

The Power of Prayer

by Rich Tozour

Rich Tozour emphasizes the transformative power of prayer in invoking God's presence and facilitating revival in the church.

Duration: 1:05:24

Scripture: Acts 12:1

Topics: "Prayer Power", "Salvation Freedom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of knowing Jesus Christ as one's Savior. He describes how being bound up in sin can prevent understanding of the Word of God and lead to darkness. The preacher encourages listeners to pray and depend on Christ for salvation, as this can set them free. He then uses the story of Peter's miraculous escape from prison to illustrate the power of God to overcome obstacles and deliver souls. The preacher concludes by referencing the hymn 'And Can It Be' by Charles Wesley, which captures the experience of being freed from sin and experiencing the light of God's grace.

Transcript

Chapter 12, that's a whole lot better. I grew up in New Jersey and did not go to a Bible-preaching church. And I remember the first time, I think I was telling probably college kids, the first time I went to a Bible-preaching church was Open Bible Baptist Church in Williamstown, New Jersey.

And the pastor opened up the Bible and he said, I want you to turn with me this morning. And everybody had a Bible. We went to a church that never used the Bible.

And as those pages were being turned, it makes quite a rustling noise, you know, when the Bible is being opened. And my two sisters were little kids and they said, Mom, Dad, what's that noise? Is it raining? They had never heard the Bible being opened. And nor had I. And I think about that first experience ever in a Baptist church.

In fact, I didn't get saved in that church, but that night, my dad took the responsibility on himself to lead me to Christ. And the very first time I went to a church that preached the word, the Bible changed my life. And God wants to do that for you.

God wants to change your life through his word. He will if you'll let him. So if any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

You know, I hope that you'll take the time before you leave to express your appreciation to Brother Harold for the work that they have put into this thing. It takes a lot of effort to coordinate a team to take care of people for three days, all the meals, and just coordinating the schedule. And then this year, having so many people, we've had to split up the college age and the high school age.

So there's a lot that goes into this. And you know, it's not just coordinating events. It's pouring your soul into this.

And Brother Vaughn carries a burden for you and for your churches. That's part of the work of the evangelists. We don't compete with churches.

We minister to churches and seek to lead people to Christ and to direct them into the churches. So I hope you'll pray for the Vaughns on a regular basis. Pray for their family.

And be sure to let them know how much you appreciate them before you leave. We're going to Acts chapter 12. I have enjoyed over the years studying the matter of revival, not for the sake simply of reading about history, but I want to see God do it again.

God says, I am the Lord, I change not. And I don't know if you ever heard about the Lewis revival off the coast of Scotland. Brother Vaughn has a series of tapes he compiled on revival, and I've listened to them over the years.

I don't know how many times I've heard the story of the Lewis revival, but it took place on the island of Lewis off the north coast of Scotland back in 1949 to 1953. There were some people in a Bible-believing Presbyterian church there that the church was dying. They thought, man, you know, we're just going to die out.

We're not going to be a church if we continue to lose people. The congregation was primarily older folks. And there were two ladies in that church that got burdened to pray.

One of them was 84 years old. She was blind and a widow. Her name was Peggy Smith.

And Peggy and her sister, who were basically shut in, they hardly got out of the church very much themselves, their health was failing, but they were prayer warriors. And they went to their pastor and they said, Pastor, things are in a terrible mess. And they said, we need to see God do a work among our young people in the community, and we need to see God do a work in our church.

And he said, so what are you suggesting? They said, well, Pastor, Peggy speaking, my sister and I have decided that we are going to seek God. We're going to pray two nights a week, Tuesday night and Friday night. We're going to be on our knees from 10 o'clock at night until 4 o'clock in the morning until God steps down.

Well, the pastor said, if you ladies are going to do that, then I'll get some of the men and we'll do the same. So he started a men's prayer meeting outside of town with one of his deacons and then a few other men. They met in the loft of a barn.

Peggy and her sister would meet in their home and they would pray Tuesday night and Friday night for six hours. And for months they began to pray. And their prayer was a very simple claim of God's promise.

They said, now Lord, you're the covenant keeping God, and you have said, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. And they began to beseech God to pour out the spirit of God on their community. Well, this went on for months.

And finally, after some months, it seemed like God wasn't answering. And one night, one of the men stood up and he read from Psalm 24, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, who shall dwell in his holy place, he that hath clean hands and a pure heart. And he looked at his fellow brethren there who were praying with him and he said, you know, gentlemen, it seems to me just so much humbug to be praying for a revival of religion if our own hearts are not rightly related to God.

He got on his knees there in the loft and he looked up to heaven with outstretched hands and he said, oh God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? Search me, oh God, and know my heart. And that night, they said revival swept through those men. It was as if the building where they were literally shook.

And they went out to find the whole community alive with a sense of God's presence. They knew God was at work. Well, someone suggested that they invite an evangelist to hold a mission.

That's what they call a revival meeting in Britain. Let's have a mission. And the name Duncan Campbell was thrown out.

Duncan Campbell was a Scottish evangelist. And so they said, we want to invite Duncan Campbell to come and preach. The pastor wrote to him and said, would you come? And Campbell wrote back and said, well, I appreciate you asking, but as it is often with evangelists, he said, I'm booked up for the next several years.

And he said, I don't have the slot open that you'd like me to come. So the pastor was kind of saddened by the news and he mentioned it to Peggy and she said, Mr. McKay, that is what man is saying. But God has said something quite to the contrary.

Do not fret. He will be here within a fortnight. That's within two weeks.

It seemed impossible. But Duncan Campbell was scheduled to preach on the neighboring island of Skye. And he had a preacher's fellowship to plan for preachers from all over Great Britain.

They were going to come and preach there and have a big conference. Well, the people of Skye decided they were going to have something called Skye Day. It's a big celebration of their island.

And so they took out from under Brother Campbell all the hotel rooms that were reserved and said, sorry, you'll have to reschedule your event. We've got something else going on. So he wrote back to the pastor there in Lewis and he said, Mr. McKay, a strange thing has come about, but he said, I've had a sudden cancellation and if you would like me to come to your island, I can be there within ten days.

And he said, please come. And ten days after the initial decline, Duncan Campbell was in the island of Lewis. The pastor and some of the men met him down at the dock there as he'd come across on the ferry boat.

And they said, Mr. Campbell, the men have a question for you. They want to know if you're rightly related to God. He said, well, I don't know about all that.

He said, but I can say this. I do fear God. They said, well, that will have to do.

And so they took him back to the house and the manse is what they call the parsonage there. And they said, now we have a wonderful meal prepared for you at the manse, but we're wondering if you might address the people before we go eat. Now this is about ten o'clock at night.

