

Praying Effectively for the Lost

By

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UNDERSTANDING THE NECESSITY

The lost **will not** and indeed **cannot** be saved unless someone prays for them. This is a shocking statement that sounds unbelievable until we view the Biblical portrayal of the lost as being: children of the devil (John 8:44), under the authority of Satan (Acts 26:18), a strong man's house (Mark 3:27), prisoners of war (Isaiah 14:17) and blinded to the gospel (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

All of these are daunting reasons why we must pray for the lost if they are to have any hope of salvation. But let's focus just on spiritual blindness for a moment. II Corinthians 4:3-4 says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, **lest** the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This passage clearly teaches that Satan has blinded the minds of the lost **specifically** to keep them from understanding the gospel.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says, "The blinding or veiling of the mind, mentioned in II Corinthians 4:3-4, causes a **universal incapacity** to comprehend the way of salvation, and is imposed upon unregenerate man by the arch enemy of God in his attempts to hinder the purpose of God in redemption. It is a **condition of mind** against which man can have **no power**" (Chafer 57).

One of the greatest preachers of all time was Charles H. Spurgeon. Listen as he shares the testimony of his conversion: "I confess that I had been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs about Jesus. I had heard the Gospel **continually**. Yet, when the Word of the Lord came to me with power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of Central Africa and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing foundation filled with blood, drawn from the Savior's veins.

When for the first time I received the Gospel and my soul was saved, I thought that I had never really heard it before. I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the Gospel fully preached **many hundreds** of times before. This was the difference: I then heard it as though I did not hear it. When I did hear it, the message

may not have been any clearer in itself than it had been at former times, but the power of the Holy Spirit was present to open my ears and to guide the message to my heart.

Then I thought I had never heard the truth preached before. **Now** I am persuaded that the light shone often on my eyes, but I was blind; therefore, I thought that the light had never come there. The light was shining all the while, but there was no power to receive it. The eyeball of the soul was not sensitive to the divine beams” (Spurgeon 26-28).

Spurgeon’s testimony is a powerful illustration of how ineffective the gospel is to a mind that is blinded to it. Sharing the gospel with those for whom no one has prayed is like encouraging a blind man to view a beautiful sunset with you. It is a hopeless case, for he is blind. He cannot see!

And unless the Holy Spirit removes the demonic blinders and opens his mind and heart to the gospel, he cannot be saved because the things of God are “foolishness to him” (I Corinthians 2:14). The Greek word for foolishness is “moria” from which moron is derived. Webster’s defines moron as “the highest classification of mental deficiency, above imbecile and idiot.” So, a lost person sees the gospel as moronic and stupid, but it is the “strong man” in his life that causes this negative attitude toward the gospel.

To try to share the gospel with someone in this condition (which includes every lost person for whom no one is praying) may even do more harm than good. Jessie Penn-Lewis says, “Until we recognize the strong man ‘fully armed’ at the back of all darkness of thought, and blindness to the Gospel, we shall not do much towards bringing men out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. And until we know how to take heed to the Lord’s warning and **first** bind the strong man, the attempts we make to ‘spoil his goods’ will only **enrage** him, and enable him to strengthen his armour, and guard his palace in peace” (Penn-Lewis 42-3).

Once we understand the importance of praying for souls to be saved, we must learn **how** to do it. In the January, 1979 issue of Fullness Magazine, Manley Beasley wrote an article entitled “Praying for the Lost.” This is his opening statement: “Praying for the lost is an area about which much is said but little is known or understood.” It is like trying to open a locked safe without knowing the combination; no matter how valuable are the contents, we eventually get frustrated and quit.

But eternal souls for whom Christ died are much too valuable for us to quit. Therefore, we must learn **how** to pray effectively for them. As a matter of fact, it may be **your** prayer that keeps someone out of hell. The well-known revivalist Charles G. Finney said, “In the case of an impenitent friend, the very condition on which he is to be saved from hell may be the fervency and importunity of **your** prayer for that individual” (Finney 54).

Jesus did **only** what He saw the Father do (John 5:19). Likewise, we should do only what we see our Lord doing, and what is He doing – “He ever liveth to make intercession” (Hebrews 7:25). We make a grave mistake by labeling some Christians as intercessors. This tends to imply that the rest of us are relieved of the responsibility – **NOT SO!!!** All of us are to do what we see our Lord doing – praying for others.

So, let’s learn how to pray effectively for the lost and join our Lord in doing the main thing.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS

One of the most powerful means of praying effectively involves presenting strong reasons to God why our prayers must be answered. He even commands us to do this in Isaiah 41:21, “Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your **strong reasons...**”

The strongest reasons are always Biblically-based, and there are many such reasons concerning prayer for the lost. I like the way F.J. Huegel expressed it, “If we find a way to harness our puny plea for help to the great purposes of God in the proclamation of the Gospel and the furtherance of Christ’s Kingdom, then we begin to pray with the spirit and vigor of a Paul or a David Brainard or a George Muller or a Praying Hyde, and we **must** be heard and **great** things will be wrought” (Huegel 80).

One of the foremost reasons for praying for the lost is our **love** for them. Prayer has been described as “love on its knees.” Certainly, it was God’s love for mankind that brought Jesus to the cross; it was love for his five brothers that compelled the rich man in hell to pray for them “lest they also come to this place of torment” (Luke 16:27-28); and love will lead us to the place of intercession.

The historic Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago has been mightily used of God to rescue hundreds of souls tottering on the precipice of hell. And it is no surprise to me that the eighteen foot neon sign “PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION” included the reminder MOTHER’S PRAYERS HAVE FOLLOWED YOU. Only eternity will reveal the incredible number of souls that have been saved through the tears and prayers of a mother’s love! Indeed, love is our greatest asset in the saving of souls.

