

The High Calling

a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society

Prayer: Reversed Thunder

By Stan Key

The opening of the seventh seal in Revelation 8 paints an unforgettable picture of the power of prayer. The saints on earth are a tiny minority of persecuted believers. The dragon has unleashed against them the full array of his demonic powers. With neither military, economic, nor political strength, God's people seem powerless to defend themselves. All they can do is pray. For thirty minutes, there is complete silence in heaven. God is listening to the prayers of his people. The petitions rise silently, like the smoke of incense, to the very throne of God.

...and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God... Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of



thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake (Rev. 8:4–5).

The imagery is powerful. Prayers ascending silently like smoke; then, God's judgment descending noisily, like thunder. Perhaps George Herbert was thinking of this passage when he described prayer as "reversed thunder."

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Dangerous Prayers

By David A. Gallimore



A product of the evangelical camp meeting environment of the 20th century, David is a uniquely gifted communicator who is able to bridge the gap between the revival days of old and the modern day multi-sensory worship era. As a pastor/evangelist, David has held hundreds of evangelistic meetings in America, as well as conducting missionary outreach in Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and the Islands of the Caribbean.

Several years ago, I was on a personal journey for more of God. I was hungry for a fresh Word. While reading Psalm 139:23–24 one day, I discovered what I call "5 Dangerous Prayers" that literally have revolutionized my relationship with Jesus Christ. I have prayed these prayers every day for the last 20 years, and it has been an incredible ride. However, let me warn you: these prayers are dangerous! They will mess you up—in the best of ways. At the end of the day, these prayers will produce a fully sanctified and surrendered life.

DANGEROUS PRAYER #1: Search Me

Picture yourself going to the doctor and getting on the examination table. You put yourself in a vulnerable position where the doctor can perform the examination. You give up control, privacy, etc. It actually can be an

uncomfortable experience. Would you be willing to get on God's examination table and say, "I give you permission to search every area of my heart, mind and soul"?

DANGEROUS PRAYER #2: Break Me

I must confess when I first prayed these prayers, my attitude was cavalier at best: "Go ahead, God. Search me. I think I'm doing pretty good. I've grown up in the Holiness Movement. I know how to do church the *right* way!" I had no idea what I was in store for! I started praying these prayers, and God started breaking me of what I will call—for lack of a better term—"spiritual pride." I began to realize new growth comes when old habits and attitudes are broken. To put it even stronger, there is room for repentance even in the saved and sanctified life.

DANGEROUS PRAYER #3: Stretch Me

When I first began praying these prayers, God led me out of a very comfortable pastorate into a cutting-edge, multi-cultural church that forever changed my perspective of ministry. Hymn books were replaced by Hillsong, suits and ties were now shorts and tee shirts, and

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Hindrances to Prayer

By R. A. Torrey (1856–1928)



Abridged and slightly edited from the chapter, “Hindrances to Prayer,” in *How to Pray* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.).

There are several things that hinder prayer. These God has made very plain in his Word.

The *first* hindrance to prayer we find in James 4:3, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.” A *selfish purpose* in prayer robs prayer of power. If we ask any petition merely that we may receive something to use in our pleasure or in our own gratification in one way or another, we “ask wrongly” and need not expect to receive what we ask. This explains why many prayers remain unanswered.

The *second* hindrance to prayer we find in Isaiah 59:1–2, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.” *Sin* hinders prayer. It may be some sin in the past that is unconfessed, it may be some sin in the present that is cherished, very likely it is not even looked upon as sin; but there the sin is, hidden away somewhere in the heart or in the life and God does not hear. “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened” (Psalm 66:18).

The *third* hindrance to prayer is found in Ezekiel 14:3, “Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them?” *Idols in the heart* cause God to refuse to listen to our prayers. What is an idol? An idol is anything that takes the place of God, anything that is the supreme object of our affection.

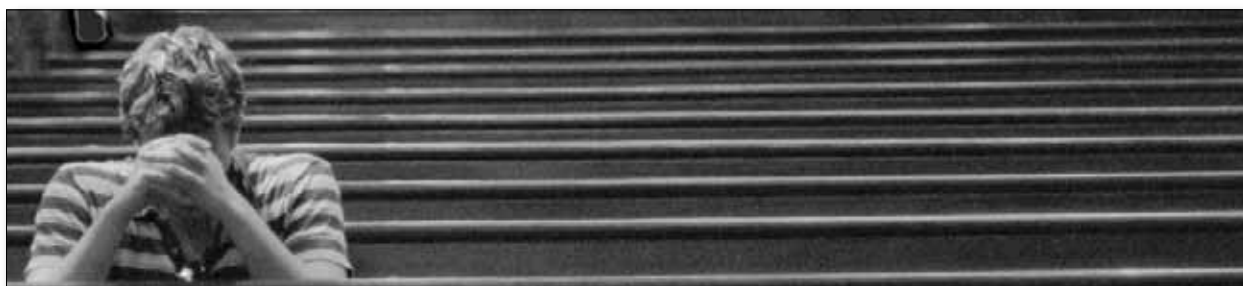
The *fourth* hindrance to prayer is found in Proverbs 21:13, “Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.” There is perhaps no greater hindrance to prayer

than *stinginess*, the lack of liberality toward the poor and toward God’s work. The generous man is the mighty man of prayer.

The *fifth* hindrance to prayer is found in Mark 11:25, “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” An *unforgiving spirit* is one of the commonest hindrances to prayer. Anyone who is nursing a grudge against another has fast closed the ear of God against his own petition.

The *sixth* hindrance to prayer is found in I Peter 3:7, “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” Here it is plainly told that a *wrong relation between husband and wife* is a hindrance to prayer. There is much of sin covered up under the holy name of marriage that is a cause of spiritual deadness and of powerlessness in prayer.

