relation of an affecting incident, or when the tender side is peculiarly appealed to. But pathos is neither the direct nor indirect result of the Holy Spirit resting upon the preacher as he preaches.

But unction is. Here we are given the evidence of the workings of an undefinable agency in the preacher, which results directly from the presence of this "power from on high," deep, conscious, life-giving and carrying, giving power and point to the preached Word. It is the element in a sermon which arouses, stirs, convicts and moves the souls of sinners and saints. This is what the preacher requires, the great equipment for which he should wait and pray. This "unction of the Holy One" delivers from dryness, saves from superficiality, and gives authority to preaching. It is the one quality which distinguishes the preacher of the Gospel from other men who speak in public; it is that which makes a sermon unique, unlike the deliverance of any other public speaker.

Prayer is the language of a man burdened with a sense of need. It is the voice of the beggar, conscious of his poverty, asking of another the things he needs. It is not only the language of lack, but of felt lack, of lack consciously realized. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," means not only that the fact of poverty of spirit brings the blessing, but also that poverty of spirit is realized, known and acknowledged. Prayer is the language of those who need something—something which they, themselves, cannot supply but which God has promised them, and for which they ask. In the end, poor praying and prayerlessness amount to the same thing, for poor praying proceeds from a lack of the sense of need, while prayerlessness has its origin in the same soil. Not to pray is not only to declare there is nothing needed, but to admit to a non-realization of that need. This is what aggravates the sin of prayerlessness. It represents an attempt at instituting an independence of God, a self-sufficient ruling of God out of the life. It is a declaration made to God that we do not need Him, and hence do not pray to Him.

This is the state in which the Holy Spirit, in His messages to the Seven Churches in Asia, found the Laodicean Church and "the Laodicean state" has come to stand for one in which God is ruled out, expelled from the life, put out of the pulpit. The entire condemnation of this Church is summed up in one expression: "Because thou sayest, I have need of nothing," the most alarming state into which a person, or church or preacher can come. Trusting in its riches, in its social position, in things outward and material, the Church at Laodicea omitted God, leaving Him out of their church plans and church work, and declared, by their acts and by their omission of prayer, "I have need of nothing."

No wonder the self-satisfied declaration brought forth its sentence of punishment—"Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." The idea conveyed is that such a backslidden state of heart is as repulsive to God as an emetic is to the human stomach, and as the stomach expels that which is objectionable, so Almighty God threatens to "spue out of His mouth" these people who were in such a religious condition so repulsive to Him. All of it was traceable to a prayerless state of heart, for no one can read this word of the Spirit to this Laodicean Church and not see that the very core of their sin was prayerlessness. How could a Church, given to prayer, openly and vauntingly declare, "I have need of nothing," in the face of the Spirit's assertion that it needed everything, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked"? In addition to their sin of self-sufficiency and of independence of God, the Laodiceans were spiritually blind. Oh, what dullness of sight, what blindness of soul! These people were prayerless, and knew not the import of such prayerlessness. They lacked everything which goes to make up spiritual life, and force, and self-denying piety, and vainly supposed themselves to need nothing but material wealth, thus making temporal possessions a substitute for spiritual wealth, leaving God entirely out of their activities, relying upon human and material resources to do the work only possible to the divine and supernatural, and secured alone by prayer.

Nor let it be forgotten that this letter (in common with the other six letters) was primarily addressed to the preacher in charge of the church. All this strengthens the impression that the "angel of the church" himself was in this lukewarm state. He himself was living a prayerless life, relying upon things other than God, practically saying, "I have need of nothing." For these words are the natural expression of the spirit of him who does not pray, who does not care for God, and who does not feel the need of Him in his life, in his work and in his preaching. Furthermore, the words of the Spirit seem to indicate that the "angel of the church" at Laodicea was indirectly responsible for this sad condition into which the Laodicean Church had fallen.

May not this sort of a church be found in modern times? Is it not likely that we could discover some preachers of modern times who fall under a similar condemnation to that passed upon the "angel of the church" of Laodicea?

Preachers of the present age excel those of the past in many, possibly in all, human elements of success. They are well abreast of the age in learning, research, and intellectual vigour. But these things neither insure "power from on high" nor guarantee a live, thriving religious experience, or righteous life. These purely human gifts do not bring with them an insight into the deep things of God, or strong faith in the Scriptures, or an intense loyalty to God's divine revelation.

The presence of these earthly talents even in the most commanding and impressive form, and richest measure do not in the least abate the necessity for the added endowment of the Holy Spirit. Herein lies the great danger menacing the pulpit of today. All around us we see a tendency to substitute human gifts and worldly attainments for that supernatural, inward power which comes from on high in answer to earnest prayer.

