

# A Call to Prayer

by Michael L. Brown

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*A call to prayer, recognizing its essential role in accessing God's power and life, and overcoming impossible tasks.*

**Duration:** 52:24

**Scripture:** Psalm 109:1, Acts 6:4, Acts 12:12, Acts 13:3, Acts 14:23, Acts 16:13, Acts 16:25

**Topics:** "Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer in experiencing God's blessings and seeing Him move in our lives. He shares stories of persecuted workers who rely on prayer and witness miraculous healings. The speaker encourages the congregation to prioritize prayer and deepen their individual and congregational prayer lives. He acknowledges that time constraints may make it challenging to spend long hours in prayer, but emphasizes that the same attitude of devotion can still yield powerful results. The speaker references Acts 6:4, which highlights the importance of prayer and the ministry of the word.

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## Transcript

Lord, may this not just be a habitual hearing by habitual believers in a habitual service and meeting. May we hear a living word from your throne. May it be written on our hearts in accordance with the promise of your new covenant.

May we, Lord, be doers of your word and not hearers only. May something move us, stir us. God, push us forward in you in prayer this day.

Give us ears to hear what your Spirit is saying in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's turn to the first chapter of the book of Acts.

I want to bring you a call to prayer today. Acts chapter 1. A call to prayer. For many years in teaching and training students for ministry work, I've told them that the greatest challenge that they'll have once they leave school, once they get involved with ministry, the greatest challenge that they'll have is maintaining a solid, consistent, quality prayer life with the Lord once they're out.

All the things that you think of that will be challenging, all the difficulties of ministry and the things that can come your way are real. But the greatest challenge and the greatest calling is still that of devotion to God

and that the heart and soul of it is our life of prayer. And all of you just involved in everyday living like we all are, be it raising kids or working a job or just taking responsibility for daily needs, you face that same challenge.

Everything else seems to come pressing in. Everything else seems to have priority. Everything else seems to come with its demands.

And there's always that battle for prayer. And I know by the word, I know from 35 years of experience in the Lord, I know from the history of what he's done among his people, and we just heard the exhortation to this effect a moment ago for fire, we will only go as far as our prayer lives go. Leonard Ravenhill used to say, no man is greater than his prayer life.

And when I reflected on that years later, I realized he didn't say no man's ministry, no woman's ministry is greater than their prayer lives. He said no man or no woman is greater than their prayer life. In other words, who you really are is who you are in secret.

A lot of us can put on a good show in public, but it doesn't really amount to much. A lot of us may look like these these great, awesome trees with with giant branches. And then the wind comes and blows us over.

Why? Because there's no depth of root. The root is who we are in secret. The root is our depth of our relationship alone with God.

And until we stand before the Lord in glory out of this body, out of this earth, this will be the challenge to put down deeper roots in prayer, to take hold of God in a greater way, to know him more deeply, to pray with greater faith and confidence, because the things he's calling us to do can only be done out of prayer. Meaning only God can do them. If it was mere human effort that could do it, we could get a whole lot done.

And it would last as long as we lasted to be here a few years and then it'll be gone. One man writing a book on revival and prayer made the comment that real church history cannot be written until we get into the heavenly perspective, until we get into eternity and then we can see what prayer actually did. When Jonathan Goforth was about to move into a new area of ministry in China, Hudson Taylor wrote to him and said, if you're going to take this territory, you can only take it on your knees.

Evan Roberts in the Welsh revival said that his calling, his duty was to call the churches to pray. A church on its knees, he said, is invincible. It's not the power of prayer in itself.

It's the power of God that is released through prayer. It is us recognizing our complete dependence on him. It is us recognizing that the Great Commission is not going to happen, that lives are not going to be transformed, that there's not going to be a glorious bride without spot or wrinkle, that we're not going to see a demonstration of the power of God without his power released and the way that he's given to us to do it is through prayer.

John Wesley said in Spurgeon echoed it like it or not, asking is the law of the kingdom. It's just the way God set it up to always bring us back to relationship with him. It's just the way he set it up to always bring us back to dependence on him.

And listen, if we could do things without prayer and if prayer existed only for relationship and intimacy with God, the sad fact is many of us would just run on in our own busyness and success. God set it up so it doesn't work like that and there are certain things he will not do without prayer. We're going to read a

number of verses in a moment, but it always struck me as odd that sometimes God would move by a person praying and that person's prayer would be answered by God who would get another person to pray for them.

And then the thing would happen, I think, well, why not just answer it, but it seems that God delights in using his people to bring these things to pass. I remember hearing a story from Wilford Wright, who was the son-in-law of John G. Lake, apostolic missionary to South Africa early last century. Wilford Wright talked about a missionary who had been in South Africa, had an injury, an accident, and his hands were terribly burned, his hands and arms.

