

The Aroma of Prayer

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in the Christian life, highlighting Jesus' encounter with the money changers in the temple and the need for the church to return to its original purpose as a house of prayer.

Duration: 51:24

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33, Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, John 1:29, John 2:13-16, John 4:1-26, John 10:11-15

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and its transformative power in people's lives. He shares his personal journey of learning about prayer and witnessing the positive impact it had on individuals. The speaker also highlights the significance of having fresh communion with God and encourages the audience to approach prayer with a genuine desire for connection. He then introduces a unique and striking portrayal of Jesus found in the Bible, where Jesus displays intense emotions by overturning tables and asserting his authority. The speaker suggests that this portrayal serves as a reminder of Jesus' power and ability to provide everything we need.

Transcript

It's a real joy to be here at the Praise Gathering, and I want to talk for a few moments about something so vital, and yet it's so simple. It's so familiar to us that that's the danger. I want our session this morning to be something that'll make a difference in our lives, rather than just some kind of talk with more information about God.

I pray that by His grace we can have fresh communion with God. To approach that subject, I want to give you one of the most strange and stunning pictures of Jesus found anywhere in the Bible. Of all the portraits you've ever seen painted, there is no portrait found in the Bible stranger.

We see Christ on the cross. We know Christ as the Good Shepherd. We know Christ walking on the water.

We see Christ sitting at the well with the woman in Samaria. But in your wildest dreams, can you ever picture this, and have you ever wondered why God would put this in the Bible, not just once, but twice? And so they came to Jerusalem, and Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple. And He overturned the tables of the money changers, and the seats of those who sold doves, and He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple.

And then He taught them, saying, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and the chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him, for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. And when evening had come, He went out of the city.

Now, the Bible has many pictures of Jesus Christ, and to me, none is stranger. The Lamb of God, the One who came to take away the sins of the world, the gentle, loving Jesus, who, as the good shepherd, puts the Lamb on His shoulders and brings it home. And yet, in this portion of Scripture, we see Jesus physically emoting in a way that is really hard for us to picture.

That He would actually take tables and overturn them, and throw money on the ground, that He somehow, all by Himself, with no armed helpers, the disciples were passive in this, that He would stop people from carrying their merchandise, and just by a word of authority, said, Get out of here with that! You can't bring that through the court! And that He would go to the people who sold the oxen and the sheep and the doves for the poor people, and He would say, Out! Get your business out of here! I mean, it's an amazing picture of Jesus Christ. The loving Jesus that we know, you know, we think that for Him, anybody to be that irate and physical must mean they're not in the Spirit. But this is Jesus Christ.

And what's strange about this is this is not the first time this has happened. I read from Mark, and the Bible tells us, in John the second chapter, that in Jesus' first visit to the temple, after He began His public ministry when He was about 30 years old, He did the same exact thing. In fact, the Bible tells us there that He made, are you ready? A whip out of cord.

And used a cord, these cords and this whip, to actually physically thrash them out of the temple. Now it's three or two years later from there, and now He's getting ready to face Calvary, and He comes back to the temple, and He cleanses it again. Why would God put something so stunning in the Bible that He would go into the holy temple of God and get so physical and so irate and say, You've made it a house of merchandise.

You've made it a den of thieves. Get out of here. Isn't that written? My Father's house shall be called the house of bread.

Now what's odd about all of this is that the people who were in there belong there. The people who were selling the animals had to be near the temple precincts because there was no way to offer the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus and the books of Moses, unless somebody could have those animals available for you. You couldn't be carting these animals from your home or all through the streets of Jerusalem.

So those people belong there. But they had put a gouging uplift on the price. They were making money hand over fist, taking advantage of the fact that they were the ones who could assist, and they were hiking the prices up so that people were getting taken advantage of.

And the money changers, you know, you had to pay the temple tax if you were a good Jew, and you couldn't use Greek or Roman money. You had to actually use the special coins that were minted in Jerusalem itself. So those money changers were there to take your money from wherever you came from, Macedonia or whatever, and you changed your money so that you could make the proper donation.