The *seventh* hindrance to prayer is found in James 1:5–7, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.” Prayers are hindered by *unbelief*. To question God’s Word is to make him a liar. Many of us do that when we plead his promises, and is it any wonder that our prayers are not answered? ✦



“It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they are; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be; nor the logic of our prayers, how argumentative they may be—which God cares for. Fervency of spirit is that which availeth much.” —William Law

“The prayer continued.” © Licensed for reuse under Creative Commons 2.0.

Though many regard prayer as a pious discipline to help strengthen our spiritual lives so that we can find grace to submit to the adversities of life, it is so much more than that. Blaise Pascal expressed the matter succinctly when he said, “God instituted prayer to communicate to creatures the dignity of causality.”

We have no indication in the Gospels that the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them to preach, to heal, or to cast out demons. But the record clearly shows that one day they stopped everything they were doing and said, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Living with Jesus had taught them that it was his life of prayer that explained the secret to who he was and what he did. His identity and mission hinged on his daily conversations with his Father in heaven. The disciples understood that failure to master prayer in their own lives would be a sure-fire way to guarantee failure in ministry—and in life.

But how does one go about mastering something in which the main point is to be mastered? How does one become proficient in talking with the Creator of the universe? And why pray if God is sovereign and knows in advance all that is going to happen? Samuel Chadwick sums up the mystery of prayer when he says:

Prayer is full of apparent contradictions. It is so simple that a child can pray, and it is so profound that the wisest cannot explain its mystery. It is so easy that those who have no strength can pray, and it is so strenuous that it taxes every resource of

energy, intelligence, and power. It is so natural that it need not be taught, and it is so far beyond nature that it cannot be learned in the school of this world’s wisdom. (The Path of Prayer. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931. p. 53)

Serving as managing editor for this edition of *The High Calling* has given me the privilege of thinking deeply, once again, about prayer. What a privilege it has been to collect these wonderful articles on prayer. The emphasis here is neither on techniques and methods nor is prayer treated as a means of personal enrichment and spiritual formation. Rather, our focus is primarily on intercessory prayer: changing the world by talking with God.

Jesus helps us to understand that talking to God in prayer is a little like children coming to their parents to ask them for something. Often, such conversations contain the zaniest requests motivated by the most selfish agendas! Though parents may be disappointed at the egocentric orientation in such requests, they would be even more grieved if the children didn’t come at all. “The only way we move beyond ‘self-centered prayer’ (if indeed we ever do) is by going through it, not by making a detour around it” (Richard Foster. *Prayer*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992. p. 11). The purpose of this issue of *The High Calling* will be attained if it motivates you (and me) to pray—mixed motives and all. As Charles Spurgeon said, “Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom” (*Praying Successfully*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997. p. 38). ✦

What Killed the Old Prayer Meetings?

By W. E. Sangster (1900–1960)



Taken from *The Pattern of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1962), 27–29.

If it is true that the spiritual power of a church depends on the quality of its prayer life, then it is important to know what went wrong. What killed the old prayer meetings? I can give a short, sharp answer to that question, for I am just old enough to remember the old prayer meetings and to have witnessed their passing. The old prayer meetings were killed by the old prayers and by the folk who prayed them.

The prayers had become stale repetitions of what had been said for years, sometimes in exactly the same words. Often they were phrased in obscure biblical language. Often they were utterances from which passion and living experience had long departed. Sometimes they were

clothed with a show of passion that sounded singularly insincere. They became boring. Reality disappeared and the meetings dwindled, leaving the same old faithful few to pray their same old prayers. Perhaps consciously but often deliberately, they made everybody else feel that by failing to attend, they were lukewarm, second-rate Christians. Those who stayed were sometimes (not always, thank God) the most bigoted and censorious of all the members. They never dreamed that many observers said, “If being a Christian means being like them, I want little to do with it.” They killed the old prayer meetings all right!

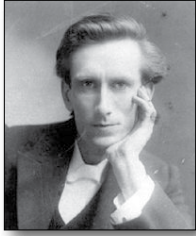


https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prayer_Meeting,_First_Stone.jpg

The essential element about a true and vital prayer meeting is that it should spring spontaneously out of an urgent situation. It should minister to keenly felt needs. The moment it becomes formal, either drop it or revitalize it; otherwise it will rapidly go sour. Do not let it linger on, or it will do more harm than good. ✦

Why Pray?

By Oswald Chambers (1874–1917)



Abridged and slightly edited from the chapter, “What’s the Good of Prayer?,” in *If You Will Ask: Reflections on the Power of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1937).

If we look on prayer as a means of developing ourselves, there is nothing in it at all, and we do not find that idea in the Bible. Prayer is other than meditation; it develops the life of God in us. When a man is born from above, the life of the Son of God begins in him, and he can either starve that life or nourish it. Prayer nourishes the life of God.

We generally look upon prayer as a means of getting things for ourselves, but the biblical idea of prayer is that God’s holiness, purpose, and wise order may be brought about. Our ordinary views of prayer are not found in the New Testament.

“Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask him” (Matt. 6:8). Then why ask? Very evidently our ideas about prayer and Jesus Christ’s are not the same. Prayer to him is not a way to get things from God, but so that we may get to know God. Prayer is not to be used as the privilege of a spoiled child seeking ideal conditions to indulge his spiritual propensities. The purpose of prayer is to reveal the presence of God, equally present at all times and in every condition.

A man may say, “Well, if the Almighty has decreed things, why need I pray? If he has made up his mind, what is the use of my thinking I can alter his mind by prayer?” We must remember that there is a difference between God’s order and God’s permissive will. God’s order reveals his character; his permissive will applies to what he permits. For instance, it is God’s order that there should be no sin, no suffering, no sickness, no limitation, and no death; his permissive will is all these things.

