

Prayer Which Gets God's Attention

By Edgar H. Lewellen

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"If My people, which are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray...I will forgive...I will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

The Purpose and Importance of Prayer

Cameron V. Thompson, in his book, *The Master Secrets of Prayer*, gives this illustration: "One poor soul entered the school of prayer after his arrival in hell. He asked for relief from his agony; it was refused. He asked that a beggar warn his brothers; he was turned down. He was praying to Abraham, a man; he could not locate God. He dared not ask to get out; he plainly knew that he was beyond hope. Prayerless on earth, unanswered in hell, he suffers on as the man who tried to learn to pray too late." (See Luke 16:19-31).

As we see the decay of morals and the drift away from God, no serious Christian will question the need for a mighty, heaven-sent revival that will shake the present Church to its foundations. The result will be an ushering in of a cleansing and empowering that will turn our nation around, so that our present way of life today will be seen as totally unacceptable to a holy God. This becomes more **urgent**, *"as we see the day of the Lord approaching"* (Heb. 10:25; Rev. 22:12). It therefore becomes imperative for His Church to fall on its knees in obedience and prayer. Our nation today is intoxicated with sex and more lewd "entertainment" that takes pride in being broad-minded enough to leave any serious thought of God out of its thinking. A. W. Tozer had it right when he said: "America is laughing her way to hell."

Prayer as It Relates to Revival

Wesley Duewel, in his book, *Revival Fire*, says, "Every time in the history of the Church when revival has come, it has followed extensive prayer and seeking of God's face by some of His children." We therefore want to direct this study to the subject of **Prayer – That Which Gets God's Attention**. We have seen that obedience and prayer are closely linked together. Perhaps you ask, "Which is more important?" or "Which comes first, obedience or prayer?" For this may we look at Scripture and see what God says.

God's Work: The Holy Spirit Draws Us

As God draws and reveals Himself to man – he then has a choice to either accept and follow Him, resulting in forgiveness and salvation, or reject Him resulting in eternal separation from His love (Mark 16:16). Those responding to Him, find forgiveness, indescribable joy and wonderful fellowship with Christ, their Savior. *"The goodness of God leads thee to repentance"* (Rom. 2:4). This is the reason for the cross! (Refer to Jeremiah 31:3; John 6:44; and John 12:32).

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David said, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God*" (Psa. 42:1).

God said, "*I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*" (Isa. 44:3). Also, "*Ye shall seek Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart*" (Jer. 29:13).

Our Work: Only Our Obedience Is Acceptable to God

The Scripture shows us clearly that the Holy Spirit's work and burden is to draw us to Christ, thus revealing to us His love, beauty, and holiness. This results in our following Him closely and obeying Him fully, and forsaking all in our lives that is not of Him (1 Sam. 15:22; Mal. 3:7; Jer. 7:23; 2 Cor. 10:5).

Our Means of Communication with Him – Prayer

He draws us. We desire to follow Him through complete obedience. We then desire to know the One who has loved us and delivered us from sin, and now have a deep desire to be in His presence and commune with Him. **That is prayer.**

Note: Samuel as a boy in the temple prayed, "*Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth*" (1 Sam. 3:9-10. Also, see Heb. 4:16 and Phil. 4:6).

Note: The exercise or act of praying avails little *if not accompanied* by a submissive and obedient spirit.

How Do We Approach God?

"If My people...humble themselves and pray..." (2 Chron. 7:14).

In **humility**. In Luke 18:14 we read that he "*that exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted*" (NIV). A proud person sees himself, his accomplishments, and his achievements, blinding him to his shortcomings and sin. A humble person sees himself as God sees him and is not happy with what he sees, which forces him to turn to Christ (Luke 18:13; 1 Pet. 5:5).

Beware of Blockages

In the Scriptures, God states that He hears His children's prayers *only* if their hands are clean and their hearts are pure (Psa. 66:18; 24:3-5; Isa. 1:15). It is the general belief that a loving God *always* has His ear open to the cries of His children. However, throughout Scripture God says the opposite. The entire first chapter of Isaiah deals with this situation.

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Many of God's children go their own way, relying on their relationship to Jehovah as a valid credit card with the Lord to receive blessings "on demand." They don't seem to realize that their actions are described by God as *"laden with iniquity," "a head that is sick,"* a people with open sores full of infection (Isa. 1:4-6). He rejected their sacrifices and worship as hypocritical, and said that *"when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; when ye make prayers, I will not hear..."* (Isa. 1:15).

However, in the face of this kind of open coldness, disobedience and rejection of His pleadings, God says, *"...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land"* (Isa. 1:18-19). Christians today are deluded into thinking that as long as they pray and go through the forms of worship that they have a right to go to God when they have a need, great or small, and God must and will hear them. Yet He says so clearly that if there is sin in our hearts *"He will not hear us"* (Psa. 66:18). He *will* hear the cries of those who are serious about returning to Him (Mal. 3:7), and who are determined to walk with Him from now onward. Only our God can be that loving, patient and forgiving. Read His words in Hosea 14:4: *"I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him."*

What Is the Place of Prayer As It Concerns Revival?

Leonard Ravenhill, in his book, *Revival Praying*, asks a question that needs to be answered today. "Are we, who still have the coals of fire on our altar, measuring ourselves by the fireless altars of neighboring churches instead of checking on the praying blaze of our saintly forebears? The world boasts its atomic power; some cults boast their satanic power; but where are those who boast of Holy Ghost power?"

Often we substitute excessive religious activities for prayer, when God is trying to impress upon us to *"be still and know that I am God"* (Psa. 46:10). Someone has said that when God intends great mercy for His people, the first thing He does is to set them praying. Only when some of God's people determine to pray until God breaks through the cocoon of man's comfort zone can we expect to have a visitation from the throne of God. This may take days or it may take months, but God's promise **will be** fulfilled: *"I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."* He will hear from heaven! (Isa. 44:3).