Now even though the sun doesn't set until about ten o'clock at night in Scotland, it was still late in the summer. It was still late. So they decided they're going to have a meeting and he thinks, ten o'clock at night, who's going to be at the church? But he goes and they get there.

There he preaches and he said the building was packed. You could just sense the anticipation. Several hundred people in the building.

Well nothing much happened in the way of response, but he could tell God was at work. They dismissed the meeting. It was sometime well after 11.

The people were filing out of the building and one of the deacons dropped on his knees and he said, God is hovering over this place and he's about to visit us with a mighty revival. Well now, these are Scotch Presbyterians. They're not emotional people typically.

But Duncan Campbell thought something strange is going on. Somebody came in the back door and said, you know there's a whole crowd of folks gathered out here and they're begging for someone to come and address them. Duncan Campbell went out the back doors and he said there was a crowd of somewhere between 600 and 700 people gathered outside.

Now who were the people? Well 150 of them were teenagers. They'd been at a dance down the road. This is in 1949.

They said while they were dancing, all of a sudden the sense of the spirit of God had come on that dance hall and they fled in terror as if the building were on fire and they ran to the church trying to seek refuge from God. While they were on their way to the church, other people in the community had gotten themselves out of bed. Many of them had already settled down for the night, got dressed and seemingly drawn by an unseen hand, began to gather at the church and they were gripped by the dread of God.

Well, as they were there and they didn't know what to do, they began to sing psalms. That was typical in their churches, singing of psalms. And so they're singing psalms and someone suggested, well we ought to open the doors and let the people come in.

So they invited the people in and Peggy in her praying over all these months had envisioned that one day their church building would be packed with young people. Well that's exactly what happened. There were so many teenagers that they put them up on the platform around the preacher while all the adults took the seats out in the auditorium.

He said there was many people listening from the windows outside as there were listening inside the auditorium. Hundreds of people. Duncan Campbell preached and as he preached, I remember him saying there was a young lady on the platform seated near him and she was saying, oh God, is there mercy for

me? Is there mercy for me? I seem to think that hell is too good for me.

She was a student at Aberdeen University. Numbers of students, under conviction, people moaning and wailing. He said that night many people came to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Not only that, six or seven of the young men who were there as former dance participants not only got saved that night, they ended up called into full-time service and going into God's ministry. After that meeting dismissed, it was long after midnight, someone said, Mr. Campbell, there is another group just like this down at the constable's office, at the sheriff's office. So he went from there and down to the sheriff's office and interestingly the sheriff lived right next to the home of Peggy and her sister.

There's a group of dozens of people gathered there. One man was in a drunken stupor. His mom was over him saying, Willie, are you coming to God tonight? Are you coming to God tonight? That night Willie got saved and so did many others.

Duncan Campbell in that message says, it may interest you to know, my dear people, that I never got that supper that night. For by the time I got back to the manse, it was five o'clock in the morning. That was his first night on the island of Lewis.

How many of you have heard that message? Brother Vaughn, do you make that available still in that series? I know you can get it from Brother Vaughn. I've listened to it ever since I was in college over and over again. That night was the first of many nights.

You see, Duncan Campbell went to the island of Lewis planning to be there for ten days and he ended up staying there for three years. Three years. He said sometimes he would preach eight times a day.

One time he preached five times in churches in the buildings, two times out in the open field, once down by the seashore. He said he would be asked by pastors, can you come preach in our community? Lewis at the time had about 23,000 people on the island, but there were little villages and hamlets all over the place with churches and they're begging, come and preach, come and preach. He said that as he was going from place to place, he said, well, I could fit in a meeting with your church if we did so between one and two o'clock in the morning.

And they'd say, well, come, we'll be there. And he'd come and the buildings would be packed. I could tell you many stories, but one particularly I remember, he was going to a town where there were some young men, the night before the revival came, they were having a beer party.

And one of them had said to his friend, you know, Angus, I think we need to add some more beer to the party. And the friend said, well, what are you talking about? He said, well, I just, I just have a feeling that this might be the last night that we'll ever drink. And Angus said, what are you suggesting? He said, well, you know, you've heard about this revival movement that's moving across the island.

And he said, oh, no, you're not suggesting you're going to go and get a religion, are you? He said, I don't know, but a strange feeling is coming over me. All night those 12 young men got plastered. They were thoroughly drunk.

The next day revival came to their town. Those like others were drawn to the meeting. And in that meeting, every one of those dozen young men got saved.

Not only that, the tavern closed down. In fact, they said, that's one community, you could not find one unsaved person in the entire town. These meetings went on and this move of God went on for three years.

Duncan Campbell moved on and Angus said that that movement continued years after Duncan Campbell had left. In fact, I remember reading some other source and him telling about this. He said, you could count on one hand the number of backsliders and that 10 years after revival had come to Louis.

Wow. The message is called, when God stepped down, you ought to hear it. But you know, the reason I pointed you to that message is I want you to know something.

That is an illustration from the 20th century. Sometimes we read about all the Welsh revival in the early 1900s or we read about the 1858 revival in the United States, the prayer revival or the 1859 revival in Great Britain or we have to go back to the 1700s. Sometimes we think revival is just something that occurred years and years ago.

Folks, revival is still a possibility. Revival is still God's desire because there is power in prayer. And I want to preach to you about the power of prayer.

I thought it would be very appropriate for us to close out a prayer advance on this theme, Acts chapter 12, the power of prayer. I want you to turn there with me and I want you to stand as we read from Acts chapter 12, verses 1 through 5. Acts 12, 1 through 5. We'll stand out of respect for God's word. Acts 12, beginning in verse 1. Now, about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to beck certain of the church and he killed James the brother of John with a sword and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also.

Then were the days of unleavened bread. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

I want you to read aloud with me verse 5. It's the text for this message. Let's say it together. Verse 5. Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

I'm preaching to you a message I call the power of prayer. Let's pray. Lord, there are certain times when I preach that I can tell, I can just sense the burden of the Lord selling on me.

This is one of those times I pray that I might preach the burden, the burden of the Lord. And I pray we might go home with a passion to pray. I pray that you'd raise up a people that believe in the mighty power of God.

If there's power in prayer, it's simply because prayer is our avenue of communication with you. It's there is power in heaven. And you have said all power is given unto me.

Go ye therefore and preach the gospel. So I ask that you would use the message today to move our souls and send us on our way with confidence in heaven and with consecration of life to Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Thank you. You may be seated. Every great move of God begins with prayer.

You'll never read of a revival that prayer didn't proceed. Every great move of God begins with prayer. The book of Acts is actually the second of a two-volume work that God used Luke, the Levite physician, to

write.