And he was in one of these desolate hospitals in Africa, his hands and arms bandaged when these army ants came marching into his room. The way it was described, they were marching, they're army ants after all. And they come marching into his room and he sees it, it's night time, but he sees what's going on.

They come marching into his room, marching into his bed and begin to get under the bandages on his burned hands and arms. And he begins screaming out and there's nobody in the hospital to respond, nobody around. He's screaming and asking for help and just in agony, screaming out and there's nobody around.

And he found out the details of the story when he was sharing what had happened years later when he was back in the States. And someone checked his prayer journal and found the exact coincidence of time and hours. But whatever the time was in another part of the world, it happened to be that this man was still sleeping in the States and he's awakened out of a sound sleep.

And he hears someone crying, help me. This guy is in South Africa, crying out in agony, there's nobody in the hospital. This guy wakes up somebody else in the States, a believer, hears somebody yelling, help me.

Isn't there anybody who can help me? He doesn't know who it is, what it is, he just gets out of bed, gets on his knees and cries out to God for help. And the guy in South Africa, all he knows is a few minutes later these army ants go marching out of the room as quickly as they came in. And in the morning when they take the bandages off the guy's hands and arms, he's completely healed.

The thing that was so wild was, why didn't God just answer the guy that was crying out in the hospital? Why did he stir somebody else to wake the guy up out of bed and then this guy cries out and prays? That's just the way God works. We're in this thing together, we're co-workers with the Lord, and we're co-workers one with another. And even though we each stand or fall before God, and even though we each have to run our own race and give account, and even though there's sufficient grace in our own lives to do what he's called us to do, we help one another by prayer and we hurt one another by our lack of prayer.

There's a story that I recounted in the book, *How Saved Are We?* about these missionaries. Again, a story of missionaries going over to Africa, but many years ago, when it was much more difficult in transportation, much more challenging. And then when they were sent out by their home church, the church said, we're going to hold the ropes.

We're kind of letting you down into the midst of this battle, but we're going to hold the ropes. We're not going to let go of you, we're going to hold the ropes. And they had an absolutely hellish time in Africa, and came back to the States just very weak physically, completely beaten down, defeated.

They looked like death warmed over. And they came back to a prayer service at their church, and they sat in the back during the service and listened to the whole night, and not a prayer for them, not a word for them, not a remembrance of them at all. And then they got up and everyone was kind of shocked when they realized who it was and how they looked.

And they said, we went over as promised, but you failed to hold the ropes. You know, how long has it been since you've even mentioned us or thought of us? There is a dimension where we help one another in prayer. There's a dimension where Paul can write about standing with him in his battle, in his war, by interceding, by praying.

So this is a call to all of us. I've been in my own heart, stirring my own heart to go after God more aggressively, and challenging my own life in God, and challenging areas of superficiality, lack of spiritual depth that should not be there. Seeking his face more earnestly, enjoying his presence more deeply.

So I bring this to this community, I bring this for myself, and I say again, there are things that God has called us to do that are real, that are wonderful, that are awesome, that are glorious, but they are utterly impossible. And all of our youthful energy and zeal, and all of our maturity and experience, and all of our commitment alone will not do it. But there must be divine intervention.

I mean, we could build a beautiful sailboat, and we could put this thing together, in absolutely massive detail, and I'm not going to paint a picture of it, because I don't know anything about boats. But just, we could make the thing nice, and we could hoist, that's a good boat word, we could hoist up the sails. But unless the wind comes, we just sit there, you understand? We need the wind of God to move us forward, in our efforts to touch the lost and hurting, in our efforts to see Jesus exalted in righteousness, in our efforts to raise up an army to go to the ends of the earth, in an effort to see the power of God come and set the captives free, we need the wind of the Spirit to blow in these sails.

And what we see here in the book of Acts, is that the disciples fully understood they had to have divine intervention. They fully understood they were given an impossible task. They were given a mission that was beyond their strength and beyond their ability, and therefore they had to have God move on their behalf, back them, strengthen them, anoint them, empower them.

Without that, it was over before it even started. When you're told to do something that seems pretty easy, pretty reasonable, you tend to just run out and do it. When you're given a task that's utterly impossible, and you have any spiritual sense, it draws you to your knees, to go before God, to get His heart, to get His mind, to get His plan, to get His strategy, to get His power, to get His anointing.

The work of God can only be advanced in the power and life of God. So we see in Acts the first chapter, after Jesus, Yeshua, ascends to heaven, verse 12, Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying.

Those present were Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, Judas, son of James. What does it say they did in verse 14? They all joined together constantly in prayer along with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. They all joined together constantly in prayer.