But they were once again packing on big-time profits. And the people carrying stuff through the temple, actually the writers of that time tell us that instead of going around the temple, they said, let's take a

shortcut, and they went through the court of the Gentiles, right through the temple, carting their stuff, making the house of God a shortcut to big-time money. And Jesus, with his whip made of cords, and Jesus somehow physically with just his presence and his authority just thrashes them out of there and kicks them all out.

Before I get to my main point, it does remind us that all of us who are involved in singing in choirs and preaching the gospel and pastoring churches and gospel singing, whatever the style is, and you who are Sunday school teachers, because I know there's a lot of influence in this room right now, you're going to go back, a lot of you are leaders in the place where you came from. Boy, does that challenge us to remember that it's not just, not if you're doing God's work, it's how you do God's work. For the Bible tells us that one day Jim Simba is going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and God's going to ask me why I pastored the Brooklyn Tabernacle and with what spirit.

You see, these people were in the temple, but they didn't have the spirit of the temple. They were supposed to be there to assist people to worship and to come into God's presence. And they were there, but they were out of sync with the whole purpose that God had for the place called the house of the Lord.

I mean, they were doing it, they were doing the job, but they were making big time money and they were greedy and they had brought a secular spirit into a sacred place. They were businessmen. They were crass businessmen coming into something that God said, my house shall be called a house of prayer.

You made it a den of thieves. You're getting over on the people, out with you. Awesome thought.

And in a day when gospel music and gospel preaching and gospel work can become so mechanical or oriented toward me, myself, and I, it reminds all of us today here at the praise gathering that as we go back to our separate duties that we have to do God's work with God's spirit. We have to do God's work and approach it with God's heart because one day, it doesn't matter if your friends approve of you, it doesn't matter how many albums you sell or how popular Jim Simbler is or if he writes a book, one day the Bible says, I'm going to stand in front of the one whose eyes are like fire and I can't get over on him. All of you that sing in that choir, it's not just if you're on your note, it's why you're on your note.

It's the spirit that you do in it. Am I doing it for the glory of God? Do I really care about those people in New York City? I mean, am I preaching just to put on a show and get through another service? Or does my heart really radiate with God's love? And am I saying the things that he wants me to say with the spirit he wants me to say them? Why are you teaching that Christian ed class, that Sunday school class? Why are you singing in that choir? Why do you serve? The Bible says that when Jesus went into the temple, he reminded them, this is not your house. This is my father's house.

And my father's house has to be run my father's way. And when you touch something sacred in a secular way, I'm going to kick you all out of here. And even though he's not walking through churches today and kicking people out, there is going to come that day when Paul says we'll all stand at the judgment seat of Christ and we're going to have to give a review to the Lord.

And we will be reviewed on why we did what we did and how we did it. But that's not my main point this morning. But that's a well-taken point for all of us.

Not only on the crass business side of money, because it's so easy to make gospel work, just another way to make a living. That's what these people were doing. They weren't interested in people getting in contact

with God.

They were making a living out of it. But as we do God's work, we must not rob the glory that is only due to him. Whatever we do and whatever we say, the Lord wants to remind us through this that all the glory and all the honor must go to Jesus Christ.

But the thing that really provoked Jesus into this angry tirade was this. He said, you men don't even understand about my Father's house. You've revised, you've given your opinion about the temple, but the temple doesn't belong to you.

My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, and you've made it a den of thieves. This is a first principle of religion, so listen closely. Jesus said, my house, my Father's house, shall be called a house of prayer.

The atmosphere of my Father's house is supposed to be prayer. The atmosphere around the things of my Father must be that aroma of people opening their heart and coming to my Father in worship and in petition and supplication. And instead of keeping that atmosphere and aiming at that atmosphere and understanding my Father's purpose, you've made it a place just to make a buck.

So out with you. My house shall be called a house of prayer. The thing that's supposed to distinguish Christian churches and Christian people and Christian gatherings is the aroma and the atmosphere of prayer.

You might say, well, Pastor Semble or Brother Jim, that's not our style. We come from a different tradition. It doesn't matter what your tradition is or what my tradition is.