Faith is another Biblical basis for praying for the lost. Jesus said, “**All** things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). All things certainly include the salvation of souls. If you can believe God for someone’s salvation, you shall have it.

Four men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus and, **seeing their faith**, He said, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mark 2:5). Though they brought him to be healed, he also received forgiveness of his sins. This

is a wonderful display of the power of faith. Indeed, faith is the coin of the kingdom.

One of my favorite reasons for praying for the lost is the mighty **power** the Bible ascribes to prayer. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man **availeth much**,” according to James 5:16. We can’t even begin to understand how incredibly powerful prayer really is, for it exerts the most potent influence of any kind in all the universe.

“Prayer is work of such a sublime order that it lies beyond the imagination of men. For when the Christian prays, his capacity to achieve and his power to do good are multiplied a thousand, yea, a hundred thousand fold. This is no exaggeration, the reason being that when man prays, God works” (Huegel 10).

When the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan during World War II, some 92,000 people were killed. But when Assyria besieged Jerusalem causing King Hezekiah to cry out to God on behalf of his people, He sent an angel that slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. Hezekiah’s prayer was **twice** as explosive as the atomic bomb!! If prayer is strong enough to destroy armies, how much more certain is its power to save souls!

If we had no Biblical basis for praying for the lost other than the fact that God **expects** us to, this would be enough. God was “stunned” when He could not find a single intercessor for Israel (Isaiah 59:16). This tells me that He was expecting to find some.

Listen to Andrew Murray’s comments on God’s seeking for intercessors: “He often had to wonder and complain that there was no intercessor, no one to stir himself up to take hold of His strength. And He still waits and wonders in our day, that there are not more intercessors, that all His children do not give themselves to this highest and holiest work, that many of them who do so, do not engage in it more intensely and perseveringly. He wonders to find ministers of his gospel complaining that their duties do not allow them to find time for this, which He counts their first, their highest, their most delightful, **their alone effective work**” (Murray 114).

God has placed praying for others the **number one priority** in our lives. Hear the cry of God’s heart, “I exhort therefore, that, **first of all**, supplications, prayers, **intercessions**, and giving of thanks, be made for **all men**...who will have **all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:1-4).

The Greek word for first is “proton” and is defined in Strong’s dictionary as being first or foremost in time, place, order, or importance. Since God desires for all men to be saved and since no one can get saved without prayer, is it any wonder that prayer tops the list of things God would have us to do?

Also among the powerful incentives for us to pray for the lost are Biblical **examples**. The greatest example of all is the Lord Jesus Himself. The prophecy in Isaiah 53 says that Christ “made intercession for the transgressors.” This prophecy was literally fulfilled when on the cross He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus should be our constant pattern in praying for others because He is still doing it!! He is our Savior and Lord, King of Kings enthroned in heaven and yet He continues to pray for others even now. Hebrews 7:25 blows my mind, “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing **He ever liveth to make intercession** for them.”

The Apostle Paul is another good example to follow. “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved” is his compassionate confession in Roman 10:1. In Born For Battle, R. Arthur Mathews describes **my prayer** as the “end of the divine search for a man to stand in the gap and to intercede for a people doomed to destruction by their own sin and headstrong rejection of God’s authority in their natural life” (Mathews 104). The only question for us is, “Will we follow their example?”

Although there are many other strong Biblical bases we could cite for this type of intercessory prayer, I want to mention just one more – God has made it our **responsibility!!**

Being members of God’s “holy priesthood” (I Peter 2:5) makes us responsible for others because priests represent earth to heaven. Our primary task is to stand between mankind and God pleading their case to Him. This is exactly what Aaron did when he took a censor and stood between the living and the dead to halt the plague of death caused by Israel’s sin (Number 16).

Since all of us who are saved are priests, all of us have the responsibility to intercede for the lost, and if we don’t, they will spend forever in a lake of fire. Let S.D. Gordon’s poignant plea speak to our hearts: “I cannot resist the conviction – I greatly dislike to say this, I

would much rather not if I regarded either my own feelings or yours. But I cannot resist the conviction that there are people in that lower, lost world who are there because someone failed to put his life in touch with God, and pray” (Gordon 194-95).

My prayer is that you will allow these powerful Biblical reasons to inspire you to pray for the lost as never before.

THE PERSONAL FACTORS

There are two factors or conditions involved in **every** answered prayer – **righteousness and faith**. The **imputed** righteousness of Christ, which comes through His shed blood, is what gives us boldness to approach His throne of grace. It is absolutely indispensable for effective prayer. But **personal** righteousness is also crucial, for Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will **not** hear me.” Perhaps Jesus summed it up best when He said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). In other words, obedient Christians get their prayers answered!!

The other necessary factor in all answered prayer is faith. This is an unbreakable law in the spiritual realm. It is **always** “according to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29). Unbelief is continually our besetting sin and it is more often than not the cause of unanswered prayer.

So when we pray for the lost, we need righteousness (imputed and personal) and faith. But there are eight other factors that are particularly important for this task. The first of these is **brokenness**. “They that sow in tears **shall** reap in joy” is the law of spiritual harvest. However, we want the harvest without the heartbreak. Leonard Ravenhill once said, “God does not answer many prayers – they are too locked-up in self-pity or aimed at personal benefit. **He does answer desperate prayer**” (Ravenhill 110). And until we get desperate for souls, our prayers for them may remain unanswered. For just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so must we weep over our lost loved ones if we really want to see them saved.

