

The Great Awakening In America

by Al Whittinghill

Transcript

Well, just as at the end of the First Great Awakening, you know the story of the First Great Awakening in the early 1700s. It began in Enfield, Connecticut, when there were messages of repentance in our country. Jonathan Edwards preached that message, sinners in the hand of an angry God.

In Northfield, where he lived, there was a great move of God that swept across our nation, and that was in the early 1700s. And all kinds of things happened, especially throughout New England, where the whole New England fabric was full of godly things, like the McGuffey Readers and all these different things that came out and taught our founding fathers the word of God. And so deep things were set in motion.

Well, listen to what happened, because the devil hates that. It was the devil sent a destroyer to try to get to our country. This happened 276 years ago in 1746.

Let me read to you this account. It is true and verified. Listen to this.

And you probably never heard of this, but I love this. I just felt led the day to read it to you tonight. It's a couple of pages, but I want you to hear it.

It says, in the fall of 1746, the governor of the Massachusetts colony received an alarming message. Ninety six French vessels were assembling off the coast of New England, preparing to attack Boston. Now there were 40 well-armed warships with cannons and 56 troop transports.

It was the largest naval armada to ever approach the American colonies. Did you ever hear about that? They were coming to destroy. Here was their plan.

Their mission was to destroy the coastal cities from Massachusetts to Boston and aboard the warships. Soldiers were already preparing cannons to lay siege on Boston and aboard the troops transports, not the warships. There were 13,000 soldiers.

You never heard of that, did you? Well, the colonies had few coastal defenses and their militias were no match for the highly trained and experienced soldiers of the French army. But listen to this. Governor William Shirley had a responsibility to protect the Massachusetts colony and its citizens.

Now stop there for a moment and keep in mind they just had this glorious move of God throughout New England. The first great awakening. People can say what an awesome thing it was.

It set in motion so much of what became the fabric of our country. But right when things were poised and going forward, the French army came to destroy. It's like the enemy sending to destroy and kill.

And so let me continue reading. It says here, as the impending invasion was only days away, Governor Shirley needed to take quick and decisive action. The colonists had only one reliable weapon at their disposal, capable of thwarting such a massive invasion.

And so Governor Shirley immediately called the people to prepare for battle. But he issued an official proclamation calling for citizens all across the colonies to assemble in their churches for a day of fasting and prayer. And on the morning of October 16th, 1746, hundreds of Bostonians made their way to the city's Old South Church.

That's the name of it today, where they would assemble together to pray for God's divine intervention. The autumn morning brought a clear, calm sky, making for a pleasant walk to the church building. Picture this, y'all picture all these people filing into the churches to fast and pray and appeal to heaven.

So then it says here, once the congregation had assembled in the sanctuary and Reverend Thomas Prince, who was the pastor, ascended the high pulpit, he immediately began a strong and fervent prayer. Here's what he prayed. Deliver us from our enemy, he prayed emphatically.

Send thy tempest, Lord, upon the waters to the east. Reverend Prince's powerful voice echoed off of the church's stone walls. And as he prayed, raise thy right hand, scatter the ships of our tormentors and drive them away from here.

And filled with emotion, he lifted his head toward heaven and continued to call upon God, but only to protect the people from harm, but to destroy this French fleet. Immediately, the sunlight, which only moments earlier illuminated the sanctuary, began to really disappear. Outside, the clear skies gave way to ominous clouds that enveloped the church in dark shadows.

At that moment, a tremendous wind slammed into the church and the windows shook violently as they strained to hold back the tempest. Now, I want to say that I go on reading. This was researched for eight years by Congressman Loudermilk from Georgia, and he wrote accounts of this, verifying all of this stuff.

So keeping reading the pounding of heavy rain on the church's roof reverberated inside the sanctuary, undaunted by the raging storm outside. Reverend Prince continued his praying. And here's what he said.

Sink their proud frigates beneath the power of thy winds, he cried out. He paused momentarily. And just then, the church's bell rang twice with a strange and uneven tone.

There was no one in the bell tower. And so the reverend took this to be a sign from God. And he kept on praying.

Listen, Reverend Prince raised both hands toward heaven. And with the voice of victory said, We hear your voice. Oh, Lord, we hear it.

Thy breath is upon the waters to the east, upon the deep, your deep. Your bell tolls for the death of our enemies. Imagine being there.

Silently, he lowered his hands and bowed his head before the great congregation. And for several moments, he stood motionless. Then with tears streaming down his cheeks, he raised his head and

closed the prayer, saying, Thine be the glory, O Lord.

Amen and amen. Well, hearing of Reverend Prince's prayer and miraculous storm that happened, Governor Shirley sent the sloop that was named the Rising Sun, S-O-N. They put a name, the Rising Sun, for the ship.

He sent it northward from Boston to obtain news of this French fleet. When he returned, when she returned, the captain gave an astonishing report. Nearly the entire French fleet had been lost in the storm, distraught by what had befallen their mighty fleet.

The French admiral, the Duke of Danville and the Vice Admiral Destornel had taken their own lives. Of the 13,000 soldiers, only a thousand survived. And a majority of these were severely ill, unfit for battle.

And the few ships that were left afloat were reported as being under full sail returning to France. Did you ever hear about that? Well, I'll tell you something. The account of this miracle is well documented.

It was once known and was once known as the story of, excuse me, as he had done so many times before, God had delivered America from the hands of their enemies. And when their liberty, safety, and security were threatened, the people of Boston prepared their homes and property, and they prayed. The account of this miracle is documented and was once as well known.

They knew it just as well throughout the colonies as the story of Paul Revere. In fact, the American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who penned that famous poem, Paul Revere's Ride. He also penned the poem at the same time as that, this miraculous event, the Ballad of the French Fleet.

You can read it today. He writes about this tremendous deliverance. This was such a mighty influence on the colonies of that day that it became well known and that was being, as we, as they moved toward the revolution, you know, that flag that they had in the colonies called Don't Tread on Me, before that happened, they made this flag in New England.

This is the motto of New England today. You can look it up, motto of New England, but this is the flag that was before Don't Tread on Me. It says it's an appeal to heaven.

This was the flag that flew from every ship that Washington sailed out of Boston and up in the Northeast, an appeal to heaven, because of this prayer that inspired them all from Prince and others that just turned and saved the nation over and over throughout our history. When the church, when the people of God turned to true prayer, even if it's in the constitutional convention and they all got out of their seats and on their knees, it's always prayer that changes and saves that which remains. So I pray tonight that that type of thing would take root in our hearts and that we would see that the mightiest force on the planet and the eternity could well be the Lord's plan to send his own spirit and his will to be done on earth as it's being done in heaven, only over the channel and the bridge of real prayerful prayer in faith by the church of the Lord Jesus.

