

An Urgent Prayer for America

by Matthew Black

We need to earnestly begin crying out to God for the souls of men that we live right next to, and seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto us.

Duration: 37:50

Topics: "Urgent Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the sinful behaviors that have enslaved individuals in America. He mentions how people give in to anger, lust, covetousness, and addiction to escape stress. The preacher emphasizes the need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to set people free from their sins. He calls for God's mercy on the country and urges Christians to live out their faith and preach the gospel to bring about genuine transformation. The sermon also references the story of Daniel and his reliance on God, emphasizing the importance of prayer and placing our hope in Jesus Christ alone.

Transcript

Tonight we find ourselves not across the seas in a mission field, but we find ourselves in our very own country in a mission field. Tonight the title of the message is An Urgent Prayer for America. It is amazing to think of the awesome and special privileges that God has granted the United States of America.

The early principles of the pilgrims and the Puritans laid a rock-solid foundation for our country. And think about what God has done for us. He has sent revivals, He has sent awakenings unlike any time in the history of the world.

Today we have freedom of conscience, freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom to worship God anywhere, anytime, because many of the people that founded this country believed the Word of God. But we have left God in our country. Sin is taking over our nation and our love for sin is destroying our nation.

And what is a nation but a collection of individuals? And so when I speak of America, I think of our families and our friends and our neighbors. God has given us wonderful things and we are destroying the things that God has given us. I think of the verse in the Scripture, to whom much is given, much shall be required.

Now, if your company gives you a beautiful car and you trash it, Mike Larson, you're going to have to pay for it, right? And America has trashed what God has given to her. Leonard Ravenhill famously said that Sodom and Gomorrah have no Bible. How much more will God judge America who has the full revelation

of Him? America rejects God in light of all the blessings He has put upon her.

And like Israel of old, we have squandered the heritage that God has given to us. You know what America has done? We have squandered the gospel of the cross of Christ for the false gospel of the American dream. We have exchanged the cross of Christ for our own comfort.

And many of our churches have lost the gospel altogether. There is no change of lives because there is no gospel. Wherever the gospel is, it changes lives.

Amen? What can we do? What can we do to change the situation? And the answer is nothing in and of ourselves. Christ said, without me, you can do nothing. America's only hope tonight is the mercy of God through the preaching of the gospel.

And that is why tonight I want to urge you to earnestly begin crying out to God, not just for some country, not for some ideal, but for the souls of men that we live right next to. Because no real change has ever come without earnest, desperate prayer. All of the great awakenings came from Christians agonizing in prayer.

Prayer releases God's power on wicked hearts to soften and break them and mold them for His purposes. And our country is hardening by the minute because of prayerless Christians. Now, with our text in Daniel 9, I'd ask you to stand as we read two verses, verses 13 and 14, God's indictment against His people of old for their prayerlessness.

As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this evil has come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us. For the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth, for we obeyed not His voice.

As we read this, I want to ask who will pray for America? We need a work of God to awaken this country. Let's pray. Oh God, we ask that you would light a fire in our hearts for our loved ones, that we would have the boldness and courage of Paul and the tenderness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, that you would save and break hearts right here in this congregation. Lord, that you would make us nothing, help us to put aside all the facades and the hypocrisy. And God, that we might be true, Holy Spirit filled, fruit bearing Christians.

Lord, your way be done in our lives, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

Don't you want to see God work? That God would fill our hearts with prayer for those that we see every day who are lost in their trespasses and sins. Do you look at your family tonight? Can you say beyond a shadow of a doubt that each one in your family is safe in Jesus' care? Can you look at the people that you live with? I'm talking about in your house. And say, I know that they all know Jesus Christ and they worship Christ and I have that assurance beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Now if you couldn't answer yes to that, agony ought to be in your heart. And prayer of agony ought to go up to God until you know that the people in your house and in your sphere of influence shine with the presence of God in their face and in their life. In Daniel 9, Daniel gives himself to prayer for his country.

And that is what we need to do. But when Daniel was praying, he wasn't praying for some ideal, for some patriotic ideal. Because all of the nations of this world are going to pass away.

Amen? There is only one kingdom that will last forever and that is the Lord's kingdom. But God has put Israel in a special place and special privileges for her. Not for themselves, but for His glory.

And any special privileges that we have in our country are not for ourselves, but for God's glory. How can we see God return to prominence? Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. If we as individuals seek first the kingdom of God, all these things will be added unto us.

