

The Missing Ingredient in Modern Evangelism

by Al Whittinghill

Al Whittinghill emphasizes the critical role of prayer as the missing ingredient in effective modern evangelism.

Duration: 53:23

Scripture: Matthew 12:28, John 3:16

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the importance of prayer in evangelism. He emphasizes that simply providing physical help and comfort to others is not enough to free them from spiritual bondage. The speaker references Ephesians 6:10, which encourages believers to put on the whole armor of God to stand against the tactics of the devil. He highlights the need for prayer as the missing link in evangelism, stating that it is through prayer that miracles happen and people are emancipated and enlightened by the Word of God. The speaker also shares the example of the Iranian hostage crisis, where thousands of churches prayed for the release of the hostages, which eventually led to their freedom after 444 days.

Transcript

What a great privilege it is to be back with you here. I was reflecting, driving up this morning, of all the different things over the years that we've just seen the Lord do together. I've prayed for you for many years and been blessed to have so many people in here that I love and know so well.

But I was thinking of that time several years ago, just before the year 2000, when my dad died. And it was on a Friday. I was supposed to speak here on Sunday.

And I didn't have time to prepare a message. But instead, you see, the Lord harvested from my daddy's deathbed 26 years of prayer for him. He came to the Lord Jesus right before he died.

Came out of a coma and came back up and trusted the Lord, and it was real. And I remember standing here that morning and telling you all that I didn't have a message prepared, but that a message had prepared me. Remember that, brother? And we talked about never give up for praying for your loved ones.

Maybe it's hard to keep praying and you maybe have gotten discouraged. And I remember that morning when the altar flooded with people and we all were just weeping before the Lord because we realized there were so many people that are in our immediate circles and loved ones in our families that are not where we know the Lord would have them to be with him. And that's really what I want to do again today,

is bring a message about prayer.

But in the light of the fact you've had an eight-week course going on about evangelism, I want to talk to you about the missing link in evangelism. Salvation is so much more than just going out and telling people about Jesus and then having them hear and understand. It takes a miracle for them to believe.

So I just want to pray with you. And let me just say when I'm here, it's like coming home, looking out at you. And I'll try not to point my finger at anybody this morning.

Because I really want to just talk to you and in a real sense reason with you. And everything this morning is to get you to come back tonight. I know we have competition tonight.

I didn't even watch it last night, the final four. I don't know if it's tonight or not, but I hope you'll still come. Oh, good.

It's great. It's next week or whatever. Good.

Well, you can come back anyway, even if it was tonight. I'm hoping that this morning's message will make sense to you in such a way that you will see some things that will truly be life-changing in regards to those people around you that you long to be saved. And maybe it'll put some things together.

Let's pray together. Father, I know this morning that as we sung earlier, you are glorious. But we've only seen through a small window, a clouded window, compared to your mystery and majesty, how unsearchable are your judgments and your ways past finding out.

We want to honor you here. We thank you that you sought us first. You did the work in us before we ever realized we needed it.

You brought us to yourself with a strong hand, and we've tasted of your abundant and tender mercies, and they're everlasting to us, and we praise you. We pray that we will be stewards of the mysteries and the majesty of God. May our eyes truly see the King as we sang, glorious.

May we see that your name is above every name and above all powers on this planet. And we thank you for the assurance that is ours of your coming again and of our eternal home as we've sung this morning. And I pray that you'll give us that which is necessary to see many souls come to know you in these days ahead of us.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, there's certainly a battle going on in our day. I'm sure that you're aware of the rising tone of the battle.

It's in the invisible. We see just the visible, what's going on. So many things, men's hearts failing them for looking at things coming to pass on the earth.

But that's just the visible part. There's a much greater and more malicious battle going on in the hearts and in the minds of men and in women. And this morning, I want to talk to you about the making use of what God has given to us as his great, great key for the missing element in evangelism.

Maybe this has been a curious matter to you. Maybe you've never thought about it. But consider this.

We've had 50 plus years in America of the most expensive and organized evangelistic outreaches and programs and activities. More than anywhere else in history, we've had it right here in America. We've got every possible way to reach out.

Now, not everyone's doing it, but we've spent a lot of energy and funds. But despite that fact, North America is the only continent on the planet where Christianity is shrinking. Did you know that? Now, we may have growing churches, but a lot of the growth is transfer growth, where we have a more way to minister to people.