Now, in a moment, you can be turning there. We're going to look at Luke chapter 10 and chapter 11 for just a moment. But I want to say that, first of all, it's clear in the scriptures and we'll see in a moment that the single most important ingredient in any life or any church really is prayer.

It's the surest way for any person or any family or any church to become truly spiritual. There's no other way into the throne room of God when you come in to hear him, to want to share with him. The only way is

to come through the blood of the Lamb in prayer.

There's no other way in. It's the best way that you could ever protect your loved ones and you could bless them and your home could be protected from the thousands of hostile forces that are in the world today. It's the best way to bless your family and to leave a legacy with my 20 grandchildren.

The best way I can do it is to truly, truly, truly let the Lord teach me how to pray for them. In fact, the only thing that's ever mentioned about Job, who God called the best man on earth in the first chapter, was that he got up early every morning and he made prayer and intercession for his family. That's the only characteristic that God cited about Job, which God set a hedge around his family until God wanted to teach them some things about removing it.

So it's the greatest necessity and it's the only foundation for all missions and outreach and discipleship. In fact, before the Great Commission, Jesus insisted there would be a great communion and a great consecration and be endued with power from on high. We think we just get a great commission and go out and get busy.

God says you can't do it unless you have the great communion. And the only way that communion will come is as you learn to be intimate with me and learn to listen and pray. It's absolutely the most powerful instrument for good on the earth.

That's prayer. Nothing else can come close to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth. It's the unfailing way and God's promised way to receive help or strength in time of trial or trouble or temptation.

Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you fall not into temptation. It will dissolve your doubts. Prayer.

It'll fix what's crept in as being carnal in your life. It's it's God's favorite classroom as you get in to the prayer closet. He whispers in your ear and and he teaches you his own word and he opens it by his spirit.

It's the place of vision. It's the place of passion. It's the place of wisdom.

This is where it comes to. It doesn't come through just thinking your way and your own understanding in your intense Bible studies. We can all have those confidences and things we know on a certain level, but we neglect prayer, the greatest resource of the church that God has called us to his prayer.

But it's the most neglected of all of them. Would you agree with that? You know, you have to ask yourself if we've missed the boat in our day, it's the prerequisite of God before he ever moves in revival in any way. It's the most strategic investment of your time that you can make.

Prayerlessness is not a time problem. It's a priority problem. It's not a problem of time.

It's a time. It's not a problem of how my time is so little. It's a it's a problem with my priorities and me really sticking to it.

You know, prayer is the most thing feared by the devil. There is. And why does he fear it? Because he suffered so much from it.

He doesn't care if you do all these activities in our churches and talk about all these issues. If we're prayerless, he's just smiling. He knows that nothing eternal or abiding could take place.

It is the outstanding characteristic prayer of the church in her finest hours. Look back in church history and you'll see that this is the great signature of God. It's the signature from the book of Acts right on through all of history.

This most awesome privilege that we have to come in boldly to the throne of grace and receive grace and help and mercy for all the times of need that we might have. It's what the Lord wants to do in your life and in my life more than anything else, especially in these days. He's he's pressing us to our knees.

And when the theology that we have becomes neology, it'll turn into doxology. It'll turn into praising God. It'll turn into seeing things the way he sees and thinking the way he thinks and partaking of the divine nature.

So as he wants to do this, keep in mind tonight, nothing is more dear to his heart than to teach you and me to really pray and to have communion with him, called into the fellowship of his son. Nothing is more evident when you study church history, that it's always to prayer that God looks and it's the bridge across which he sends his best things for the precious church of the Lord Jesus. Communion, that's together, co-labor, co-mission, co-operate.

It's together with God and he has chosen in his sovereignty to make prayer his first line of offense and first line of defense. It's the way through which he has chosen to implement through the cries and heart of his people, his will to be done on earth. And it agrees with what's happening in heaven.

It's our most pressing need and it's the most pressing need in our churches. It's meant to be the heartbeat in the body of Christ that controls everything else. Nothing much else you do will really work or have impact if it's basically done in a prayerless way.

So I want tonight to just plead for that. The Lord would give us a new beginning in prayer. So let me just read with you.

Let's look at Luke chapter 10. If you have your Bible, maybe you've heard me share on this before because I think it's such an amazing thing. But the disciples had just been sent out on two different occasions.

He called in chapter nine, he sent a group and in chapter 10, he sent verse one, another 70. And they began to go to the villages where Jesus was going to go and preach. And as they went, Jesus had prayed for them and they discovered that they had authority said over demons and over evil things.

And they came back to the Lord Jesus. They were so excited because they'd seen a dimension of what he wanted that they'd never seen. And they said, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

And he says, well, don't rejoice that demons are subject to you only, but rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven. This is the real perspective that you're a son of God, you're a child of God. And so you see them.

He then talks about really blessed are the eyes that see what you see and the ears that hear what you hear. And so right after that, he gives them a parable and you don't know how many people are with him,

but he comes in verse 38. He comes in Luke 10, 38.

He comes to a village, Bethany, and their two sisters, Martha and Mary there, they have a brother named Lazarus. And look what it says. And we don't know how many people were there, but if Jesus is coming to your house to eat supper and you knew he was coming, you might be a little nervous, right? I mean, when missionaries come to our house, we put out the best stuff.

We want to treat them like like the king's kids. So here's what it says. Verse 38 of chapter 10.

Now, it came to pass as they were going that he entered into a certain village, Bethany. We know that. And a certain woman named Martha received him into her into her house.

She apparently was the oldest sister. And you see them appearing later as well. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet and heard his word.

Well, that's where prayer starts when you sit at Jesus feet, as he is today. And but Martha was distracted with much serving. Now, there's nothing wrong with preparing a good meal for Jesus and the disciples.

It must have been quite a task if there were more than 12, even or even 12 or more. But it says she was distracted or weighed down with much serving. So she came.

She must have looked out and seen Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. And there's only two sisters and she's left alone. And she's she gets a little ticked off, perhaps that Mary's just kind of lazing around.

That's probably what happened. I don't know. Doesn't say Martha was weighed down with much serving.

So she came out to the Lord Jesus and she said, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me all alone? Bid her, therefore, that she helped me. And the word help means to carry the other end of a heavy load. So it's kind of a rebuke to Jesus.

Don't you care? Why don't you tell her to get busy, get busy, get involved in what's going on around you? And so Jesus answered and said to her, and I can't read it as tenderly as he must have said it. Martha, Martha, you are careful or you are troubled and bothered about many things. Well, that's a verse we can identify with, especially today.

You're troubled and bothered about many things. But one thing, one thing is needful. Now, keep in mind, the disciples are watching all of this.

And it's not just for Martha that he's saying he's saying it for them, as you'll see in a minute. But he says one thing is needful. And Mary has chosen, chosen that good part, the part which can never be taken away from her.

You can't outgrow it. You can't grow old. You can't get so physically unable.

