

# Invitation to Prayer

by Chuck Smith

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*God promises to answer our prayers and show us great and mighty things when we call upon Him in times of trouble.*

**Duration:** 34:23

**Scripture:** Psalm 20:1

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Gods Sovereignty"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of calling upon the Lord in times of trouble, highlighting the assurance that God hears and answers prayers, even when His responses may not align with our expectations. It explores the concept of God showing great and mighty things beyond our understanding in response to prayer, encouraging believers to trust in God's sovereignty and wisdom in answering their petitions.

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## Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 20 for our scripture reading. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses, and we ask you to join together as you read the even-numbered verses, shall we stand as we read the Word of God. May the Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.

The name of the God of Jacob defend thee and remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt sacrifice. We will rejoice in thy salvation and in the name of our God will we set up our banners. The Lord will fulfill all thy petitions.

Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we will remember the name of Jehovah our God. Save Jehovah, let the King hear us when we call. Let's pray.

Father, we do put our trust in you today. We know Lord that there are people that put their trust in many things, but the things in which they are trusting are uncertain at best. We know Lord that as we've put our trust in you, that the trust is well founded.

We ask Lord your blessing upon the Word today. Let it speak to our hearts and the issues of our lives. Draw us close to you Lord.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen. You may be seated. Tonight Pastor Skip is going to lead us through the study of the Word of God.

Tonight is Jeremiah chapters 32 and 33. If you haven't been with us on Sunday nights for Skip's studies, you're really missing something that is extremely valuable and very enlightening. And so we would encourage you to come on out and join with us on Sunday evening.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to Jeremiah chapter 33 verse 3, where the Lord said to Jeremiah, call unto me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. This is very similar to a passage in Psalm 50 verse 15, where God said, call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify me.

This is an encouragement. In fact it is a commandment to pray. The Bible tells us that men ought always to pray and not to faint.

Actually it was a day of trouble for Jeremiah. He had been put in the king's prison because of his prophecies that he was making at that time. Zedekiah was the king.

The city of Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian army. They were building a mount to destroy the city. And that, and Jeremiah was recommending that they surrender to Babylon.

Not to resist. That if they resisted it would cost them their lives, it would cost them the city, that Babylon would win. That they should just surrender and submit to Babylon and thus survive.

The false prophets were encouraging the people to resist the Babylonian army. Encouraging them that they would overcome and destroy the Babylonian army. And so Jeremiah was accused of treason.

Demoralizing the people. Telling them that Babylon was going to defeat them and thus placed in prison as a traitor. Also Jeremiah had been warned by the people of Anathoth, his hometown, that if he would speak to them any more prophecies in the name of the Lord they would kill him.

They didn't want to hear what he had to say that God was saying to them. And that if he continued in that they would put him to death themselves. It's interesting that oftentimes in the days of trouble are the days when we do call upon the Lord.

As I was preparing this message yesterday I received a call. A call from my daughter. And she was crying.

And she said, Daddy can you meet us at the emergency at Holg Hospital. Greg is got some real problems. About noon yesterday Greg began to talk rather incoherently.

He began to mix his words up. If you know Greg he's always very verbal. But he would have trouble pronouncing words or even thinking of a word.

He was not making sense. About three o'clock in the afternoon Jan called the doctor and he said get him to Holg Hospital as quickly as possible to the emergency room. So she called and said Daddy can you meet us at Holg.

Greg's in trouble. So I went over to the emergency room and we went back and we saw Greg and saw the way that he was speaking so incoherently. And we're very concerned.

And we were calling upon the Lord. It was a time of real trouble. And that's when people usually call on the Lord.

When there is a troubling situation. And this was very troubling indeed. As we left the room and I was walking down the hall there in the emergency area of Holg Hospital.

I was talking with the lady that had led me in. And some fellow heard me talking recognized my voice and began to yell Chuck. Chuck.