It's His Father's house. And His Father says, in my house it shall be a house of prayer and supplication. Now, we know that that temple is unlike any church.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle, the building that I pastor in, is not a sacred building. Your church building is not a sacred building. There are no sacred buildings like the temple.

We know that. That temple that sat there in Jerusalem, which now the Mosque of Omar sits on that land, was the only place that God said the brazen altar could be put and the animal sacrifices could be given. It was the only geographical spot in the world where the holy place and the holy of holies could be.

So what I'm not trying to say today is that in our churches there's some counterpart to the temple. We know that. In fact, the Bible says we're the temple of the Holy Spirit.

But what I want to say to you is that God's work from the very beginning is not like you and I often imagine it. God's work, God's house, the Christian religion is always supposed to have the aroma of prayer. Preaching, yes, but not my house shall be called a house of preaching.

Music, yes, but my house shall not be called a house of music. My house shall be called a house of prayer. There were choirs, but it was called a house of prayer.

There was the reading of the word, but my house shall be called a house of prayer. So the Bible tells us that when Jesus Christ died and resurrected and went back to heaven and he began his church, which the gates of hell shall not prevail against, he kept the same line running through the formation of the church, which was in his father's house. Have you ever noticed that the Christian church was not born while

someone was preaching, but while people were praying? Have you ever noticed that in the second chapter of the book of Acts, when the church was born, they were doing nothing but just waiting on God and praying? And they were just sitting there, and as they were praying and worshiping and waiting and having heart community with God and God shaping them and cleaning them out and building faith into them and doing those heart operations that only the Holy Spirit could do.

The church was born, the Spirit was poured out. My house shall be called a house of prayer. In the fourth chapter, Peter and John are arrested and they're slapped around and threatened, don't you preach anymore in that name.

And what do they do? They don't go and protest, they don't go to the Supreme Court, they don't try to get some political leverage, they go back to a prayer meeting. They go back and say, behold the threat. Oh God, look how they're threatening us, but oh God, we lift our voices together to you.

Oh God, behold their threats and give your servants boldness that we might preach the name of Jesus in the name of Jesus. And the place where they prayed again was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. My house shall be called a house of prayer.

They had this instinct, when in trouble, pray. When intimidated, pray. When challenged, pray.

When persecuted, pray. When you're in trouble, pray. In fact, this thing called prayer, whatever it is, is so unique.

It's not like what we're used to, you know, we talk about pray, we say prayers, most of them, a lot of them are mental prayers. This thing called praying is so deep that when the Apostle Paul got converted, and he was first Saul of Tarsus, this violent persecutor of the church, Jesus went to Ananias, and the Lord appeared to Ananias in Damascus and said, go to this man, this Jew, this church persecutor named Saul of Tarsus, and pray for him. And Ananias said, you know, I know about this man.

This man is trouble with a capital T. And Jesus said, as if this was proof that everything had changed. No, Ananias, you can go, for behold, he prayed. He prayed.

You can go now because he's in that room, blind somewhere, waiting for you because he actually, for the first time in his religious life, is offering a true prayer. And because he's praying, you can go and not be afraid. It was as if that was the sign whether somebody was the real deal with God.

Behold, he prayed. And that same Apostle Paul, when he writes to Timothy, and he wants to encourage him how to do God's work, he says this, first of all then, I want supplications, first of all, in your church, Timothy, first of all, before anything else, supplications and prayers and intercessions and thanksgiving to be made for all men. That's first of all.

It doesn't matter what your tradition is or what American Christianity says. The Word of God says, first of all then, I want supplications because we've got to remember, Timothy, my house shall be called house of prayer. Later on in the same chapter, he says, and then I, remember, Timothy, I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands without wrath or doubting and I want them to pray.

That's the sign of a Christian church. Paul says, men praying with holy hands without wrath or doubting. In fact, the book of Revelation says that when the four and twenty elders fall at the feet of Jesus, they have these golden bowls and you know what's in the bowl? This incense that is so fragrant to Christ.

It's the prayers of the saints. I mean, what must prayer be to God that he keeps it in bowls in heaven? Just imagine, when you and I kneel or stand or pray seated and we really open our heart to God, somehow those things are kept. They're so precious to God.