This is the thing that lasts forever. What is it? What is it? Sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to his word, commuting with him. And Mary's made the choice to prioritize and make that the main thing.

So with all of that ringing in their ears, the disciples, you know, chapter 11, verse one, it starts with an and. So it's based right on what we just read. And it came to pass that as Jesus was praying in a certain place, when he stopped praying, one of his disciples came and said to him, Lord, teach us to pray.

That's what we're gathering around tonight. Lord, teach us to pray like John taught his disciples. So they saw Jesus praying.

And in fact, they'd seen him praying before and what they just heard him say to Mary. Imagine they get up in the morning and Jesus was off behind a tree or something and was praying to this one he called his father. And at night he'd go out and be on many nights alone.

In the afternoon, he might leave a thousand people or five thousand and go to a solitary place, it says in Mark. And there he's communing. And he says things to him like, I don't do a thing.

But what I see the father doing, I don't say anything. What he says and they knew there was this mysterious, glorious relationship that the Lord Jesus was living before their eyes and walking in with this one called father. And they came to him after they'd heard what he said to Mary.

And they said, Lord, teach us to pray. Just like John the Baptist taught his disciples. See, let's take that one step higher and say it was only when they saw him in that relationship that they were inspired, they wanted to know about that.

Do you realize that is the only thing the Holy Ghost chose to record? That the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them. The only thing they had questions, but the Holy Spirit chose to say, Lord, teach us to pray. They were asking him to teach them because they saw the most conspicuous thing about the Lord Jesus was his time with his father and his prayer life.

It's amazing if you trace it through the New Testament. And then you see later how the most conspicuous thing about the church, the early church, was their amazing prayer. One hundred twenty praying, three thousand get saved and five thousand get saved.

And all of them are at the prayer meeting every day. Think about that. And you say, well, that was then and this is now we're different.

Yes, we are different in our statistics and everything else. Prove it. We aren't living where they live in that communion.

You have need of power from on high before you go out and seek to be moved. And all that I am telling you now, keep in mind also is when they saw him praying that they were asked to teach him to teach them to pray. It's when we see him praying not only on earth, but in heaven.

And my question to you is, have you ever thought about what Jesus has been doing since he went back to heaven and was crowned king of the universe? It says in John's gospel, it says that that whoever believes on me, like the Scriptures say to believe out of his innermost men will flow rivers of living water, just like the Scriptures say. And this he spoke about the spirit. John seven thirty eight nine.

He says he says this. He spoke about the spirit, which was not yet meaning given. And it's full of his fullness because Jesus was not yet glorified.

But you see, in the latter chapters of John and the first chapters of Acts, how that Jesus, when he ascended into heaven, he sat down on the right hand of the father and prayed the father. He was given the name above every name. At that point, the disciples never called Jesus Jesus.

They called him master and Lord, and they spoke rightly. But at that enthronement, at that session of the Lord Jesus as Lord of all, when he and the father and then he says he did and the father did, they sent back one that was just exactly like him, the third person of the deity to live within the disciples. And he told them, wait for the promise of the father.

You wait until the reality of the life and character. You've seen the character of God, this comforter that was coming in me. What you've seen in me, you've seen him.

He that's been with you in me is going to be in you. And he will be your life on the inside, just as he empowered me and all that you've been with me and seen me to do. And in that day, he says three times in John, in that day, you will ask.

In that day, you will understand. And in that day, you will do. What day is that? It's the day of his power when the Lord Jesus is enthroned over all.

And he sends the Holy Spirit to seal. And and to the spirit of God had gone into people and been into people like like John the Baptist and others. It says the spirit was in them, but it was different because Jesus was not yet on the throne of the universe.

A perfect man taken the throne as the high priest of heaven changed everything and made it so that he that began that good work will shepherd it right through. This is the promise to you. And to me.

Lately, I've been really meditating on my high priest, whoever lives to make intercession for me. And when you see him praying in a certain place, like it says here on Earth in John and Luke 11, when you see who you have living at the right hand of the father, who's the Lord of all the universe and eternity, and he's praying for you, he is for you when you see that it'll make you want to pray because he's asked you to pray with him and co-labor together with him in prayer. See, you can't become a prayer warrior just because you want to or think you should.

You can't become an Olympian just because you'd like to stand on the block. And and we all know we should pray and we all hope we belong to churches who pray. And we know that it's something that God wants.

But but implementing it, you see, is what we're lacking. It's not just our ability that matters. It's our availability.

Am I available? Am I really his? You see, nothing is so simple. But nothing is so deep because the enemy fights it more than anything else. He does not want you and me to really receive.

But what happens is we need a teachableness that comes from a sense of our own need. We think we're pretty rich and increased with goods. I wonder when Jesus said, look, my father's house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations.

Well, who's going to call him that? Well, the people that watch and see this is what they do. It's not a house of singing or witness or all this. That's not how the world describes them.

Jesus said, I will build my church and my father's house will be called a house of prayer. The most conspicuous thing about the church in the book of Acts was their prayer together in mass, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together. But in our day, I mean, you could say, well, how is our church

known? Any church could say this.

Well, we're known for our outreach. We're known for whatever else. But see, what God wants is the world to see.

That's a praying people. They need to see the wonder and the astonishment that comes when we get in touch with the living God and he answers what couldn't be done on any other basis. It's just what he wants.

You see, the disciples saw the mystery of it. And so they recognized the key to it. And they said, Lord, teach us to pray his awesome relationship with the heavenly father.

So when they saw him, they make their request. And so I would say you figure this. He had 30 years of growing up in obscurity.

And in that time, he grew in stature and favor with God and with man. He had he was tested no matter that we could be. He was and he he learned obedience by the things he suffered, not just in the three years of ministry, but when he began his ministry for three years.

The most conspicuous thing in the Scriptures is his prayer life. And then he had one great act of dying for our sins on the cross and then being raised. During that time, he's always praying on the cross.

You see him. And for nineteen hundred or two thousand years since. What's he been doing at the right hand of the father? Hebrews says he ever live us to make intercession.

He is the the priest, the high priest of the throne room of heaven. So notice it says, Lord, teach us to pray. Well, you've got to settle that because you see, if he's not Lord, then all we see prayer is just an escape of problems or to make life easier.

Maybe he's my savior and save me again. Lord, get me out of this hut. But when you begin to see prayer is more than just a way of escape or a way to get blessed.

When you see prayers, the avenue through which the father makes known to you, his word and his will and his ways, and you begin to walk in fellowship with him and it's no longer I, but it's Christ living in me. I'm letting him do it. He's working in me to will and do.

He's speaking into me and through me and to me. Then you begin to understand that you become his body and his hands. And he communicates the living impulse.

And what you hear in the closet, you go out and you preach. Lord, teach us to pray. He must be the Lord before he'll be your teacher.