In many instances modern preaching seems to fail in the very thing which should create and distinguish true preaching, which is essential to its being, and which alone can make of it a divine and powerfully aggressive agency. It lacks, in short, "the power from on high" which alone can make it a living thing. It fails to become the channel through which God's saving power can be made to appeal to men's consciences and hearts.

Quite often, modern preaching fails at this vital point, for lack of exercising a potent influence which disturbs men in their sleep of security, and awakens them to a sense of need and of peril. There is a growing need of an appeal which will quicken and arouse the conscience from its ignoble stupor and give it a sense of wrong-doing and a corresponding sense of repentance. There is need of a message which searches into the secret places of man's being, dividing, as it were, the joints and the marrow, and laying bare the mysterious depths before himself and his God. Much of our present-day preaching is lacking in that quality which infuses new blood into the heart and veins of faith, that arms it with courage and skill for the battle with the powers of darkness, and secures it a victory over the forces of the world.

Such high and noble ends can never be accomplished by human qualifications, nor can these great results be secured by a pulpit clothed only with the human elements of power, however gracious, comfortable, and helpful they may be. The Holy Spirit is needed. He alone can equip the ministry for its difficult and responsible work in and out of the pulpit. Oh, that the present-day ministry may come to see that its one great need is an endowment of "power from on high," and that this one need can be secured only by the use of God's appointed means of grace—the ministry of prayer.

Prayer is needed by the preacher in order that his personal relations with God may be maintained and that because there is no difference between him and any other kind of a man in so far as his personal salvation is concerned. This he must work out "with fear and trembling," just as all other men must do. Thus prayer is of vast importance to the preacher in order that he may possess a growing religious experience, and be enabled to live such a life that his character and conduct will back up his preaching and give force to his message.

A man must have prayer in his pulpit work, for no minister can preach effectively without prayer. He also has use for prayer in praying for others. Paul was a notable example of a preacher who constantly prayed for those to whom he ministered.

But we come, now, to another sphere of prayer, that of the people praying for the preacher. "Brethren, pray for us," This is the cry which Paul set in motion, and which has been the cry of spiritually minded preachers—those who know God and who know that value of prayer—in all succeeding ages. No condition of success or the reverse of it must abate the cry. No degree of culture, no abundance of talents, must cause that cry to cease. The learned preacher, as well as the unlearned, has equal need to call out to the people they

serve, "Withal, praying also for us." Such a cry voices the felt need of a preacher's heart who feels the need there is for sympathies of a people to be in harmony with its minister. It is but the expression of the inner soul of a preacher who feels his insufficiency for the tremendous responsibilities of the pulpit, who realizes his weakness and his need of the divine unction, and who throws himself upon the prayers of his congregation, and calls out to them, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and for me, that utterance may be given me." It is the cry of deep felt want in the heart of the preacher who feels he must have this prayer made specifically for him that he may do his work in God's own way.

When this request to a people to pray for the preacher is cold, formal and official, it freezes in-stead of fructifies. To be ignorant of the necessity for the cry, is to be ignorant of the sources of spiritual success. To fail to stress the cry, and to fail to have responses to it, is to sap the sources of spiritual life. Preachers must sound out the cry to the Church of God. Saints everywhere and of every kind, and of every faith speedily respond and pray for the preacher. The imperative need of the work demands it. "Pray for us," is the natural cry of the hearts of God's called men—faithful preachers of the Word.

Saintly praying in the early Church helped apostolic preaching mightily, and rescued apostolic men from many dire straits. It can do the same thing today. It can open doors for apostolic labours, and apostolic lips to utter bravely and truly the Gospel message. Apostolic movements wait their ordering from prayer, and avenues long closed are opened to apostolic entrance by and through the power of prayer. The messenger receives his message and is schooled as to how to carry and deliver the message by prayer. The forerunner of the Gospel, and that which prepares the way, is prayer; not only by the praying of the messenger himself, but by the praying of the Church of God.

Writing along this line in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul is first general in his request and says, "Brethren, pray for us." Then he becomes more minute and particular:

"Finally, brethren, pray for us," he goes on, "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith."

The Revised Version has for "free course" the word "run." "The Word" means doctrine, and the idea conveyed is that this doctrine of the Gospel is rapidly propagated, a metaphor taken from the running of a race, and is an exhortation to exert one's self, to strive hard, to expend strength. Thus the prayer for the spread of the Gospel gives the same energy to the Word of the Lord, as the greatest outlay of strength gives success to the racer. Prayer in the pew gives the preached Word energy, facility, and success. Preaching without the backing of mighty praying is as limp and worthless an effort as can be imagined. Prayerlessness in the pew is a serious hindrance to the running of the Word of the Lord.