Luke actually wrote more of the New Testament than anybody else. You're probably thinking, wait a minute, Paul did. Paul wrote more books, but Luke wrote more volume.

The books of Luke and Acts give us quite an overview. First of what Jesus began to do and teach, that's in Luke, the life of Jesus. And then what he continued to do and teach through the lives of his apostles.

The Acts of the Apostles specifically focuses on the ministries of Peter and Paul and what God used them to do. You come to Acts chapter 12 and the church is falling on tough times. The church is being persecuted.

In fact, the persecution is so intense that some are being put to death. James, the brother of John, the two sons of thunder, the Lord's beloved apostles, James is put to death. Peter is put in prison and things are tough.

But I want you to see that the prayers of God's people call down a prescription from the great physician to remedy their biggest problems. When we face our biggest challenges, God has his greatest opportunities. He said, my strength is made perfect in weakness.

God's strength isn't tested in our weakness. It's made perfect. It's made manifest in our lives when you and I are in tough times.

So I want you to see several things from the passage. First of all, I want you to notice what I call problematic situations. It's in verses one through four, problematic situations.

A few situations had arisen here and they were problematic. Verse one, Herod the king had stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. What's the first problem? The church was persecuted.

The church was persecuted. The word vex means to cause harm or do injury to. You know, we haven't yet faced that in our country.

We well may. I remember talking to a friend of mine who had moved to the United States from the former Soviet Union. His name is Constantine Kamilchuk.

I met Constantine in California. His parents had moved here and after all the persecution they had faced in Russia, once the doors opened up, they moved this way. Constantine was half Russian, half Ukrainian.

He had grown up in the Ukraine and he said, when I was growing up, brother Rich, he said, our church could not meet in church building. We were unregistered. We're not registered with government because government would control what we preached.

So people met in woods, out in forest. He said we had 300 people meet out in the woods any given Sunday. I said, well, snow, rain, every Sunday, doesn't matter.

I said, how long would the services last? Three hours minimum. Three hours, rain, snow, no matter what. I said, so what would happen if the KGB would come? Oh, he said, it happened all the time.

He said, people say, KGB coming, KGB coming. When the KGB agents would come, whoever was preaching the Bible would be arrested and sent off to a hard labor camp. He said, you know, we had a

policy.

Whatever layman was standing closest to pastor when KGB came to camp, he would snatch the Bible from pastor's hand and push him down. He'd stand up and take pastor's place. That man would go to the work camp.

He said, my own father spent three years in hard labor for taking the pastor's place. What a convicting thing. How many people make lame excuses, well, the services are too long, the pews are too hard.

You know, NASCAR is on today, I can't go to church. They'd meet out in the woods. That was a church that was persecuted.

And you know, I like the fact that Paul says to Timothy that we are to pray that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Sometimes you think, well, the only way we'll ever have a revival is if we have persecution. You know, it's sad if it takes persecution to bring revival.

We ought to get desperate enough for God before we ever have persecution. Or we will have persecution. The church was vexed, persecuted.

But something else, notice James was executed in verse 2. He killed James, the brother of John, with a sword. You see, the Lord built his church on the foundation of the apostles who were the pastoral staff of the church in Jerusalem. It was the apostles.

James is one of the preachers there, and he is killed. He is executed. But it gets worse.

In verse 3, because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Verse 4 says he apprehended him and he put him in prison. We see Peter incarcerated.

So church is persecuted, James is executed, and Peter is incarcerated. Now I want you to think, if your church were being persecuted, and let's say your pastor were put to death, and let's say the assistant pastor in your church was now preaching because your pastor has been put to death, can you imagine? Your pastor's wife is a widow. Your assistant pastor's wife is thinking, what's going to happen to my husband? You know, pastor was put to death, how long is it going to be until they come and take him? That's the kind of situation in the church.

These were dark hours. You know, you and I live in tough times. We live in dark times.

A lot of people despair and say, you know, these are Laodicean times, it's the end times. Listen, folks, God did not give us the prophecy about the Laodicean period so we'd all sit back and say, well, it's just fatalism, that's the way things are going to be. It doesn't have to be that way.

Other churches are going to be apostate, they're going to be corrupt, but you don't have to be that way. And we can see the power of God. So we come to verse 5, and I want you to see what I call persistent supplication.

Here's the second thought, and this is the main thought. Persistent supplication. Verse 5, Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

Peter's kept in prison. You know, it isn't like there's suddenly light at the end of the tunnel. It's not like suddenly the day's beginning to dawn.

It's not like, well, did you hear? Peter's about to be paroled. It wasn't like there was any good news coming. Peter's kept in prison.

In fact, what we know from Scripture is the next day, Herod has every intention of putting him to death. It isn't looking any better, but prayer. But prayer was made.

Ironic to me that when the developments occurred on September 11, 2001 in this country, immediately prayer became a buzzword. It became almost a politically correct term. Our thoughts and prayers are with our viewers.

You'd see that on television stations, etc. Isn't it amazing that the networks that mock God, blaspheme His name, defile His commandments, all of a sudden they're saying, our thoughts and prayers are with our viewers. It's almost like a politically correct thing to say, ah, well, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

First of all, what does my thoughts are with you do? It's nice to think about somebody. That's great. Hey, I was thinking about you.

Oh, thanks. Glad you thought of me. But that doesn't change my life.

And prayer. What is prayer without God? See, on the receiving end of prayer is God, people. And that's why prayer changes things.

Because God changes things. Prayer is our avenue of going to Him. Well, prayer was made without ceasing.

Interesting word. Without ceasing. The word means continually.

The literal meaning of the word, if you were to translate it, rough literal, would be stretched outedly. What's that mean? It's like a baseball player out in center field. All of a sudden there's the crack of the bat.

He sees the ball sailing over his head. He runs toward the outfield, and it's about to go out the center field fence. He jumps and he stretches out.

Once in a while, you see the highlights, they'll pull one back. But no matter if he's going to get this one or not, he's going to give it every bit of effort he has, stretched outedly. He's not giving up.

That's the term. That's when you lay out your soul to God in prayer. You say, God, it doesn't look very good.

God, it looks hopeless. Oh, but God, you must intervene. Please, God, intervene.

Praying continually. You know, when the scripture says pray without ceasing, that's not only the idea of living in an atmosphere of prayer and pray all the time. It means pray until you get the answer.

Now, folks, God answers every prayer he hears. God answers every prayer he hears. Oh, he didn't answer my prayer.

No is an answer. Did you know that? How many of you have ever gotten a no from God and looking back on it, you're glad you got a no from God? Yeah, I'd have married the wrong girl twice if God hadn't said no. Sometimes God says no.