And I turned and couldn't see anybody. And I said where are you? And he said I'm behind this curtain over here. And so we had the opportunity to go in and pray for him.

He was to have surgery later in the afternoon. And all alone. And so it gave us a great opportunity to just be with him for a while and minister to him.

As we left the hospital Greg had a major seizure. I was a little concerned. I felt that they weren't really doing enough to help him.

Just sort of ignoring the fact that he was there. But he had the major seizure then everything went into gear. The neurologist was to determine whether or not to have a CAT scan or a MRI.

And with this major seizure they determined an MRI was important. And so they gave to him this MRI which did rule out stroke. Which we originally felt that he was probably having a stroke.

They're not certain yet just what the situation is. Their guess at the present time is encephalitis. But it's a time of trouble.

And at the times of trouble are when we call upon the Lord. And it's good to know that when we call upon the Lord he will hear. He will answer.

He will show us great and mighty things. Oftentimes when things are going well. When everything is going fine we get a little negligent in calling upon the Lord.

But in Psalm 107 the psalmist sees several situations that cause us and prompt us to call on the Lord. In verse 5 of Psalm 107 he said, Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them out of their distresses.

Times of distress. Times of financial difficulty. Hungry and thirsty.

We don't know how we are to be provided for. And those are times when people call unto the Lord. Verse 10.

Such as sit in darkness in the shadow of death. Bound in affliction because they rebelled against the words of the Lord. They were contemptuous of the counsel of the Most High.

Therefore he brought down their heart with labor. There was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distresses.

And so not knowing where to turn. Not knowing what to do. Calling upon the Lord for help in that time of trouble.

Verse 17. Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of mean.

And they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he saves them out of their distresses. And surely when we are fearing for a person's life we don't know if they are at the gates of death.

It's a time in which we are prompted to call upon the Lord. Finally in verse 23. They that go out to the sea in ships that do business in great waters.

They see the works of the Lord and the wonders in the deep. He commands and raises the stormy wind which lifts up the waves. They rise up to heaven.

They go down again to the depths. Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man.

They are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he brings them out of their distresses. Out on the ocean in a heavy storm.

Looks like things are bad. Time to call upon the Lord. I can remember about the last time I went surfing I think.

I was in Maui and I was speaking at a married couple's camp or conference there. And the surf was up. There was a storm surf.

And the waves were huge. And so all of the fellows said let's go surfing. So I said okay let's go.

And I got out there in that heavy surf. Huge waves. These guys were all young and I got to thinking what am I doing out here.

You know these waves are humongous. And I started praying. You call on the Lord in a day of trouble.

And I said, Lord if you'll just help me catch one and go to shore I won't come back out. I mean this I don't really like. The Lord helped me hook a neat one.

Got a great ride all the way into the beach. I was so exhausted I just laid there on the rocks for a while and let a few waves wash over me until I could finally get enough strength to stand up. But in times when we're at our wits end we call upon the Lord.

Wonderful to know that when we call upon the Lord He will help us. You know the Bible tells us concerning angels that He will give His angels charge over us to keep us in all of our ways. To bear us up lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone.

Also in the New Testament it speaks of the angels and said are they not all ministering spirits that are sent to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. From these scriptures we get the idea or the thought of guardian angels. Angels that are watching over us.

That are commissioned by God to watch over and to protect us from particular dangers. And with that thought in mind I wonder if often times angels aren't in conversation over us as they watch us. As they watch us going through turmoil, problems, trials.

They see us as we are struggling. And I think that they might say to each other, what's wrong with them? Why don't they pray? Don't they know that God will help them if they'll just call upon the Lord? Look at

them. Look at all of the agony they're going through.

Look at the fear and all that they have. Why don't they pray? And on other occasions I think that the angels say, you know they're getting a little careless. They haven't called on the Lord for quite a while.

Why don't we just let them go for a bit? Not protect them. Let a few things happen to them so they'll call on the Lord. And I think that sometimes they do let us get into difficult circumstances where we are more or less forced to call upon the Lord.