So they come for their children, or they come because of the new music, or we come for a lot of reasons. We've learned how to draw people in. But the church in North America is going through a great crisis, and it's shrinking.

And something's got to change. And this morning, I want to ask you, have you ever wondered why the church overseas, pretty much in all countries, especially the hard situations, is exploding? Why is that? And there's a tremendous difference, you see. Where is the presence of God in the New Testament churches in the United States of America? Well, we know that something's missing.

I think we all know that in our churches today. And it's significant that in the New Testament, as we read it, all the significant moves of God always followed prayer. And this has always been in church history as well.

And the most conspicuous thing about the church of the Lord Jesus in her finest hours, if you look back, is always its prayer. Jesus even said, My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer. But He says to the people in the next breath, But it had become a den of thieves, robbers of what God intended the church to be, because they had let other things take the place of the intention of God.

But the greatest factor in history, human history as well as church history, without a doubt, is prayer. But if you're like me, it's the battleground. It's so hard.

It's easier to do other things. We let prayer get crowded out. But you see in the New Testament, I wish we had ten messages on prayer to cover these things, but you see the priority of God on prayer.

You see Jesus speaking on prayer and demonstrating prayer. He said that prayer would be the way that the church would do her greatest work, even greater works than He did because there would be all of us involved in this asking in His name and seeing the power of God. Church history is going to be written again in our day, but the ink God will use will be believing prayer.

And this will be the great key for us. We must make prayer, once again, the preeminent thing in our churches or nothing else we do will be effectual or eternal in impact. We may build a nice building.

We may have a lot of people coming for a lot of mixture of reasons, but it won't be that supernatural glory and presence of God in a life that changes Him at the very core of their being. The early church was a spiritual army on her knees. They were drunk with the atmosphere from around the throne of God.

That was the one thing that was the heartbeat in their fellowship. Every member, every single one was a praying member and the atmosphere that she breathed literally was prayer. Now we need to recover this in our day, but specifically I want to address this morning the battle for the souls of people that are around us, the souls of men and women.

No church or no outreach or no evangelism will be greater in its eternal impact than in its prayer. It just won't. It may influence people on a lot of levels, but the command to go into the world and take the gospel was preceded by the statement, all power is given to me in heaven and on earth.

And because of this, you go. There's a linkage between God's power and the going in an evangelistic or a soul winning aspect. And that link is meant to be prayer.

So I'm going to give you a lot of references this morning. I hope you'll write them down because I'm serious. This really might be new for some of you.

And for some of you that are really prone to be thinkers, really serious thinkers, this may challenge you in some ways. Not that you don't think when you hear this, but the Lord says be sanctified by the renewal of your mind, not the removal. So I'm not against intellectualism, but I am saying that God wants us to see what His word says and then be willing to make adjustments by faith.

Do you realize what the word of God really says about lost people? I mean, sometimes we hear it like a lost person's just out there waiting for us to make the gospel simple to them so they can just, oh, at last I've heard it. Or maybe if we could out persuade them with some clever, tantalizing tidbit or overarch their intellect with apologetics that are sterling and brilliant, that they would quickly believe. But it's not that simple because there's a deeper problem than that.

You see, it's like going to the ocean and you see the waves coming in and you see the visible of what's happening without realizing that there's a moment when the tide turns and it's because of heavenly forces, the moon and the rotation of the earth, and it affects everything you see. And that's what it's like for prayer when it comes to human souls and evangelism. Here's what the Bible says if we're going to learn to pray for the lost.

Here's what it says about the lost. Let me just give you a little list here of some of the things that are true about every lost person that doesn't have a relationship with Christ, that doesn't know the Lord through His word and have the Spirit of God living in them. Here is what is true, whether it's the person in the gutter or whether it's the person working in the White House.

I didn't say any names, but I'm just saying it's the same for all of them, the Word of God says. It says, first of all, that they're prisoners whom Satan refuses to release. In Isaiah 14, verse 17, it says that the devil refuses to let his prisoners go.

So, a lost man is a child of the devil. The Lord Jesus Himself said to people that weren't Christians, you're of your father, the devil, in the Gospel of John when He was talking to religious Pharisees who didn't know Him. It also says that a lost person is helplessly held in Satan's grasp.