My house shall be called a house of prayer. And we have, in the day that we live in, a lot of revisionism going on. But it's not coming from Washington.

It's coming from the church. We're revising what a church is today. The Bible says, and they continue, the early church, they continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer.

Now, we've revised that and said, if you can get people for one hour on Sunday morning in a building, that's the church. That's not the church. We can use every device we want to get people for one hour and keep it early and keep it moving and keep it going because people have important things to do that day.

That's not the story of the Christian church. That might be the story of my church or your church, but that's not the church Jesus built. And the history of revivals down through the ages have told us that whenever things have grown crass and commercial and secular and hard and worldly, God sends a revival.

And what's always the sign of the revival? Behold, they pray. The church begins to pray. Moody goes somewhere in England and they begin to pray.

Finney goes to upstate New York and they begin to pray. The great awakening happens in America and they begin to pray. Who was the fancy preacher? Nobody.

They prayed. Where was the great music? Oh, they made great psalms, but that wasn't the great thing about it. It was they prayed.

Prayer preceded it. Prayer kept it going. And the minute prayer ended, the spirit of God lifted and we got back into one of those tougher times for the church of Jesus Christ.

You folks, young people who are going to these schools, let me tell you, as someone who went to college as a basketball player on a full scholarship and traveled around the country playing basketball, never had the privilege of going to a school like you folks are going to. The greatest thing anybody can learn in this building is how to pray. How to call on God so that God intervenes in the situation.

They continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and in prayers. And that's the church. And I talked to well-known ministers.

I talked to men. If I mention their names, a lot of you would know a lot of their names. And they tell me privately off the record, hey, listen, I know I'm dazzling them with my books and my sermons, but brother Jim, something's wrong because except for Sunday morning one hour, I can't get a soul into the church.

If I call a prayer meeting, not one-tenth of the congregation would come. They'll pay \$20 for a concert, but Jesus can't draw. They'll pay all kinds of money to hear somebody do something, and that's wonderful.

I'm all for that. But doesn't it awaken us that if the prayer meeting was called, that nobody would come when God said, My house shall be called a house of prayer. My house shall be called a house of prayer.

And you represent all kinds of cities, and just ask yourself that question, the city you live in, what church do you know takes a night, a prominent night, with all the leadership there, and says, If prayer is so great, and His house shall be called a house of prayer, and we have all these promises, S, you shall receive. C, you shall find. Not, it shall be open.

And all of those promises, call unto me and I will answer you. You would think the Christian church would say, Time out. We're gonna pray because God said when we pray, He'll intervene.

The truth of the matter is, in the city I live in, New York, and the same is for Chicago, and Philly, and all of that. Who are we kidding? More people are turning to crack than to Christ. There are more people trying crack than are getting baptized in water.

That's the real deal. And preaching is not gonna do it alone, and teaching is not gonna do it alone. My house shall be called a house of prayer.

That's what brings God's power and grace into a situation. The proof of that is, in the last 40 years, there's been more books written about marriages than in all the preceding 2,000 years of church history. More books in the last 40 years on marriages go to any pastor in America asking that there aren't more problems per 100 marriages today than at any time.

And we have the most books. We got all the how-to's, but what we're missing is the grace of God. My house shall be called a house of prayer.

A couple that prays together, stays together. A church that prays together, stays together. There'll be difficult moments.

I'm not being simplistic, but God's Word is true. Call upon me and I will answer you. I'll show you things you can't even imagine.

Just give me a chance. There's more books on child rearing, quality time with your children, ad nauseam. Talk to any pastor.

There's more problem with children, young people in the church, per 100 young people, than at any time previous. It's not because we're lacking knowledge. It's not because we're lacking how-to, and all of that has its place.

But brother, sister, when the rubber meets the road, we need the power of God. We need the grace of God. Listen to the promise as I come to a close.

Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, so that we might receive grace and mercy to help us in our time of need. It doesn't say, therefore, let us come to the sermon. We in America have made the sermon the centerpiece.

