



Prayer Availeth Much

Dr. Tony Marshall Anderson

The Intercessory Prayers of Christians

"... Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me..."—[Luke 11:5, 6](#).

There is evidently a ministry of prayer even as there is a ministry of preaching. The teachings of Jesus contained in the parable show us that praying and preaching are integral parts of the plan of salvation.

Preaching is God's way of speaking to man, and praying is man's way of speaking to God. Preaching is God's way of appealing to the will of man, and praying is man's way of appealing to the will of God. Our Lord's teachings relating to intercessory prayer are clearly revealed in the Epistles. John's Epistles reveal the amazing power made available to God's people through intercessory prayer.

Peter assures us that the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. James said, "... The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up..." The inspired writings of Paul disclose the

astounding possibilities in the ministry of intercessory prayer. In one of Paul's Epistles the ministry of prayer is connected so closely with the ministry of preaching that it is difficult to tell where the prayer ends and the preaching begins. ([Colossians 1:9-17.](#))

Note the boundless possibilities revealed in the prayers of a faithful minister of Christ. "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."—[Colossians 4:12.](#)

It is obvious that the fervent prayers of a servant of Christ can enable the believers to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Perhaps it is difficult for us to understand how our praying for the children of God can establish them in the faith; nevertheless it is true according to this Scripture. We are convinced that our fervent prayers can obtain power from the throne of grace to preserve some struggling saint in an hour of severe trial.

The man said, "... A friend of mine in his journey is come to me..." Our Lord focused attention on the responsibility to pray for others when He uttered the stirring words in this parable. It obviously was not the man's own personal need that compelled him to request the three loaves; it was the imperative need of the tired traveler that moved him to ask for bread at midnight. No man can be a faithful follower of Christ and not recognize his responsibility to pray for others. The spiritual life received from Christ motivates a Christian to present the needs of others at the throne of grace, where mercy is obtained, and the promised grace is found to help others in a time of urgent need.

Our personal responsibility to intercede for others is made more apparent when we emphasize the words, "... Is come to me..." What strange combination of circumstances caused the man to seek help from his friend?

Perhaps he had taken the wrong road in the confusing darkness of the night. We are aware that the parable does teach the disturbing truth that men are lost in the darkness of sin, and that it is our duty to lead them to Christ. But the pitiful plight of the pilgrim is not the only startling truth contained in our Lord's teachings. The statement, "... A friend of mine in his journey...", persuades one to think that the traveler knew before he started on his journey that he could

find rest and comfort in the home of his friend. It was his faith in his friend's reputation for hospitality that encouraged him to continue on his journey through the enveloping darkness of the night.

The parable reveals that men will come to us when they are convinced of our ability to obtain help for them through intercessory prayer. The news that a certain man can prevail with God in prayer will soon reach a multitude of hopeless and helpless people. Some distressed soul will soon be knocking at the man's door seeking help and comfort.

It was the good news that Christ was giving help and comfort to all men that caused the multitudes to seek Him day and night. The disciples had boldness in their preaching and a power in their praying that drew broken and burdened humanity to seek the Savior.

Paul expressed his thanks to God for the church when he said, "... From you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything."—[1 Thessalonians 1:8](#).

Lost men do not seek Christ by mere chance; He draws them unto Himself through the convicting and convincing power of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit performs His office work in the world through Christ's witnesses. Jesus said, "... The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."—[John 15:26, 27](#).

It is obvious that the Spirit enables the Christians to attract lost men by faithfully witnessing the Savior. Our Lord has not commissioned all of His people to preach, but He called all of them to pray.

The great revivals born in the hours of agonizing prayer attracted the attention of the civilized world. People came for the express purpose of obtaining spiritual help through the preaching and praying of God's servants. The great revival that began at Asbury College in 1950 was born in seasons of importunate praying. Some of the students prayed all night for a great spiritual awakening. Many of the teachers prayed earnestly for a gracious visitation of God. My own soul was

in great agony of prayer. The burden was so great that I confessed the sins of the world to God. In some peculiar manner I had been made aware of the condemnation that rested on the souls of lost men.

During the Chapel service I exhorted the students to seek the Lord. I realized that it was God's appointed hour to answer prayer. At that moment the Holy Ghost moved mightily on the entire student body. Wave after wave of deep conviction swept over the audience. Many were moved to seek the Lord with diligence. It was an hour of triumph for the faithful few who had tarried through long seasons of intercessory prayer before the Lord during the quiet hours of the morning.

The news of this marvelous visitation of God spread all over the nation. It was broadcast by radio to several foreign countries. People came hundreds of miles to receive spiritual help. Perhaps more than five thousand people were directly influence by this glorious spiritual awakening born in the hours of intercessory prayer.

I am thoroughly convinced that a great spiritual awakening will come to this benighted world if the people of God will deny themselves of sleep and seek God in the peaceful hours of the morning. It is my firm conviction that the great Asbury revival set the pattern to be followed in order to have a great revival in this day and age of the world.

God will hear His people when they see the importance of praying for others. Our Lord revealed this fact when He said, "Because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needed." The man's plea for bread was so insistent that he did not heed the protest of his sleepy friend. The need of the traveler who had come to him out of the night was more important than the rest needed by his friend's entire family.

Is it possible that we are too indolent and indifferent to pray? Is there no passion for souls? Is there no sincere concern for the lost? Can it be that we are too sleepy to watch with Christ in the Gethsemane of prevailing prayer? Are our physical comforts more important than our praying for others?

Perhaps our Lord will draw some weary wayfarers to our door asking for help through our intercessory prayers. If He is pleased to trust us with such a responsibility, let us not fail to feed the famishing soul. The man made an amazing confession when he said to his friend, "... I have nothing to set before him." It is evident that Jesus is not calling attention to the man's embarrassing poverty. He is showing us that our sufficiency is not of ourselves. Paul stated this fact when he said. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."—[2 Corinthians 3:5](#).

We are woefully wanting in natural ability to help others spiritually; we have nothing to set before them. Unless we avail ourselves of the abundant resources of Christ through prayer, we will never have anything of spiritual worth to set before a starving world.

It is not difficult to imagine that the man had an easy chair and a comfortable bed to offer the tired traveler. But furniture is not a substitute for food. The welcome at the door, the furnishing of the house, and the entertaining conversation, cannot satisfy the hunger of the human heart. It requires the bread of life obtained from God to save a famishing soul from death.

Jesus encouraged us to avail ourselves of His resources when He said, "... He will rise and give him as many as he needeth." We have nothing of ourselves to save a lost soul, but we have a faithful Friend, who will give us as much as we request in intercessory prayer.

Jesus would have us understand that our importunate praying can overcome our discouragements and difficulties. He disclosed this fact when He said, "... He from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." He is not saying that our heavenly Father is unwilling to grant our requests for others. The Master is teaching us not to cease praying when we encounter some opposing forces in life.

There are times when it seems that our earnest requests have been denied. Let us keep in mind that our heavenly Father is willing to give the bread of life in answer to our intercessory petitions for others.

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