On one occasion some Salvation Army workers wrote to General Booth decrying their ineffectiveness in winning souls and asking what they should do. He sent back a two-word message, “Try tears.” Tears are so **potent** that when coupled with sharing the gospel, God guarantees a fruitful harvest (Psalm 126:5-6).

Another important factor is **travail**. This pictures the excruciating agony and pain of childbirth as seen in Isaiah 66:8, “...as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children.” Strong’s dictionary defines

travail “to writhe in pain; to fall grievously with pain.” Luke 22 speaks of Jesus being in an agony and His sweat as great drops of blood. Most of us have never been here in our prayer life, which is why we don’t see phenomenal results in winning the lost to Christ.

Jesus described the experience of salvation as being “born again.” Just as a mother experiences labor pains in giving her baby physical birth, the same is true in the spiritual realm. Paul speaks of “travailing in birth again” for the spiritually immature Galatians he had won to Christ. But even as a man cannot fully appreciate the severity of the labor pains his wife experiences because he does not give birth, neither do most Christians understand the necessity of travailing for souls since some **ninety-five percent** of professing Christians never win a single soul to Christ!!

One of my heroes is John “Praying” Hyde, a missionary to India who literally gave his life praying for souls to be saved. In 1908 he prayed for God to give him a soul every day. That year he won over four hundred to Christ. The next year he prayed for two souls a day (not just to pray a prayer, but to be baptized and consecrated to Christ) and won over eight hundred to Christ. Then in 1910, he prayed for four souls a day and God granted his request. But during this year as his health was failing, a friend persuaded him to visit a doctor. For us to understand the tremendous toll of travail for souls let’s listen to what the doctor tells him: “The heart is in an awful condition. I have never come across such a bad case as this. It has been shifted out of its natural position on the left side to a place over on the right side. Through stress and strain it is in such a bad condition that it will require months and months of strictly quiet life to bring it back again to anything like it’s normal state. What have you been doing with yourself? Unless you change your whole life and give up the strain, you will have to pay the supreme penalty within six months” (Carre 44).

There is a price to pay if we would join our precious Lord in agonizing for the deliverance of souls from the kingdom of darkness, but it will be worth it all! Therefore, let us join that noble band that “loves not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11) and victory will be ours.

Through the many vivid word pictures in the Bible concerning the plight of the lost, we can easily see why **persistence** in prayer becomes a necessary factor. Isaiah 14:17 describes the lost as being prisoners whom

Satan refuses to release. Acts 26:18 tells us that they are under the authority or jurisdiction of Satan. Perhaps the most frightening description of all is that given by Jesus in Mark 3:27 as a strong man's house. He even tells us that "no man" can help those individuals until the strong man is bound.

Some controlling demons are so strong that prayer and **fasting** is required to gain the victory (Mark 9:29). Persistent prayer is necessary because of Satan's **reluctance** to give them up, **not** because God is unwilling to save them!!

Satan is even able to control entire countries and cultures. This is why it is often so difficult for missionaries to be effective in reaching some people groups. "It was seven years before Carey baptized his first convert in India; it was seven years before Judson won his first disciple in Burmah; Morrison toiled seven years before the first Chinaman was brought to Christ; Moffat declares that he waited seven years to see the first evident moving of the Holy Spirit upon his Bechuanas of Africa; Henry Richards wrought seven years in the Congo before the first convert was gained at Benza Mantaka" (Gordon 139-40).

One of Satan's favorite tactics is to make the situation look so impossible that we get discouraged and quit praying. The reason he does this is that he has absolutely **no defense** against prayer. The old saying is true that Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees. All prayer is warfare and, when you pray, Satan is being defeated even though you see no change in the circumstances.

However, if we could see what is happening in the spiritual realm when we pray, we would be greatly encouraged. Remember how God opened the eyes of Elisha's servant so he could see the horses and chariots of fire protecting them from the enemy (II Kings 6:17)? So, keep on praying for the lost whether you **see** results or not because your prayers are being answered!!

The most incredible case of this kind of persistence is found in the life of George Muller. Because he had much success early in his ministry in seeing the immediate conversion of many for whom he had just prayed, he got the impression that it would always be that way. But listen to his testimony concerning this, "If I say that during the fifty-four years and nine months that I have been a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ I have had **thirty thousand** answers to prayer, either in the **same hour** or the **same day** that the requests were made, I should not go a

particle too far...But one or the other might suppose all my prayers have been thus promptly answered. No, not all of them. Sometimes I have had to wait weeks, months, or years; sometimes many years...In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed **every day** without one single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land or on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God, and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day I continued to pray for them, and six years more passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remain unconverted. The man to whom God in the riches of His grace has been given tens of thousands of answers to prayer, in the self-same hour or day on which they were offered, has been praying day by day for nearly **thirty-six years** for the conversion of these two individuals, and yet they remain unconverted” (Steer 246-47).

But this is not the end of the story. He kept on praying day after day, year after year and then he said, “The great point is never to give up until the answer comes. I have been praying for **sixty-three years and eight months** for one man’s conversion. He is not saved yet but he will be. How can it be otherwise...I am praying.” The day came when Muller’s friend received Christ. It did not come until Muller’s casket was lowered in the ground. There, near an open grave, this friend gave his heart to God. Prayers of perseverance had won another battle. Muller’s success may be summarized in four powerful words: “He did not quit” (Eastman 99-100).

Because prayer is warfare, I want to suggest that **aggression** is important in intercession. God has given us incredible authority (Matthew 16:19), and it is imperative that we exercise it, especially in world evangelization (Matthew 28:18-20).

