

Aggressive Toward God

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of being aggressive in seeking God's presence and provision through persistent prayer and faith.

Scripture: Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:5, John 12:24, John 14:12, John 15:7, John 16:23

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Richard E. Bieber emphasizes the importance of believers imparting the reality of God to those in need, highlighting that the true test is not in the appearance or sophistication of churches but in the ability to touch others with God's presence, forgiveness, healing, and life. He challenges listeners to consider how they respond to people with needs, sins, bondage, and pain, urging them to seek God's presence for the strength to help others effectively. Bieber stresses the need for believers to be aggressive in prayer, persistently seeking God's provision and intervention, even when faced with apparent refusals or closed doors.

Transcript

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the work that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son;....." John 14:12-13

Outside of town there was this place called Hospital Hill where there were two hospitals within a hundred yards of each other. In appearance there was no comparison. The first hospital was up to date in every respect...gleaming modern buildings, manicured lawns, staff physicians, residents, interns, nurses, technicians who were superbly trained. Hospital number two looked more like a railroad station from the 1880's and the staff gave the impression of being clumsy and unprofessional.....they never seemed in a hurry. Travelers who needed emergency service always chose the first hospital. But people who lived in that town chose the second. ...because the townspeople knew that while the first hospital had the best in equipment and training the mortality rate was ten times higher than in the old hospital with its unprofessional staff.

Moreover, people who went to the old hospital with its clumsy doctors recovered quickly and stayed recovered. Who cares what they look like! Hospitals are for healing!

So the test of people who claim to be followers of Jesus is not how slick their churches are, or how much scripture they can quote, or how skillfully they can grasp the intricacies of systematic theology, but whether or not these people can impart the reality of God to those who seek.

What happens to the people who come to us with,

- their needs,
- their sins,
- their bondage,
- their pain...

Do we send them on their way touched with the touch of God, or do we dismiss them sick, or sicker, than they were before?

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

Fruit in this case is bringing people into the reality of God as it is in John 12 where Jesus says,

"...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."
John 12:24

And wherever it's a matter of bringing people into the reality of God, touching them with,

- the touch of God,
- the forgiveness of God,
- the healing of God,
- the life of God,

the one thing needful is that we have access to God's presence ourselves.

It's possible to know all about the fact that Jesus opened the door into the presence of the Father by His shed blood ... that the way is now open and anyone who will can come ... and yet, when we try to pray, we find ourselves standing outside an iron door that simply will not open.

Jesus often talked about closed doors.

The door that closed on the foolish virgins and never opened again.

The narrow door that closed on the very people who ate and drank in His presence and never opened again.

But there is one closed door that Jesus insisted will open. And this is the door we're dealing with.

If we are ever going to bring any healing and help to these people who come to us, we are going to have to get this door to open.

The one who stands on the other side of this door is our Friend. the truest friend we shall ever have. But He doesn't open the door because He is our friend. Even though He is our friend. He opens that door only when we start getting aggressive.

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:5-13

Here is a situation which fits us to a tee. On the one hand is our inadequacy. People are coming to us and we sit them at our table and stall for time while we open our empty cupboards and rattle our empty dishes. Maybe we can entertain our guests or show them pictures of food as beautiful as the menu at our favorite restaurant....but we have nothing to feed them.

Then there is our nearby friend who has plenty of bread, but his door is closed. The closed door means we have no sense of the presence of God -- no vital consciousness of His nearness or of what He is ready and willing to do. In fact, when we start out praying to God for bread for our hungry visitor we seem to get four very discouraging answers.

A. "Don't bother me!"

How many Bible believing, Bible quoting, doctrinally sound Christians in their actual living seem to be hearing only one word from God, "Don't bother me!" No wonder they're chicken-hearted when it comes to prayer. As soon as they begin with their polite little petitions back comes the thundering roar, "Don't bother me!"