There are times that heaven seems silent. Like Jacob wrestling with God, God will test your perseverance. He wants you to prevail in prayer.

Pray without ceasing. Don't quit. Stick with it.

Pray stretched out continually. I want you to hear some scripture concerning prayer. Psalm 5, verses 1 through 3. Give ear to my words, O Lord.

Consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.

In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. David said there, in the morning I'm going to pray. Elsewhere, he said, evening, morning, and at noon will I pray.

Different times in David's life, he had different habits of prayer, but the point was David had a habit of prayer. Well, do you pray? Pray without ceasing. In fact, in Jeremiah 33.3, scripture says, call unto me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.

Call unto me, God says. That's the only thing he tells us to do. Call.

I'll answer you. I'll show you great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Now how many great and mighty things have you seen in your lifetime? Well, I've seen some incredible things, but you know, great and mighty, God says in Ephesians 3.20, he's able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Well, I've seen some answers to prayer, but I want to see that. Revival would be exceeding abundantly above all we could ask or think. Well, why don't we pray for it? Call unto me, I'll answer thee.

Somebody told Vance Havner one time, the famous preacher, Mr. Havner, you can't claim that promise, Jeremiah 33.3. It's in the Old Testament. He said, I wish they'd never told me that. I've been praying that prayer for 37 years and God been answering.

God answers prayer and these promises are for us to apply. Someone else, by the way, Vance Havner said, I pray for daily bread with sweat running down the hoe handle. The last hour I talked to you college young people about praying to God and trusting him for provisions.

But you know, we prefer to trust in a full cupboard rather than a faithful God. And God doesn't keep the cupboard stocked. He'll do like the widow who had just a little cruise of oil and some meal and sometimes we get to the end and you've got to do what you can do.

And then you trust God to do what you can't do. Call unto me, I'll answer thee. Then there's Matthew 6.6. Jesus said, but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.

Now, wait, he didn't say if you happen to pray. He said, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and shut thy door and pray to thy father in secret. And thy father, which seeth thee in secret, shall reward thee openly.

God rewards those who pray. Matthew 7.7. Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Verse 8. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Interesting. All of those terms are in linear action. If you remember from geometry class, there's a difference between a line segment and a line.

A line segment goes from point A to point B. A line goes on both directions ad infinitum forever and ever and ever. That's linear action. God says, ask, ask, ask.

There are relatives of mine for whom I've been praying for years and they've not gotten saved yet. Had it not been for the encouragement of the life of George Mueller, I think I'd have given up a long time ago. George Mueller began to pray for five individuals in the year 1844.

Five different lost people. And he wrote in his journal, I began to pray for the conversion of these people in 1844. He said, I prayed every day, whether sick or in health, on land or at sea, whatever the pressure of my engagements might be, every day I sought God to convert these five individuals.

He said a year and a half went by, 18 months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God for him and went on praying for the other four. Five years elapsed before the second was converted.

I thanked God for him and continued to pray for the others. Six more years went by before the third one was saved. Mueller said, I thank God and kept praying.

Thirty-two years later, George Mueller was writing in his journal. He said, well, the last two of the five are not saved yet, but they will be. He said, I continue to pray and trust God and they will be converted.

In 1897, 52 years after he'd begun to pray, the last two friends of George Mueller's, in fact, came to know Christ after George Mueller had died and gone to heaven. Fifty-two years of praying. Samuel said in 1 Samuel 12, verses 24 and 25, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.

How's your prayer life? Do you have one? How about this? In Luke 18, verse 1, Jesus spoke a parable to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint. In fact, in Acts 6, verse 4, we find out why there was such power in the ministry of the apostles. They tell us their priority there, Acts 6, verse 4. They said, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Then we read this in Ephesians 6, 18, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Praying always, all the time, with prayer and supplication in the spirit. What does that mean? Supplication in the spirit.

You know, I don't know if I've begun to comprehend what that means, but I've been asking God to teach me, what does it mean to make supplication in the Holy Ghost? What does it mean to pray in the spirit? That's not some heavenly gibberish. What is it? It is spirit-empowered praying. He says we're to pray that way.

In fact, in Philippians 4, 6, be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Colossians 4, 2, continue in prayer and watch in the same. First Thessalonians 5, 17, pray without ceasing.

First Timothy 2, 1 through 4, Paul writes to Timothy, his young son in the faith, and he says, I will, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved

and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. Why does God say pray for all men? Because God wants all men to get saved. That's what he says.

That's what First Timothy 2 says. You say, yeah, but God may want them to get saved, but they don't want to get saved. Jesus said, no man can come to me except the Father which has sent me, draw him.

But he said, if I be lifted up from the earth, I'll draw all men unto me. You know, we live in a day, there's a whole big debate going on, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. You know what, folks? God's sovereign and man has a will.

And somehow God's not threatened by that. And no man can come to God except God draws him. And Spurgeon was asked one time, how do you reconcile the sovereignty of God and the free will of man? And he said, why do I need to reconcile friends? They are not at odds.

I may not understand all that in my infinite, in my finite human mind, but God in his infinite wisdom has it all figured out. And God is good and he wants all men to be saved. Pray for them.

Pray. Don't sit back like some fatalism and oh, well, whatever's going to be will be. Prayer in the Bible proves that God hears the petitions of men and changes the course of history.

Pray! Pray! Pray! Do you pray? James 5.16, the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. I've got to tell you, there's no way to kill a revival more quickly than go to the typical prayer meeting. What do you mean? Dear Father, thank you for bringing us together.

Thank your brother so-and-so who got that truck that we wanted God to provide. Thank you for our pastor. Sometimes he preaches too long, God, but we sure love him.

Thank you for him. If you listen to a typical prayer meeting, we kind of drone on about this and that. Prayer.

The Bible says to be effectual and fervent. Effectual means producing effect, bringing about effect. Fervent is the word from which we get effervescent.

It means bubbling over. It's like taking a can of soda, a can of pop, and shaking it up, and then you pull it down. Your prayer life ought to be passionate, God.

Oh, Lord, you must work. We have no strength. We have no might, but our eyes are on you.

Where is the passionate? Where is the confident praying? Scripture concerning prayer, but then let me give you this. Saints in the habit of prayer. Have you ever thought, and as I've read Christian biography over the years, I've noticed every person, every person ever mightily used of God was a person of prayer.

George Mueller, one time was crossing the Atlantic from England to Canada to preach, and his ship was fogged in. It's one of my favorite Mueller stories. The ship was fogged in.

The fog was so thick. The ship had to stop, could not move ahead for fear of running into whatever was out there at sea, for fear of losing direction, and so they just sat there. Mueller went to the captain.

