

The Church and Its Mission - Part 2

by Ern Baxter

Ern Baxter emphasizes the vital role of various forms of prayer and corporate intercession in fulfilling the church's mission and influencing communities.

Duration: 22:41

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Isaiah 44:6, Matthew 6:33, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 6:18

Topics: "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the current state of the nation and the need for spiritual power to combat the forces that are in control. He emphasizes the importance of moral power, which comes from fellowship with God, in order to withstand the erosion and manipulation happening in society. The speaker shares a message from God that His hand of judgment will be lifted off the nation for four to eight years, calling for prayer and action to redeem the nation. The topic of leadership in the local church is also addressed, highlighting the role of intercession and the need to revert back to family, neighborhood, and community as suggested by a secular expert. The speaker references biblical passages that emphasize the power of agreement and the importance of supporting and uplifting one another.

Transcript

As I've already said, my spirit is praying while I'm talking. I'm aware of my spirit ascending to God. I could move right into it very simply, but my job right now is to address you horizontally, not to talk to God vertically.

If I start to talk to God vertically in an unknown tongue, I am disobeying the order of the Lord. So my spirit is praying and I'm talking to you in English, or a reasonable facsimile thereof. Now, the second thing that the apostles teach, not only is it prayers to be unceasing, but prayers to be various.

In Ephesians 6.18 it says we're to pray with all kinds of prayers. Short prayers, long prayers, medium prayers, sentence prayers, word prayers, paragraph prayers, chapter length prayers, book length prayers, poem prayers, encyclopedic prayers, prayers in the middle of the night, prayers in the morning, prayers in the bathtub, and above all, prayers in the airplane. My mom was a simple Irish lady, beautiful, tender, and gentle, and she had a habit after she became a spirit-filled Christian that when she'd be surprised or anything would happen, she'd say, oh Jesus, some self-righteous soul got on her about it and said that that wasn't right.

Well, she always thought that I was the fourth person in the trinity after I went into the ministry, and she'd come to me with all her difficult questions, and if I spoke it was thus saith the Lord, and she called me John. She was the only one who used my middle name, and she said, John, somebody told me that it's wrong for me to do that. Oh, I said, mom, that's not wrong, because I'd rather you'd say Jesus than what I hear a lot of other people say when they hit their finger with a hammer.

No, I said there's nothing wrong with it. That's a marvelous thing. I can't think of anything better than just say Jesus.

Every kind of prayer, short prayers, ejaculatory prayers, moaning prayers, groaning prayers, laughing prayers, crying prayers, pray. I'm telling you, pray standing on your head. Pray anywhere you like to pray.

Keep your spirit at it. Ruth and I were flying in California on Airwest on an old, I'm sorry, Airwest. I got so used to that.

They're out of business now, so they can't sue me, but it was an old prop plane, and it was a storm, and Ruth had never ridden in a prop plane, and I know obviously she'd always ridden in the jets, you know, those beautiful things that soar up and get above the air. I had ridden in all kinds of prop planes. I'd been a Skyway jockey for years, and suddenly the plane hit a pocket and down it went.

A voice filled the airplane cabin, Jesus. Why is that we rule by prayer? First Timothy 2, we rule by prayer. Coming back now to the matter of the mission of the church and the mission of the kingdom of your life.

We're meeting here as kingdom citizens today, but in your church, God has put you in a geographical locality. He's put you in a sphere, and you, by your prayers, should be affecting the life of that city or that town, at your sphere, at your area. Pray for the government of your town.

Pray for the people in government. Pray for the president, of course, but why pray for the president except, I mean, you can't expect God to change the mayor and change the alternate and alter the school board. Start to zero in on your local situation.

That'll give you faith to pray as kingdom citizens for our nation. You came here with the answer. Let's take a few minutes.

We have to be sure that we have a mandate, a specific mandate. There's a generalized kind of prayer, but there's a mandated kind of prayer where God directs us. I'll be trying to deal with that more in the morning, but I think that you're on the right track.

The only thing I'd like to say is this, that if you feel that there's an area that you are being directed to in prayer, and this is terribly important. I think there's a general kind of prayer that has some value, but I think when one prays in the Spirit, he prays in the mind of the Spirit, and he starts to hear what the Spirit wants prayed about. It's very, very important.

I think there's a religious kind of praying that hits all of the things that should be prayed about, but it's not in the Spirit. It's just a kind of a superficial religious exercise. When you get into real intercession, you really become an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and you start to say what the Spirit wants you to say, and there's just one thing I would say about that.

I think you're on the right track. You've got to deal with the principality, but I would issue a word of warning, and that is be careful what you take on. I shudder when I hear men brazenly and arrogantly coming against powers that could blow them away in a couple of seconds, and I've had a few embarrassing experiences with my own brashness in other years.

In the sixth chapter of Ephesians, when Paul is dealing with wrestling with principalities and powers, he's dealing with corporate wrestling. I didn't get to talk about the corporate so much, but he's talking about the Ephesian church. He's not talking about one fellow standing up and taking on the prince over the temple of Diana.

That was a powerful prince, but he's saying, together, brethren, get together now and together come against this. In 1977 in Great Britain, when we taught on this, we taught on it for a week and built up to it, and on the last night, I gathered all the leaders. I can't remember how many, 40 or 50.

We linked arms. The whole congregation stood, about 8,000 people, and we came against the prince of Great Britain. Now, some remarkable things took place.

I could take an hour or so and tell you some remarkable things. Now, I'm not saying we toppled the prince, but we did battle with him, but we did it out of corporality, and I think that you need corporality. I think Satan is delighted with our division for many reasons, the main one of which is we can't muster enough strength to budge him from some of his entrenched strongholds.