"But Lord, I thought you were a good God? I thought you sent Jesus to die for our sins? And now when I come to you begging bread, not even for myself but for somebody else, you say, 'Don't bother me!' Why?"

B. "Because the door is now shut."

"You could have asked me for bread all day long. Where were you when it was being baked?"

Isn't that the way?

"For Peter the door was open.

For Paul the door was open.

For Mary the door was open. But for me....shut!"

"Back in Bible days it was open.

In the days of Luther and Wesley....open.

In the 19th century revivals.....open.

In the latter rain movement.....open.

But for me...shut!

God is on the inside and I am on the outside!"

C. Then comes a word which is even more discouraging. The Father seems to be saying, "My children are with me in bed."

"My children are in here, safe and warm, and you're not one of them. It's not right to take the children's bread...."

When Elijah prayed things happened because he was one of the children --- now he's in there beyond the door. What glory fell when the believers in Acts 4 lifted up their voices to God in prayer. The building shook and they were filled with the Spirit because they were His children --- now they're in there beyond the door. But I'm out here on the wrong side of the door.

D. Then comes the final word, "I cannot get up and give you anything."

Oh how loud and clear this seems to come roaring back to us when we try to pray. "I cannot get up and give anything."

"Don't bother me. The door is now shut. My children are with me in bed. I can't do it."

But are all these discouraging things we are hearing and all the discouraging things that seem to be happening, (the more I pray, the worse things get), truly from God's heart? Is this really what God feels toward us? What about the time Jesus said to the Canaanite woman,

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel....It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs...."

- Was that His heart?

- How will we know what God's heart really is?

We'll never find God's heart until we get aggressive. And yet how many, many times we piously respond to all these apparent refusals with, "thy will be done," and walk away with nothing for the hungry one sitting at our table.

"Sorry friend, I tried. But it must not be God's will..."

Isn't this amazing? When it comes to our life among men,

- we know how to be aggressive,

- we know how to holler when our check doesn't come on time,

- we know how to make waves when the power company overcharges us.

And, we know how to push our way around in the church, how to manipulate people, how to threaten and cajole in our own sweet Christian way when we want something from man. But when God seems to be saying, "Don't bother me. The door is now shut," we shrug our shoulders, shed a tear or two and say, "Thy will be done," and expect nothing.

The only time Jesus said, "Not my will but thine be done," was when the cup of agony was coming toward Him and the Father was saying, "Drink." Every other time, "thy will be done" meant, "Open the door, Father, and give me the necessary bread."

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...." is a prayer for miracles surely.

When Jesus stood outside the grave of Lazarus and prayed, it was not, "Father, I'd like to raise Lazarus from the dead, but nevertheless, not mine but thy will be done." No! Jesus prayed,

"Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. Lazarus, come forth!"

And so when these people come to us in their need and we have nothing for them and we ask the Father for bread and He says, "Don't bother me. The door is now shut," Jesus commands us to be aggressive....to keep at it.

Stop wasting your strength being aggressive with men and start being aggressive with God. God is your friend, but He will not open the door and give you bread because He is your friend. He will only open the door and give you the bread when you have pestered your way through your own unbelief and hardness of heart to God's mercy. Who but God knows why it is this way - but it is. This door remains closed to the passive and opens to the aggressive.

It's not a matter of works righteousness but of purity of heart. How badly do you want this bread? How desperate are you for that door to open?

- You've got to ask your way through the, "Don't bother me!"

- You've got to seek your way through, "The door is now shut. My children are with me in bed."

- You've got to knock your way through the "I can't get up and give you anything."

Then the door will open and you will see the glory of the heavenly Father in the face of Jesus Christ, and in His hands will be so much bread you won't believe it. You will pile fresh bread on the table before your happy visitor and you will verily fill that woman or that man with the life of God.

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

Matthew 7:11

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it." John 14:12-13

"If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples....You did not choose me,

but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name; he may give it to you." John 15:7-8, 16

"Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." John 16:23b-24

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