He said, Captain, I've come to inform you that I must be in Quebec by Saturday. Captain looked at George Mueller. He said, Mr. Mueller, if there were anything I could do, I'd be glad to help you, but there's nothing

that I or anyone else can do.

He said, Captain, let us go to the church room and pray. The captain looked at him and said, Mr. Mueller, have you seen the density of this fog? Captain, my eye is not on the density of the fog. It is on the living God who controls every detail of my life.

I have served him for 57 years, and I've never failed to get a hearing from heaven. Well, the captain reluctantly followed George Mueller to the chart room. They knelt.

Mueller prayed. It was a really simple and short prayer. He didn't pray for but a matter of minutes.

Father, if it be consistent with thy will, I am asking that thou wouldst remove the fog within five minutes. Lord, you know the engagement that you've made for me in Quebec this Saturday. I've been coming to you for 57 years and asking.

I've never failed to make it to an engagement because of your kindness. And so I'm asking that you would remove the fog in the name of my Savior. Amen.

He finished praying. The captain was about to come up with some kind of prayer, and Mueller tapped him on the shoulder and told him not to pray. The captain looked offended.

Mueller looked at him and said, Sir, first of all, you don't believe that God will answer your prayer. Secondly, I believe that God has already answered mine, so there's no need for you to pray. The captain looked indignant and he said, I've told you I've prayed for 57 years.

He said, God does answer prayer. If you go to the door, you'll find the fog removed. The captain got up rather indignantly, walked to the door, snatched it open, and the fog was completely gone.

You say, man, if I can only pray prayers like that. The power is not in prayer. The power is in God.

One time someone was getting a tour of the George Mueller estates, the orphanages there long after Mueller had died. One of Mueller's successors was showing them around, and the lady said to the man, my, it must take a lot of faith to run a place like this. He looked at her and he said, my dear lady, great faith in a weak plank will land me in the creek.

Weak faith in a strong plank will be sufficient to carry me across. What's he saying? It's not the strength of our faith, it is the power of our God. That's where prayer really comes to bear on our lives is when we recognize it is not me, it's not my feeble petition, it is the power of almighty infinite God.

Saints in the habit of prayer. We have the effective intercession by Moses. How many times Moses fell on his face and God spared Israel? We have the holy habit of Samuel.

I mentioned in 1 Samuel 12, the people said, please don't stop praying for us. We've done wickedly in asking a king. He said, God forbid I sin against the Lord and cease to pray for you.

We have this in Elijah's example, powerful praying by Elijah. He prays a prayer of 61 or two words and fire falls from heaven and God consumes the sacrifice that's been soaked with water. And the people say, the Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God.

When they see God answer prayer. We have the persistent practice of Daniel. You know, when the edict went forth that nobody could pray to any God, but to the king, to Darius, Daniel knew the petition had been signed, but he went, he prayed as he was one as well as his custom.

And you know something? I thought about that. That's what got him thrown in the den of lions. If there had been a, a petition signed and a law stating that nobody could pray to anybody, but to the, to the president of the United States or to the king of the land, would you have to start up a prayer life to protest that commandment? They didn't have to start up anything.

And by the way, how long would it have taken before you got arrested? Daniel got arrested the next morning. We have also the perennial practice of Paul. I noticed how many of his epistles and I jotted down just one after another, that he begins with a statement.

I pray for you without ceasing. I make mentioning you in my prayers. Paul must've had an incredible prayer life, but the most challenging of all to me was the everlasting example of Jesus.

I heard another preacher preach this. I thought, wow, so true. He said, you know, in the beginning of Jesus life of his ministry, he prayed Mark one 35 and in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed in the middle of his ministry.

He prayed Mark chapter 14 verse 23 tells us of the time that Jesus went out and continued all night in prayer to God. At the end of his ministry, he prayed Luke chapter 22 and verses 39 to 46. We find him in the garden of Gethsemane.

He's agonizing in prayer. The blood from his head is mingling with his sweat and he's praying with great sweat drops of blood on the cross at his death. He prayed father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. Beginning of his life, middle of his ministry, end of his life, Jesus is praying. But you know what's even more astounding? According to Hebrews 7.25, we know what's going on right now in heaven for the Bible says he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Today, Jesus Christ prayed for you, young person. Today, he called out my name in prayer and if God the son sees need to pray, how much more do you and I need to pray? Saints in the habit of prayer, scripture concerning prayer, statements regarding prayer. I've read some of the most convicting statements over the years from saints of God.

Anything you can get by E.M. Bounds is worth reading on prayer. E.M. Bounds, A.C. Dixon, he was a preacher at the turn of the century. I'll give you this quote.

A.C. Dixon said, when we rely on organization, we get what organization can do. When we rely on eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. When we rely upon education, we get what education can do.

I'm not disposed to undervalue any of these things in their proper place, but when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do. That is powerful. Another preacher, Samuel Chadwick said, the one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying.

He fears nothing from prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray. A man by the name of Owen Carr said, a day without prayer is a boast against God.

A day without prayer is a boast against God. I got so convicted of that. When I was a teenager, I made a commitment that I would never go a day without reading my Bible.

The reason I did that was because Jesus said in Luke 10, when Martha was complaining to him, look at my sister, she left me to serve alone. One thing is needful, Jesus said, Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her. What was she doing? Sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing his word.

I purposely in my heart, one thing was inflexible in my schedule, that had to be a daily devotion time with God. And I have not missed a daily quiet time in 24 years. But I wish I could tell you I was so consistent in my prayer life.

I can't tell you I haven't missed one day in 24 days. In fact, I got to see where my prayer life was a mess. Some days I'd pray a half hour, some days I'd pray an hour, and some days I'd pray nothing.

Oh, I mean, I always pray for meals, and I always pray, now God, we're going into service, and please have your will done. And we always have a half hour prayer meeting before our nightly revival meetings. But I'm talking about personal intercession time.

Beside what is my professional purpose in life, where's my time with God? God began to convict me. Brother Vaughn mentioned the other day having a prayer list. I had one, and I tell you, if you don't have some kind of organization, you won't remember what you need to pray for.

But my prayer list became tedious. I had a list on, you know, eight and a half by 11 sheet of paper, and then another one stapled on, and I'd have them individually listed, and I'd put my finger on that name, and I'd pray for that person and their family, and then I'd move my finger down to the next name, and I'd pray for them for a while, and then my mind would wander. And I never got all the way through the list, and it just seemed so tedious.

And I began to pray about my prayer life. You know, we pray about everything else, why don't you pray about prayer? I said, Lord, I need help. I'm an evangelist.

I've been an evangelist for nine years, and this was three years ago. I've been an evangelist for nine years, and my prayer life is so erratic. I need help from heaven.