In 1 John 5, verse 19, it says, we know that the whole world lies in the evil one. But it really means in the grasp of. And it's a picture there of a mother rocking a baby.

That's one of the pictures. It's like the enemy has people put to sleep. And he's rocking them like this, some of them.

And others, it's in the grasp that they're held in a firm hold. Listen to what it says in Mark 3, verse 27, that the lost person, the person without Christ, is a house in which the enemy has like a palace. And on the inside, there's armor that's put there.

It says in Ephesians 2, verse 2, listen to these verses about a lost person. It says, in the times past, you walked according to the lifestyle of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, according to him. And it says, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

You walked and you were energized, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. That word works means energized. You see, there's the sense where every person who walks on this planet is being energized by a master.

And the scriptures say, there's no neutrality. You're either mastered and under the sway by the grace of God, of the spirit of God. Same word for energized.

Or you're energized by the thinking and the course of this age, and your heart is held captive by what's natural and visible. And it says in the next verse, by nature, by nature, we are children of wrath. Now, I know this is hard when you hear this kind of stuff.

Say, well, that's not what I was like. Well, the scriptures say that's what every lost person is like. The question is, do I believe the scriptures? Here's other words that it says about a lost man.

Alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance of God that's in them. Their understanding is darkened. There's a blindness of heart.

You cannot, as a lost person, it says, a lost person cannot receive the things of the spirit of God because they are foolishness unto him, and neither can he know them. Because they're spiritually discerned. So a lost man is without the spirit of God.

And he's lost and alienated without God, without hope, the Bible says. And Romans 5.10 says that before we're Christians, we're actually, in our nature, enemies of God. Strangers, ungodly, and apart from Him.

And we're blinded to the gospel. We can't see. Listen to what it says in 2 Corinthians 4. When it says in 2 Corinthians 4.3, If our gospel is veiled or hidden, it's hidden to those who are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who are not believing.

Otherwise the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who's the image of God, would shine in unto them. You see, there's a blindness, there's a veil that's over the earth and over the minds and hearts of the lost. And it is supernatural.

It's not intellectual only. There is an ownership that the enemy says that he has, and slaves to the authority of this age, and the devil is where the lost man lives. It says that God grants repentance.

But when does He grant repentance? Listen to what Timothy says in 2 Timothy 2. It says, If by chance God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him to do his will. Every person serves one of two masters. That's what the Bible says.

That's what Jesus said. But God who is rich in mercy, even when we were in sin and far from God, for His great love that He has, He so loved the world that He commended the word of God toward us. And when we heard the gospel and the light of the gospel shined into us, we believed that we were saved.

But something had to happen before that. Do you know what it was? It was a miracle. It was where you were emancipated.

Where you were enlightened by the word of God, by the freedom that Christ has purchased. But how did that come to you? Did it just come without any direction? I'll tell you, I believe that this morning you will see that someone, somewhere prayed for you. And in that prayer, God was waiting.

He has so chosen that prayer would unbind the people who are bound by the God of this world, and would unbind them that they would be able to see, because they've been emancipated and enlightened, and hear the gospel, and then be free to really make that choice of love. But apart from that, before when we go out like we have in our country so often, and we blanket the streets with tracks, and we do all these things, but we don't deal with the power behind the blindness and the binding. And so it's like ricocheting off a rock.

A hard heart. A natural man not receiving the things of the Spirit of God. So, let me just give you a couple things, these points to remember.

In praying for the lost, you must realize this. Yours and my enemy is real. Do you believe that? Do you believe that you have an enemy? It's becoming more apparent, I think, in our day than it's been.

But this enemy, he wants the lost to remain lost. He wants that. And he is a usurper.

He is not just obeying God's purposes and will. He's left in the world, but he wants to stop those people around us that don't know the Lord from seeing the gospel and hearing the truth. Then the devil has, it says, schemes and wiles and methods and subtleties and deceptions.

And Paul says, if we don't know about these in 2 Corinthians 2.11, the devil will have an advantage of us. Now, see, I realize that some people never want to deal with the invisible. They do not want to deal with anything supernatural.

They want to have it logical and explainable, and I do too. But, you see, logical and explainable are not enough to break a man free from the spiritual prison that he's lost in, if he's a lost man. So, our Lord Jesus spoke of this.

Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 11, and I just want you to see something, if you have your Bible, in Luke chapter 11. Our Lord Jesus explained this when he dealt with the enemy. And he talked about a human being a house.