So settle this, Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, teach me, teach me. But you see, it doesn't say teach me, does it? It says teach us. You know, teach us to pray.

The word saint is not even in the singular in the New Testament. If I if you find one, tell me, I want to know. I've been looking.

I can't find it for a long time. It's always saints. We're together.

He wants us together. He wants us in the communion, the quinonea of the saints. And so teach us to pray.

And as we're together and we agree in our hearts is touching. And so teach us, us, us and to pray. I noticed in the announcement it said teach us how to pray.

It doesn't say that here. I mean, even if you learned how to pray, you'd still have to pray. You see, we might know how to pray.

But the question is, do we do it? Our problem is not unanswered prayer. Our problem is unoffered prayer. It's a matter of attitude and heart.

And I'm not trying to rail on this, but I'm just saying, teach us to pray. Real prayer is learned as we make ourselves available to our Lord, even when it's hard. And we we're we're in his training school where his discipleship he's giving to us.

He's imparting to us what we need and where it involves, first of all, not a feeling, but it involves a willing. Am I willing, Lord, teach me to pray. It's not more information that you and I need.

It's inspiration to realize who we're dealing with and the privilege that is ours to cooperate, to commune with him. It's the royal law of prayer that God has ordained in his sovereignty, that he will often limit his workings to the degree and intensity of the church's intelligent and real prayer. He says you have not because of what? You ask not because you haven't come to me all through Ezekiel.

He says, this is what I'm going to do. This is what I'm going to do. Then he adds at the end of it.

But for all these things that I'm going to do, I will have Israel inquire of me so that I may do them. So God has things he wants to do. He longs to do in my family and in your family and in our churches.

But he waits. For the church to say, I will be done. On Earth.

As it's being done in heaven, he's chosen to do that. It's the royal law of prayer. God has chosen to do nothing on Earth, but in answer to prayer.

Dwight Moody used to say, behind every work of God, somewhere, some place, there's a kneeling form. Somebody has prayed. Somebody has fought Hell's legions undismayed.

Somebody has been in a church like Old South and said, Lord, sink these people that are coming to kill us. And God's just waiting. Do you think he would have done that without that kind of prayer? You think England, when Dunkirk was happening and all those troops were out on the shore, you can read about this.

There are people in the King called a day of prayer and all the churches in England had lines of people going in and they prayed. And the next day, storms came out all over Germany and France and all the rest and bogged down the German troops that were closing in to kill all the Allied troops that were trapped on the beach. But it was the strangest thing.

First time in 13 years they'd seen it. The people that was there said that the English channel was as smooth as glass. And all of these people put little fishing boats and all little.

They went across the channel and evacuated of hundreds of thousands of guys, not just not just British, but all the troops and got away from Hitler. And it changed the tide of the whole war. So much so that England declared days of Thanksgiving every time for a long time until we outgrew it.

Look it up. Why don't we hear about this? Teach us to pray, not just how to, but to do it, to do it. And and at first, prayer looks simple like the ocean for a child.

But as you grow in it, you see how much God has given to the hands of you and me to put the powers of the unseen at the disposal of God. So. After repeated sense of lack and failure, maybe trying to work it up, trying to enter into God's throne room based on your quiet times you've had or all the things you've done in response to what you know of him.

Look what I've done. Surely I can come here with the audience instead of by the blood and by the word and the grace of God frustrated. And at the end of our rope, we come.

We finally ask him, Lord, teach me to pray. Teach us to pray. Have you ever asked him, have you really ever asked God to teach you his ways in prayer? It's easy to carry on our own Christian life and our own strength.

And we can be busy doing good things like Martha. But you see, busyness is not the same thing as effectualness. I used to think that that that busyness produced barrenness, that when we're busy, we neglect things and we become barren.

And I think that's true. I think it is true. But I've come to see after years of being in a lot, a lot, a lot of churches, that it's the other way, too, that barrenness can produce a busyness to cover over our sense of lack because we're not spending time with God.

We're not living with him in intimacy. Sometimes we do things to make ourselves feel better and like we're really involved and God understands. But nothing will take the place of prayer.

Nothing will take the place of prayer. The powers of the unseen realm are at the disposal of the people of God. And prayer is the great ministry to which the Lord Jesus has been called.

I call it his unfinished work. He's got a finished work as priest he did on earth. He offered his own body a sacrifice for us.

But then he took his own blood up to the throne room of heaven. As we read in Hebrews and all the places he went there, he sprinkled his blood on the throne of the father. And that throne became a throne of grace.

And he was set down. And today he's praying that's his ministry in heaven. And it's unfinished.

It will be finished. He that began this good work will finish it. And but the but the powers of the unseen realm are placed at the disposal of prayer.

Think about it. The first thing ever said of Saul of Tarsus after he was struck down and put into Ananias house, he was blinded. The first thing said about him in Acts chapter nine, verse 11 says, he's there and behold, he's praying.

Here's the proud Pharisee that's prayed all his life as a Pharisee. You know, he had all these things. But for the first time, perhaps in his entire life, he God said, behold, it's a term of delight and astonishment.

Behold, he's praying. Think of it. You know, you could be in church.

I mean, the disciples were with Jesus for 30,000 hours for you to have the same amount of time with Jesus in some context. You'd have to go to church eight hours, 10 hours a week for the next 58 years to have that many hours with hearing the word. And it wouldn't be the quality that they had.

And it wouldn't be the intensity that they experienced. But you see, that's what they needed, this touch of the spirit of God to lead them into all truth and to teach them these things. It's expedient for you that I go away, meaning take the throne of the universe in those John 13, 14, 15 and 16.

He says 14 times he's leaving and they're so messed up by that. But five times he says, because I'm going to the father, greater things than I've done. And will you do also because whatsoever you ask in my name, I will do it again.

Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it seven times. He says in those chapters, ask in my name. He says, you heard about the seven last words of Jesus on the cross.

You know, father, forgive them. I first those seven great sermons that are all those things. But this is the seven last words and longings of the Lord Jesus.

The commands before the cross. He says in that day you will ask in my name and the father will hear prayers. The great key of David and the Psalms, it's opening the door to bring you and me into the throne room of God.

You see, it's it's absolutely stunning. The spirit of God helps our weakness because we don't know how to pray as we ought the how and the what and all the other things, but he has come in to us and the spirit himself makes intercessions for us, sometimes with groanings that we can't even put into words. But see, people mistake that they try to enter with well-rehearsed prayers sometime instead of just going and God looks at, I mean, which has more power over you when your children come in.

If they came into the room and all they could do is cry and fall on the ground and groan, I guarantee you that you'd listen to them probably more intensely than if they came in just giving you a shopping list of ice cream and all the rest. You'd listen to them and you'd care. But it's the it's the heart, the heart that God is longing for.

You see, the Bible is clear about it. Prayer is the one calling we all share. We're not all prophets.