And in a simple little normal thing for me, I was preaching at Tri-City Christian School across town from my home church in Kansas City. I'm from Eagle Heights Baptist, and they're about 20 minutes away. I went over there to preach, and the principal of the school said to me, Brother Rich, I've been praying for you.

I said, hey, thanks, Damien. He said, no, I mean it. And he handed me a three-by-five card, and on the top it had my name, said Rich Tozer, and underneath there were specific dates that he had prayed for me.

I said, wow. You know, don't ever say to somebody, I pray for you, if that's just a cliché. Only say that if it's true.

He documented, I've been praying for you. Now, you know, it's only one or two times a month, but man, a couple times a month, this guy was calling out my name to God in prayer. I said, Damien, boy, that's a blessing.

I said, do you do that for everybody you pray for? He said, I do. I said, man, not only is that a blessing for me, being the recipient of your prayers, that gives me a great idea. And I took my prayer list, and I

transferred each request to a three-by-five card.

For a while, I walked around with them in a stack of cards with a rubber band, and each time I'd pray for that thing, I'd write the date, and then I'd move on. Tell you what that did. That gave me a tracking record of how often I had been praying for somebody or something.

Kept me accountable. You know, many of us will have accountability partners, people to check up on us. I find when I travel a lot, as I do, I can't trust, or not I can't trust, I can't really depend on somebody to be always checking on me.

You know, even my wife and I, sometimes we don't see each other throughout the daytime. We're doing other things. So I can't put it on somebody else's shoulders to make me accountable.

I got to keep me accountable. So that's how I did it. And after a while, my wife had one of these binders, and it said, The Prayer File of Angela Tozer.

And she had them all neatly arranged. I said, hey, that's a great idea. I'd like to do that.

Could you make me one? She said, sure. You can buy these things at office stores, or even we got them at Walmart. And we made up a little cover on Publisher on Windows there, and then we took tabs.

And these are my daily requests right there. That's what I pray for, try to pray for on a daily basis. And then these are my weekly things, groups one through four.

And I just divide up missionaries, friends into these categories. My wife has hers divided by category, missionary, friends, family. You know, if this will help you, run with it.

I have my memory verses here. These are scriptures I'm working on memorizing. Then here's daily requests.

And there's the first thing I pray for every day, revival, me, our family, Eagle Heights, churches across the USA, my college alma mater. And then there's every date this year that I've prayed for revival. On the next card is Angela, my wife, and specific things I pray for her.

The next card is Breonna and Heather, my girls. And I take every request, and then I jot down the dates under that for which I pray. You know what? I can't tell you that I pray every single day like I want to, but I am praying more often than not now every day.

And God is answering prayer. And you know, that accountability will change your life, the practice of prayer. Well, we've seen problematic situations, persistent supplication, but notice in verse six down to verse 10, I'm going to call this providential salvation, verse six.

And when Herod would have brought him forth, in other words, to kill him, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, a light shined in the prison. He smote Peter on the side, raised him up, saying, rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

The angel said unto him, gird thyself, bind on thy sandals. And so he did. He saith unto him, cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

And he went out and followed him, and wist not, didn't know that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. And when they were past the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord. And they went out and passed on through one street, and forthwith, right away, the angel departed from him.

Providential salvation. This is not Peter's salvation from hell. This is his deliverance from prison, but what a picture.

He is in the prison. He is guarded by four quaternions of soldiers, that's 16 soldiers, and he's chained between two of them. There are other soldiers outside the gate.

There are two prison doors, and then there's the iron gate from the prison that leads out to the city, and the angel shows up, and he says, Peter, Peter, smites him on the side. Wake up, Peter. Put your sandals on.

Gird your cloak about you. Follow me. The chains fall off.

Angels don't need keys. Chains fall off. Peter wakes up.

There's a light in this dark prison. The guards are still asleep. The first door opens up.

The second door opens up, and then the third gate, the boss says, opens up his own accord. That is the term automaticus. We get our word automatic from it.

Now you know, if you go to the grocery store and the doors open automatically, you don't think a thing of it. In the 21st century, but in the first century, that didn't happen. Boy, powerful picture of all the things that God is able to overcome to deliver a soul.

This is the picture upon which Charles Wesley drew, or from which Charles Wesley drew in his hymn, And Can It Be? Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night, thine eye diffused a quickening ray. I awoke, the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off.

My heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed thee. What a picture of salvation.

It's possible somebody here still has not come to know Jesus. Jesus Christ is your Savior. You're bound up in sin.

You don't have any light to understand the word of God. It's all darkness to you, doesn't make sense. You are bound up in sin.

I want to tell you, prayer, simple dependence on Christ as Savior can set you free. If you call on Him, He will save you. Go to verse 11, and there's a fourth thing.

I call it persuaded serenity. To be serene is to be calm. Persuaded means confident.

Look at persuaded serenity, verse 11. When Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety. The Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

What's interesting, when the scripture says Peter came to himself, came to himself how? He's waking up. Well, yeah, people do that. You know, they say, where am I? What am I doing here? How did I get here?

What's amazing about that, folks, he's in prison on death row.

The next day, he's to be put to death, and he's dead asleep. You say, now, the scripture doesn't say he was snoring. I know, but he was a Galilean fisherman.

What do you think? I think he's snoring. I'm sure those guards are thinking, who put us on this duty? You know, old snoring, fishy-smelly Peter, and we've got to be stuck in this prison with him. Peter's dead asleep.

Why? Why? Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee, Isaiah 26.3. How can you have peace in the face of death? I mentioned earlier, you know, I told the college kids, we've been through some tragedies in our life. My home church, our pastor's wife, shot and killed their 24-year-old daughter, and then took her own life in the year 2000. How do you prepare for that? God was incredibly good to bring us through that tragedy, incredibly good to our pastor.

He would resign the church after that, but, you know, he went on and worked in a church ministry in Iowa, ended up meeting a widow there, and the two of them are married, and serving the Lord. That's tough on a church. Two years later, Angela and I are expecting our third child.

My wife is terribly sick. It's the first trimester, and she's very ill, and that's not unusual for her in her first trimester, but the trimester ends, and we go into the fourth month, and she's still not well. In fact, she's so ill, I'm having to fly to meetings by myself while my family stays in Pensacola with my parents.

Angela's parents travel full-time, so my mom's taking care of Angela. When you marry a person, you really do marry a family. So my parents are taking care of her, and my girls are being homeschooled by my mom and whatever as I'm flying.

That's a lonely life for me. I'm without my wife, and on Easter Sunday morning of 2003, I'm up in Ohio preaching in a church, and Angela and I talked that afternoon. She said, honey, I really feel worse than I have.