I question whether the people who continually ask for prayer meetings know the first element of prayer. It is often an abortion of religious hysterics, a disease of the

nerves taking a spiritual twist. Jesus did not promise to be at every prayer meeting, but only at those “where two or three are gathered together in my name,” meaning, in his nature (Matt. 18:20). Jesus Christ does not pay attention to the gift of “religious gab.” It is never our earnestness that brings us into touch with God. Rather, it is our Lord Jesus Christ’s vitalizing death (see Heb. 10:19).

In his teaching about prayer our Lord never once referred to unanswered prayer. He said God always answers prayer. If our prayers are in the name of Jesus or in accord with his nature, the answers will not be in accord with our nature but with his. We are apt to forget this and to say without thinking that God does not always answer prayer. He does every time, and when we are in close communion with him we realize that we have not been misled.

It is not so true that “prayer changes things” as that prayer changes us, and then we change things. Consequently, we must not ask God to do what he has created us to do. Jesus Christ is not a social reformer. He came to alter us first and if there is any social reform to be done on earth, we must do it. God has so constituted things that prayer on the basis of redemption alters the way we look at things. Prayer is not altering things externally, but working wonders within our disposition. When we pray,

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The High Calling

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Wrestling with God

By P. T. Forsyth (1848–1921)



Abridged and slightly edited from the chapter, “The Insistency of Prayer” in *The Soul of Prayer* (London: Independent Press, 1916).

Prayer should be strenuously importunate, for prayer is not only meditation or communion. It is not merely submissive in tone, as the “quietist” ideal is. We need not begin with “Thy will be done” if we but end with it. Prayer is not really a power till it is importunate. And it cannot be importunate unless it is felt to have a real effect on the will of God. By importunity I’m not talking about passionate dictation and stormy pertinacity—imposing our egoist will on God, and treating him as a mysterious but manageable power that we may coerce and exploit.

One of the greatest obstacles to the deepening of the spiritual life is when prayer is conceived merely, or chiefly, as *submission*, resignation, quietism. We say too soon, “Thy will be done;” and too ready acceptance of a situation as his will often means feebleness or sloth. It may be his will that we surmount his will. It may be his higher will that we resist his lower. Prayer with us has largely ceased to be *wrestling*. But is that not the dominant scriptural idea?

Prayer may really change the will of God, or, if not his will, his intention. If this is not believed, the earnestness goes out of prayer. It becomes either a ritual, or a soliloquy only overheard by God, where we are more passive than active. Prayer is not merely the laying of the head on a divine bosom in trust and surrender. That may have its place, but it is not the nerve and soul of prayer. Prayer is an encounter of *wills*—till one will or the other gives way.

If we are guided by the Bible we have much ground for this view of prayer. Does not Christ set more value upon importunity than on submission? “Knock, and it shall be opened.” I would refer also not only to the parable of the unjust judge, but to the incident of the Canaanite woman, where her wit, faith, and importunity together did actually change our Lord’s intention. We have Jacob wrestling. We have Abraham pleading, yea, haggling, with God for Sodom. We have Moses interceding for Israel and asking God to blot his name out of the Book of Life, if that were needful to save Israel. And we have Christ’s own struggle with the Father in Gethsemane.

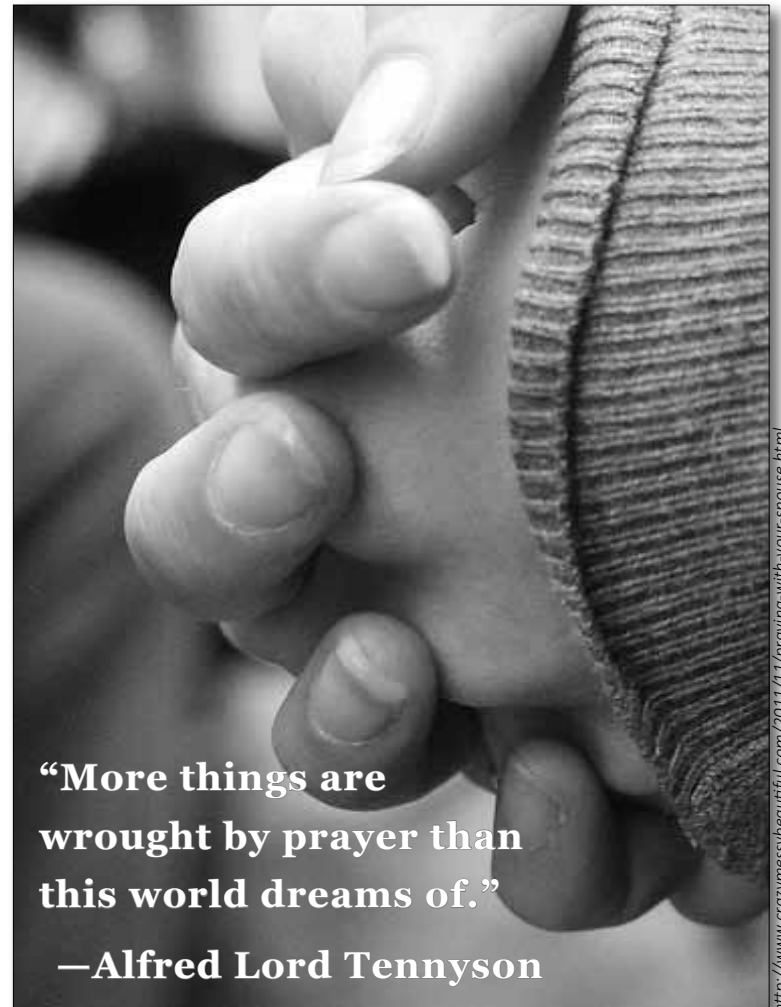
Prayer is wrestling with God. And it is better to fall thus into the hands of God than of man—even than your own. It is a resistance that God loves. In love there is a kind of resistance that enhances it. The resistance of love is a quite different thing from the resistance of hostility. The

yielding to one you love is very different from capitulating to an enemy.