God never intended the sermon to be the centerpiece. The preacher, if he does his job, is supposed to get people to come to the throne of grace. Why? Because it's at the throne of grace that God gives grace and mercy.

If a singer, a gospel singer, really does his job, and every gospel singer listening to me, you're gonna answer up one day, because God's gonna say to you, did you bring people to where the action was at the throne of grace? If you just entertained them, if you just tickled them, and gave them a little warm fuzzy

moment, woe unto you, because at the throne of grace, I could have changed their life. Pastor Cimbala, did you bring the people and dazzle them with your footwork and try to be clever, or did you make Jesus wonderful, so that they could come to the throne of grace? Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace. That's why Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, so that He could make a way, so that me, with my problems, could go and receive grace and mercy to help me coming apart here.

That's an awesome thing. Just an awesome thought. That we've created a religion kind of of our own, and sometimes, His house shall be called the house of prayer.

In a lot of churches, in a lot of services, you have everything but prayer. You have talks, readings, talent, choir, and my wife conducts a choir. I'm all for those things, but do you get what I'm driving at? If it doesn't end up with somebody touching God and praying, who are we kidding? We need the Lord.

For someone who's so ill-prepared, as myself for the ministry, seems to me that God has chosen, among other things, to make my wife and I example of those foolish things that confound the wise. My wife writes music, and directs the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, and she neither reads nor writes music. She's never been trained.

She doesn't know what she's doing. She just does it. I've never been to a seminary or a Bible school, and I ended up with 15 or 18, 20 people in New York City on a street that was so depressing.

Our church was so depressing, I didn't want to go, and I was in charge. Drugs everywhere, inner city, totally different culture than especially my wife grew up in. I, as a ball player, had been around, and then I realized, what am I going to do? Am I going to live in this Christian fantasy about what God once did, and then what God's going to do one day, but then your life goes by, and you never see God do anything.

You can let your life pass by with that kind of talk. Remember, the worst epitaph on anybody's tombstone will be this, you had not because you asked not. Someone says, well, Brother Jim, now you understand, Jim, that you don't get everything you ask for.

It has to be according to God's will. I understand all of that, but we can't use little theological dodges to get away from the fact that a lot of people don't have things that God wants you to have right now today. He wants you to have it right now today, but over my life or possibly yours, he writes, you have not because you asked not.

I want to do it for you, but God has chosen prayer to be the one conductor, listen, the one conductor, the one channel for all of God's blessings. The channel is prayer. In other words, God has this table set for us, and he sees Jay and Amy, and he knows exactly what they need to raise that child, and he has the table spread with every kind of wisdom and grace and strength that they could possibly need, but he says, the only way you can get it is to pull up to the table and taste and see that the Lord is good, and pulling up to the table is called prayer.

In other words, God doesn't tell us, pray because I want my people to pray. He says, pray because I have all kinds of things for you, and when you ask, you shall receive. In other words, it's not legalism, it's not get in there and start praying, it's, I need thee, oh, I need thee.

Every hour I need thee. God, you see what I'm facing, help me, Lord. And as we pray, he's faithful to his word and supplies.

Well, my wife and I began to learn a little bit about this conductor and this channel called prayer, and we began to see people's lives get changed, and, you know, I began to preach and not being trained and studying on my own and building a library which has grown quite large and trying to stay a student, but at the very beginning, it was rough. Sermons I preach at the beginning, it's tough when you fall asleep doing your own sermons, not just the people falling asleep. It's when you doze off.

But, you know, I found this, that God, when you become a Christian, and because of what I just said, how he blesses people through prayer, he's going to make you a woman of prayer. He's going to make you, sir, a man of prayer, and you try to run, he'll chase you, but he will make us people of prayer. He knows how to order our lives and to get our attention and say, do you realize how much you need me now? Oh, no, Lord, I can handle this on my own.

And God says, all right, fine. When you hit the stone wall the 32nd time, remember that you need me. But notice, he's not making me a man of prayer so he can say, see, I got him praying.

It's a father saying, I have all of this and you live with such scarcity. Please, come unto me, all you that labor. Pray, talk, spend time.