And so it is with an entire nation. What can we do to see America turn back to God? Well, the first thing that we need, which is found in Daniel 9 and verse 3, is that we need a serious commitment. We need a commitment to not only seek the kingdom of God, but to seek the salvation of others.

You know this, nothing lasting in your life has ever occurred without an all-out do-or-die commitment. We have to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord if we are going to see anything lasting happen. Jim Elliott, he said, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

And that is what we are required to do. We have to give ourselves in agonizing prayer for those that we want to see saved. And prayer works.

Do you believe that tonight? God answers prayer. He uses the prayers of His people as means for accomplishing His sovereign purposes in this earth. Daniel says in verse 3, I set my face unto the Lord to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

I wonder how many sober-minded people we have in this congregation. I wonder who would be deemed by God to be sober-minded. God doesn't answer the prayers of people who fool around with His word and who fool around with His lordship in their lives.

God doesn't answer the prayers of any of those people. He answers the prayers of people who are sober and serious-minded when it comes to His awesome throne and His awesome majesty. Look at what Daniel did.

He set his face unto the Lord God and he sought Him by supplications, by fasting, by sackcloth, by ashes. This was a serious endeavor. And we are to give every inch of our being to prayer.

We are to give every ounce of our power to praying because God will answer prayer. Now, one of the things it mentions is fasting. You know that you are committed when you are fasting.

What is fasting? Fasting is denying ourselves of any lawful pleasure for a spiritual purpose. It's denying ourselves of any lawful pleasure for a spiritual purpose. It's not just cutting back on our eating for health reasons, though that's good to do that.

Fasting is denying ourselves of food or other earthly pleasures for a spiritual purpose. Why do we fast? Well, fasting shows a commitment to God. It shows a hunger for God.

And the Bible says that whoever hungers after God, after righteousness, after righteousness, after righteousness, after righteousness, will what? They will be filled. Matthew 6 tells us that when we fast, we are to anoint our head, to wash our face, that we appear not unto men to fast. We are to fast for the glory of God.

We are to fast for His purposes, not to be seen of men. But fasting, giving ourselves in total commitment to God. What does it accomplish? We all talk about having a stronger commitment to God.

Here's one way that you can have a stronger commitment to God right here. You can fast because that's one thing that it accomplishes. It accomplishes a stronger commitment to God.

Think about it this way. An athlete denies himself of everything in order to train, in order to train, in order to train, in order to train longer. Have you seen someone who is training? My brother recently went on a marathon run, a bike ride that is, from coast to coast, literally from California to Washington, D.C. And in order to do that bike ride, he had to deny himself first of all in training to even be able to make it across the United States.

And then he had to take off work and he had to dedicate himself every day, one minute at a time, one mile at a time, one sore muscle at a time, one flat tire at a time. And he did everything that he could to make it from Washington, D.C. And last week he arrived in Washington, D.C. from Sacramento, California. That's what it takes to make progress in prayer with God.

It takes an all-out commitment to God and to others for the glory of God that you would deny yourself to fast for the souls of people. Now, if you've never fasted, let me give you an idea of how you can begin. You can begin by praying about it and start with one day for your fast.

And a fast can be denying yourself of food, that's what we normally think of it as, but it could also be denying yourself of watching the news. Instead of watching the news at night, you go into your prayer closet and you dedicate that time for the souls of men. There are many things that you can deny yourself of, but set up a day, if you've never fasted before, a one-day fast would be good.

Choose a day when your activities are light, if you're fasting from food, because you don't want to endanger your health. And if you're sick or you're on medication or you're pregnant, you need to talk to your doctor first. But remember that fasting is for the glory of God, it is to get things done spiritually, it's not for vain glory.

And God will not bless anything that is done for the praise of men. So Daniel says, I set my face unto the Lord, and he shows this amazing commitment for his people. Now look at, secondly, how we need to pray.

Not only with this commitment, this serious, sober commitment to God, but also with a steadfast confidence in God. Look at verse 4 of Daniel chapter 9. He prays to the Lord, he says, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him and to them that keep his commandments. Daniel's confidence was in a dreadful God, but verse 9 also says that God is full of mercy.

And when you think of God and standing before God face to face, standing before him is a dreadful thing, because his holiness is beyond anything that we could ever dream of keeping. Do you find yourself failing? Do you find yourself weak? How much more will you be when you stand before the dreadful God of the universe? But verse 9 says that he is great and full of mercy. That is the only way that any one of us could ever think of entering into heaven and standing before the awesome presence of God.