We're not all teachers. We're not all giver. I mean, we're different in our spiritual gifting because God loves to manifest himself in glorious diversity.

And it takes a body. One's an eye, one's a hand and one might be an ear. One might be an armpit.

I mean, I don't know. But but whatever. But but prayer is the one calling we all have and nothing else you do, whether you're a deacon or an elder or you're a preacher or you're a soul winner, you think you are nothing you do, anything else will ever take the place in your life that God intended for you to have before him in real prayer.

He's raising up intercessors. He's raising up a royal priesthood, especially in our day. Can't you sense what's going on around the world? Can't you sense that the judgment of the nations is just at hand? Can you read like Reese Howell's intercessor, that great book and see how that God used a group of intercessors in in in the UK to actually turn the tide of the war many times as they got together and they

saw their ministry was to truly, truly pray all success in spiritual things depends on prayer.

Otherwise, it's just a tangible, temporary result. I mean, if you ask yourself, how are the churches in our day measured? Ask yourself that. How do we measure a church and look at it? That's a good church.

Is it by the number of books the pastor writes and are read? Is it by the great singing or music they produce? Is it by the services to the sick and all the rest? All those things are important. But we would look and we measure them by by amount given or the amount received or or the number of people that attend. But God's measuring stick is different.

I would ask, how's your prayer life? I remember the time that a man was writing his dissertation on praying churches and he went to a dear brother that I preached with at different conferences named Greg Frizzell, you might know Greg. And he said he was he called us and he called. I didn't know he'd call Greg.

He called me and he said, can I come interview you? I'm writing a dissertation and I'm I'm wanting to know about praying churches because I want to write about him. I want to go see him. And he came to me and he says, tell me some praying churches.

I mean, I'm thinking biblically now, but God has in mind his standard of praying and I thought and I thought and I thought and I gave him only one or two that I thought were close in many ways. But when it came right down to it, I said, brother, I just can't help you with what you're wanting. And I felt real embarrassed.

And I was I was so lamenting this at the conference. I was at next and Greg was there. I said, this happened to me.

It really disturbed me. I couldn't think of all the great churches I know and have been friends with. I don't know of a praying church, not like the New Testament kind of prayer.

And Greg said he came to you, too. He came to me and I was in the same dilemma. Now, that's not to say there aren't praying churches.

I just hadn't seen in all the churches I've been in. The one I would really think would be a really model like the Jerusalem church was or the mother church like Jerusalem for that kind of prayer. See, prayer, prayerlessness proves we've lost that sense.

Of the presence of God, but when God's spirit makes himself real to us, almost immediately people go to prayer. And you don't have to twist it out or work it up. Prayer is God's priority.

It's the place of reality. When I get real with the Lord, he'll get real with me. And I will see the heavens clear out of many things.

A lot of our problems that we think are physical are really spiritual and it's spiritual warfare. What else could they have done in Massachusetts with all those ships coming in? Would bastions on the beach have done any good? Would it have done to arm every person with a gun and would that have really made any long term difference? It was only prayer. And God got the glory.

Today, we're still talking about it and credentials of men really mean nothing when it comes to prayer. God has ordained that his measuring stick of my heart is prayer many times, the word and prayer. And of course, by the blood, almost every biography I read of great men of God, when they're asked a question like when they get to the end of their life, what would you do differently if you could go back? I know Billy

Graham said it.

I know Alfred Monod, the great Billy Graham of France, last century and many others, they said, I would have spent more time in prayer. I would have spent more time in communion with God. You see, he says when he opens his who's who, his book of remembrance, many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first.

It was Dwight Moody who was seeing results in this country and but he wasn't seeing big results. And these five ladies would come to him and said, Mr. Moody, we're praying for you. And he got irritated by this because he thought something they thought something was wrong, but they kept praying.

And finally, Moody received the mighty infilling of the Holy Spirit and a burden for prayer. So much so people who traveled with him said that Moody was a greater prayer warrior than he was a preacher. But this little old lady in England wanted Moody to come to her church in London.

And she prayed and prayed that he would come. But she everybody said he'll never come. She prayed and prayed.

And one day Moody received an invitation and went to her church. And so he preached there. And and as as he found out about this little woman who prayed for years for him to come, he went to see her and he heard about the parallel of how his life was blessed by one little hidden one that the Bible talks about a little woman.

I can tell you about another little woman who was a woman of prayer and she had hidden journals. I've done funerals for little widows who had like 20 books of little journals of how they prayed for people. But this was one of those kind of women, one of God's hidden ones, and she was tucked away.

Well, there was a man called V.R. Edmund. You might have heard of him. He was the president of Wheaton College, a great missionary.

And he and his wife went down to Ecuador and they were down there. And while they were down there as a young man, I mean, he was a great linguist and they all thought he'd be a great teacher in the seminary. But instead of going to seminary, he went down to Ecuador to translate their scriptures.

Well, he was just getting to a place of getting to a real point of having his work really looking completed some and he became ill. And this they found was the disease in which nobody had ever recovered from there in Ecuador. And so Mrs. Mrs. Edmund watched her husband grow thin and pale and gone.

And he was on his deathbed and he was dying. And the death rattle, they said, was in his throat. That's when you start you're ready to die.

And all of a sudden that night, Edmund's own testimony is that he was aware that the spirit of God came upon him. He writes about this and he said he knew that he was well and he didn't get his weight back, but he sat up and he he knew. So he washed himself and got down and had prayer.

And it was so significant that from that day on, V.R. Edmund called it his resurrection day. He didn't know how it happened. It was 20 years later that he was in the Chicago area preaching.

And after he got through preaching and told that account of that day after the service, a little old lady that was bent over came up with her little books. And she says, Dr. Edmund, could you remember the date of

your resurrection day? He says, of course I can. He told her the date and she had a little prayer book.

She was going through like this and look and turn in the pages like this. And she said, could you tell me what time of day it was there would be in Chicago? And he told her. And she got her finger, went down, she said, oh, yes, there it is, Dr. Edmund, you'll want to see this.

And it says here. I was asleep and the Lord woke me up from sleep and said, the devil is trying to kill V.R. Edmund. And it says, prayed for him, and then she she pointed over to the margin.

She says, do you see that check there, Dr. Edmund? And he said, yes, I do. She said, well, that means victory. And she put a little fist up, said that means victory.

And there was a little unknown, unnoticed saint in Chicago praying for a missionary halfway around the world and raised him up from certain death, and he went on to translate the scripture and become president of Wheaton College. And you never hear a thing about her. You know, just so many people that learn how to pray and learn how to intercede and learn how to trust God.

I can tell you that prayer will make the difference in your own life. Many who seem to be first and with that day, they may be last because it was all outward. But many who are unnamed and unnoticed will be great in the sight of the Lord, watchmen, intercessors.

And it's a crazy thing. Now, I don't know where to go from here. I want to not take too much time.