What else are they going to do? Jesus has promised that they're going to receive the Spirit. Just as John immersed them in water, now they're going to be immersed in the Spirit. They're going to be empowered and they're going to be witnesses.

And they've been given a commission to take this message throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth, to make disciples of the nations. What else are they going to do? They must give themselves over to prayer. They may have talked strategy, we don't know, but that's not what's recorded.

They may have come up with some kind of plan, how they're going to do it, divide the city into regions or subdivisions. Maybe they did it, but it's not recorded. What we do know is that they went to prayer.

What they do know was they were shut up to prayer, consigned to prayer, saw nothing else that was worthy of their day and night time but prayer. Why? Because that was the only way to access the riches of heaven, the treasures of heaven, to do His work here on earth. I mean, it's an amazing thing how sometimes we can know the task isn't possible, but we want to plot and scheme and strategize and figure things out.

And do everything that our fleshly power has. I mean, God loves to break our self-confidence because it's for our own good. Self-confidence is a terrible curse when it comes the wrong way.

There's a confidence we have in God that can make us confident in every area of life. And there can be just a normal self-confidence that you're affirmed as a human being and feel good about the things that you do in this world. But there is a fleshly self-confidence that's a curse.

And Jeremiah 17 talks about it. Cursed is the man that relies on the arm of flesh. Samuel Chadwick said it.

The church always fails at the point of self-confidence. It's a good thing. As much as there's been trial and testing, it's a good thing that God's put fire through the fire.

Because it burned out whatever self-confidence we might have had. Maybe there's something there still that God's after. So be it.

But I'm telling you, whatever comes out of here, every one of us to a leader, every one of us to a leader's spouse, every one of us that's involved in any way in this ministry work, every one of us will know where the excellency of the power is. Every one of us will know it's nobody's name or nobody's reputation and nobody's great experience or wisdom or this or that. It's the grace of God and the power of God doing the work.

They all join together constantly in prayer. Man, you wonder sometimes what stops us from just going after God. You wonder sometimes what stops us from just slowing down other activities and putting away non-essentials and shutting down things that just don't have to be there and just going after God in prayer.

Be it as individuals, be it as roommates in a house, be it as families, be it as couples, be it as ministry teams. What stops us from just going before God and shutting off everything else and shutting out everything else and saying, I'm just going to go after Him because He's the only source, He's the only hope and without His intervention, we can't do His work. Even if it's just a matter of spending more time with Him to grasp hold of what He's already given us and already spoken, what He's already deposited, it comes out of time with God, quality time with God.

There are over 30 references to prayer in the book of Acts. Let me just run through a few of them. You know, the question of, okay, who's going to be raised up as the apostle to take Judas' place, Acts 124.

They pray about it. They don't just plan and strategize and who's got the better qualifications. They pray first.

Lord, You know everyone's heart, Acts 124. Acts 242, after 3,000 are added to the body. Acts 242, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

That's what they're all devoted to. When did Peter and John go up to the temple in Acts 3.1? At the hour of prayer. I wonder what they were planning on doing at that time.

Acts 4.31, you know what happens? Persecution, opposition in the fourth chapter. The apostles warned, so they go to God in prayer through that chapter and then the 31st verse, when they prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. What did the apostles say in Acts 6.4? We, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

What's the first thing that we're given to do? What's the first thing that we're called to do? What's the first priority that Peter expressed? The leadership there, the apostolic leadership. First thing we've got to do is give ourselves to prayer. When they raise up the first seven servants that are going to take care of the tables, Acts 6.6, they have these men stand before the apostles who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Stephen's being stoned to death in Acts 7.59. While they're stoning him, what does he do? He prays. After Saul of Tarsus has his radical encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, and Ananias is told to go to him. Look at what it says in Acts 9.11. The Lord said to Ananias, Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul.

At this moment, he's praying. Man, his whole world has just been rocked. He can't even see.

It's been three days now. Hasn't eaten. His whole world just turned completely upside down.

What's he doing? How is he identified? He's praying. If you've never just gone through the epistles of Paul and looked at his prayer life based on the epistles, how he prayed day and night, how he prayed without ceasing, how he prayed with tears, if you've never done that, especially if you consider yourself too busy to pray, go and read those words. I remember getting a letter.

It was the worst typed letter I'd ever received in my life. I'd done a prayer conference in Israel in 1986 and received this typed letter. I mean, it was the worst typed letter I have ever seen in my life.

More typos, more just the page laid out poorly. It was bad. And I have seen a number of poorly typed letters.

This is in the pre-computer days. And this woman just said, look, I work whether it was 12 hours a day or 15 hours a day, whatever. I don't have time to pray.