Aren't you glad that his mercies are new every morning and his faithfulness is great to you? Not because of you, but because of Christ who we look to. Our confidence is in Jesus Christ. And as we think about this, I want to sing a verse from the song Before the Throne of God above.

And if you have your handout, it's on the front sheet of that handout. Because our confidence is not in the next presidential election. Our confidence is not in our finances.

Our confidence is not in a good program or in some false promise of a politician. Our confidence is in Jesus Christ and in his great mercy. Sing this with me.

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on his hands.

My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thanks depart. No tongue can bid me thanks depart.

When you think of our country in the last century, we've fallen from hope in the gospel to hope in this thing called the American dream. Everybody can have a chicken on their table. And everyone can have a college education and a picket white fence.

And they can have two dogs. And for you cat lovers, they can have one cat for a very short time, okay? And two and a half beautiful children. The American dream is not God's dream.

Abraham Lincoln said this, my concern is not whether God is on our side. My greatest concern is to be on God's side. My concern tonight is not that any of you have the American dream.

Fathers and mothers, my hope for you is not that you would be rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. My hope for you is that for you and your house that you will serve the Lord. Revelation 3.17, Christ describes the church of Laodicea and I think it's very much like the people of America who say, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.

And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Our country thinks that they are rich and increased with goods, but on the day when Christ comes, all of this will become nothing and it will show itself to be worthless. And there are so many people that say that they are Christians, but Jesus asks here tonight, why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? And I will say that to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ.

You say that you know Christ, but don't call him Lord if you do not the things that he says. But oh, if you love Christ and you're hot for him and you're on fire for him, go out and preach the gospel and show a real Christian life to people who need to see it. Because this nation needs so many more true and genuine Christians.

I don't want for my children the American dream. What does it profit my daughter Katie or my daughter Kristen or my sons Will and soon to be born Evan? What does it profit them if they gain the whole world and lose their own soul? What is a person going to give in exchange for their soul? Daniel saw that his confidence was in God. He needed to pray to God, not go to the government for some new tax rebate for some loan that's going to make some deal happen.

Our hope is not in anything but Jesus Christ. And Daniel says in verse four, Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him. Oh, I have a covenant with Jesus Christ, the new covenant in his blood, and he has shed his blood and made a promise to me that all my sins will be taken away if I trust in him.

And that's what we need to be preaching the gospel, not the American dream. If my children get a college education and they work for NASA and go to the moon and they know not Christ, they're going a place that's a lot farther away than the moon for eternity. They're going to an eternal lake of fire if they don't know Christ.

Don't you love your family? Don't you love your extended relatives? How about loving the relatives of other people who are wicked and who don't even pray for their family because they don't know Christ? How about praying for them? How about praying for your neighbor who has nobody praying for them? That's what we need to do. Our confidence is in God to convert their heart as it was with Daniel. My confidence is in Christ and I hope my children's confidence will be in Christ.

My children, I don't care if they're driving a garbage truck or they're driving a Fortune 500 company, I want them to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto them. We need to boldly come before the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy because that's what rebel sinners need is mercy and find grace to help in time of need. I can't convert anybody.

I know for sure, as sure as a father can be, that one of my children is saved, but I don't know about the rest. And even though they're young, I am agonizing for my children's souls and I'm going for help because the only one that I know that can give mercy is Jesus Christ. And so we need to pray seriously.

We need to pray confidently. We need to pray with a sincere confession. And here we find in verses 4 through 5, Daniel begins to confess his sin.

You know what's going to send our children to hell? You know what's going to send our children to hell and your neighbors to hell? Their sins. That's what's going to send them to hell. We need to begin reaching our children and giving them the message of power and grace and forgiveness of sins, but we can never give that message in a credible manner if we love the world.

If you love the world and you love the things of this world, no matter how small that fox is, it's going to spoil the vine and it will reek of hypocrisy before your children and it will send them to hell. And so you need to begin by confessing your sins. If you want to see God work on behalf of your children and on behalf of this neighborhood and this city and this country, Daniel, he begins to confess his sins.

He says, I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep His commandments, we have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and rebelled even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments. I want to ask you tonight, won't you be zealous and repent of your sins tonight? How zealous are you to get sin out of your life? The Bible tells us to confess our sins one to another and so fulfill the law of Christ. The best way to get sin out of your life is to reveal it, to corner the enemy, to unveil the enemy.