The preaching of the Word of the Lord falls to run and be glorified from many causes. The difficulty may lie with the preacher himself, should his outward conduct be out of harmony with the rule of the Scriptures and his own profession. The Word lived must be in accord with the Word delivered; the life must be in harmony with the sermon. The preacher's spirit and behaviour out of the pulpit must run parallel with the Word of the Lord spoken in the pulpit. Otherwise, a man is an obstacle to the success of his own message.

Again, the Word of the Lord may fail to run, may be seriously encumbered and crippled by the inconsistent lives of those who are the hearers thereof. Bad living in the pew will seriously cripple the Word of the Lord, as attempts to run on its appointed course. Unrighteous lives among the laity heavily weights down the Word of the Lord and hampers the work of the ministry. Yet prayer will remove this burden which seriously handicaps the preached Word. It will tend to do this in a direct way, or in an indirect manner. For just as you set laymen to praying, for the preacher or even for themselves, it awakens conscience, stirs the heart, and tends to correct evil ways and to promote good living. No man will pray long and continue in sin. Praying breaks up bad living, while bad living breaks down prayer. Praying goes into bankruptcy when a man goes to sinning. To obey the cry of the preacher, "Brethren, pray for us," sets men to doing that which will induce right living in them, and will tend to break them away from sin. So it comes about that it is worth no little to get the laity to pray for the ministry. Prayer helps the preacher, is an aid to the sermon, assists the hearer and promotes right living in the pew.

Prayer also moves him who prays for the preacher and for the Word of the Lord, to use all his influence to remove any hindrance to that Word which he may see, and which lies in his power to remove.

But prayer reaches the preacher directly. God hears the praying of a church for its minister. Prayer for the preached Word is a direct aid to it. Prayer for the preacher gives wings to the Gospel, as well as feet. Prayer makes the Word of the Lord go forward strongly and rapidly. It takes the shackles off of the message, and gives it a chance to run straight to the hearts of sinners and saints, alike. It opens the way, clears the track, furnishes a free course. The failure of many a preacher may be found just here. He was hampered, hindered, crippled by a prayerless church. Non-praying officials stood in the way of the Word preached, and became veritable stumbling blocks in the way of the Word, definitely preventing its reaching the hearts of the unsaved.

Unbelief and prayerlessness go together. It is written of our Lord in Matthew's Gospel that when He entered into His own country, "he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Mark puts it a little differently, but giving out the same idea: "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folks and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief." Unquestionably the unbelief of that people hindered our Lord in His gracious work and tied His hands. And if that be true, it requires no undue straining of the Scriptures when we say that the unbelief and prayerlessness of a church can tie the hands of its preacher, and prevent him from doing many great works in the salvation of souls and in edifying saints. Prayerlessness, therefore, as it concerns the preacher is a very serious matter. If it exists in the preacher himself, then he ties his own hands and makes the Word as preached by him ineffective and void. If prayerless men be found in the pew, then it hurts the preacher, robs him of an invaluable help, and interferes seriously with the success of his work. How great the need of a praying church to help on the preaching of the

Word of the Lord! Both pew and pulpit are jointly concerned in this preaching business. It is a copartnership. The two go hand in hand. One must help the other, one can hinder the other. Both must work in perfect accord or serious damage will result, and God's plan concerning the preacher and the preached Word be defeated.

("The Weapons Of Prayer" ; EM Bounds; Chapter 8-9 ; 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)



We would like to invite you to join with us November 25-28, 2012 for A Call to Prayer & Fasting, as we connect with hundreds of churches and communities throughout the world, united in purpose as supplications, prayers, intercessions, and the giving of thanks are made (2 Timothy 2:1).

For four nights, we will be broadcasting live prayer and worship services from cities across the United States. We are giving churches the opportunity to participate each night by becoming host sites of prayer gatherings, logging onto www.prayandfast.org and streaming the live webcast to their congregations. Our hope is to have thousands of groups praying in unity as we simply seek the Lord for revival in our families, churches, communities, and the world.

Mike MacIntosh @ Horizon

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

Chapel Flock ♦ PO Box 161102 ♦ Wichita, KS ♦ 67216 ♦ (316) 243-1438

(If you wish to be removed from the mailing list e-mail at: chapel-flock@sbcglobal.net)