And he talked about, back in chapter 10 of Luke, he had said to them, when they came back from going out and preaching, they were rejoicing that even the spirits were subject to them in his name. And he says, don't rejoice because spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Oh, that's the real reason.

You're the child of God, he's saying to them. But when you come to chapter 11, verse 1, they say, teach us to pray. And in the answer, as he says, keep on asking and seeking and knocking, and the Father will give this Holy Spirit of persistence and faith and vision to you.

Then he demonstrates it, as he goes out and he says, he that's not with me is against me. Look at verse 20, after he cast out an evil spirit out of a man in verse 20. But if I, with the finger of God, cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God has come upon you.

And then he says, but a strong man, fully armed, keeps his palace, his goods are kept in peace. What's he talking about? Who's the strong man? It's Satan. And when he's fully armed, which means his defenses are all up and all his tactics are in place, he keeps his goods in peace.

There's no war going on. But verse 22, when a stronger than he shall come upon him, who's that? That's Jesus speaking about himself. And you'll see he also gives this strength.

Greater is he that's within us, the Lord Jesus, than he that's in the world. And I'm strong in the power of his name. The people that do know God shall be strong and do exploits.

So when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him, this weaker one, all his armor, which he was trusting in, and divides his spoils. And the one, you see, Jesus says in 23, that is not with me in this, ends up being against me. And he that is not gathering with me ends up scattering.

Now that, people might say, is an isolated scripture. But do you realize it's repeated also in Matthew 12, verse 28 to 30. And in Mark chapter 3, verse 27, in three gospels, this is recorded with some elaboration in each one of those, giving depth to say, how can a man take a house like this unless a stronger than he first comes and binds that enemy, Mark 3, verse 27, and takes from him the armor, and then he'll spoil him.

And how do we do this? I mean, how are you going to walk inside of a palace of the enemy and take over what is his? You see, we've got to learn how to bind and spoil his palace. There's a lot of palaces that he lives in all around us. And you may have them in all degrees of darkness.

But the second thing I want you to remember is, not only is the devil real, and he wants lost people to remain lost, he is defeated. He is defeated. It's a done deal.

And it's not just a semi-defeat, it's an utter defeat. As it says in 1 John chapter 3, verse 8, for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. And listen to what it says in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14.

I don't know if I'm probably violating a rule, giving you so much scripture, but I'm just getting cranked up. I want you to write these down. For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, the Lord Jesus himself also took part of the same, that through his death, look at this, he might destroy, and it's a very strong word, make inoperational, that he would destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who fear of death for all their lifetime in bondage, held in captivity.

You see, Jesus, by his death, frees from the fear of death and decrees and all the things that hold people in this deception and bondage. Here's what he did. Colossians chapter 2, verse 14 and 15.

Here's, he came upon the enemy at Calvary, and here's what it says, he blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that were against us, contrary to us, and he took those out of the way, nailing this certificate of debt to his cross, having spoiled, and this is a word that means like a man jamming his hand down the throat of an animal and grabbing him on the inside like they go catfish, you know, reaching in for catfish, but they jam it down an animal's mouth and turn him wrong side out like this and hold him up, inverted upside down. That's what it says, the Lord Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, and he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. It's a picture of a Roman general returning to Rome, this word picture, with his captives chained to his chariot.

That's what Jesus did. He utterly and totally defeated the devil. And so now, any power that the devil seems to be exerting around us, you see, or exercising, is either because, number one, we fail to apprehend and appropriate what he's done, or number two, it's because we have tolerated in our life what he says must be taken care of in the way of sin.

Only those things, a foothold for the enemy and ignorance, can allow the enemy to stay in power around us. So the enemy is real. He holds people in slavery, lost, unable to hear, and he wants to keep them that way.

But number two, he's been totally defeated, and the victory of the Lord Jesus is complete. And he loves these lost people. Listen to what it says as it talks about us praying for lost people.

Listen to what 1 Timothy 2 says, I exhort therefore that first of all supplication and prayers and intercession and the giving of thanks be made for all men. And he gives a list of kings and all that are in authority. And he says, verse 3, This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

There's one God, one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom to purchase us back, to pay the price of a kidnapping, you might say. And he will be testified as this in due time. The third thing is we're called to deal with the enemy.