I work so much. On the one hand, my heart went out to her and I'm sure she was busy and I'm sure she had a heavy schedule and Israel can be a very oppressive place to live. The shock, by the way, was that she said she was a professional typist.

That was her job. Maybe that's why she works so many hours a day. Well, look, we can't compare ourselves one to another.

Someone may have more time in their schedule than another person has. But I know that Paul was an extremely busy man. And when you read about his life and then you realize the job that he worked at times just to be an example and make a living and then how he poured himself out for so many and yet he had this incredible prayer life.

It's telling me on a certain level that a heart of prayer and a desire for prayer and a going after God can even transcend the times that you can set aside. There's just an absorption of life in God and the times that we do have can be focused. And it's amazing when you really go after him.

Someone said that when we go to prayer, the devil knows, it was a Puritan, I believe Richard Baxter, that when we go to prayer, the devil knows that we go to fetch strength against him so he does everything in his power to stop us. You just determine you're going to seek God and pray more and if you don't know there's such a character as the devil, you'll meet him quickly. You'll find more things happening and more distractions and more disruptions and more things getting in the way which tells you you're on the right track.

Hold to it. Hold to it. You'll be amazed how much can be cleared out when you determine I'm going to go after God.

How much God will allow you to get done in an hour what would have taken four or six hours and how many times we run and do our own thing instead of going after God and just hit frustration after frustration and delay after delay and finally get to the end of the day and we haven't prayed. And then you repent and the next day you go and put God first and things fall into place. Acts 9 40, before Peter raises Tabitha from the dead, what does he do? He kneels down and prays and then says, Tabitha, get up.

Kneels down, communes with God, whether he reminded himself of what he had seen his master do, whether he meditated on scripture, whether he just composed himself. He prayed. It's just who they were.

Remember my first trip over to Korea. I taught some Korean students in the States starting in the early 80s. My first one over to Korea, 1990.

I was just amazed to see the spirit of prayer. I was amazed to see how prayer just went before everything, in the midst of everything and after everything. And you get in the car before the driver would drive, you just notice him bowing his head in prayer.

And you go to have your meal. We had a very rigorous schedule. I remember my first trip over there when we had 23 meetings in the first five days and you're totally wiped out.

Time for meal. No, you don't just get to eat. Time for prayer.

I mean, they'd pray the house down before they'd have a meal. They'd all be crying before the meal. I mean, I've joked about it.

I was crying too because I was hungry and weak. No, that's just the standard joke I say there. I mean, they'd be praying, and I didn't understand Korean, but I'd hear them pray for me and pray for Mary and pray for Israel and pray for this and pray for that tear streaming down their cheeks before a meal.

And then you go to someone's home and then you notice as people arrive at the home, they just get down on their knees and pray first. Isn't that so? And it's not as a show. It's just, hey, they're going to another house.

They're just being honoring of the Lord and they want this time to count. You know, we'd finish, you know, just day and night of meetings, and they'd say, okay, now we have prayer meeting. And then you leave prayer meeting and then you go to someone else's house for prayer.

And there's a reason that the church had this supernatural explosion. It went from about 2% of the southern part of the country being saved to 25% in just a couple of decades after the Korean War. Two, three decades of supernatural explosion and a lot of it birthed in prayer.

And then to a certain extent, some of the churches almost becoming proud of prayer and slight decline now spiritually. We were with one pastor, oversees about 50 or 60,000, the network of churches. And we found out that for many years, years and years and years and years and years, every morning, he led the 6 a.m. prayer in his church for years and years and years and years.

Oh, and he also led the early morning prayer at 4.30. Six o'clock prayer, that was the later prayer. I'm saying it's just a way of life. That's the reason for saying it.

You get saved in that and it's just a way of life. When we were together at BRSM, I told the students that on some occasions the intensity of our prayer even passed what I saw in Korea. I said, the problem is we do it for about one minute.

They can do it for hours and hours and hours. It's an extreme level of intensity and crying out. Not that that earns something from God, but just the passion of our hearts coming out to God.

But I've been with folks that just pray like that for hours. Why? It's just they've gotten used to it. They've tapped into a certain stream.

There's a discipline with it, but it's just a life. I'm not saying that you want to start putting things on yourself in a self-righteous way or trying to put on some kind of show. But the more you pray, the more you need to pray, the more you want to pray.

Let there be a deeper stream of prayer that's just loosed in our midst. Let there be just a deeper stream of devotion. Let there be just a deeper revelation of the love of God so that we can't get enough of His presence.

And on the days when it's a battle, on the days when it's just discipline, on the days when we just hit a wall, let's just stay with it. Here's an amazing account. Look at this.

This is how the Gospel makes its first definite inroads into the Gentile world in the 10th chapter of Acts. I was just struck by this looking at these verses earlier. Acts 10.2, speaking about Cornelius, he was a devout man who feared God with all his household.

He gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. So the guy that gets singled out for the message of the Jewish Messiah and now spread wholesale into the Gentile world is a man who's a man of prayer. The angel says to him in Acts 10.4, the angel appears to him and Cornelius stares at him and Terence says, what is it, Lord? The angel answers, your prayers and your alms have ascended as a

memorial before God.

God's paid attention to them, God's taken note of them, God's seen them. Now, Peter, what's Peter doing? Chapter 10, verse 9, about noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. There are men from Cornelius who've been sent to Peter and how does God get Peter's attention? He's praying.

Cornelius is a man constantly in prayer. The angel says, your prayers have come up to God, tells him to send men to get Peter, tells him where he lives and then what's Peter doing? He's praying. Acts 10.30, Cornelius is explaining four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house.

The angel appears to him, tells him God's seen your prayers. Peter goes to pray and God gives a message to Peter. You know what it's telling me? Everything is hidden in God, everything's caught up in him and when we raise our hearts and minds to him, when we become conscious of who he is and what he's saying, we begin to tap into his plan and this one comes from here and this one comes from there and it all comes together.

Listen, we will be a miserably frustrated if we go after God more in prayer. We really will and we will be a wonderfully blessed group of people if we go after God more earnestly in prayer. Not trying to prove something, not trying to win brownie points, not to try to be better than someone else but just because we know, it's all up here in you Lord and I'm gonna take hold of your promises Lord and by faith bring them down to see them realized on earth so Jesus can be glorified to the max.

That's our heart, that's our desire. The angel says and Cornelius repeats it, Acts 10 31, Cornelius your prayer has been heard. Peter recounts it, Acts 11 5, I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision.

Acts 12 verse 5, Peter's in prison. Jacob, James has been killed already. Peter's gonna be killed.

He's a beloved leader of so many of these people. There's no possible human way to get him out. No way to put pressure on the government.

No way to get him out of prison. It is impossible in the natural, he's a dead man. So what do God's people do? They pray.

If we recognize the impossibility of the task, we'd really pray and one reason that we keep setting before you a vision of what God wants to do in our midst and what he wants to do in this community is yes to build your faith, yes to encourage you, yes to be obedient to God and make prophetic proclamation but also to stir us to prayer because all this is just empty words and talk without prayer. None of it will happen but as we seek God in faith and lean on him, we'll see amazing things happen, impossible things happen, wonderful things happen, things that'll happen that'll get us on our faces worshiping and praising God. Acts 12.5, while Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

They didn't just pray, they prayed fervently. There's something to it. It's not the volume of our voice that gets the job done.

It's not that we somehow with our intensity we move God. But listen, we are whole being, spirit, soul, body, mind and we need to be fully engaged. Acts 12.12, it tells us that Peter gets out of prison at night.

He's sleeping between two guards. Right? So it's nighttime when this happens. He's asleep and yet the people are praying.

He gets out miraculously, realizes it's not a dream, it's not a vision, this is really happening, goes to knock on the door. They're shocked to the point of not believing it's really him. But why were they there at the house of Miriam, why? They're praying.

Acts 12.12, many had gathered and were praying. Barnabas and Saul are sent out. Acts 13.3, after fasting and prayer they laid their hands on them.

Acts 14.23, after they appointed elders for them in each congregation, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord. Acts 16.13, Paul and his workers, Acts 16.16, one day as we were going to the place of prayer, Acts 16.25, when Paul and Silas are in prison, severely flogged, in the lowest dungeon, about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. And it goes on.

Turn with me to Psalm 109. Psalm 109. This is one of these rough battle, difficult times, strong people against you.

So what's the response of the psalmist? Psalm 109, verse 1, O God, whom I praise, do not remain silent. For wicked and deceitful men have opened their mouths against me. They have spoken against me with lying tongues.

With words of hatred they surround me. They attack me without cause. Listen, that's hard.

Sometimes in calling and obedience to God you get used to it. But often that can be hard because sometimes you just care about the people and you love the people and they speak evil of you and that's painful because you love them. Sometimes it's hard because you don't care about your own reputation but if people believe evil things about you, it'll hurt your ability to be a blessing to them.

Sometimes it's hard because of pride in the flesh. But it's very easy to respond in the natural. When you get wronged, to want to wrong somebody back.

When you get hurt, to want to hurt somebody. When someone falsely accuses you to lash back out, that's the way of the flesh. Completely contrary to the way of the cross and the way of Jesus.

That's what the flesh likes to do. So you can just tell, the psalmist is going through it. Verse 4, In return for my friendship they accuse me but I am a man of prayer.