I said, honey, you know, I was just thinking, we've got to face the fact that we may lose this baby. She said, I know. And the people I was staying with had been through exactly the symptoms my wife was going through, and they said, we don't want to tell you this, but we lost that baby.

I said, I had a feeling that might happen. They said, does your wife have a doctor she can see? Well, if she goes to the emergency room, she's just going to wait for hours because there's really nothing immediately wrong. She doesn't just want to sit there.

She doesn't feel well enough. They said, let us contact our midwife. Maybe she can help your wife.

I said, all right. We contact their midwife on an Easter Sunday afternoon. She is kind enough to talk to me, and then she calls my wife, and she had told me, she said, Rich, this is not looking good, but I want to talk to your wife.

She talks to her, and while my wife's on the phone with the midwife, the water sack breaks. She says, Angela, you need to get to the hospital right away. I'll call your husband.

Her sister, who lives in town, takes my wife to the hospital. Midwife calls me back and says, Rich, I don't know how to tell you this other than just come tell you. Your wife's water broke.

I said, there's no chance a four-month-old baby will survive, a four-month-in-the-womb baby will survive, right? And she said, no, there's really not a chance. I said, okay, my wife is going through this, and I can't be there with her. I'm miles away, and this, we find out, ends up being our first boy, and I'd wanted a boy.

I love my girls. I just wanted some of each. Always wanted five kids, and this was our third, and God saw fit to take that boy.

And you know what? I'm not teary-eyed because God's choosing to take the boy. That's fine with me, but I'm thinking about my poor wife walking through that without me by her side. Sometimes the Lord will put you in a place where you don't have friends, you don't have family to hold your hand.

You only have God, and that's a good place to be. And God gave us grace abounding. Oh, the next day, I finally, I spent all night trying to find a flight.

I flew home the next morning, canceled the meetings, came home, and Angela cried, and I wept with her. But you know what? After that, we were fine. Why? Because God is able to give persuaded serenity.

Philippians 4, 6, be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication. With thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. You need to settle by faith the fact that God is good, for it will not be your feeling when the ferocity of the storm strikes.

But when you've persuaded, you've been persuaded in your heart that God is good, you can weather the toughest storms. Persuaded serenity. Finally, what I call profound surprise.

Profound surprise in verses 12 through 19. Notice what happens. And when he considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

Notice that. Many were gathered together praying. Sadly, the prayer meetings of our churches are the least well attended meetings.

Here many were gathered together praying. And Peter, as he knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken named Rhoda. Now it's interesting.

Prayer meetings at John Mark's mother's house. Apparently the church met at her house. John Mark.

You know about him. He wrote the book of Mark in the Bible. He was Barnabas's nephew.

John Mark. Isn't it interesting all the connectedness here? God uses common people, but he uses praying people. John Mark grew up in an atmosphere.

Prayer meetings were common at his house. Verse 13. No, 14.

When she knew Peter's voice, she opened up the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. They said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so.

Then they said, It is his angel. But he, I'm sorry, but Peter continued knocking, and when they'd opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Now, just a minute.

Peter's out there knocking. Now, he's out in broad daylight, and he has just broken prison. They're going to be on the hunt for him.

Finally, this young girl comes to the door. It would be like one of you girls going to the door and said, Who is it? Oh, it's Peter. Let me in.

Oh! It's Peter! It's Peter! She runs in. Now, look. We've got John the apostle.

We have perhaps Nathanael, Bartholomew, others are in here praying, and she busts in on this prayer meeting of just spiritual giants. She says, He's here! He's here! They say, Who's here? The authorities? No, Peter's here. Thou art mad.

What's that mean? The word is maniac. Girl, you're nuts. Can you imagine? It must have been Thomas in charge of the prayer meeting.

Can you imagine this? What are you talking about? He's here! And she says, I'm telling you he's here. And they said, Who's here? It is his angel. Now, what does that mean? Well, either his spirit, you know, he's dead and he's come to tell him don't pray, or perhaps his guardian angel.

The guardian angel says, Hey, guys, I'm out of a job. I just came by to tell you don't pray for Pete anymore. He's gone.

He's in good hands. All right? It is his angel. And then finally, they hear knocking, knocking, knocking, and they thought, well, angels wouldn't have to knock.

And they go to the door and, Oh, it's Peter! They were astonished. You know, I'm so glad God put that in the Bible. Because this is a prayer meeting of spiritual giants, and none of them expected this.

What are they praying for? They're praying for his release, and what happens, they said, Oh, my. Well, you know when Jesus said, According to your faith, be it unto you? Thankfully, that's not the only way to get prayers answered. Persistence in prayer can get the job done.

Just keep praying. They didn't get the answer because of their profound faith. In fact, for them, it was a profound surprise.

If you read on in verse 17, But he, beckoning to them with a hand to hold their peace, declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James and to the brethren. He departed and went to another place.

And as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him and found him not, he examined the keepers and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and there abode.

Why do you say put these men to death? Because he said, Where's the prisoner? We don't know. It's just like we woke up and he was gone. What do you mean he was gone? Remember something about this blinding light.

It was like we were in a coma or something. We couldn't do anything. And we heard the chains fall off and this door opened up, that door opened up, the other door.

It just happened. Herod says, That is impossible. That is ridiculous.

Off with their heads. Because the story was impossible. God's able to do the impossible.

There is power in prayer. I'm going to close by reading you some paragraphs from an article called Prayer Convoy on Interstate 70. How many of you remember the Beltway Sniper back in 2002, Washington, D.C.? Most of us do.

Deacon's wife in our church gave me this. Traffic on I-70 wasn't too bad. I should have been enjoying myself that day.

Last October, 2002, sitting up in the cab of my 18-wheeler cruising through the Pennsylvania hills. 36 years as a trucker and I still got a kick out of my rig. Bass Transportation had bought this 600-horsepower tractor in 2000.

I was the only one who drove it. And although I'd logged almost 400,000 miles, the cab was still so clean you could eat off the floor. If traffic held steady, I'd make my usual run right on schedule, hauling a tanker of Ohio to Delaware, then deadheading back to my home in Ludlow, Kentucky.

But I didn't make the run on time that day for the same reason I wasn't enjoying the trip. The Beltway Sniper. The words hammered in my head.

Eight dead and two wounded already. And it didn't look like there'd be an end to it. At any truck in the D.C. area, all the police were talking about, all we talked about, was the white van police were looking for.

Schools were closed, people too scared to leave their homes. It weighed on me this guy was out there getting ready to kill again. I knew what it was like to lose someone you love.