We are over-comers (Revelation 12:11) and “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37), and God expects us to “come upon” the strong man who is **fully armed** and **overcome him** in order to “spoil his goods” (Luke 11:21-22). As we have already seen, Satan holds souls captive and he will not give them up without a fight! But we must ever be aware that the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God” (II Corinthians 10:4). When we are battle-ready in God’s

armor and with God's weapons, we **fight by praying** (Ephesians 6:10-18).

God has mightily empowered His church to aggressively assault and conquer the "gates of hell." Yet, we sit passively by, allowing hell to "enlarge herself, and open her mouth without measure" (Isaiah 5:14). I was stirred by Ravenhill's graphic way of stating this tragedy – "There is a **suffocating indifference** in the church to the peril of judgment" (Ravenhill 80).

Just as a small wooden stake is able to hold a huge elephant because he has been trained to believe he can't get loose, so the church of the living God has been so deceived by Satan concerning our mighty power (Ephesians 1:17-23) and authority that we **no longer try**. And he continues to imprison our loved ones while we languish in lethargy and unbelief.

Satan refuses to acknowledge his ultimate defeat; he refuses to surrender any of his dominion until he must; he fiercely and bitterly contests every action against himself, yielding only what is **forcibly wrested** from him (Newell 27). Therefore, it is time for us to get aggressive in the war for souls, for the kingdom of heaven "suffereth violence and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

When it comes to praying for others, **pleading** is very effective. Many are the Biblical examples: Abraham for Sodom (Genesis 18), Moses for Israel (Exodus 32), Hezekiah for Judah (II Kings 19) and the list goes on and on. Pleading basically means that you present to God a Biblical reason why He should answer your prayer. The Lord even instructs us to "bring forth our strong reasons" (Isaiah 41:21).

A.T. Pierson says, "We are to argue our case with God, not indeed to convince Him, but to convince ourselves. In proving to Him that, by His own word and oath and character, He has bound Himself to interpose, we demonstrate to our own faith that He has given us the right to ask and claim, and that He will answer our plea because He cannot deny Himself" (Pierson 150).

Spurgeon felt strongly about the power of pleading. He said, "It is the habit of faith, when she is praying, to use pleas. Mere prayer sayers, who do not pray at all, forget to argue with God; but those who would prevail bring forth their reasons and their strong arguments and they debate the question with the Lord...Oh, brethren, let us learn thus to plead the precepts, the promises, and whatever else may serve our turn;

but let us always have something to plead. Do not reckon you have prayed unless you have pleaded, for pleading is the very marrow of prayer” (Spurgeon 49-50).

George Muller took the first five words of Psalm 68:5, “A father to the fatherless,” and repeatedly used the phrase to plead for his orphans. These are his own words: “By the help of God, this shall be my argument before Him, respecting the orphans, in the hour of need. He is their Father, and therefore has pledged Himself, as it were, to provide for them; and I have only to remind Him of the need of these poor children in order to have it supplied” (Pierson 143).

I am quite sure that there are hundreds of Scripture verses we can use in pleading for the salvation of souls, but for the sake of time and space allow me to mention just a few. We can plead the **purposes of God** for man (Jeremiah 1:5), (Luke 19:10), (II Peter 3:9), (Acts 26:18) and (Ephesians 2:5-7). We can plead the **promises of God** concerning salvation (John 3:16), (John 1:12), (Romans 10:13) and (John 6:37). We can plead the **power of God** to save (Hebrews 7:25), (Romans 1:16), (I Corinthians 2:4-5) and (I Peter 1:3-5). We can plead the **personage of God** in His relationship to man as Creator, Redeemer, Father and Lord. We can plead the **attributes and attitude of God** toward man such as His love, His mercy, His grace, His gentleness and His longsuffering. My favorite plea involves His **past performances** in saving others: Ninevah (a city so wicked that God had already earmarked it for destruction), the Gadarene demoniac (who wore no clothes, lived among the tombs, was so fierce no man could approach him, an outcast of society, filled with a legion of demons, worse than anyone we will ever know), Saul of Tarsus (wreaking havoc of the church) and the entire towns of Lydda and Sharon (Acts 9:35).

Another crucial factor which can be so subtle as to make literally years of praying totally ineffective is our **motive!** Our primary motive in praying for the lost must be for God’s glory (John 15:8). But many times our motives are poisoned with pride and selfishness. Parents may be praying for their “black sheep” out of pride for the family name without even realizing their motive is impure.

I prayed for years for my brother-in-law without seeing any results whatsoever. But when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer and my prayers became more fervent, God revealed to me that all those wasted prayers were tainted with selfishness. You see, the real reason I wanted

him to get saved was so that my sister would have a better husband and my nephews and niece would have a better daddy. Therefore, God **could not** answer my prayers for him. However, when my motive became pure, God saved him!!

The Bible is crystal clear at this point: “Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). If you have been praying for a long time for a particular person (especially a family member or close friend) without seeing results, you may want to check your motive to see if it is pure (primarily for God’s glory).

In a court of law the opposing attorney can “object” to a line of questioning, a particular argument or the presenting of certain evidence that he believes to be outside the bounds of legality. If the judge agrees he will “sustain” the objection which renders the non-legal tactics null and void. The same is true in the spiritual realm. We may very eloquently plead the case of our lost loved one, using dozens of strong Biblical reasons, **but** if our motive is wrong, Satan “objects” and God must agree with him, rendering all our prayers and pleadings null and void!! And the one for whom we are praying will die and go to hell **if** we do not get our motives right.