Why are you so rushed for? You're running for what? Working with what? There's nothing in gym symbol to work with you. Everything that you need, I have. So when are we going to talk? So I began to learn, and we began to stress our Tuesday night prayer meeting as the Brahma of our church.

And this past Tuesday night, between 1,200 and 1,500 people gathered, like every Tuesday night. And since, of course, those days, we've had like 14 other churches begin all stressing that prayer meeting night because we found if you can beat the devil on the prayer meeting night, you'll beat him on every other level. And that's the way it is in our personal lives.

If you can beat the enemy in prayer, you can beat him on every level. You will reap the word. There's grace flowing through your life.

You have an appetite for the things of God. So from me standing in front of two people on a Tuesday night, I used to do that. First offering I took on a Sunday was \$85, tithes and offerings.

And I had a daughter named Chrissy who was about a year old. My wife took a second job. I took a second job.

But the people began to pray. But in closing, let me just tell you some of the last lessons I've learned about this wonderful truth because I'm not trying to preach down to anyone. I'm preaching to myself as I was talking to you about eight or nine years ago.

My daughter who is here today, she got away from us. She got away from not only us. She got away from God.

She got away from our house. And my wife and I went through a two and a half year long nightmare that I don't want to go into. But I promised God, as I was getting at the end of it, that as he brought me through it, that wherever I got a chance, I promised God no matter how hard it would be, as he's my witness today, no matter how hard it would be, I would tell people what God does in the answer to prayer.

You know what the feeling is not to know where your daughter is? She grew up as a model child. I have two other children. Chrissy's now 25.

I have a daughter 21 and a boy 18. But at that time Chrissy was about 17, 18. And it was, I'm talking nightmare.

I'm talking about getting in my car and leaving my house to go to the church in the inner city where I'm going to face 10 new people who visit who are HIV positive and a battered woman and no need family units and everything discombobulated. And I don't want to be the focus. I'm supposed to be there, Carol and I, to minister to them.

But I'm crying from the minute I leave my door to the church and saying, God, my heart is broken. My nerves are shot. I've screamed, begged, pleaded, tried to use money, reasoned, cried.

And she's getting worse. She's not getting better. And how am I going to minister? And we're starting other churches and renting Radio City Musical and starting new churches in the city and going to South America.

And Carol's writing songs and making albums. But nobody knows or very few people know that we're hanging by a thread, my friend, by a thread. And all the times I drove and cried out to God coming in and saying, God, please, just get me through these three meetings.

We have 11, 3.30 and 7.30 services each about two hours long or more. And I'm just saying, God, please, just get me through another Sunday. And God would just lift me and I would have the grace to get through and minister to people even though inside I was so, so just shaky.

And I learned that when you pray, God comes. I learned that when you have no logical way to stand, God somehow when you pray gives you fresh feet and a fresh foundation. We have a prayer band in our church.

It's a more important ministry than the 240-voice Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. There's a prayer band that not only prays through each service, about 20 of them pray through each service on Sunday while I'm preaching and ministering there in a room locked away praying. But now they pray for several years now from 2 in the afternoon till 6 in the morning.

There's in the church, there's people praying every seven days a week, 2 in the afternoon till 6 in the morning. Many of you have some need, you can just mail it to our church. Someone will pray for it 3 in the morning.

It's an amazing thing how God honors that. Well, they began to pray for me. And as God is my witness, I would sense myself at night sometimes or shaving in the morning, I would feel God's grace just come underneath me and begin to steady me and hold my emotions.

And I hadn't even been thinking about God and I would say, Lord, what is this that's just come into my life? Somebody's praying for you. Somebody's praying. People would be praying for me.

God bless them. Then my wife got ill. Had to have a hysterectomy and the hormonal imbalance that she ended up with.

My daughter's out of the house. The other 2 children, I'm doing the best I can. And now my wife is not talking just about leaving New York, which she wanted to, because the enemy had told her, fine, start your churches and influence people for Christ, but I'm gonna have all your children.

I've got one and I'm coming for the other 2. And my wife believed it and told me, you can leave with me or you can stay, but I'm leaving. Because he already has Chrissy and I'm not losing my other 2 kids enough with this. We can't do this.