I really don't. But I want to say this. I just want to say a word about this family prayer, because it's been my conviction lately and I've been deeply convicted, deeply convicted that my wife and I need to spend more intense focused time praying for our grandchildren.

We see the Lord doing all kinds of things, but we need to be at our age watching more for our grandchildren. And I can tell you over the years that as I've gone in and preached, I remember I remember being at Bartlett, being at Bartlett. It was years ago.

But I remember being in the lobby back there. I don't know if you remember this, Mike, if you were maybe you were just a pup. And I don't know.

But they used to have on the back wall pictures of people that had been in the church for 50 years. You remember that? There were like seven or eight pictures of people that had been in that church for 50 years. And I remember standing back in the back and just looking at those pictures, totally amazed in church here for 50 years.

Amazing. Bless them, Lord. And they were all elderly, of course.

Well, they looked like they were kind of like Mike or me. You know, they looked like been around a while. And so I remember that night, one night, the second night I preached and the first night I preached on prayer.

I think I think that I preached about family prayer and how to how husbands and wives, the greatest prayer team on earth is a husband and wife. They have a unity on many levels that nobody ever has. And if the Lord can keep us from getting all upset with each other and keep us on the same page and sweet, we can pray together.

I remember I preached on that and I said, you know, really, we need to repent of prayerlessness and pray. It'll change your marriage and change your life. So two nights later, that I noticed after the service, a little woman came up and she was talking to me and she she has her husband with her kind of standing behind her a little bit, kind of embarrassed to talk to the visiting preacher, whatever.

But she says, Mr. Whitting Hill, thank you for that message night before last on prayer as a family. And I just wanted to say that after you preached, my husband and I and he kind of then stood out and looked and smiled. We went home and we did what you said.

I said, what did you do? And she said, we prayed together. It was our first time. And I said, wait a second, I've seen you before.

Weren't in your picture back there on the back of that wall? Yep. We were charter members here. We've been here over 50 years.

And and I said, and you're telling me that in all this time, you've never prayed together. She said, no, not really. Not like you said, but we did it the last two nights.

And we'll never miss another night as long as we live. And I said to myself, I said, glory to God, what an amazing thing I could tell you of missionaries, I look at this one here, 36 years, there was a Mennonite elder who was at a missions conference down in another country. And at the end of that conference, he stood up before everybody there.

And he said, you know, at the beginning of this conference, we thought everything was going great. But over these days, God has shown us that my wife and I have been having our problems because we're not praying together. And three nights ago, we started praying together.

And it's been like glorious. It's restored things that were gone in our marriage in so many ways. And our marriage has been changed forever to the glory of God by the restoration of the altar of prayer.

I can give you dozens of illustrations like that, and I can tell you my own life that when I've forgotten and left off and been too busy, that things begin to strain and just all kinds of what seems unrelated. But there's a lubrication that comes in the machinery of our operations that when we pray, God faithfully keeps it going. So.

You know, I don't want to go much further, I have a lot more I wanted to say, but as we have our conference in a couple of months or whatever, whenever that happens, I want to talk to you about church prayer. You know, that verse that's always quoted over in Hebrews when it says in Chapter 10, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as is the matter of some. And you always think about that maybe being Sunday morning, but we keep going to church.

But if you read the context of that, you'll see where it says, let us come boldly into the throne of God by a new and a living way, which he himself has consecrated for us through the rendered veil of his own flesh. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance and and having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of the Lamb, then to that exactly. But that's what it's saying.

And our bodies washed with pure water. Let's come in and because we have we have we it says what we have four times. So don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together in prayer.

And even though you say we don't see much happening at first, God is putting things into place. And I'll tell you, he wants a praying church. He wants a church to come together.

It may be just a couple of people. I mean, there may be who knows what the future will be, what kind of impositions the government will make upon us not to assemble. You can't sing.

You can't pray. Who knows? But you see, here's what the the the devil can't ever take away. Praying.

He can't ever take away personal witness, even witness in jail when you lose everything. I'm just saying it depends on what you want. And my question to you and to me, do we realize that prayer is not just a ministry? It's the ministry.

It's the ministry that comes first, without which nothing else will really have any depth or power in our life. Have we allowed committee meetings to usurp and take the place of our prayer meetings and when we come for a prayer meeting, do we spend all our time just giving requests, giving organ recitals, what's wrong with this person and this and this and this? It's true. There are many things that are happening, but God wants us in faith to start claiming the promises of God.

I'm part of a pastoral prayer group ministry that I kind of get to lead. Once a month with our Noonday Association. And I remember at first getting pastors together to pray, it's like herding cats, it just doesn't work.

It's just really hard. But these guys began to come together to pray. And I remember I mean, I remember it's happened four times, four times, and God's trying to encourage us.

I remember I'm going to give you one last example. When we were together praying and we have Asian, we have a black black guys, we have Asians, we have big churches and small churches. And we were together in prayer that day.

And this is when Hurricane Michael was pressing in upon the North Carolina coast. It was a category five hurricane and it was coming in. They said it would be the worst disaster North Carolina had ever experienced out to the Cape Hatteras might vanish.

It was coming in so hard. I'm from North Carolina. It burdened me not just because I'm from there, but just because what was happening.

And I remember we were there that morning. It's starting at 10 o'clock and we were going to pray. And the pastors became burdened.

And somebody read the verse in Mark 11. It says, I say to you, if you agree and your heart is touching, you can speak to the mountain and whatever you say will come to pass. If you if you live in this dimension of prayer and something just clicked in our in our brothers.

And we said, Lord, we're just going to pray about this. And we got down on our knees and we began to pray. And as we prayed, several of us saw the same thing in our mind.

It was crazy. It couldn't have we saw that one of those pictures you see on the news on the weather station where you're looking at a hurricane from the air and you see this big white thing circling, you know, it's over the water and we could see that. And in the middle was this little black dot like an eye.

And as we're sitting there praying, I see that hurricane coming in. Yes, Lord. And and so here's what we began to pray.

I forget who even prayed it. I actually think the Lord gave it to me because I prayed in Fiji once in a hurricane went away and it blew me away. It blew me away.

My daughter was with me and it blew me away. I still kept the newspaper from the next morning. But I remember we began to say, Lord, in the name of Jesus, we speak a word to the eye of this hurricane.

In the name of Jesus, we just drop it right in there. And we say diminish, diminish in Jesus name, diminish. That was our word diminish.

We all begin to take it up. And we got through praying. And we left.

Well, that next morning, I said, you know, I didn't even check on what happened with that hurricane. And I turned on the news. And there is Shepard Smith, that moniker of virtue on there.

Shepard Smith, that news reporter, you know who he is. And he was on there and he was looking out at the TV. And he said, ladies and gentlemen, I want to give a report on North Carolina.