So when God yields to prayer in the name of Christ, to the prayer of faith and love, he yields to himself who inspired it. Christian prayer is the Spirit praying in us. It is God pleading with God. And when God yields it is not to an outside influence he yields, but to himself. Let me make it still more plain. When we resist the will of God we may be resisting what God wills to be temporary and to be resisted, what he wills to be intermediary and transcended. We resist because God wills we should. So the prayer that resists his dealing may be part of his will and its fulfillment. To struggle with him is one way of doing his will. To resist is one way of saying, “Thy will be done.”

Let us beware of a pietistic fatalism that thins the spiritual life, saps the vigor of character, makes humility mere acquiescence, and piety only feminine, by banishing the will from prayer. The popularity of much acquiescence is not because it is holier, but because it is easier. And so we fall into the ecclesiastical type of religion, drawn from an age whose first virtue was submission to outward superiors. We shall come to canonize decorum and

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“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

Jesus, Wake Up!

By Stan Key



As this edition of *The High Calling* was being prepared for press, Katy Key, Stan's wife, suffered a major stroke caused by a blood clot after lung surgery. As she fought for life in the neuro intensive care unit at St. Joseph Hospital in Lexington, KY, Stan wrote this article as a means to help him with his own struggle to understand the mystery of prayer.

A children's Sunday School chorus came to mind this week as I sat beside Katy's bed in the neuro ICU:

*With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm,
Smile at the storm, smile at the storm,
With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm
As we go sailing home.*

Actually, the neuro ICU is a very good place to meditate on the meaning of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35–41). The gentle beeps and quiet hums of medical technology may create the impression that this is a place of peace and tranquility. Don't be fooled! No one lands in these beds unless a massive tempest has hit his life and is threatening to drown everyone who happens to be in the boat.

You remember the story. Jesus is in the boat with his disciples on the Sea of Galilee when a terrible storm suddenly descends upon them. No one expected this! Realizing that the boat is sinking and that they are about to drown, the disciples panic: "Master, do something!" The good news is that Jesus is right there in the boat with them. The bad news is that he is fast asleep! I'm not sure whether they shouted in his ears, pulled on his robe, or kicked the pillow out from under his head, but they finally got the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to wake up. Wiping the sleep from his eyes, the Lord of Creation calmly stood up, assessed the situation, and then simply said to the wind and waves, "Oh, shut up!" Immediately, a profound silence settled over the lake, broken only by the water dripping from the sails and the breathless panting of the disciples. The sea became as smooth as glass, like a

mirror. "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" the disciples asked one another.

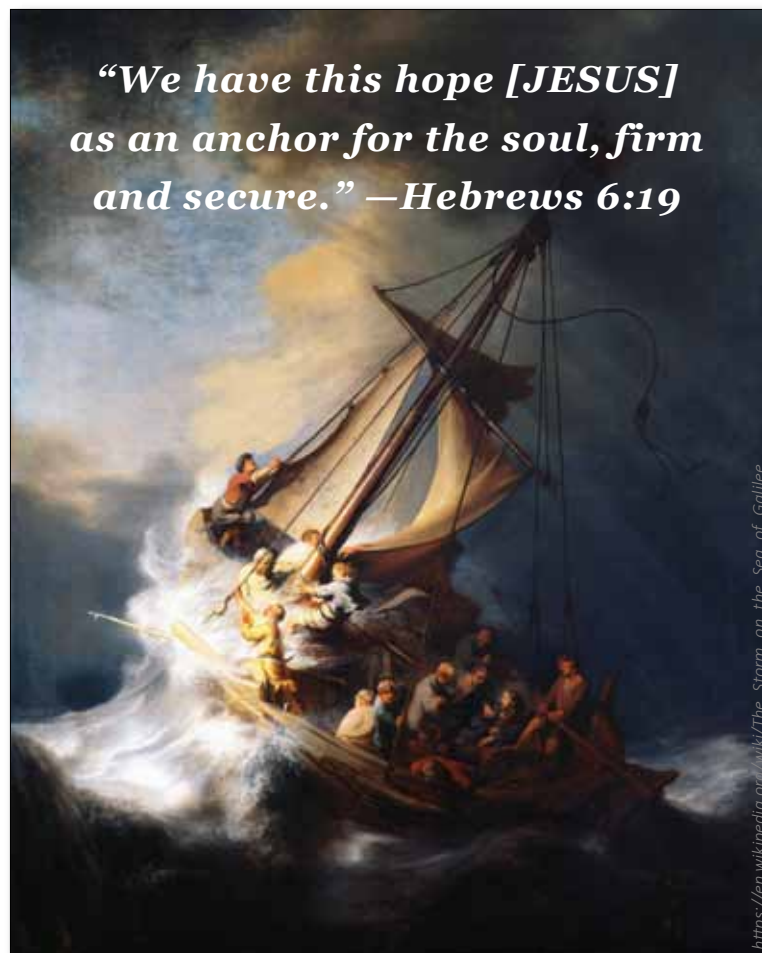
Sitting in the ICU next to my bandaged, sedated wife, watching in silent agony as she struggles to speak, to breathe, and to open her eyes, I easily identify with Peter and his friends in the boat. *Lord, where did this storm come from? I thought if we followed you, we would be protected from things like this. Didn't you promise us peace and blessing? Don't get me wrong, I'm so thankful you're in our boat, and it comforts me to realize that you are experiencing this storm, too! But how can you sleep in a time like this, curled up in the stern with a pillow under your head?! I'm thankful that this crisis poses no problem for you. The peace etched on your sleeping face*

reassures us that all will be well. But Master, don't you care about US? YOU may be OK with this storm, but we're not! Don't you care that the boat is sinking, and we are about to drown? Jesus, wake up!