The atmosphere in the city, New York is a miserable place to be. I'm not there because I like it. I'm there because God put me there.

And then after the operation, she's talking about she doesn't feel any reason to live any longer. And I mean, what do you do? Your wife is flipping out. You're preaching, you're doing all of these things.

I'm just telling you, oh, how wonderful it is to know that at the throne of grace, no matter what's happening, God can lift you and hold you. What a wonderful God. One November, after about 2 years had passed, Chrissy was awake.

God and I got totally alone in Florida and God spoke to me and said, I know you've been praying for Chrissy. The impressions I got were basically this. I don't want to sound mystical or sensational.

I'm just gonna tell you from my heart. No more talking to Chrissy and no more talking to anyone else and no more money and no more screaming and no more crying. Drop it.

Just tell me. Let's make a covenant. You just tell me and I'll take care of it.

And I told my wife, I'm not gonna see my daughter until she's right. And that's my first child. My wife kept in touch with her.

Months went by. Christmas. Sad Christmas.

Who wants presents when your daughter's away? On a February night in the prayer meeting, my house shall be called the house of prayer. We were all praying and calling on God and waiting on God. You know, nobody in charge.

No choir. No speaker. Who needs it? You have Jesus.

It's amazing how wonderful He is. And someone sent a note up to me. A woman, a young lady who's sensitive to the Lord.

And she sent a note up through an usher and the note said, I feel deeply impressed that we should stop the prayer meeting and pray for your daughter. I looked at the note. People were praying all around me.

I looked at the note and said, God, is this really you? I don't want to be the center of attraction. People have their own needs. But I felt impressed it was.

I stopped the prayer meeting after a little while and everybody gathered together in that room, in that church, and held hands, over a thousand people probably that night. And I called one of my associate pastors in the front and he began to pray. And all I can tell you, and I don't know what your theology is, and it really doesn't matter, I'm just going to tell you what happened.

You know where Paul said, I travail like a mother giving birth to Christ before I'm done you? Well, I told the people, my daughter thinks up is down, and down is up, and she thinks light is dark, and dark is light. And unless God visits her and intervenes, my daughter is out there. And someone wants me to stop the meeting so you could pray? My associate's going to come.

He's going to pray. And suddenly it turned into a labor room. You ever hear women when they're giving labor, having labor? It's not pleasant, but it has some great results.

And they began to pray. I was overwhelmed by it. I was, as God is my witness, I was overwhelmed by it.

I mean, they began to pray as if, they went to the throne of grace like, and now Satan you will give up that girl. Dave, you would just come, and let's sing Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior. And they prayed.

I came home. My wife wasn't there that night, and over a cup of coffee at night, I told her, Carol, it's over. She said, what's over? I said, it's over.

If there's a God in heaven, what I just experienced tonight, it is over, finito, it's over. Just about a day later, I was shaving, and my wife burst into the bathroom and said, Chrissy's here. I said, Chrissy, I haven't seen her in four months.

Chrissy, and you better go down. I went down the steps, and in the, wiping off the shave cream, and in the, on the kitchen floor was my daughter on her knee. And when I walked in the kitchen, she grabbed at my pants leg.

She pulled it. She was weeping, and she said, Daddy, I've sinned against God. I've sinned against myself.

I've sinned against you and Mommy. Daddy, forgive me for being rebellious, etc. Daddy, Daddy, it's different.

But Daddy, who was praying for me? Who was praying Tuesday night for me? Why, Chrissy, what happened? And she drew up to me. She said, in the middle of the night, God woke me up. And he showed me that I was heading toward a chasm, and it had no bottom.

But Daddy, even as he showed me that, and showed me how off I was, he put his arms around me, and he showed me that he loved me, and he had a plan for my life. And Daddy, I made it right with God. And I could tell by her face, she was my daughter again, the one I had raised.

Very soon, God opened the door, and for the next four years, she directed the music program at a Bible school. She married a man of God. They're both in the ministry today.

And God reminded me once again, my house shall be called the house of prayer, because when you call, I will answer. And the hard cases that some of you are facing, I want to tell you now, it won't come from another seminar. Seminars have their limit.