Brian Edwards says, "Men used in revival have a great opinion of God and are touch sensitive to sin, long before revival comes. Together with our prayerlessness, it is probably the unholiness of the lives of Christian leaders today that convinces God we are not really serious about revival."

Prayer in the Farmhouse

Duncan Campbell [evangelist in the revival in the Hebrides in 1949] related an account of the days leading up to the revival:

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"It was the week-night prayer meeting. There had been bitter opposition to the Gospel in the village, and although many attended the meetings from other areas, very few locals attended. A church leader suggested they should go to prayer, and thirty or so moved into the home of a friendly farmer. Prayer was hard, and about midnight Duncan Campbell turned to the local blacksmith who had been silent so far and said, 'I feel the time has come when you ought to pray.' The man prayed for about half an hour, because in revival, time doesn't matter, and then drew his prayer to a close with a bold challenge: 'God, do You not know that Your honor is at stake? You promised to pour floods on dry ground, and You are not doing it.' He paused for a while and then concluded: 'God, Your honor is at stake, and I challenge You to keep Your covenant engagements.'

"At that moment, Duncan Campbell recalls, 'That whole granite house shook like a leaf,' and while one elder thought of an earth tremor, Duncan Campbell was reminded of Acts 4:31: *'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken....'* Duncan Campbell pronounced the benediction and they went outside. It was about two o'clock in the morning and they found the whole village alive, ablaze with God. Men and women were carrying chairs and asking if there was room in the church for them!" (From *Revival, A People Saturated With God* by Brian Edwards).

Question: Are we on praying ground so that we can challenge God in this way?

Can Anyone Pray for Revival?

The answer is, yes! However, the question should be – **Who can move God to send revival?** In Psalm 24:3-5, the Psalmist asks, *"Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart"* – he who is totally sold out to Him. This speaks of being qualified to pray as one who has searched his heart before God, received cleansing, and now is able to call down the Spirit of God upon His people. In verse five it states that he will be heard and receive *the* blessing of the Lord. This speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit. Here our personal relationship with God takes on primary importance. God hears the prayers of those **who are blood-related** to Him and **are not at variance** with a Christian brother or sister. Variance will always cause a blockage in our praying (Matt. 5:23-24).

Someone has said, "Soiled hearts that operate soiled hands cannot plunder the resources of God." The question is: Do we mean business with God? Are we ready to pay the price for revival? We know that prayer is taxing and exacting. It means enduring. It means denying self – a daily dying by choice.

Will God Answer Our Prayers?

As God's children we have a choice between effectual praying and excuses. Too often we take the easy, human way out as we offer excuses for our failure in touching God. For example, we are tired. We don't have time to pray. We point to the coldness or problems in

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our church family, or to the day in which we live as reasons. Even some pastors and missionaries are so bold as to *put the blame on God* by saying that since God is sovereign it just isn't His time to descend with fire from heaven.

Could it be that "**our** cupboard is bare"? Has coldness taken over? Has sin dulled our sensitivity to the voice of God? We have too many gods of this world that consume our time and energy. Harboring in the life that which we *know* to be sin will definitely prevent us from praying through to God (Psa. 66:18). Isaiah said to God's people, "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear*" (Isa. 59:2). If Elijah were here he would call out, "*How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him*" (1 Kgs. 18:21). God says to those hungry to see the fire of God descend upon His Church today, "*You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart*" (Jer. 29:13). In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ says, "*Ask, and it shall be given you....*" (7:7). Paul tells us that "*all things are yours*" (1 Cor. 3:21).

Desperate Praying

When we really mean business with God, we will find that real praying is work. Satan will fight every effort we make to touch the throne of God. There is a price to pay – that of perhaps long hours, sleepless nights, heart searching and possible "housecleaning" (Psa. 66:18). Prayer means denying self and perhaps putting aside the things we like and want to do, to give God time to implant His burden in our hearts. It is here that victory comes as we begin to *fully* obey the Spirit's promptings, so that we are ready to let the Holy Spirit take control. Then will our Father hear our prayers. Is this not what the elder in the Hebrides revival meant when he cried, "Friends, it is so much humbug to be waiting and praying, waiting and praying, **if our hearts are not rightly related to God**"?

Duncan Campbell maintained "Desire for revival is one thing; confident anticipation that our desire will be fulfilled is another! God frequently brings His people to the point of desperation before He sends revival; only then will they learn that '*without Me you can do nothing*'" (John 15:5). May God give us desperate people!

Conclusion

1. God is looking for a person and a people who are serious, hungry, and desperate for a mighty visitation of God upon His people.

2. He demands that the hands and hearts of these be clean before God and before man (Psa. 24:1-5).

3. Once conditions have been met as outlined in 2 Chronicles 7:14, God looks for those who will pray, wait, and confidently expect that God fulfill His promise.

Do we believe that God will keep His promise to return to us, if we have fully and unconditionally returned to Him? (Mal. 3:7). The answer is **Yes, He will!** God is more anxious

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to meet His people in wonderful cleansing and satisfying revival than His people are to surrender fully to Him!

If we are really serious to see God descend with cleansing fire upon us and our people, are we ready to expend much time daily in prayer? Let us remember that God has asked us to **humble** ourselves before Him, and **pray**. Then God will hear from heaven (2 Chron. 7:14).

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Revival – God's Proven Method of Awakening His Church is a thirteen-lesson manual, prepared as a course for adults to be offered during the Sunday school hour. It can also be adopted for small group discussions or as a study to stimulate prayer groups with a burden for revival. The manual may be purchased through Amazon.com for \$10.00 or you may ask your local Christian bookstore to order it for you.