This storm experience with Katy has given me a new definition for prayer. Prayer is waking up Jesus. It's good to have him in the boat riding out the storm with us, but with all due respect, his presence is only part of what we need. Prayer is rousing the Master to get up and do something about the storm! Our Lord is not like Baal who is so deaf his followers have to shout and cut themselves in the hopes of getting his attention (I Kgs 18:25–29). No! The one

who keeps Israel never slumbers or sleeps (Ps. 121:3–4). Prayer is a great mystery. Though God knows all about our storm and cares about our crisis, he waits to be roused to action. He wants us to wake him up!

The way Mark tells the story, it seems so simple: terrible storm... prayerful cry... Jesus wakes... all is well. I'm not sure why, but it seldom seems to work that simply for me. The great mystery is not so much *if* God will answer our prayer but *when*. The part we never know is how



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Reserved

By Sue Newton



Sue Newton is a full-time wife and mother of five who lives with her family in Kijabe, Kenya. Her husband, Mark, is the head of the Anesthesia Department at AIC Kijabe Hospital. Sue loves spending time in the Word, enjoys conversations about life with Jesus, and generally just does “the next thing” needing to be done on any given day.

It’s strange the places God can put his pen. On September 8, 2015, I was in the parking lot of a townhouse complex across the street from Vanderbilt Hospital. I wasn’t supposed to be there. Well I should say, I *didn’t suppose* that I was supposed to be there.

Our home for the past 18 years has been in Kenya, where my husband, Mark, is a doctor at Kijabe Hospital. We

had been in the U.S. for the summer for a short home assignment, with our two high school daughters and our youngest son, Ben.

But by now, we were supposed to be back in Kenya. Instead, at this particular moment, Ben was in the townhouse, recovering from an acute illness and waiting for clearance from the doctor to return home to Kenya. I breathed in the early fall air, watched a few leaves twirl down to the pavement, and said a prayer for my girls, who had returned to Kenya without us, as well as my brother and sister-in-law unexpectedly caring for them, two continents away.

Many things had not gone as I supposed they would this summer. Some things drove us closer to God, hanging on, hoping; another left us cold, hardly wanting to open the Bible for fear, perhaps, of facing our sense of betrayal by God. We were tired by the end of the summer as we prepared to go back home. Our girls had boarded a plane and headed to Kenya, and Ben and I expected follow in a few days. Instead, 24 hours later, I was in an emergency room with Ben, very frightened and trying not to show it.

Mark asked me as we worried about what was wrong, “Do you think God is trying to test us?” I suppose if you don’t really believe in God, or at least if he doesn’t seem real, then you might not ask that question. But when you’ve staked your life, your parenting, your decisions, on

the belief that God is good, that God is loving, and that God draws near to us through Christ, when you really, really love Him, then it is a fair enough question. So what did I think? “I don’t know. But here’s the thing: I’ve got no ‘otherwise.’ If Jesus isn’t who we’ve believed him to be, then where else do I turn? I’ve got nothing else.”

I admit that I have on occasion stood at the kitchen sink, praying, and then suddenly thought, “Are you really real God? Because if you aren’t, I spend an awful lot of time talking to myself like a crazy person.” No kidding. Jesus is the real deal or I’m just plain nuts.

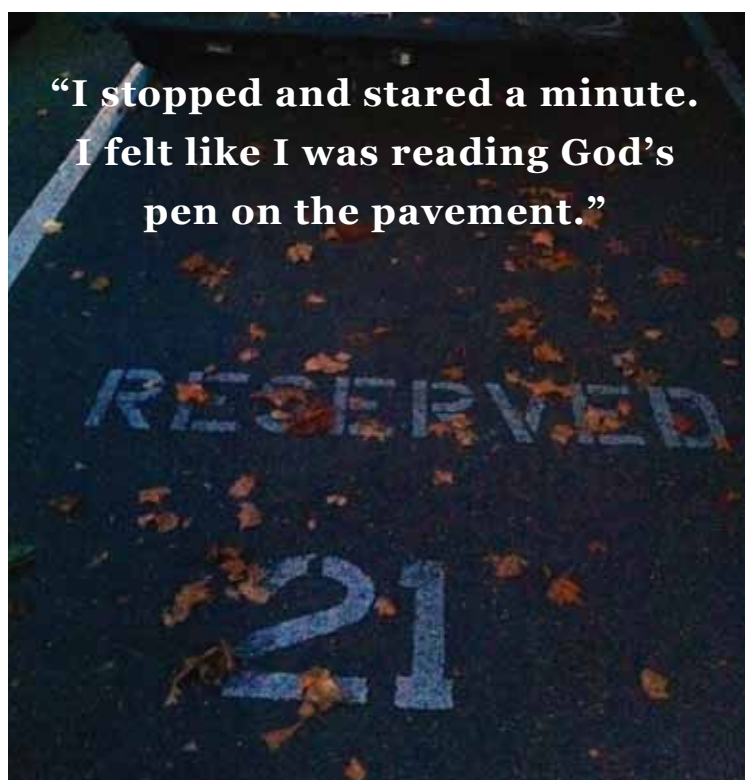
After what seemed like eternity, we found out that Ben would recover but we would need to stay on in Nashville

for treatment. That is when I found myself in the parking lot, trying to clear my head a little. And then I saw it. Our old white Suburban with Texas tags was parked in a space that said, “Reserved 21.”

I stopped and stared a minute. I felt like I was reading God’s pen on the pavement. Strange, the comfort that comes from knowing that God has reserved these circumstances for us, for his purpose and our good.