Confess your sins. Tell the sins that you're struggling with to another brother. At times it's appropriate to tell it to the whole church because you're going to be a lot more successful and you're going to be able to circumspect if you take those sins out from underneath the rug.

But I want to give you some encouragement because if you're a believer, if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. There is not a sin that God cannot forgive. Confess your sins.

What do you think? You're going to hide under the rocks on the day of judgment? The rocks won't hide you. Confess your sins. You'll be standing naked before the throne of God soon enough.

I want to ask you, are you on praying ground? Are you able to pray and get a hold of God so that He will actually move the hearts of sinners? You need to get there. Pray individually. Confess your sins individually, but we also need to confess our sins corporately.

We need to pray for our families and we need to pray for the families of this church that are not meeting with God. We need to pray for fathers and mothers and children that go weeks and months and maybe even years and say that they're Christians and they don't open their Bibles and they don't find themselves on their knees. If you're a praying Christian, you need to pray for prayerless professors of Christianity in this church.

Because what do we have? What do we have after all of our Bible knowledge and after all of our words? What do we have if we don't have Christ? We have a bunch of empty knowledge and all of those words and knowledge can be just as much idolatry as pornography on the internet if you don't know God. Anything you find your end in that doesn't result in the glory of God is an idol. Everything that has been given to us is to get us to God.

And if you're satisfied completely in anything on this earth without a vision to God, then it is an idol. It could be this tie. It could be preaching.

Anything that we idolize that doesn't get us to God is an idol. And we need to confess our sins because there are many people who are prayerless. There are many people who are totally lost and they'll never pray and their prayers will never get through to God.

But if you know God, you need to pray. You need to pray for those who can't get a hold of God. That's the means of grace.

Pray for them. I read an article recently by Reb Bradley on WorldNetDaily entitled, What's Happened to America? This is why we need to pray. He writes, quote, according to a crime study from the Department of Commerce Census Bureau, in the last 30 years the murder rate has increased more than 100%.

While crime is increasing, stability of family relationships is on a downward spiral. On a national average, marriages are now dissolving at nearly a 50% rate of divorce. Now adolescents are not only alienated from their parents, but they sue them for emancipation.

And in one well-known case, a man who had been born with a birth defect sued his parents for not having an abortion. This article was written during the week of Columbine, but he goes on, quote, students are killing their classmates. Crime is up.

Families are falling apart. And academically, student success is at an all-time low. Since 1963, SAT scores have been dropping steadily from an average score of 980 in 1963 down to a score of 901 in 1999.

In the last few decades, premarital and extramarital sexual activity has increased markedly. Graphic pornography, once available only on the black market and popular only with the, quote, lower elements of society, unquote, can be found in corner video stores and reputable hotels and is enjoyed as entertainment by the masses. In the last generation, the numbers of teenage girls that have become sexually active has increased from 12% in 1955 to 70% now, unquote.

Bradley's conclusion is that America is no longer the home of the free, but the home of the slaves. He says, quote, in modern America, most individuals are ruled by their passions. They lack self-restraint.

They cannot say no to themselves. When they are angry, they give vent to their anger and lash out in violent actions or words. When they lust, they gobble up pornography like candy and pursue those they lust after with no thought to wedding vows or little thought to risk.

When they covet, they steal to obtain or they cheat to achieve. When they need an escape from stress, they drink, inhale, or pop a pill to numb the pain. When it's to their advantage, they have little regard for integrity, but lie, mislead, or break a promise.

The addiction to personal gratification rules the individuals who comprise America. The land of the free has become inhabited by slaves, unquote. Tonight, what can release us from this slavery? My friends, the gospel of Jesus Christ is that Jesus Christ died for sinners of whom I am chief.

Christ can set us free from our sins, but we need God's mercy on this country. In this country, we have murdered the unborn. In our hospitals, the hospitals that some of you gave birth to your children in, these hospitals, they're aborting the 1.3 million babies in America every year.

We need God to have mercy on this country where we have allowed godless humanism to invade our schools. The answer, though, is not to get God first back in our schools. The answer is to get God back in our families.

How about that first? How about to get God back in our pulpits? How about let's get some preachers that preach the word of God without compromise, that are not afraid to preach the truth. We must beg God to have mercy, even as Christ did on the cross, when he said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And then we need to seek and pray for a spiritual solution.