God said to Jeremiah, call on me. I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things which you know not. Now the interesting thing is the timing of this.

If you go back to chapter 32, Jeremiah is there in the prison. Chapter 32 and 33 are written together. There in chapter 32 while he is there in prison the Lord speaks to him and tells him to buy the field of his uncle Shalom.

And Jeremiah tells us that the next day his cousin Hamimiel came into the court and said my father wants you to buy his field because the right of redemption is yours. Jeremiah said then I knew it was God that was saying to me buy the field. But it confused Jeremiah.

The Babylonians were already occupying the area where the field was. The Babylonians are going to take Jerusalem. The people are going to be taken away captive.

Why would God want me to buy the field? It's sort of oi, oi, oi. What's wrong? You know. Why should I buy the field? It's in the Babylonians' hands you know.

And Jeremiah is in distress over this. And so Jeremiah is praying and the whole latter part of the chapter is Jeremiah's prayer to the Lord because of his confusion of the Lord telling him to buy this field. He couldn't understand that.

But the Lord wanted him to purchase the field because Jeremiah had prophesied that after seventy years they would be returning from the Babylonian captivity. God was going to bring them back again and they were going to occupy the land. And God wanted Jeremiah as a confidence in his own prophecies to buy the field in the public arena so that the people would know that Jeremiah had confidence that God was going to bring them back after their captivity.

So having spent the night in prayer, Jeremiah is still there in the court of the king in prison and the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying, call unto me. Well he had been calling all night long. What do you mean call unto you? What do you think I've been doing Lord? Calling unto you.

But the Lord said, I will answer you and I will show you great and mighty things. The wonderful promise of God is that I will answer you. God answers prayer.

This is the great motivation to pray. This is the great incentive. This is really the thrust that brings us to prayer.

The fact that God does answer prayer. Now it should be noted that he doesn't always answer the prayers just as we pray them. Because we may be praying for something that would be totally bad if he answered.

As I look back on my own life, I thank God as much for the prayers that he did not answer as I do for the prayers that he did answer. I'm very aware that had God answered a lot of prayers that I had made to him, I wouldn't be here today. I would be in major trouble had God answered a lot of those prayers.

And so in his love for me, knowing what's best for me, he didn't answer so many of those prayers the way I had prayed them. Now I have found that so often when we do have a problem, a serious problem, in our minds we figure out how God could best work in this problem. Having a great financial need.

How can I pay all my bills? Well, if when they draw the numbers from the Reader's Digest sweepstakes, if they get my number, I'll be able to pay my bills and I'll be in good shape. God help them to draw my number now when they draw these sweepstake numbers. And I'm in the finals and so Lord let it be my number that they draw.

The date goes by. I don't get the letter informing me and I think, oh God you failed me you know. Well God has other ways by which He wanted to supply my needs.

And it wasn't through the Reader's Digest sweepstakes. And so He answers the prayers, but He doesn't always follow my directions. You see it would be better just to give a direct prayer.

Lord I've got these bills. Help me to take care of them. That's direct.

Not tell Him how to do it. Direction prayers. God doesn't always follow directions, but He does answer prayer.

And that's the glorious promise. I will answer you. The story is told of a time when in Athens the Senate had gathered for an outdoor Senate meeting.

And as they were outdoors they saw this little sparrow that was being pursued by a hawk. And this sparrow was attempting to get away from the hawk and it flew down into the Senate into the lap of one of the Senators who was a very hard and crude man. He in turn took the little bird and dashed it to death on the pavement.

Immediately the entire Senate to a man stood to their feet and demanded the death of this Senator. They said, he does not deserve to be in the Senate. He does not deserve to be called an Athenian.

He has rejected the little bird that has fled to him for refuge and he should surely be put to death, which he was. Now, our God, we flee to Him for refuge. Do you think that when you flee to God for help, for refuge, that He is going to turn you away? That He's going to not respond to your need? Surely He will respond.