I sat on the back bumper of the Suburban and Oswald Chamber’s words came into my head, “If Jesus says, ‘Sit

here while I go over there and pray,’ the only appropriate response is to sit.” We get anxious, aggravated, frustrated, and maybe downright mad when our circumstances do not match what we suppose they should be. But what a relief it is instead to choose to trust God, to know deep down in your soul that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). ✨



**“I stopped and stared a minute.
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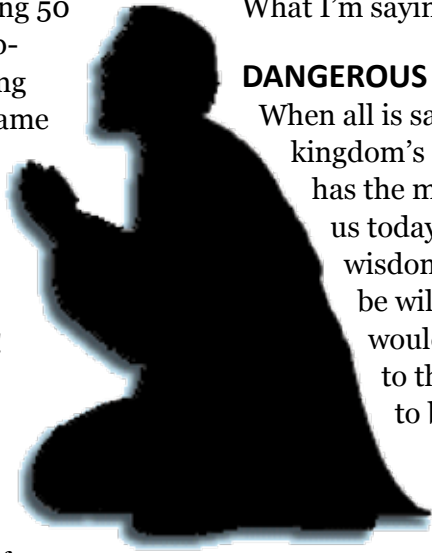
**“Prayer does not fit us for
the greater works; prayer
is the great work.”**

—Oswald Chambers

testimonies changed from “I’ve been saved and sanctified for 50 years,” to one innocent but enthusiastic biker who shouted from the altar to a packed congregation “this is the greatest day of my life! God just saved the Hell out of me this morning!” Was I *ever* being stretched out of my comfort zone! I had the privilege of baptizing 50 new converts one Sunday. Three women approached the baptistery in two-piece bathing suits! I got all mixed up, thinking “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” what am I going to hold on to! We got on the phone in the church office on Monday morning and ordered baptismal robes to take care of that problem. Watch out when you pray these prayers. They’re dangerous!

DANGEROUS PRAYER #4: Lead Me

King David prayed “lead me in the way everlasting.” For the past 20 years, I have prayed that God daily would lead me out of my comfort and safety zones into a life of radical obedience. After serving the church as a pastor for many years, God called me into a full-time itinerant ministry of evangelism. I tried to reason with God about this: it’s not 1950, most churches do not have revival meetings anymore, we will starve to death! I ran the numbers on the calculator, and they did not add up, but I kept praying these prayers. Lead me Lord; I’ll follow. We took this



“I notice that if I am praying for my friends, coincidences happen; if I stop praying for my friends, the coincidences stop.”
—William Temple

much time is going to elapse between the onset of the storm and when the Master says, “Peace! Be still!” Will the storm last an hour or a year or even a lifetime? This question is seldom answered. “How long, O Lord?” But this we can know for sure: if Jesus is in our boat, and if he is sleeping peacefully in our storm, then all will be well. Though he may appear to be asleep and disconnected with your present crisis, don’t be fooled. He knows what is happening. He sees your hardship. Don’t let the thunder of the storm or the waves of the sea keep you from shaking the Lion of Judah awake. He actually likes to be roused by our prayers. Soon, he’ll get up and make the storm go away! In the meantime, pray without ceasing and try to get some rest, too. If Jesus can sleep in the storm, so can you. In the words of Julian of Norwich, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” ✨

huge step of faith and left the security of a great church that was taking wonderful care of me and my family, and we found that, when you trust and obey, God always provides. For the past 10 years, I have averaged preaching 45 evangelistic meetings a year here in America and abroad. What I’m saying is that you can trust God with your life.

DANGEROUS PRAYER #5: Use Me

When all is said and done, has your life counted for the kingdom’s sake? The mantra of this world is “he who has the most toys at the end wins.” My prayer for us today is that God would deliver us from the wisdom and ways of this world and that we would be willing to live fully surrendered lives, that we would say “I am available today, God. Lead me to the person who needs you most and use me to be a winning witness.”

Would you be courageous enough to pray these five prayers every day? Remember the disclaimer—the fine print—they are dangerous. But they have the potential to radically revolutionize your life. May God bless you as you start the adventure. ✨

**Come, My Soul,
Thy Suit Prepare**
By John Newton (1779)
Come, my soul, thy suit prepare:
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay.
Thou art coming to a King:
Large petitions with thee bring;
For his grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much.

Practicing God’s Presence
By Brother Lawrence (1614–1691)
Taken from *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981), 84–85.
The time of action does not differ from that of prayer. I possess God as peacefully in the bustle of my kitchen, where sometimes several people are asking me for different things at the same time, as I do upon my knees before the Holy Sacrament. ...I turn my little omelette in the pan for the love of God. When it is finished, if I have nothing to do, I prostrate myself on the ground and worship my God, who gave me the grace to make it, after which I arise happier than a king. ✨

Christian Fatalism

By Brother Andrew



Brother Andrew, a native of the Netherlands, is the best-selling author of *God's Smuggler* and the founder of Open Doors, an international ministry to the church in countries where religious freedom is restricted or threatened. This article is abridged and slightly edited from the chapter, "We Are Not Helpless!" in *And God Changed His Mind* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1990).

Some time ago I heard two Christian women discussing the plight of hostages being held by Middle Eastern terrorists. "I feel sorry for those poor men and their families," one of the women remarked, "but really, this is God's problem, not ours. We have to remember that he has already decided how their stories are going to turn out. We can be sure that nothing happens outside his will." As I listened, I felt indignation rising within me. I could barely control the urge to turn to them and say, "What's the matter with you? Why are you talking this way? You're not helpless! God has given you the power to change that situation! Why don't you use it? Why don't you pray?"

These two very devout women were steeped in a false doctrine that has infected the thinking of an alarming number of Christians in our time. I call it—for lack of a better term—*Christian fatalism*. Without realizing it, those women had succumbed to a spiritual error that had all but neutralized their effectiveness as believers. If I had asked them, "My dear ladies, have you considered joining Islam?," no doubt they would have been outraged and offended. But the truth is, their beliefs about "God's will" would have fit very nicely into the Muslim religion and into a number of other fatalistic religions, too, like Hinduism and Buddhism.

I believe that in our determination to submit to the sovereign will of God, too many of us have lost sight of a powerful truth: God never created us to be puppets. He made us in his own image, endowing us with the ability to make independent choices. In doing so, he in a sense restricted his own omnipotence by allowing us to say yes or no to his will. In other words, God has given us the privilege of choosing how our lives (and our world) will turn out.