And the solution is not that we would eradicate poverty from America. Giving more money to our children is not going to make them love God. Giving them tax rebates, lower gas prices, is not going to make America love God.

In fact, it will probably make America more greedy. But some of us here today are more concerned about high gas prices than the souls of men. And we need to get on our knees and see the lost souls, and that God can redeem them.

Don't you believe that? The problem is not that we're not smart enough. Is the solution more education? Get them a higher degree. Get them a master's degree.

My children can get master's degrees, but if they don't know Christ, what good does it do them? Listen, the solution is found in Daniel 9.16. Daniel says, essentially, that we must be made nothing. We must be made nothing. We need to see our own guilt.

He says in verse 16, O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and let Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain, because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, or our parents, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. What we need is God's people to have a burning desire to become nothing. To have no ambition in this life, but only to follow Jesus Christ.

That's what we need. We need to stop all of our American dream and throw it away and follow Christ and let's see what God will give us in exchange for that worthless American dream. And we need God's glory to become everything.

In verses 17 and 18, He says, Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant and his supplications. This is his prayer. Cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate for the Lord's sake.

Is your sanctuary desolate? Have you seen God work in your heart? Or is there dust in the chambers? Oh, we need the Holy Spirit, the wind of God to come and blow us clean of all of our iniquities and all the things that are besetting sins to us and those things that we cling to. And we need to admit those things to God and let God fill us and let God be our end. And then we can pray for people and God will answer.

As we close, I want to share with you five minutes of a sermon from David Wilkerson. I played it for the men a couple weeks ago. This is a man who went to New York City to reach drug addicts and gang members and he ended up planting a church in Times Square, New York City.

The gospel is powerful and it can reach the hardest of sinners. I'm going to go ahead and get that started. If I as a pastor knew you personally and I was watching your life and as one of the pastors of this church I come to you and say, I love you, but I have to tell you the truth.

You're changing. You're not what you were. Something in the world has gotten in your heart.

I don't know if it's television. I don't know what it is that has your heart, but I see changes in you. I don't see the brokenness.

I don't see the compassion you had once for your family. I don't see concern for your unsaved loved ones. You're changing.

Little by little, something's happening to you. Would it bring you to your knees when the ruin that you are not even aware of is suddenly brought before your eyes? But the truth of the matter is, in all honesty, there are numbers among us that are changing. You've lost your fight.

Little by little, you're losing the love of God, the love of Christ. Little by little, these things are making inroads. Folks, why do you think your pastors cry out against television? These things, I don't know where it is on the job.

These things that creep in and suddenly this Jerusalem, the walls go down. Ruin sets in. Does it really matter to you that your unsaved loved ones are dying and we're getting closer and closer to the end? Does it really concern you they could die and go to hell? Where's the anguish? Where are the tears? Where's the mourning? Where's the fasting? Anguish means extreme pain and distress.

The emotion's so stirred that it becomes painful. Acute, deeply felt inner pain because of conditions about you, in you or around you. When is the last time you've been to church where you've seen young people under such conviction because the people of God have been on their face and there's such a concern and there's such an agony that young people are falling on their faces and calling on God because a spirit of conviction is called down from heaven upon them.

Our so-called awakenings, our stirrings, last but a short time. They are so short-lived and in those times we promise God we'll never return to our passivity. That it's not long, it's just weeks or months and we're back and this time we slip further back into passivity than when we started.

And we say this time, oh God, you've touched me for life. I'll never be the same. And it's like fireworks.

A loud bang and a lot of noise and then it dies. All true passion is born out of anguish. All true passion for Christ comes out of a baptism of anguish.

You search the Scripture and you'll find that when God determined to recover a ruined situation, He would seek out a praying man and He'd take him down into the waters of anguish. And I remember breaking down and it didn't matter the crowds going by I sat on the side of a building and wept. Weeks and weeks of calling on the name of the Lord.

Confessing my own deadness and dryness. And see them selling a kind of heroin would kill you so I've got the good stuff, it'll kill you. And I was in anguish.

I was in anguish four blocks from here on Broadway. Weeping and crying and wailing. I wasn't looking for a ministry.

I wasn't looking to build a church. I was feeling God's pain for a lost city. A true prayer life begins at the place of anguish.

A place where lifetime decisions are made.

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