Another integral element of intercession is a **sacrificial spirit**. We find this demonstrated in the apostle Paul who was willing to be “accursed from Christ” for the salvation of his Jewish people (Romans 9:3); in Moses who fasted and prayed **another** forty days and nights because of the sins of his people (Deuteronomy 9:18-19); in Esther who declared, “If I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).

When I was teaching a seminary extension class on Personal Evangelism, I printed up some prayer list cards with the inscription “I’ll Go To Hell For You.” The idea was to list the names of people for whom we would be willing to go to hell in their stead and pray accordingly. At the next class meeting, after having distributed the cards to my students, one of them, a pastor, said, “I don’t think that I am willing to go to hell for anyone.” He pretty much spoke for all of us. Although God would not allow for us to take another’s place in hell, it sure would increase the effectiveness of our prayers for them if we were so willing!!

All other things being equal, **unity** is the **most powerful** factor in praying for the lost. It usually yields **immediate** results!! Just as a

magnifying glass can ignite a fire by capturing the diffused rays of sunlight and concentrating them on one specific spot, so can Christians unitedly praying for a particular person rout the strong man and focus the power of **the Son** on his life.

This is what happened in the conversion of William Carey's son Jabez. It was during the annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society being held in London that Dr. Ryland, being heavily burdened for Jabez said: "Brethren, let us send up a united, universal, and fervent prayer to God in solemn silence for the conversion of Jabez Carey." As though the Holy Ghost had suddenly fallen upon the assembly, the whole congregation, of at least **two thousand** persons, betook themselves to silent intercession. Carey soon received a letter from Jabez telling of his conversion, "and the time of the awakening was found to accord almost exactly with the **hour** of this memorable intercession" (Gordon 87-88).

Jim Cymbala tells how he agonized in prayer for his daughter Chrissy for two-and-a-half years with no visible results. Then during a Tuesday night prayer meeting at Brooklyn Tabernacle, a young lady felt impressed that they should pray for Chrissy. That night "the church turned into a labor room. There arose a groaning, a sense of desperate determination, as if to say, 'Satan, you will not have this girl. Take your hands off her – she's coming back!'" And **thirty-two hours** later she did (Cymbala 63-65)!

When the pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Jones, Louisiana, challenged his congregation to write on a slip of paper the name of someone they wanted to see converted and were willing to commit themselves to pray for that person, eighteen people wrote "Mike Doles." In **two weeks** time he was gloriously converted.

After eighteen fruitless years of praying for her husband to be saved, Helen Gresham asked her pastor, Mickey Hudnall to help her pray. With the two of them praying together for Ricky, he was wonderfully converted in less than **two months!** And you will be delightfully amused at all the things God engineered in his life during that two-month period as you read his testimony. By the way, he did not know that his wife and her pastor were praying for him.

Let's recount the awesome power of unified praying for the lost: two thousand prayed for Jabez Carey and he was converted that very hour, several hundred prayed for Chrissy Cymbala and she was

repenting within thirty-two hours, eighteen prayed for Mike Doles and he was saved within two weeks, two prayed for Ricky Gresham and he was totally transformed in less than two months!!

Hey, if you can get somebody to help you pray for your loved one, you will see dramatic results!! For two can chase ten thousand in the spiritual realm (Deuteronomy 32:30) and two “agreeing together” in prayer will **always** receive their request according to the Lord Himself (Matthew 18:19).

Let me tell you why unified praying for the lost is so powerful. First and foremost is the incredible value God places on unity among His people. This is the Lord’s desire evidenced in His prayer for us (John 17) where five times He prays that we “may be one.” Also the number one thing on God’s list for us to do is to “pray for all men...that they may be saved (I Timothy 2:1-4). Now, since unity is **fairly rare** and intercessors are **extremely rare** (God could not find even one in Israel – Isaiah 59:16), when you bring these two together – **unity in intercession** – you have something that is **doubly rare**. And God finds it so precious that He richly blesses it beyond our wildest imagination!!!

The second reason is really simple – there is only one strong man controlling a person’s life. When several of God’s people come against one strong man, he is easily defeated because “greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world” (I John 4:3-4). And then the “spoiling of his goods” is a relatively easy matter. Many times the lost person will even come to you looking for help. This was the case with Jimbo Barrentine. I covenanted with his wife Rachele in January to pray for him. Two months later he was under such crushing conviction that he came to my office looking for me. But I was in Arkansas teaching this material in a prayer conference, so he went to the home of another preacher in our church to find the way of salvation. He couldn’t wait for me to get back; he had to get saved right then and there!

The third reason is that pride is broken. Satan inhabits pride just as God inhabits praise. And until someone is humble enough to ask for prayer help, the devil is usually able to keep controlling the situation. And besides this, God Himself “resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”(James 4:6). On several occasions as I have tried to witness to a lost husband, the wife would begin to tell me about his good qualities. Her pride would not allow her to accept his wretched condition before God. Consequently, I never won any of those men to Christ.

THE SPECIFIC REQUESTS

Most of us encounter difficulty in praying for someone to be saved because all we know to do is say, “God, please save so-and-so.” We feel foolish in praying that one statement over and over again, so we usually give up and quit. However, this kind of praying involves four areas: the individual, the soul-winner, the word of God, and revival. When we learn to pray for specifics in these areas, our intercession becomes challenging and effective.

To begin with, we pray for the individual by name, asking the Lord to do five things in his life. First of all, we ask the Lord to **sanctify** him. This may sound strange but this is how God begins His work of redemption in every individual’s life. He always sanctifies or “sets apart” a person for salvation **before** He saves him.