Contrary to what the two women believed, God has *not* "already decided how this story will turn out," any more than he has decided whom we will marry or what the president of Russia will be doing five years from today. Mind you, I'm not saying that God has no plans for us or that he has taken his hands off the world and is letting us spin out of control in our own self-made oblivion. Nor am I saying that we have ultimate control over God or that he has put us in charge of everything. But we must



remember that God's plans for us are not chiseled in concrete. Only his character and nature are unchanging; his decisions are not!

Moses understood this facet of God's character as few men ever have. We read that the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen what a stubborn, rebellious lot these people are. My anger shall blaze out against them and destroy them all" (Ex. 32:9–10). Sounds pretty final, doesn't it? A fatalist might have responded, "Oh, boy, we're in for it now! It's all over!" But Moses didn't accept that. He "begged God not to do it... So the Lord changed his mind and spared them" (Ex. 32:9–11, 14). Moses knew it was possible to change God's mind, just as most of the other heroes of the Bible did. Moses *knew God*, and as God's friend, he understood that God's plans could be changed.

So why are so many Christians today infected with this paralyzing virus of fatalistic apathy? It isn't hard to understand. There is no denying the appeal of fatalism to people who are "spiritually inclined." The fatalist's attitude seems to reflect tremendous faith: "I refuse to question the will of God," he will say with pious humility. It makes life so simple, doesn't it? Fatalists can relax because they are no longer responsible for anything. They don't have to obey God or actively resist evil; they can simply "let it be" (as the Beatles recommended in their hit song of the '60s). If a Christian can incorporate fatalism into his theology, his life becomes immeasurably easier and more comfortable.

Christian fatalism is not an innocuous doctrinal interpretation that we can coexist with as we do in the case of minor variations in Christian theology. It is a paralyzing disease that has invaded the Body of Christ with disastrous consequences. It infects its victims with complacency and apathy that immobilize their will to resist evil while eroding their determination to accomplish the great work of Christ. Unless this disease is halted, the world is going to

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The Blame Lies with Us

By E. M. Bounds (1835–1913)

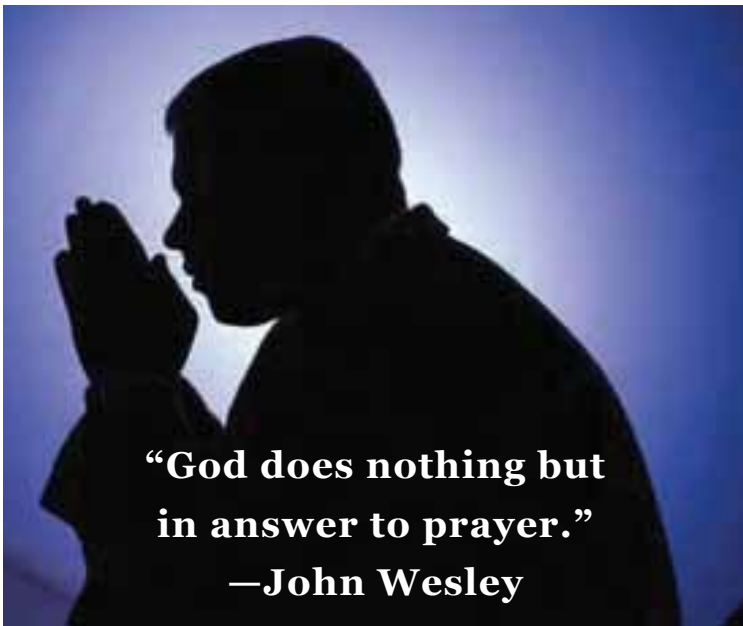


Taken from *Purpose in Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1920), 155.

Every mighty movement of the Spirit of God has had its source in the prayer-chamber. The lesson of it all is this: that as workers together with God we must regard ourselves as in not a little measure responsible for the conditions that prevail around us today. Are we concerned about the coldness of the Church? Do we grieve over the lack of conversions? Does our soul go out to God in midnight cries for the outpouring of his Spirit?

If not, part of the blame lies at our door. If we do our part, God will do his. Around us is a world lost in sin, above us is a God willing and able to save; it is ours to build the bridge that links heaven and earth, and prayer is the mighty instrument that does the work.

And so the old cry comes to us with insistent voice, “Pray, brethren, pray.” ✨



Why Pray? continued from page 4

things remain the same but we begin to be different. If we have been born from above and Christ is formed in us, instantly we begin to see things differently: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (II Cor. 5:17).

*Heaven above is brighter blue;
Earth around is sweeter green!
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs o’erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am his, and he is mine.*

The good of praying is that it gets us to know God and enables God to perform his order through us no matter what his permissive will may be. We are never what we are in spite of our circumstances, but because of them. As Reader Harris once said, “Circumstances are like featherbeds—very comfortable to be on top of, but immensely smothering if they get on top of you.” Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of God, always keeps us on top of our circumstances. ✨

Vespers

By A. A. Milne

Little Boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

Christian Fatalism continued from page 9

be in even more desperate trouble than it already is. The boundaries of evil are expanding every day, and fatalistic apathy is enabling those boundaries to grow because it offers no resistance. But Christians *must* oppose evil; we were born for battle! We must fight fatalism for all we are worth, because it is the most powerful weapon the enemy is using at this moment in history to defeat the purposes of God. ✨

Wrestling with God continued from page 5

subduedness in life and worship. We shall think more of order than of effort, more of good form than of great power. Our religion may gain some beauty in this way, but it loses vigor. It may feed certain pensive emotions, but it may emasculate will, secularize energy, and empty character.