I'm not sure, sister. I have a blanket answer to that. I think specificity is so important, and I think maybe that one of the things you should do is ask God what you should pray about, really, and God will probably give you something to pray about.

I'm going to try to ring the changes on this in the morning, but I would like to get God's people more sensitive to the Holy Spirit in the area of prayer. Having a prayer list and going over it sort of automatically, it may have some value, but I really only pray with the kind of intensity that I feel is effective when I know that the Holy Ghost has given me, I can pray then with authority, I can move in, I can do things, because I know I'm on the Spirit's wavelength. When I'm on my own, it's kind of a hit or miss thing.

So, I would answer that out of my own personal experience by saying, first of all, ask God what you should pray for, and he'll undoubtedly tell you. I want to check something out to see whether I'm understanding. Are you causing us to be hearing what you're saying? Let me just simply say, I think it's always right for you to pray alone, especially in the areas of your personal need and your family and so on.

But it does seem to me, and I haven't worked out a sophisticated system on this, I'm not any great expert on it conceptually, but it does seem to me that Jesus said, or the word of God says, two are better than one. When Jesus sent his disciples out, he sent them out two by two. Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer.

Of any two of you shall agree as touching anything. The irreducible minimum of plurality is two. And I think that he's trying to tell us something there.

That, for instance, the simple rule of two is given to us in Ecclesiastes. Two are better than one. If one falls down, the other will lift him up.

If one gets cold, the other one will keep him warm. They have a better reward for their labor, and if they're attacked on the road, they'll be able to beat off their assailants much easier. Now, if you put that into the realm of prayer, if you've ever done any intercession, there are times when your spirit starts to flag, and you're jolly glad to have a companion standing by.

And this, this you can't bring out of the realm of concept. You've got to bring it out of the realm of practice. You've been in prayer warfare.

There are times when your strength flags, and you're glad to have companions around you that can pick up and go on. I think there's a special power in corporality that isn't available to the individual. Get somebody to pray with.

You see, what the man is saying is that there are forces. There are forces that are in control of situations which, if they are not retarded or driven back by spiritual power, are going to go ahead. Moral power comes out of fellowship with God.

A man who isn't fellowshiping with God has no moral thrust. He'll compromise and concede and yield and give in, and he'd rather be red than dead. That's the bottom line of that fellow.

Now, when you become a servant of God, he puts moral fiber into you. And until there is enough moral fiber comes back into the hearts of men, such as was in the beginning of this nation, that can withstand the kind of erosion and subtle intellectual sabotage that is going on, plus governmental manipulation. Until that moral courage is restored, there's no hope of it not going down.

But there is now a rising up against it. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord will raise up a standard. He's raising up a standard.

This man is an avowed Christian. He's got no idea letting the nation go down the tube. Whatever God's future is for the nation, the man I talked to today is going to give his life to stand for the principles of Christ in the midst of governmental situations.

That's our only alternative. I don't know how God's going to change the nations. That's his business.

My job is to pray for rulers and those in authority, that God will change them, that we may have a quiet and peaceable life. Either God wants to answer the prayer, that's his business. All I've got to do is pray it.

Can I add a comment? In listening to secular experts talk about the futility of the conditions of the land, I hear them saying that all of the institutions of the world are obsolete. One particular man who's been in the White House three or four times and numbers among his clientele many international corporations, he says, all of the institutions of the world are obsolete. Militarism is obsolete.

The sociological systems are obsolete. The political situation is obsolete. All of these institutions that man has raised up are obsolete.

And he was being interviewed, and the interviewer asked him, well, that sounds cool. What do we do? And he says, we need to revert back to family, neighborhood, and community. Now, this man is secular.

He has nothing. But you see, he's talking right into the plan and purpose of God. We were together on election day when the president left presidential election.

A group of us in Intercessory for America met in Cleveland, and God spoke a word as our hearts were joined together. He said, I'm going to lift my hand of judgment off of this nation for a period of four to eight years. Now, this is God's mandate for us to pray for this nation right now.

If a hand of judgment is lifted off, well, we need to really move and take a hold. God can't reveal that. One more question.

I am not sure that I, I, I want to word this correctly. Let me put it this way. I'm a little concerned that I hear intercessors being singled out as some kind of an elitist group.

Now, I have to admit that there aren't that many intercessors, but very simply, without trying to be profound about it, Paul in 1 Timothy 2 says, I exhort therefore, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. Now, what he's saying is that every Christian should be an intercessor. Intercession is a, is a, a part of the whole prayer situation.

And I feel a little badly when I find that it's like the old, old business. When you're traveling around like I am, you'll come into a church and somebody will say to me, I want you to meet dear old Sister Smith. She is a saint.

Now, the impression is that she's our, our church saint. Now, I don't know what all the rest of the Christians are. Actually, actually, not just ideally, actually, every Christian in that church is a saint.

Why don't we expose our hearts to the Holy Spirit? Father, we don't know how to pray as we are. We don't know what to say. We are confronted, Lord, with so many things that baffle our reasoning.

We're full of flies, flies. So we come with humbled hearts, aware that our abridged minds, so self-described, are certainly incapable of grasping the kinds of problems that the whole world is facing. Father, we see your wisdom in this.

You're reducing us to that place where we will acknowledge that you are God, and besides you, there is none other. That you are only the foundation, that you're the God who is Alpha and Omega. You're the beginning and the ending.

You started it. We prostrate our spirits in your presence, in longing of human consensus. We need a word from God.

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