The Bible clearly teaches this truth in I Peter 1:2, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through **sanctification of the Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...” We see the same emphasis in II Thessalonians 2:13-14, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through **sanctification of the Spirit** and belief of the truth...”

It is like God draws an invisible circle around the person and **then** begins to bring his influences to bear there. It is easy to see that whatever comes “inside” that circle **directly and mostly** affects the one already in it. When God Himself gets in that circle, incredible things begin to happen, as you will see when you read the personal testimonies later in the book.

This wonderful truth is a great encouragement to those of us praying for others because we can rest assured that the Holy Spirit who is the Lord of the harvest **always** gets his man, once He sanctifies him! A college student, professing to be an atheist, once wrote to C.S. Lewis explaining that he had fallen in with some Christian students who were vigorously witnessing to him of their faith. Some of the things they said had unsettled his thinking; he was going through some great struggles. What did Dr. Lewis think? Lewis wrote back: “I think you are already in the **meshes of the net** – the Holy Spirit is after you. I doubt you will get away” (Dunn 118).

Now we ask the Lord to **ble**ss him. When Jesus sent His disciples into “His harvest,” He gave them specific instructions to “**first** say, Peace be to this house” (Luke 10:1-5). Since it is **always** the **goodness of God** that leads individuals to repentance (Romans 2:4), it is imperative that we implore God to liberally bless them.

But sometimes when our prayers for the salvation of others do not bring speedy results, we tend to get frustrated and impatient, secretly desiring for God to “teach them a lesson with the rod of trouble.” When a certain village of Samaritans rejected the Lord, His disciples wanted God to burn them to a crisp on the spot. He rebuked them saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:52-56). If we are to emulate our dear Savior, we must continually desire God’s best for all people. We should especially ask His very best blessings upon those for whom we pray.

Thirdly, we ask the Lord to **convict** the individual, since conviction is absolutely necessary for salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can bring someone under conviction, so we would do well to plead John 16:8-11 in our prayers. Conviction basically means to **convince of a fault**. The fault or problem of the lost is in “not believing on Jesus” and this is **THE SIN** of which the Holy Spirit convicts (John 16:9).

People already know what their “sins” are, except for the sin of unbelief in Christ. Since this is the **only** sin that condemns one to hell, Satan keeps them blinded to it. Therefore, the Holy Spirit convicts or convinces the lost at this **one and only point**, revealing to them the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, so they can be saved. However, we must know that conviction does not automatically guarantee salvation. As Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled...” (Acts 24:25). But there is no Biblical indication that he ever got saved.

Next, we ask the Lord to **illuminate** his mind to the truth. Even after one comes under conviction of his need for salvation, his gospel-blinded mind may remain closed to the light of the glorious gospel of Christ and he will remain in spiritual darkness (II Corinthians 4:6). Once the heart and mind has been opened to the truth, God uses Christians to explain the gospel to him. Although the Ethiopian eunuch was a seeker for truth, and had come to Jerusalem expressly to worship and even

owned a copy of Scripture, he admitted that he could not understand “**except** some man should guide me” (Acts 8:26-39).

An even more fascinating story is that of Cornelius (Acts 10). He was “a devout (holy) man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave alms to the people and prayed to God always.” Hey, he was much better than most Christians we know, and yet, he was still lost – he **did not understand** the way of salvation. He was instructed by an angel to send for Peter who would, “tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” Cornelius and those with him were so open to the gospel that as soon as they heard “the word,” the Holy Ghost fell on them and they got saved **while Peter was still preaching!!**

Ask the Lord to open the minds and hearts of the lost – He will! Then, they can be gloriously saved.

Now we are ready to ask the Lord to **save** him. However, we must be willing for God to do **whatever it takes** to facilitate his salvation, for God orchestrates events in his life designed to bring him to repentance.

In commenting on Luke 19:10, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” Chafer says, “It must mean more than a mere attempt to locate unsaved men, for they are present on every hand. The term suggests a divine preparation of the unsaved that will bring them into **adjustment** with the necessary conditions of salvation” (Chafer 3-4).

Tony Fontenot’s family had prayed for his salvation for several years. Their prayers seemed to have been in vain until May 22, 1982. On that faithful day he crashed his plane and nearly burned to death. God had his attention – the rest was easy!

Once the individual is ready to receive the gospel, someone must share it with him. So the natural thing to do is to pray for the Lord to send someone to do that. As a matter of fact, this is exactly what He tells us to do, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; **pray ye therefore** the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Because the laborers are **few**, which means “puny in extent, degree, number, duration, or value” (Strong’s Dictionary), we must pray for God’s help in this area. We first pray for Him to **send out more** workers. The Greek word “ekballo” has the idea of using force – to thrust out, to cast out, to throw.

Remember the difficulty God encountered in getting Jonah to Ninevah to preach His word? God literally “forced” him to go! A similar situation occurred when the church was evidently reluctant in propagating the gospel beyond their comfort zone. God allowed a “great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1), but “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

Since the laborers are not only few in number but also puny in **duration and value**, we ask the Lord to equip them with the essential qualities that will make them effective witnesses. However, we must understand that all of the equipping comes through the precious Holy Spirit. Samuel Chadwick says, “The power of the Spirit is inseparable from His person...God does not let out His attributes. His power cannot be rented. It cannot be detached from His presence...He is not simply the Giver of power, He wields it. No one else can” (Chadwick 89).