All our forms and views of religion have their test in prayer. Lose the importunity of prayer, reduce it to soliloquy, or even to colloquy, with God, lose the real conflict of will and will, lose the habit of wrestling and the hope of prevailing with God, make it mere walking with God in friendly talk; and, precious as that is, yet you tend to lose the reality of prayer. You may have beautiful prayers—but as ineffectual as beauty so often is, and as fleeting. Therefore, cast yourself in his arms not to be caressed but to wrestle with him. He loves that holy war. ✨

What Is an Intercessor?

By Norman Grubb (1895–1993)



Abridged and slightly edited from the chapter, “What Is an Intercessor?” in *Rees Howells: Intercessor* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973).

That God seeks intercessors, but seldom finds them, is plain from the pain of his exclamation through Isaiah:

“He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor” (Isa. 59:16); and his protest of disappointment through Ezekiel: “I sought for a man among them, who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land... but I found none” (Ezek. 22:30).

There are three things to be seen in an intercessor, which are not necessarily found in ordinary prayer: identification, agony, and authority.

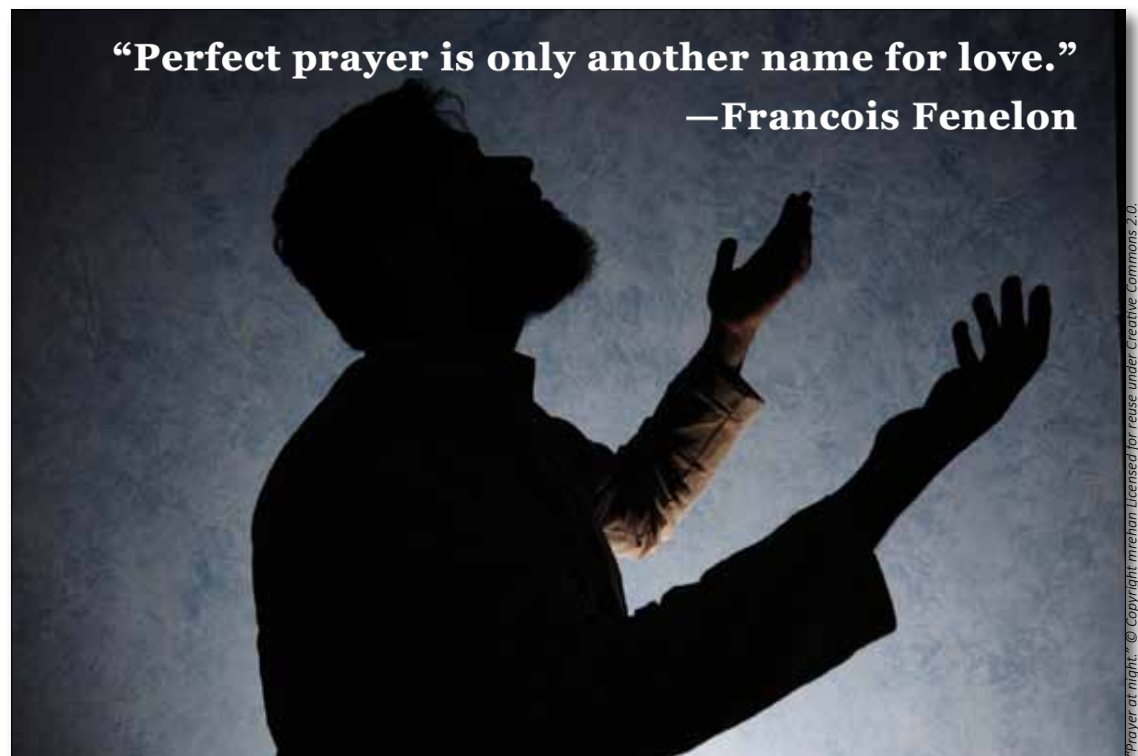
The *identification* of the intercessor with the ones for whom he intercedes is perfectly seen in the Savior. Of him it was said that he poured out his soul unto death; he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many and *made intercession* for the transgressors (Isa. 53:12). As the Divine Intercessor, he drained the cup of our lost condition to its last drop; he “tasted death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). To do that, in the fullest possible sense, he sat where we sit. By taking our nature upon himself, by learning obedience through the things that he suffered, by being tempted in all points like as we are, by becoming poor for our sakes, and finally by being made sin for us, he became able to make intercession for us. Identification is thus the first law of the intercessor.

But such identification in prayer is costly. There is an *agony* in intercessory prayer. The Holy Spirit now “intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). Being the only present Intercessor on earth, the Spirit has no hearts upon which he can lay his burdens and no bodies through which he can suffer and work except the hearts and bodies of those who are his dwelling place. Through them, he does his intercessory work on earth and they become intercessors by reason of the Intercessor within them.

But before the Holy Spirit can lead a chosen vessel into such

a life of intercession, he first has to deal to the bottom with all that is natural. Love of money, personal ambition, natural affection for parents and loved ones, the appetites of the body, the love of life itself, all that makes even a converted man live unto himself has to go to the cross. It is not theoretical death but a real crucifixion with Christ. It is both a crisis and process. The self must be released from itself to become the agent of the Holy Spirit. As crucifixion proceeds, intercession begins. By inner burdens, by calls to outward obedience, the Spirit begins to live his own life of love and sacrifice for a lost world through his cleansed channel.

But intercession is more than the Spirit sharing his groanings with us and living his life of sacrifice for the world through us. If the intercessor knows identification and agony, he also knows *authority*. It is the law of the grain of wheat and the harvest: “if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). Intercession is not substitution for sin. There has only ever been one substitute for a world of sinners: Jesus the Son of God. But intercession so identifies the intercessor with the sufferer that it gives him a prevailing place with God. He moves God. He even causes God to change his mind. He gains his objective, or rather the Spirit gains it through him. The weak channel is clothed with authority by the Holy Spirit and can speak the word of deliverance. “Greater works” are done. When an intercessor has gained the place of intercession in a certain realm, then he has entered into “the grace of faith;” along that special line the measureless sea of God’s grace is open to him. That is the gained place of intercession. ✨



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