We are called to deal with the enemy. You see, God wants men and women around you to be saved. In fact, it says in 2 Peter 3, verse 9, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some people count slackness, but he is longsuffering toward us.

He is not budome, designing, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. I kept wondering why y'all were looking up there. You're pretty good back there putting up the scriptures.

I don't know how you're doing that like that. That's really good. You're probably saying, oh, he uses a different version.

But the truth is getting out in there. It's getting out in there. We're called to deal with the enemy.

Now, how little this is realized by us leaves us with a great loss. Because we think that we can go out and go to people and just speak to them words about the Lord Jesus, and that they quickly will believe if we're just apprehensive or apprehending enough or simple enough, but we don't realize they're in chains and they're darkened and they're blinded and they're bound. So, as members of our risen Lord, seated with him, it says three times in Ephesians 2, 6, seated with him in the heavenlies.

We are his church. We are his bride. And here's his choice.

He's training his church. He's training his bride in the purposes and the things of eternity. And he's entrusted to us his authority.

He's given us authority. It's what it says that this is not a normal thing for us. We don't think like this, you see.

Paul writes to the Ephesians and he says, I'm praying that God will enlighten your eyes and open your hearts in the full understanding, wisdom, and knowledge of God. That you would know what is the assurance of him being called as a high priest. And what is the riches that he has living in you.

And the third thing he says, And that you would know what is the exceeding greatness of his dunamis, his dynamite power. Toward us who believe, according to the working, there's that same word, energizing of his mighty power. But it says, see, it's toward us who believe.

It's resurrection power in the church, in his body. The head controlling the action of what the body does. And doing the same thing so that we are stewards of the mysteries of God.

We are ambassadors. We have the word of the king. And we come with all authority because he has it all.

And he says, you go because of this. I'm sending you forth what looks like lambs among wolves. But fear not, because I'm with you.

We have the word of the king. This authority which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. And set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.

Far above all principality and power and might. And dominion in every name. Named not only in this age.

But also which is to come. And he's put everything under the feet of his body. That's us.

Everything is under his all-conquering feet. And gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Which is his body.

The fullness of him who fills all in all. So, you see, he wants his church. Like the Lord Jesus, we're his bride.

He wants us to yield to him. So that these two in an intimate relationship. He can give the word, the seed.

And we then, in prayer, prevail. And we bring forth life. It's an amazing picture.

So as members of his body, united to him by blood and breath and heart and mind. In covenant with him. We participate in the manifestation of his victory.

We have the privilege raised with him to have his authority. And we're to enforce his will in prayer. This is the thing that we're not doing.

As a church across our country. We are not seeking to enforce his will in prayer. We don't know what it means.

Thy will be done on earth as it is being done in heaven. Make your name holy in our midst. Let your kingdom come.

Like the Lord Jesus talked about. Let your will be done all around us. So we're in a conflict.

And every day we look around and we see what looks like just difficult problems. And without prayer, we might go out and try to solve those problems. And we might do a lot to help people.

We might give them all kinds of food. And that's a good thing. I'm not against any of this.

But just because we give them food. Just because we help them in a difficult situation. And comfort them.

That's not enough to free them from prison. Something's got to come first. For instance, the missing link in evangelism.

It makes all the good works catch on fire. It absolutely does everything that is awesome. You see, it says in Ephesians 6.10. Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God. So you can be able to stand against the wiles of the methods. The drag downs of the devil.

Because we wrestle not. In this five times it says against. Against.

Against. We wrestle against. Not against flesh and blood.

But against principalities and powers and rulers of darkness. And so God gives us weaponry that we are to armor. That we are to put on.

There's nothing there that's offensive except for the seventh piece. And it's mysterious. And it's in verse 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Watching thereto. Being sleepless thereto.

It means with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. There's five all's in that one. Five against and five all's.

Oh, the Lord wants us to understand that our battle that we're in is not just an intellectual. Not just an apologetic. Not just a lack providing needs.

There's something first that's needed to give that meaning and power. Or it will be just more of the same where people want to be helped. And we'll help them on a certain level.

But we won't be able to really hold them to the heart of God. I want you to look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10. And I want you to see verse 3. We go to work.

We come home. We go out and we meet people by the thousands over every year. But we've got to use spiritual weapons.