Anyone have a different translation for the end of verse 4? What does it say in yours, John? But I give myself to prayer. Somebody else with a different translation? Forget the footnote. Same as John.

Ah, wait, that's not a translation. That's a Hebrew Bible. And look at what it says here.

Lo and behold, va'anit filah. Ah. If you want to translate it hyper-literally, you can translate it, but I am prayer.

Or perhaps, a better way to translate it and still be very literal, but I am a prayer. I mean, think of your whole life. Just think of this.

Your whole life being so absorbed with the purposes of God. Your whole life being given over so much to His will being done. Your whole life raising a cry to God that you can actually say, va'anit filah, I am prayer.

I am a prayer. Just picture, instead of a prayer going up to the throne, your whole life going up to the throne. Sometimes you feel like that when you're fasting.

Even when you're not praying, you're conscious that you're not eating. You're conscious you're abstaining from things you would normally have. And that consciousness is a constant prayer going up to God.

That's what's important. God answer. God hear from heaven.

Listen to what Matthew Henry says about this verse. He resolves to keep close to his duty and to take the comfort of that. But I give myself unto prayer.

I, prayer, so it is in the original. This is how he paraphrases it. I am for prayer.

I am a man of prayer. I love prayer and practice prayer and make a business of prayer and am in my element when I am at prayer. Let me read that again, especially like the end of it.

I am for prayer. I am a man of prayer. I love prayer and prize prayer and practice prayer and make a business of prayer and am in my element when I am at prayer.

A good man, Matthew Henry says, is made up of prayer, gives himself to prayer as the apostles in Acts 6.4. You know, we prize so many other things and we put our emphasis on so many other things and I know that people have different time and hours in the day. There was a stretch in my high school schedule where I had a light high school schedule and was not working much outside of it. And if I wanted to spend six or seven hours alone with God every day and go to service five nights a week, I had the time to do it.

My schedule was that light. And if I was disciplined and for a good stretch of many months, that discipline was there to spend six hours or seven hours, even eight hours. I mean, with my door shut, on my knees, in the Word and prayer and memorizing Scripture.

Well, I didn't have that time once I started working a full-time job out of high school, then went to college, and then in the midst of college got married and had our first child and then in school with two kids and going to grad school. There was not the same amount of time. But I'm confident that the same attitude yields the same fruit.

The same attitude of pruning away the non-essentials, the same attitude of being in my element when I'm in prayer yields the same results even if the schedule doesn't permit the same amount of hours. It's that heart focus. It's that heart devotion.

And listen, if you say, but you don't know what life is like and you don't know how everything crowds around me and you don't just even get a private place and private time is difficult, ask God for grace. Ask God, Lord, this is difficult. I'm not seeming to connect.

I can't get to a place of focus. It seems there are always things pulling at me and needing my attention. He can give grace that you can find sanctuary even in the midst of public places.

He's able to do it. Say, Lord, if this is really important to you, you know my heart, my desire, I'm asking for your divine energy to work. I'm asking you for your grace to give me greater focus.

I'm asking you to show me ways to overcome my lack of discipline. I'm asking you to give me a private place when it seems there's no privacy around. He can do that.

This is important to him. This is relational. God willing, in October, I'll be going to India for my 14th straight year.

Our first trip over there in 93, the Kavas, went with Nancy and me and another friend of ours and we saw the work of our brother Yesu Potom there when it was very small. His discipleship school had just been in existence one year before we got there. They had, what, maybe 60, 70 kids in a little house that was the orphanage, maybe another little house they owned or something like that.

You go there now, it's mind-boggling. I mean, the level of expansion. It is absolutely mind-boggling.

Even though I've been there now 13 straight years, each year I go, I'm still amazed to see the expansion. I mean, those disciples that were just being trained and raised up, they've now, we've graduated. We do the graduation every year now.

So they've had 14 years of graduations. They've planted about 250 churches in very difficult areas. They have old folks' homes.

They care for, I believe he's responsible for 5,000 meals a day for children and men and women. 5,000 meals a day with no guaranteed monthly support of any kind. They've started other discipleship schools, other orphanages and children's homes and other cities.

They just bought half of a mountain from the government. If you remember when Yossi Potomah was here, he shared that with us and the government doesn't sell mountains. They bought one half, not the top half or the bottom half, but the left or the right half, if you understand it like that.

One half for a 24-hour prayer tower there for an old folks' home, I believe a home for handicapped. And then for a hospital. They already have a 50-bed hospital.

They already have a nursing school, junior college, vision for university. The government now sends people to their schools for the government times of testing at the end of the school year because their schools are the top quality where they are. And Yossi Potomah was just an untouchable.