He said, I've been doing hurricanes for over two dozen years and I've never seen anything like this. This hurricane was coming in a category five. And it got to a certain point.

And all of a sudden it veered to the south. And here's I'm sitting there watching it. And here's what he says.

He says, it just diminished. He used the word. I went to my knees in front of the television, I said, oh, God, how could it be like that? Oh, ye of little faith.

Did I not say to you if you would just believe all things are possible? Well, needless to say, when the guys got back together and we prayed, we were fired up, we were fired up. And the Lord said to us, look, hurricanes are easy for me. It's a heart that's wayward.

It's a it's a life that's disobedient. This is what I want you to really learn, that there's as much power and that is turning a category five hurricane. Well, another hurricane started to come to New Orleans and it was going to hit the levees within a half inch of the top.

And so he said, Lord, you did it before. We just we just prayed this thing will stop and it'll dissipate. That was the second this diminished and then there's a dissipate.

And so the papers came out the next day that he kind of stalled and it dissipated out in the Gulf. And we said, my Lord, look what you've done. And we had three more come in.

One was the next word was deflect, deflected away from Tampa and went out to sea, and it was like four different times that it was the specific word that was used and it blew us away. So what can he do? For our children, if we begin to learn how to pray together and really come to an agreement and let all bitterness and clamor cease, and if we let the Lord spirit convict us and we come with a broken and contract heart and a heart that's cleansed from rebellion and sin and we call upon him out of a pure heart with full conviction of faith, there is no telling. But our problem is, see, we've only seen prayer as a way of escape or a way of blessing.

We've never seen the real ministry of prayer. So I think this is what was happening to the disciples. When they saw that Jesus had sent them out, he had prayed for them and they they knew he was.

And when they began to understand and they heard what he said to Mary, one thing is needful, one thing. If you have one thing in your life that you're good at or let the Lord really do, let it be prayer, let it be sitting at the feet of the risen Lord Jesus, Lord of all, and listening to his word as he teaches you. And as he says, pray about this and you take his will and you say, Lord, I will be done.

Thank you for showing me. And you and you wait on the Lord until you know his ways and his will. And if you don't know, you pray by faith, of course, like you do anyway.

And and we lay hold of it. You begin to grow and you begin to say this is consistent with who you are. Stop this hurricane.

Don't let these innocent people get blown away. And and the Lord then does it. He encourages.

It's just like nobody becomes a prayer warrior by accident. You have to make a choice. Mary has chosen.

The good part, and when you get to the end of your life and I'm 73 now and I look back and I see prayerless days, I look back and I see things where I I mean, what could I have seen, what could have been different? You can't live in that and you can't let it destroy you. But you can certainly make real changes now. And my appeal to Medlock and Martha's iPad and Connor's iPhone, whoever you are, I can't see you.

And 817201 and whoever is on here, you know, and and Pete and your precious family and to my dear brother, Mike, and to the people back in the back, there is that we would hear what the spirit of God is saying to the churches, but not just the churches that's kind of out there, but what he's saying to me, how are you going to spend the rest of your days? I wrote down a few things, you know, everybody's trying to redefine the church or define it. What is the church? Well, you don't have to worry about that. Jesus already told you my father's house.

Here's what it is. It's called a house of prayer. And I'll build my church.

And the cornerstone he laid in the book of Acts was that mother church, that model church, Jerusalem. And they were always together. How could they assemble and and keep all those people by praying? And you see in Acts chapter four, the first recorded prayer.

We'll look at that if we ever have this conference. The first recorded prayer of the church was for power. And the next one was for purity.

You see God teaching the church. The church is the greatest witnessing tool when she's right on the planet. The greatest need in America is for the church of the Lord Jesus, whether she's Smyrna or whether she's Laodicea or whether she's Sardis, whatever she is, that she be filled with the Holy Spirit and deal with the specifics that God has spoken to her and is speaking to let God be God.

It really teach us how to pray. What is the main consciousness of your church? What is it that motivates you? Wouldn't it be something if you could have a secret ministry and see the world change the praying together and really turn into a group of real warriors? You know, you can see giving increase. Tithes can build a church, but only tears will bring it to life.

Real tears, tears that are agreement with God. Well, here's here's what I wrote down to ask you all at the end. I wrote this down.

I'm skipping so much that I had because I've just long winded and verbal apologize. But what would you say is the most noticeable characteristic of the church in America today? What would you say are the most noticeable characteristics? It's I don't think it's prayer. I don't think it's praying the word of God and being available.

I just don't. But we have this idea we can have a growing church while we have at the same time a shrinking prayer. It's almost spiritual insanity to think that you could have a growing church with a shrinking prayer ministry.

But as prayer begins to flourish, prayer transforms and we quit trying to serve God in our own puny and weak strength. How is it with you tonight? This is what I wrote down. May I ask you and myself, how is it with you and your heavenly father? How's your personal prayer life and praying with your family? How long since I've experienced a real flow in prayer? And you just don't understand, Al.

It's just so hard to spend time alone. But with God, it's just hard. Well, have you ever said that about baseball? If you love baseball, it's just so hard to go out and play baseball, or if you love to fish, it's just so hard to get out there and throw the fish, the line out to the fish.

Or when you first fall in love, you say, this girl, it's just so hard to spend time with her. I mean, it's just like I can't wait to see her, even if I get together and act like some crazy person. I can't wait to spend time with her.

Well, so that's the indication you see. Do you love to spend time with him? And if you don't, are you willing to examine your hearts and say, Lord, teach me to pray. God, please rekindle the flame of my first love.

I didn't lose it. I left it. It never says we lost it.

If you lose it, you may never know where you left it. But where it is. But if you left it, you can say it's when I took that new job.

My schedule changed and I quit making my time with you, Lord. Teach me. And I want to be available.

I want to enter. I want the next years of my life to really count. And I want to confess my prayerlessness is not just a mistake, but it's sin.

And I've left you out of my thinking. And I want to just I want to see you change it. He's not going to condemn you.

He's not going to fuss at you. I just want a new beginning in prayer and I want to be faithful. And that's what he wants for it to be for you and me to be simplified and to.

Be broken before him and to let him be God. Well, I don't really know how to end this, except to say that, you know. I think the Lord is driving the church to her knees.

In America. You look overseas and revival doesn't mean that America starts waving flags again and loves who we are and kind of this religious patriotism. Listen, conservatism without God is just as godless as liberalism without God.

Doesn't matter if you're conservative and throw in the name of Jesus a few times. What really matters is, does God have a home in you? And is he a fellowship with my mind and heart? And can he get from me what he wants to put in and through me? And can he trust me with it? Well, it won't be so unless unless I know him. Daniel says the people that do know God.