Not just our fleshly ones to reach the lost. And here it says, verse 3, 2 Corinthians 10. Though we walk in the flesh, we do not make war after the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly or carnal, but they're mighty through God. They're not because of us mighty. They're mighty through Him.

To the pulling down of strongholds. What's a stronghold? It's what the enemy's been hiding behind. When you go to Germany or some European country, you see old abandoned castles.

The stronghold's still there. The enemy's gone. You have to take them down brick by brick.

Even after the enemy goes. But here you see, there's a stronghold in a person. And here's what happens.

God says, verse 5, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. And it'll bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And people stop there.

And they don't read verse 6, which is the key to it all. If our weapons are mighty through God and He does this, then when does He do it? It says, verse 6, God has a readiness. And it's not talk about us being ready

to do it.

The Greek word implies God is having a readiness to revenge all this disobedience and all the unbelief around us. When your obedience is fulfilled. Well, what are we supposed to obey? I believe so clearly God is calling us to intercede.

And to stand in the gap. And to be that bridge. A holy priesthood.

To stand between God and man. And to come to a lost man. And don't just preach the word to him.

But bring that lost man in before God like a priest. And you pray for them. And you emancipate.

And you ask the Lord to send light. You see, because they're living with a darkness. And a blindness with a veil over them.

And what they need is the glorious gospel to shine in. Like God says, let there be light. It's a regeneration.

It's quoting back to Genesis in chapter 1. Let there be light. And so it comes. And Steve is re-generated.

He's regenerated. The life of God comes to his heart. And he is able to believe on the Lord Jesus in that infinite precious moment.

When we dare to stand. So we've got to use spiritual weapons. The only weapons the early church had were the word of God.

And that never changes. And the spirit of God who is faithful to be himself always. And third was prayer.

That's the only variable. It's the only variable. And you see, I'm just telling you the devil has suffered so much from these weapons.

That he's attacked the word of God. And he's doing it today on every side. And getting people to change it.

Or add to or take from. He's attacking the spirit of God through producing all kinds of extremes that aren't in the character of God. So people just say, I don't want anything to do with that.

And he's attacking prayer. Through all kinds of divisions in the church. And zillions of activities that compete for the attention and heart of the church in this matter.

I'm not against activities. And being smart. And doing things that are public service.

But if we do that without prayer. It will not produce anything really eternal or lasting on any real level. You see, it is with all prayer and supplication.

Being sleepless thereto and standing before God. Emancipation and enlightenment must happen before a person can believe. Do you realize that? Otherwise, they can sit in church for years.

And you'll never really hear it. You know, I think back to when I was at Carolina. Back to my fraternity days.

And I would sit on the front porch. And I can think back to two or three different times people came by and gave me a track. Or really, and I think back now, it was a powerful presentation.

Hitchhiking over to UNC Greensboro to meet someone. And someone witnessed to me. I wanted to jump out of the car.

But I never really, I remember saying after I really got saved. Why didn't somebody tell me this before? Or they told me. I just couldn't hear it.

I was blinded. I was bound up without hope. Without God in the world.

After I was saved, I read a little missionary in Haiti. A couple years later. I said, did you ever pray for me? I gave her my testimony.

Didn't hear anything back for a couple months. Then I got this letter. And it said, yes, your letter came on a day when I needed it.

It was under a stack of letters. And I opened it up. And she said, yes, I did pray for a little boy.

She used to babysit for me when I was just a boy. And she prayed for me this way. Over the years.

And I found out she was praying for me. When the Lord emancipated me. And gave me light.

And I could easily have looked at the wave that brought me the gospel and said, that's the reason. But before I could ever believe the gospel, I had to be freed in the inner person. You see, I had to be.

It says that repentance is the gift of God. Does it not say that? That you can't repent unless God gives you this. It says in Ephesians 2 that you're saved by grace through faith.

And that faith is not of yourself. What is it? It's the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.

So, repentance is a gift. Faith is a gift. And Jesus said a man can receive nothing except it given to him from heaven.

We don't go shopping with coupons and get what we think we need of Jesus. And then it says, no man comes to the Father. Jesus said this.

Unless the Father draw him. He says it twice in John chapter 6. Verse 44 and 65. You can't just come to Jesus anytime you want to.

We might think that because we've left off this element. But I'll tell you, God is the one who mercifully comes in answer to the church's prayers. Where they've prayed and said, Lord, would you emancipate this person? And on the ground of the cross of the Lord Jesus, the devil is defeated.