Five years earlier, my wife Ruth and I had lost our only son, Ron, to multiple sclerosis. It's a pretty October day just like this one when he died. I knew when I was going to the nursing home that day something was up because there was a lot of hollering going on down the hall.

What's going on? I asked. It's your son, Mr. Lance. I hurried to Ron's room.

There was our boy sitting on the edge of his bed, hands over his head, raised, praising the Lord. For more than a year he hadn't been able to sit up on his own. I'm leaving here, Ron said.

Someone's coming through that door tonight to take me home. Then he looked at me real hard. Dad, I don't want to be up in heaven waiting for you and you don't make it.

It wasn't the first time he'd brought up the subject. Ron was a real committed Christian. My parents had raised me in the faith too, but somehow I drifted away.

I want you to go over to my church right now. Find my pastor. Give your life to the Lord, said Ron.

Well, that's exactly what I did. Afterward, I went back to the nursing home and I told Ron, I'm glad I had the chance because somebody did come for my boy that night and took him home. My life turned around.

I got active in church. I headed the men's fellowship, led retreats, was on the Sunday school board. I never start a run without kneeling by my bed at the rear of the cabin asking God to watch over Ruth.

After the sniper shot his first victims, I'd been praying about that too, that someone would stop this killing spree. It had gone on for 12 days already. Around 7 p.m. when I was about an hour and a half out of Wilmington, Delaware, the usual report came on the radio.

Nothing new on the sniper. All they knew was that a white van might be involved. I got to thinking about what I'd learned at church, how a bunch of people praying together can be more powerful than a person praying alone.

What if I get on my CB and see if a few drivers want to pull off the road with me and pray about this? I pressed the button on the mic and said, if anyone wanted to pray about the sniper, he can meet me in a half hour at the eastbound 66-mile marker rest area. A trucker answered right away. Then another and another.

They'd be there. Before long, before I'd gone five miles, a line of trucks formed, some coming up from behind, others flowing up down ahead, all to join us. The line stretched for miles.

It was getting dark when we pulled into the rest area. There must have been 50 rigs there. We got out of our cabs, stood in a circle, holding hands, 60 or 70 of us, including some wives and children.

Let's pray, I said. Anyone who likes can start. Well, the first one to speak up was a 10-year-old kid standing just to my left.

The boy bowed his head. Our Father, who art in heaven. We went around the circle, some folks using their own words, others borrowing phrases from the Lord's Prayer.

It seemed to me there was special significance where it said, deliver us from evil. The last person finished. We had just prayed for 59 minutes.

All those truckers adding an hour to their busy schedules. Ten days later, October 23rd, I was making my Ohio to Delaware run again. There had been another killing, and the sniper was no nearer to being caught.

Right from the start, though, there was something different about my trip. In the first place, it was a Wednesday. I normally made my runs Tuesdays and Thursdays, but there was a delay at the loading dock, so I told my pastor I'd have to miss our normal Wednesday night prayer meeting.

We'll be praying for you, he said. The second thing that happened, I was stopped by the cops. Once was rare for me.

This trip I was pulled over three times. Not for very long, they were just checking papers, but it made me late getting into Wilmington. The next strange thing, instead of catching a few hours sleep, I headed back west as soon as my cargo was offloaded.

Around 11 p.m., that wasn't like me at all. I knew too many stories about truckers that didn't get enough sleep and crashing. It's like I had an appointment.

Like I couldn't even sleep if I tried. At midnight, a show came on the air, a music and call-in program a lot of truckers listen to. There was news in the sniper case.

The police, I'm sorry, there were two snipers, not one, and police now believe the guys were driving a 1990 blue Chevrolet Caprice with New Jersey license plate number NDA21Z, not the white van police had all been looking for. I wrote down the tag number. Just before 1 a.m., I reached the rest stop near Myersville, Maryland, only a few miles from where so many of us had gathered in a circle and prayed.

Westbound on I-70, it's the only rest area between Baltimore and Breezewood. I wasn't going to pass that by. Here was the last weird thing.

The truck aisles were full. I'd never seen so many rigs at one rest stop. Drivers all asleep.

Only thing I could do was swing around to the car section. Well, I wouldn't be long. Climbing down from my cab, I noticed a car in the no-parking zone.

The light over the men's room door was shining right on it, a blue Chevrolet Caprice. There must be hundreds of Caprices out there. I looked closer.

Two men, one slumped over the steering wheel asleep. Beyond the men's room was a row of bushes. I crept behind them and squinted to make out the license number.

Jersey plates NDA21Z. Quiet as I could, I climbed back in my rig. Better not use a CB in case those guys have one.

I pushed 911 on my cell phone. I'm at the Myersville rest stop. There's a blue Chevy Caprice here.

Jersey license NDA21Z. The operator asked me to hold. In a minute, she came back with instructions.

Wait there. Don't let them see you. Block the exit with your truck if you can.

If an 18-wheeler can tiptoe, that's what mine did. I blocked as much of the exit as I could, but there was still room for a car to get by. Five minutes passed.

Only one driver was ready to roll. As soon as I told him what was happening, he pulled his rig alongside mine, sealing off the exit. I sat in the cab, looking out the side mirrors at the blue Caprice, expecting a shootout, thinking I ought to be scared and wondering why I wasn't.

Five more minutes passed. I was afraid another trucker would drive up and honk for us to move it, waking the suspects, but no one stirred. The cops slid up so quietly, I didn't know they were there until suddenly it was like the 4th of July with flash grenades lighting up the night to stun the two men.

FBI agents, state troopers, officers from the sheriff's department swarmed the rest stop, searchlights, breaking glass, shouts, the thump of helicopters, SWAT teams in night-vision goggles running low, crouching, guns drawn. Next thing I knew, the two men were being led away. The police took down names and addresses of everyone who'd been at the rest area.

It was two and a half hours before we were free to go. Since I'd been blocking the exit, I was the first one out. Five miles down the road, I started shaking so badly, I could barely hold the wheel.

Then I got thinking about all the unusual things that had to happen for me to be at that place at that time and about my friends at church praying for me that same evening. And I couldn't help think about Ron, my son, who had led me to that church. I looked in my rearview mirror and saw a line of trucks forming behind

me and remembered 10 days earlier leading a similar line of semis.

I remembered the circle of truckers and their families holding hands, voices joined together to pray, deliver us from evil. But you didn't hear that in the news. The man's name is Ron Lance, and he's the man that found the Beltway snipers.

And he found them in the answer to prayer. Prayer changes things, even world events. You know, right now, we ought to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

God tells us to do that. Right now, we ought to pray for revival in our country. Right now, we ought to pray for our family members to come to Christ.

How's your prayer life? Every great move of God begins with prayer. Let's stand together.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14158.mp3>

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