This is why Jesus commanded His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until “ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 1:4-5). Then He said to them, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye **shall be witnesses** unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Although the fullness of the Holy Spirit is our birthright (Acts 2:38-39), the church as a whole knows very little of the “exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Ephesians 1:19). Consequently, all around us souls are plunging blindly into hell for we are powerless to stop them without a mighty enduement of God’s Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must pray for the Lord to fill His workers with His Spirit, equipping them with power (ability and force), boldness (Acts 4:31), wisdom (Proverbs 11:30), zeal (Colossians 4:12-13), compassion (Jude 22-23) and divine insight (Jeremiah 33:3). **And souls shall be saved!!!**

After we have prayed for the individuals to be saved and for the workers to witness to them, we now pray for the word of God that is to be shared with them. The reason for this is twofold: first of all, no one gets saved without hearing the word of God (Romans 10:14) and, secondly, Satan hates the word of God, continually and viciously attacking it in his diabolic efforts to prevent people from receiving it.

Since the word of God is necessary to convict (Acts 2:37), to free (John 8:32), and to save (I Peter 1:23) the lost, Satan vigorously opposes it with distractions (Luke 8:11-15), fortifications (II Corinthians 10:4-5), and substitutions (II Corinthians 11:3-4).

The word of God is to Satan as kryptonite is to superman – it makes him weak and defenseless. It also decimates his kingdom by freeing his captives for “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). But notice, it is not the truth that sets you free, but rather the truth you **KNOW**. So, Satan does everything he can to keep people from “knowing” the truth.

In explaining the parable of the sower to His disciples, Jesus said that Satan comes **IMMEDIATLEY** and steals away the word **before** the person can understand it (Mark 4:15). This is why it is imperative that we pray for the word of God that is being shared with the lost.

In praying for God to use His word to convert the lost, we make five specific requests. First, that His word will “have free course” (II Thessalonians 3:1). This simply means to be **unhindered**; that Satan could in no way stop the flow of God’s word. He tries to stop it in every way he can imagine, from hindering and harassing the messenger of the word, to distorting the word, to destroying the printed copies of the word, to casting doubt on the word, ad infinitum!

Next, we pray for God’s word to be **glorified** (II Thessalonians 3:1). This means to be highly esteemed and honored among those who hear it. We will have a new reverence for His word when we see that He has “magnified thy word **above** all thy name” (Psalm 138:2). Actually, God is His word incarnated. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:1, 14).

We also pray for God’s word to be **multiplied** (Acts 12:24); for one of the laws of harvest is: “He that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully” (II Corinthians 9:6).

We also pray for God’s word to **prevail** or exercise force (Acts 19:20). Just as a small seed can crack a concrete slab as the force of life bound up in it begins to emerge, so does the seed of God’s word planted in a heart.

My favorite prayer for God’s word is that it will be **effective**. Acts 14:1 says that they “**so spoke**, that a **great multitude** both of the Jews and also of the Greeks **believed**.” We can plead Isaiah 55:11, “So shall

my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but **it shall accomplish** that which I please, and **it shall prosper** in the thing whereto I sent it.” God intends for His word to be effective; ask Him to make it so and you will be praying in His divine will and your prayers will be answered!!

Let me remind you that Judas Iscariot lived in **constant contact** with the living Word of God and yet he died and went to hell with Jesus saying, “It would have been better for him if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21). The Pharisees – the most religious people of their day – wore the word of God on armbands and could quote large portions of scripture, yet they were as far from the kingdom of God as one could get.

We must understand that it is **only** as the Holy Spirit quickens the word in the hearer’s heart, that one can be saved. This is why we must pray for God’s word to be effective in the lives of those hearing it!!!

If we really want to see multitudes saved, then we need to pray for **revival**. The classic scripture on revival begins this way, “If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and **pray...**” (II Chronicles 7:14). The kind of praying noted here is intercession – praying for others. It was only after Job prayed (same Hebrew word as above) for his friends that God dramatically changed his own situation (Job 42:10).

During times of revival, all prayer is almost **exclusively** for others. Duncan Campbell describes revival as “**a people saturated with God**” (Edwards 26). When people are saturated with God, they are more concerned about others than about themselves. His passion for souls becomes theirs!!

Listen as Finney describes the prevalence of prayer during times of revival: “I have said, more than once, that the spirit of prayer that prevailed in those revivals was a **very marked feature** of them. It was common for young converts to be greatly exercised in prayer; and in some instances, so much so, that they were constrained to pray whole nights, and until their bodily strength was quite exhausted, for the **conversion of souls** around them. There was a great pressure of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of Christians; and they seemed to bear about with them the **burden of immortal souls...**it was very common to find Christians, whenever they met in any place, instead of engaging in conversation, to fall on their knees in prayer.

Not only were prayer meetings greatly multiplied and fully attended...but there was a mighty spirit of secret prayer. Christians prayed a great deal, many of them spending hours in private prayer. It was also the case that two, or more, would take the promise: 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven' and make **some particular person** a subject of prayer; and it was wonderful to what an extent they prevailed. Answers to prayer were so **manifestly multiplied** on every side, that no one could escape the conviction that God was daily and hourly answering prayer" (Finney 141-42).

Just a cursory reading of revivals quickly reveals that hundreds, thousands, and even millions of souls are converted to Christ during these times. Jonathan Edwards even considered revival to be the **major means** God uses to extend His kingdom (Edwards 26). So, if you want to see souls saved, **pray for revival!!!**

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The primary purpose in praying for the lost is **NOT** to convince God to save them for He is “not willing that **any** should perish” (II Peter 3:9), having sent Christ to die for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). But rather, it has to do with spiritual warfare – freeing them of demonic influence so they can be saved.