You're a usurper. You're holding this person. I can tell you, this doesn't just happen on a personal level.

The church can do this on a city level. What she learns about the authority that you really do have in believing prayer. That's why tonight I'm asking you to come back.

And I'm asking you, to each one of you, to bring a list on the back of your ticket. You can't get in with your ticket unless you have five names written down. You check them for us, brother.

I want three of them, brothers and sisters, to think of someone. It's reasonable to you that prayer could... You know what? I believe they could be saved. But the other two, they could be the devil's best friend.

You think, oh, there's no way this person could ever come to the Lord. I believe God's going to prove something to this church and to us and each one of us. That if we will dare to believe God and come, we're going to pray together for our list of people.

These five people. We're going to pray in groups. We're going to believe God together.

Based upon Calvary. Based upon the emancipation that Jesus... You see, we claim what He has purchased. People are His.

It says in 1 John 2, this just rocked my world again. It said, He is the propitiation for our sins. That's us.

But not for ours only. But also for the sins of the world. You mean to tell me that His blood has paid for their sins? Of course.

We say we know this. But it turns away the wrath of God from this person. And Jesus says, listen, whoever sins you remit shall be remitted.

And whosoever you retain shall be retained. We don't even ever hear that verse preached because it's so holy. I believe it means something.

I'm not trying to say I know. But I believe it's something in this realm when it says, if a man see a man sin a sin that's not unto death, ask for him. And God will give him mercy instead of judgment for that sin.

Job, I want you to go and pray for your friends that it won't be hard on them. He prayed for his friends. God has chosen to work when the church prays.

And He will never do apart from prayer what He promises to do in answer to prayer. He will wait. And I thank God the situation around us is getting more desperate because we're being driven to our knees.

We're about to discover our truest destiny. We're about to discover as a church, I think across this country, that we really do have authority. And that our Lord Jesus is going to use us when we come in.

God chooses to work through us, our loving, believing according to His resurrection power and might. We co-labor in the work of contending for the souls of men. Not only preaching, but going to all the world in prayer before you preach.

Because otherwise you'll just shoot blanks. But when you go from your closet, bearing precious seed, weeping, He says without a doubt you'll come back rejoicing, bringing your sheaves. See, it's not just pleading to lost men to be saved.

Not going to men and pleading with souls. But it's first going to the throne and pleading with God based on His word, by His Spirit for precious people. Who are blinded and bound and that are all around us.

You work with them, I work with them. And maybe you've said they're just an impossibility. Bring them on your list tonight.

And we're going to believe God together. A stronger than he, the devil, is going to come upon that ground. And we're going to, by faith, believe God to drive the devil off that ground.

And we're going to, by the word of God, spoil his goods and take what is his. Behold, I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Peter. Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Jesus says this twice, Matthew 16 and Matthew 18. Whatever you bind on earth, you'll find out, has been bound in heaven.

God backs up what the church says when we pray. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. Six times he says that, the last words to his church in the upper room.

And all through the scriptures. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will. And I'll generate it to you.

This is the confidence that we have in him. That if we ask anything that's according to his will, he hears us. And if we know he hears us, whatever it is we ask, then we know.

We know. Because he lives. We have the petitions that we've asked of him.

And so, only when a person is prayed for. This is what I believe the scriptures teach. And that's why I would ask you to write these down.

So you can search it out. Because once you search this out and see if it's true. That it is only prayer that breaks down the defenses that a soul has had put up in their life by the devil.

And if we don't pray, it leaves the power of the enemy intact. And the defenses and the deception there. And it's like trying to push through armor that the devil has on.

But we put on the armor of God. Six pieces. With the seventh being the weapon of choice of the Holy Spirit.

The word of God. And we thrust through. We cut away.

We destroy. Not in our own power, but mighty through God. His resurrection power working in us as we dare to believe what does not make sense.

This is so big that we draw back from it. It's so powerful that we say it couldn't be that simple. I submit to you this morning.

That the reason that people around you are still lost that are lost. So many of them. Is because the church has relegated her responsibility and privilege.

To dare to believe God. To set the captives free. And we're so busy getting blessed.

And letting Jesus put our own life together. That we've forgotten why he left us here. To be sent as he was sent.