And you have to understand Indian society to understand how impossible it is. And if you'll ask them, what has been the key to all of this expansion? What has been the key to what you're doing? How have you had this success? How have you been able to establish even ministry bases in different countries? Oh yeah, they sacrifice and they go for it. And it's not uncommon that their workers are beaten and persecuted.

They stand up for Jesus. They understand by life or by death. But if you ask them, what's the key? How have you seen all these things happen? How have you seen the increase? How have you seen the blessing? How have you seen the financial needs? He'd say, it's simple, prayer.

He'd say, that's the beginning. That's the end of it. There is never a time when you go to the prayer room where there's not somebody praying.

And the times I've walked by, it's somebody praying with tears. We were shocked to find out that the little children pray from three and a half years old up, get up in the morning, and from 4.30 to 5.30 in the

morning spend the first hour in prayer. If we could find our element more in prayer, if we in these weeks and months could just have a congregational, individual shift that deepens us in prayer.

I'm telling you, the acceleration of seeing God move, the intensifying of seeing God move, the grace that would be released, the things that would be revealed in our own lives that need attention, or where he helps us. We just kind of kick ourselves, saying, man, why don't I give myself to prayer more? I just got an email from one of our grads, and he said, boy, to hear about praying people being stirred to pray more is encouraging. I mean, we're not a prayerless people.

This is not a prayerless flock. We're not prayerless individuals. Many people have solid walks with the Lord, solid times in communion with the Lord.

There are many different prayer meetings that happen. I don't just mean among student body, I mean the flock as a whole. But God's basically saying time to shift gears, time to move into another realm than you've been.

It's gonna take a couple more moments and close. I've sometimes quoted the words of another Puritan, Thomas Watson. These guys had such insight and often these pithy, quotable sayings.

Thomas Watson said it was the angel that fetched Peter out of prison. It was prayer that fetched the angel. We're also faced with impossibilities.

We're also faced with things that simply cannot be done. Let me ask our key missions leaders here, Dr. Peters, Mr. Calva, are you guys satisfied with the amount of workers we have on the field in light of the Great Commission? Are you guys satisfied with the level of fruit we're bearing with our workers out on the field? Absolutely not. Let me ask Bob Gladstone here, are you satisfied with the anointing of the Spirit that's been released in our midst? Are you satisfied with the prophetic flow? Are you satisfied with sick being healed the way they are? Listen, we could go down to each one, leadership here, and those that are just part of the flock and the things that are dear to us, there's a holy frustration.

Look, we could just come in each week and do like other churches do, I'm not criticizing them, maybe that's who they are and what they're supposed to be, but just come every week. Who's happy to be here? I'm happy to be here, you're happy to be here, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Say praise the Lord.

Look at your neighbor and say, I'm happy, I'm happy. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Hey, where's the happening place, the happy praise the Lord houses? Who's happy? And we just go in thinking this is it, and if that's the calling, so be it.

But God's put within us a desire to see a city and a region shaken by the power of God. God's put within us a desire to see an army of laborers going around the world glorifying Jesus. God's put within our hearts a desire to see His power released with signs and wonders for His glory, for His namesake.

I knew when God started moving on me to write a book for not just a church audience, but for a secular audience, exposing some of the realities of the homosexual agenda, and to do it in a way that had not been done, I knew there would be challenges in terms of just finding a publisher. I knew in certain ways that that would be the greatest challenge. And I've written now 17 or 18 books.

Actually, I started to lose track, which was positive, I guess. And I've been used to, you know, either publishers talking to me about getting stuff out, or I write something and I know the Lord's with me on it,

and I send it off to a, you know, a publisher that I know or an editor I know. Okay, great, let's get this out.

I've been used to it here and there. I had some resistance, especially in the earlier days, but then I would always see the Lord move. So it's kind of an unusual experience to not see a door open.

Again, I expected it, you know, when you contact a publisher and begin to interact. I've never had an agent either. If the Lord wanted me to, that's fine, but I never have.

So it's me contacting someone, and when you talk about this book that you really believe, you know, is supposed to get out widely to the American audience called *The Queer Thing Happened to America*, and here's the book and what it's about and all this. And, you know, it's not a surprise that you either don't get a response or that you get a thanks but no thanks. Just as I've been exploring.

Again, I haven't heard the Lord say, this is it, do it, just as I've been exploring. And on the one hand, it can bother you a little because you're not used to that. You're not used to writing something and not getting an enthusiastic response or absolutely we want to see this out or wonderful because, you know, because that's what you do and you put your life into it and you feel the Lord's hand in it.