And He declares to Jeremiah, call unto Me. I will answer you. Now, because God does love you, He won't always answer exactly as you have prayed.

Sometimes He does. But I'm grateful to God that He is discerning in the answers to my prayers. Would you rather have a God that answered every prayer for you, every prayer that you offered, even though He knew that by answering it is going to bring you all kinds of problems.

It's going to bring you all kinds of suffering and pain. But He's going to answer that prayer anyhow. That would not be a God of love.

God knows much better the situations than we know them. And often our prayers are off the mark and God doesn't answer them because He loves us and He knows that by answering those particular prayers it could bring us all kinds of grief. I believe that it is the height of ignorance and folly to think that I know what is best for me.

That I know better than God what is best for me. So when God answers no or wait, I am content to wait for His answer. There are so many issues that I am waiting to see what God is going to answer.

I don't know yet what His answer is. But I know that it will be best. And so I rest in that fact that all things will work together for good because I love God and He's called me according to His purpose.

This idea that I can command God to do anything that I desire is pure unscriptural stupidity. If He did that He would not be a God of love but some kind of a ghoulish fiend just standing by as I destroyed myself by those things that I would want for myself. John wrote, and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, and there's the key, according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have received the petitions that we desire of Him. Not only does God promise that He would answer, but He also declares that He would show Him great and mighty things. As we read through the Old Testament we read these wonderful stories of the great and the mighty things that God did in answer to prayer.

Showing of His power great and awesome things. I think of the parting of the Red Sea. I think of the supplying of water out of the rock in the wilderness.

I think of the daily supply of manna while they were in the wilderness. I think of Elijah, that man of God who was just like you, an ordinary person. And yet how he prayed and it didn't rain for three years.

And how he prayed again and it rained. How he prayed and God sent fire and spontaneously kindled the altar upon which He had placed the sacrifices there on Mount Carmel. As I move into the New Testament I see the great and the mighty things that God did in answer to prayer.

And of course the book of Acts is just filled with wonderful things that God did in answer and in response to prayers. I look at my own life and I look at the wonderful awesome things that God has done in response to prayer. I'm amazed.

I stand in amazement at the work that God has done not only in our midst right here but around the world. The work that God has accomplished as the result of prayer. Calling to me God said, I will answer you.

I will show you great and mighty things. Dr. Schuller declared that the Crystal Cathedral stands as a monument to the power of possibility thinking. Bishop Peale said that his ministry stood as a monument to the power of positive thinking.

There are those that say their ministries are a monument to the power of being purpose driven in your life. Well this church stands as a monument to the power of prayer. What God can do when people pray.

No gimmicks, no limericks, just prayer. Trusting God and to God be the glory for the great things that He has done. Are you in trouble today? God commands you to call on Him and He promises to answer you and to show you great and mighty things.

James puts it so succinctly. He said, you have not because you ask not. And sometimes it's just that simple.

God is ready. God is able. God is desiring to help you.

But you just haven't called. God said, I will show you great and mighty things that thou knowest not. The Bible tells us that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think.

You can't even think of what God is able to do. It's beyond our imagination what God can do when we call on Him. God said, my ways are not your ways.

My ways are beyond your finding out. So He is able to do great and mighty things that we don't even know. That we haven't even thought of.

All we have to do is just pray. Put it in God's hands and then rest and trust in the promise that He will answer and show us great and mighty things that we don't even know. Let's pray.

Father, how we thank you for this privilege of coming to you. Bringing to you our burdens. Bringing to you our needs.

Bringing to you our cares. And casting all of our cares upon you knowing that you do care for us. Lord, there are those today that are here that are in trouble.

Lord, there are those who are distressed because of situations that they are facing. Lord, may they this day call on you and may they discover Lord those exceeding wonderful things that you're desiring to do and will do for them in answer to their prayers. Things that they have not even thought about.

Lord, help us always to pray, never to faint. In Jesus name, amen.

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