To seek and to save that which is lost. To give our life a ransom for many. It starts in prayer.

Evangelism always must start in prayer. I just remind you of one thing. What he's purchased, we must claim.

It's just like Israel in the promised land. We have the land of promises. He wants us to move into these promises of God.

Just like he sent them in. He says look at this. When you see it.

Everywhere you see. I've given it to you. But I want you to walk in this truth.

And when you do. I'm with you. And you'll triumph.

The church sees these things. He says I've got you an apprenticeship of believing God. I want you to learn to trust me.

And when you do. You'll see that I've gone before in all the enemies. It really is your land.

It was some years ago that the Iranian hostage crisis took place. There were 52 Americans. You remember seeing a picture of them blindfolded? They were there in Iran.

And they were kept for 444 days. So thousands of churches. They literally did.

Prayed for them. And you know after 444 days. They were set free.

And I remember the rejoicing. At that physical release. And I started thinking about that.

I said. Lord what you did for them physically. You can do for people all around us.

Spiritually. Who are bound. And blinded.

By the enemy. If we would just dare to trust you. And truly.

Truly. Let you give us the burden. Of your heart.

Your blood. Is the propitiation. For my sins.

But not just mine. But for the whole world. And so therefore.

Put your burden in me. Have you seen prayer as a ministry? Not just a way to have your needs met. And not just something you do.

Before you attempt something for God. Or before you preach. But it is actually a ministry.

To set the captives free. You won't pray like this. You can't pray like this.

Unless the love of Christ constrains you. It's not. It's work.

Peter. Do you love me? He didn't say. Do you love sheep? Do you love me? If you do love me.

Then do what doesn't come natural. Feed my sheep. And the same motive.

You see. Do you love me? Then forgive. As I've forgiven you.

And do you love me? Then pray for the things that are on my heart. Lost souls. All around you.

And then when you go. And you take those skills. Wonderful course you've had.

Wonderful. He'll have the arm of his strength. Right behind it.

The devil's not afraid of swords. Just laying out in the field. But the arm that wields the sword of the spirit.

Is believing prayer. And through believing prayer. We set the captives free.

Well I want to pray with you. And then. I'll ask my brother Jim to come up.

And close this. Our Lord has delegated authority to us. The early church lived in this.

And a lot of the church around the world is living in it today. And so many of God's movements. That he wants to do.

I'm convinced. Or waiting for the church. To awake from her sleep and slumber.

Of prayerlessness. And dare to say. This is exhilarating.

That we can walk in this. Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. Would you allow us the privilege of truly laying hold.

Of this privilege. Of being used by you. Your church.

To demonstrate. The wisdom of God. The grace and the power of God.

That we could dare. Even though we may feel we're not gifted in so many ways. We can come.

With spiritual weapons provided by God. With your word and by your spirit. Claim these precious promises.

There's a whole land of them. And may we dare to put our foot on the enemy's neck. Like you have destroyed him utterly.

And pronounce upon him. The judgment that is written. We bind him.

And we take from him those spoils. That have been purchased by Jesus. Stolen property.

We take it back. And we. Teach us to pray for hearing ears.

And seeing eyes. And free hearts. And joy.

And peace. To come to hearts who dare to trust you. You want us to prepare the soil.

In prayer. And then preach the word. Faithfully.

So. May we never forget this this morning. And may it drive us to our knees.

Especially tonight. Teach us to pray. We pray this in Jesus name.

Lord I thank you now. And praise you for my dear brother Al. Who it just continues to bring tears to my eyes.

Of how over the years he has prayed for just our family. And I just have a picture of the call that was made. The night that we found out.

My precious wife was water and rope. And it was Al who prayed for us and directed us. And you know really I think prayed faith into being.

And I just. Just. Yeah.

Just thank you. Thank you for the answered prayers for Al over the years. And Lord we just really got an introduction today.

I was thinking we'd go probably another hour. I think Al just got started. And we just praise you and thank you for just the answered prayers.

That we've seen in his life. And just the answered prayer for his dad. And the fact that you really, really saved him.

After years of praying. As an adopted son. And I just thank you and praise you for that.

And we just praise you and thank you for. I just pray for each of us. I pray that you would draw us back tonight.

I pray that you would continue to open our hearts and minds. Through the power of your Holy Spirit. And continue to draw us to yourself.

And we thank you now and praise you. And ask and pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.

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