All they can do is be an arrow that gets you to the throne of grace. But when you get there, watch out. Because God can do exceedingly beyond what we ask or think.

I'm not being emotional. I'm not being simplistic. But we have too many technicians now invading the church that are into methodology.

The answer is not in methodology. The answer is in the power of the Holy Spirit. The answer is in the grace of God.

Could you just close your eyes right now? They've given me permission, and I thank Bill and Gloria for this, and Randy and the folks who work here. Pass me not, O gentle Savior. Sing it with me.

Hear my humble cry. Hear my humble cry. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry.

Well, every eye is closed. I wonder, before we sing that song again, and the lights are dimmed because the last thing we need is any kind of spectacle or any sense of embarrassment for anyone. I have a feeling that there's more than one mom or dad that could all too empathize with what Carol and I went through.

And you have a son or a daughter who's out there. Even some of them are in church, but you know they're out there. When you consecrated and dedicated them to God, this is not the end result that you knew God had in mind.

They're maybe totally away from God and your house even, or maybe you could just sense there's like a hardness, a crust. They're just going through the motions and the tenderness that you know they're going to need in life. Tenderness to God is not there.

Instead of worrying or just praying and crying about it, I'm going to ask, as we sing that song again, for every mom and dad or every grandma or granddad who has a grandchild that is a burden to you. You love them. And they've been reasoned with.

They've been talked to. They know the Word of God. Now it's up to God.

It's up to God, the Holy Spirit, to get them. We're not God. We can just bring it to God.

Or maybe you're a husband or a wife and your spouse is not with you today and is not with the Lord, serving the Lord, and yet you got married in Christ. And now there's trouble in the house. Listen, those are the real battles of life.

This stuff in Haiti and this stuff in the Persian Gulf, that's child's play compared to the real battles of life. I'm going to ask every mom or dad, grandparent or husband or wife who identifies with anything I've just said, would you stand right now, wherever you are and by standing, you're saying, I'm bringing that situation to the throne of grace. I'm not embarrassed.

Just stand. That's it. Don't be ashamed.

Sing with me, please. I love you, Savior. This morning we sense your presence here.

I've done my best to honor your word, God. We're not the ones who invented prayer. You're the one who called us to your side, to the throne of grace.

And Lord, for these moms and dads who are weeping, some of them, over that son or that daughter, we understand, God. For those grandparents who are concerned about a grandchild or that marriage that's falling apart, God, we need your grace. We need your mercy, oh Lord.

We need the Holy Spirit to come and even as you change my daughter and countless other people who have been prayed for over the decades and centuries as Christians have called upon you, God, we ask

you to do it again, oh Lord. We're coming to the throne of grace. We don't have the strength to do it.

Our money won't do it. We're not smart enough to do it. We can't finesse it.

We need an outright invasion of the Holy Spirit into that person. Wake them up in the middle of the night, oh Lord. While they're driving in a car, let them feel the glory of the Lord.

While they're taking a shower, remind them of verses that were taught to them when they were children. But God, we're not going to hand them over to the enemy, we're going to fight the good fight of faith. We're going to pray and we're going to keep praying and after we pray, we're going to pray again.

We won't let you go, Lord, unless you bless us. Unless you touch these situations. Lord, I pray that there will be a new aroma and fragrance of prayer in all of our lives as we go back to our central home.

Oh God, let prayer meetings begin in churches. Let prayer meetings begin in family altars and homes. Let people see, God, all of us afresh that when we call upon you, you're faithful to answer.

Stop us from being so rushed and so busy and we're learning and never coming really to the knowledge of the truth. Work on our hearts and not just our heads, oh God. Make us men and women who live at the throne of grace tasting and seeing how good you are.

While every eye is still closed, I just want to sing it one more time. And if someone is standing next to you or near you, just look up briefly. Put your hand right now on their arm or their shoulder.

They need your encouragement. We all understand what they're feeling. Would you sing it with me? Bless the land of the free and the home of the brave Bless the land of the free and the home of the brave Could you lift up your hands? Let's put our hands together and give God a hand.

Bless the land of the free and the home of the brave

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