Will be the strong ones and they'll do the exploits when it's all said and done, it'll be those you think about standing before God after certain people you read about, and it's just very, very scary. But see, that's not the measuring stick of what you've produced. What's the measuring stick is, is have we been obedient? I'm convinced, like, for example, the little down syndrome fellow that loves Jesus, that walks around saying, praise the Lord, he has just as much reward as somebody like Dwight Moody if he's been faithful to what the Lord showed him.

And so. I love you guys. And, you know, I think we have to be honest with each other.

I don't know how long I have left. I don't know what the future will hold. One night I was praying and the Lord asked me a question.

I was thinking about what could happen in our day if they really decide to do it like they're doing in Austria and in Australia, they use something as a cover to come and collect the Christians that set the devil. Our real enemy is the devil. You know, it's not doctors, it's the devil.

But I'm saying he wants to get rid of the church. He wants to castrate her or make her sterile so she can't produce anything. He wants to take away the weaponry of God.

He wants to turn our gold shields into brass ones, lookalikes. And so I was thinking of what could happen that they could come and arrest us if we've been preaching. You know, you've spoken out against gender.

Are you spoken out against transgender? You're against them. They could throw you in for a lot of reasons. If the situation is dire enough, just like the yellow star in Germany.

So similar to what's going on today. But suppose, Al, they came and they got you. They knocked on your front door and they just grabbed you by the arm and jerked you out.

I didn't have time to get a Bible. I didn't have time to kiss my wife goodbye. And they took me out to this van and threw me in the back after they they beat me with rods and one of my legs broke and I'm injured.

I'm in a van. They take me off to this holding place. And there I am alone in a cell that is terribly dark and dingy.

I don't have my Bible. I don't have fellowship. I'm in pain.

I don't have anything that I'm familiar with. And I'm there. I think I'm forgotten.

Nobody will ever know about it. And I felt like the Holy Spirit asked me a question. Al, how much of your Christianity is left now? And I was floundering.

I couldn't answer it. And I felt like the Holy Spirit answered me to my mind. He said, the real part.

That's what's left. Fellowship with me. It blew me away completely.

Then a couple of years later. I was in D.C. for that meeting I was telling you about for the National Prayer Committee. And in the Reagan building, there was a banquet one night and Mike Pence was coming to speak to about maybe a thousand people that were sitting there.

And we were all sitting out in the audience. We've been through security and all that. And we're all out there.

And before Mike Pence came, there was an interview being conducted by one of the preachers, and he was interviewing the guy that was the missionary, if you remember, in Turkey, remember that fellow that was in Turkey. He was there for 13 years as a missionary. And all of a sudden he was arrested and he was thrown into prison and in solitary and nobody could get him in or out.

And his wife couldn't even see him hardly except a few times. And he was there all by himself. Brunson was his last name, in case you have forgotten Brunson.

But eventually, eventually, Trump got him out by putting billion dollar pressure on Turkey and they let him go. And Brunson came to the White House, if you remember, and he got on his knees and he prayed publicly and thanked the Lord for his deliverance. And he prayed for the government in our country and thanked the Lord and it made quite a stir.

But Brunson was being interviewed because he'd been 13 years as a missionary. And then he had been almost two years in solitary confinement alone for no reason forgotten. And he was being interviewed.

And someone said, well, Mr. Brunson, what was it like there in prison? Tell us about how the Lord sustained you and how it was. And I think they were expecting some God is so great. He gave me what I needed.

And Brunson looked at the people and he says, while I was in there, I want to tell you what disappointed me was my own lack and my own weakness and my own great need. And I said, I was so depressed and I was so hopeless. I felt like and I wasn't just this modicum of faith.

I was so alone. And if my wife ever did get to see me, the one thing I wanted to know is, is the church praying for me? Is the church praying? That's the only thing you want to know. And he was there for some time.

He thought he'd never get out. And one day when he was really, really trying to pray and alone, it's like the Lord showed him a picture of this long line of people. And he was in that line and it was moving toward the front.

He was moving up slowly toward the front and he was getting closer to the front. And he said, Lord, what is that? What is that picture you're showing me? And he said, the Lord answered him and said, this is the line of those who've suffered for my namesake. And you see how you you've moved up to the front and now it's your turn, your privilege to suffer for my namesake, great as your reward.

And he stopped and he looked out at the audience of the people and he said, and, you know, we're all in that line and you're moving forward to a time when you will suffer for his namesake because all who are governing Christ Jesus will be persecuted or suffer. The Church in America, he and then he stopped when he said that, he said, he said, everyone in this room is in that line. And he looked out and he put his hand up and said, and I want to tell you, American Church, you're not ready.

You could have heard a pin drop. You could feel the impact of such a moment as that when the Holy Spirit says to us to get our hearts ready and to learn to pray and to walk before the Lord and the beauty of total surrender, holiness to his name. So that night really impacted me because we think we're ready, but we got to really count the cost and really see that the one thing that's needful is to learn to commune with the Lord Jesus.

Well, I've taken a lot of your time. Thank you so much. Let me just pray.

Father, teach us to pray, not just to say prayers, but to really come to a place in a position of really knowing your ways and learning how to stand in the gap, learning how to pray your word back to you and to lay hold of not the promised land, but the land of promises, the place of faith where we stand before you, bow before you and we're sprinkled with the blood and we come in boldly to obtain grace and mercy to help in a time of need. Show us how to negotiate the pitfalls of this hour and to learn the methods and the wiles and the strategy of the enemy and learn how to answer every man and learn how to give heavenly words to earthly hearts so that the conviction would come because it's first flowed through a surrendered heart. Teach us how to walk in the fullness of your life and not just try to sponsor you in some safe way.

Teach us how to stand in the truth and love and sacrifice and humility. And these are not easy things to pray. But if we're going to see your will to be done, it's got to be like that.

Teach this precious evangel church how to pray and what to pray and to pray, to make time and not to but you have to not find it. You got to make it. Teach them how to prioritize.

Teach me how to prioritize. Teach us as a church across this land, not to just call a prayer meeting successful because we say words. Teach us how to agree on the will and heart of God, how to see that will be done.

Have mercy upon us. No nation that's ever seen revival, Wales, India, China, wherever it's taken place. Nobody has ever prayed enough or done enough to deserve your outpouring of what you've done.

And so we stand before you as needed tonight. We don't deserve a thing, but we plead with your mercies so that we could make you pleased and you could see your church and and we'd commune with you and you'd you'd be honored and blessed by your people. May we not waste our time.

Let me redeem our time. May we see that time spent with God is never wasted. Never, never.

Even if we don't understand it, stewardship with mystery teaches how to receive in prayer and to give in obedience to others and to stand in the gap. I don't even know how to pray or what to pray in this moment. But I pray that you will grip every heart and show us how to lay hold of, as you say, eternal life for our families, for our own heart with you, for our churches and for others.

So that when we stand before you, we will truly be able to hear well done, good and faithful servant. So we pray this tonight that you'll teach us to pray in the name of Jesus.

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