So I was just praying about this the other day, and I was just reminded, what are you expecting, kid? It wasn't even the Lord speaking, it was just me reflecting, well, what are you expecting? You expect this is going to happen without a battle? And then another thought hit me. If God really wants to use this the way I believe He wants to, if I'm wrong, so be it, but I believe He really wants to, if that's true, then all the more is it going to be a battle. All the more is it going to have to be birthed in greater prayer and fasting.

All the more is it going to strip away any self-confidence and bring me and us to a place of desperation. It's the same for so many here. Come on, if you got up here and said, honestly, I want to share from my heart what I believe God's promised me that I'll see in my lifetime.

I just want to get up and share what I believe God's spoken to me that He's laid in my heart that I'm going to get to be part of, or ways He wants to use me, or things He wants to do through me, or visions He's given me for this congregation or this work. Come on, if one after another got up and shared things here, from the oldest to the youngest, it would be impossible. And all along the way, God's spoken to us, you're not dreaming.

All along the way, He's confirmed, this is me, this is me, this is me. We've seen Him faithfully do it. We've been in enough situations as a body and a people and a community here where if God did not superlatively sustain us, it was over.

In fact, several times we threw everything on Him and said, God, this is not our vision. This is not our plan. This is not our agenda.

We can all do something else and be fruitful for You. If you're not going to back this, Lord, then we'll go on and do something else. We're not trying to prop anything up.

And He would clearly and supernaturally bring His hand to back and to bless. We really want to see abortion eradicated here and in this nation. We really want to see a mighty outpouring of the Spirit, a massive harvest of souls.

We really want to see a national change in the homosexual agenda being turned back and a glorious harvest of souls for among homosexual men and women. We really want to see city transformation and regions turned upside down for the Gospels. One of my co-workers just heard a report about the increase in gang violence in Charlotte.

We've been hearing it from pastors we pray with in the city, different leaders. Man, there's strongholds here. How are they going to be broken? How are they going to be turned? We think we're supposed to just live and die and see Islam grow and increase without the Gospels shattering those walls and bring a harvest of hundreds of millions of Muslims.

We think there's still supposed to be over 2 billion people who never heard the name of Jesus and we just go on and live like that. No, there's something in our hearts and it's not supposed to be like this. Now do something about it.

And we've got to do something but we can't do it without God's power. So what can we do? Pray. I don't believe that given our nature and makeup we will ever get so focused on prayer that we'll forget about doing other stuff.

I don't think that's a weakness here. I don't think that we'll just get so lost with just... I'm just playing my harp on the clouds of devotion while my neighbors all die and people scream in need but the harp sounds so nice. No, I don't think that'll happen.

I think the closer we get to the Lord the more our hearts will break for a hurting and dying world. But this is a simple call to each of us to put our roots deeper in prayer. I remind you again if you seek to do it expect opposition at some point.

I don't mean expect the worst calamities of your lifetime but just expect opposition. Let that be a sign you're on the right track and dig in deeper and dig in deeper and give yourself more. And the nice thing is prayer has this wonderfully addicting power to it that the more time you spend with God the more handicapped you feel if you're not spending time.

And the more you desire His presence. Maybe you have a break in your schedule. Seize it for the Lord.

Maybe you have some freedom that you might not have in a few months. Seize it for the Lord. Maybe you feel a fresh discipline.

Maybe you feel a fresh hunger. Seize it for the Lord. If it's simply a matter of I'm just going to walk in obedience and heed the call of the Word and the call from the leadership here act on that.

If God just brought you in as a visitor here as a guest here this day just to hear this for the transformation of your own life you take hold of it. There's no telling what could happen. Like Leonard Ravenhill wrote prayer grasps eternity.

There's something of the world to come we take hold of in prayer and bring it to bear in this world. The fruit will be dramatic. Let's stand to our feet.

Father, I pray now that in the coming days and weeks and months You will actualize this Word in us that as Your servant said I am a prayer. I am prayer. I'm totally given to prayer.

And Lord, in that context He prayed for judgment on His adversaries. Lord, in this context, Lord we pray for mercy on our adversaries. We pray, O God that to the extent we take hold of You You would honor Your Word, honor Your promises and that You would send us out here like blazing torches.

May we learn afresh in Your presence to set ourselves on fire that people may come to watch us burn. That they too may catch the fire be freed from sin be empowered to holiness and live transformed lives out that would touch a dying and hurting world. Father, right now we throw out of our mind any thoughts of condemnation or falling short or I'm not good enough.

Even if we've wasted years, God may there be a fresh new start. Meet each of us where we are right now without comparing each of ourselves to another. Take us from where we are to where You want us to be.

Make us a people of prayer. May fire be a prayer that ascends to Your throne just like the fire on the altar that never went out. May the fire from here never go out unceasingly going up to Your throne for the coming of Your kingdom and power.

In Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.

You can go. Have a great day. Let's make a difference.

Amen.

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