A brief review of the Biblical description of their desperate situation will help us understand this critical truth. The lost are prisoners which Satan refuses to release (Isaiah 14:17), slaves under Satan’s authority and jurisdiction (Acts 26:18), children of the devil (John 8:44), blinded to the gospel (II Corinthians 4:3-4), “energized” by Satan (Ephesians 2:2), helplessly held in Satan’s grasp (I John 5:19), and a strong man’s house (Mark 3:27).

Just a little elaboration on some of these scriptures will give us a clearer picture. For example, Ephesians 2:2 says, “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” The Greek word for worketh is *energeo* – “to energize.” This means that the lost are literally “energized by the spirit of the devil. Of course, a lost person doesn’t know that, and certainly would not admit it if he did. He thinks he is free (that’s part of his lostness), but in truth **his course of action is dictated** by the prince of the power of the air” (Dunn 120).

Let’s look at I John 5:19, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” This means the whole world (including its inhabitants) lies utterly prostrate under the influence of the wicked one. Webster’s dictionary defines prostrate “to lie with the face downward in abject submission; to be completely subjugated.” Concerning this verse, Stott says of the world, “It is ‘in the evil one,’ in his grip and under his dominion. Moreover, it **lies** there. It is not represented as struggling actively to be free but as quietly lying, perhaps even **unconsciously asleep**, in the arms of Satan. The evil one does not ‘touch’ the Christian, but the world is **helplessly in his grasp**” (Stott 193).

And then, Mark 3:27 is what I consider to be the most important verse in the Bible concerning winning the lost to Christ. In this verse Jesus Himself says, “**No man** can enter into a strong man’s house and spoil his goods, except he will **first bind the strong man**; and **then** he will spoil his house.” If this verse means anything, it means that no lost person will ever be saved unless someone frees him from the demonic influences that control him. This is absolutely the first thing that must be done. And this freeing process is accomplished through prayer!!

In order to win the war for souls, there are some basic things we need to do. The first of these is to use our God-appointed weapons. When I was drafted by Uncle Sam, part of my military training involved learning the weapons I would be expected to use in the Vietnam war. I had to get so familiar with my M-16 that I could dismantle and reassemble it in the dark because this feat was regarded as a potential life-saver in the war zone.

God has provided powerful weapons for us to use in this spiritual war. “For the **weapons** of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (II Corinthians 10:4). Our problem is that we are neither familiar with our weapons nor indeed the war itself.

But before I acquaint you with your weapons and how to use them, let me remind you that the actual combat is prayer – we **fight by praying**. I’ve heard Brother Mickey Bonner say many times that **all prayer is warfare!!** So when we aren’t praying, Satan is winning by default, but when we are praying, he is losing because he has absolutely no defense for prayer. Could this be why God wants us to “Pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17) and why the apostles gave themselves “**continually to prayer**, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4)?

Just as all physical weapons of war, whether bombers, tanks, missiles, grenades, rifles, etc., are used for one purpose – to defeat the enemy – so all spiritual weapons are used to do the same! So, let’s get familiar with our mighty weapons and use them when we pray.

The **blood of Christ** is one of our most powerful weapons. Revelation 12:11 says, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb...” Hebrews 2:14 tells us why pleading the blood of Christ in prayer is so powerful: “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Strong’s dictionary defines destroy “to render entirely useless; to make void.”

“When Satan slew the innocent Son of God, he destroyed himself...not annihilated, but destroyed. All of the legal claims which he secured upon the earth and man through Adam’s Fall are now completely cancelled; since the cross, he has absolutely no right at all upon any one or any thing. It means that all the power which he now exercises he exercises solely by deception and bluff” (Billheimer 31).

When we plead the blood of Christ, we are reminding Satan and all his demons that they are already defeated. This is especially significant in the battle for souls, since the shedding of Christ’s blood on Calvary paid the sin-debt for all mankind (I John 2:2) and now Satan holds souls captive **only by default** – because we have not insisted that he turn them loose!!

Another very powerful weapon is the **name of Jesus!** The Lord’s disciples, returning from their witnessing mission, joyfully exclaimed, “Lord, **even the devils** are subject unto us through your name” (Luke 10:17). And they are subject to us also!

There are three Biblical reasons why the name of our Lord Jesus is so powerful in the spiritual realm. Firstly, because He is Lord over all by **creation**: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be **thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers**: all things were created by him, and for him”(Colossians 1:16).

And secondly, He is Lord through **crucifixion**: “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, **the devil**; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

And thirdly, He is Lord through **coronation**: “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; **angels and authorities and powers** being made subject unto him” (I Peter 3:22).

Since we are acting in direct obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus in interceding for the lost and demanding that they be set free, their controlling demons must obey because they are subject to His name.

The **word of God** is another mighty weapon we can use in prayer. As we have already seen, pleading scriptures is really effective. The word of God is even called “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17).

Since Satan was totally stripped of his power and authority at Calvary (Colossians 2:15) (Hebrews 2:14), all he has to work with is a

lie. However, he is pretty good with it seeing as how he is able to “deceive the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). But, the word of God is “truth” and truth beats a lie **EVERYTIME**. Therefore, if we continually use the word of God in warfare prayer, we will win every time and souls will be set free!!!

Praise is another powerful weapon we can use, for when we begin to praise God, He comes into the situation (Psalms 22:3) and how wonderful it is to have the “commander-in-chief” on the scene of battle!! A wonderful testimony to the power of praise is the story found in II Chronicles 20. Judah was being attacked by a combined army from several enemy nations. The situation was so desperate that King Jehoshaphat called for all Judah to “fast and pray.” But, it was “**WHEN** they began **to sing** and **to praise**, the Lord **set ambushments** against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten” (verse 22).

Most of us have no concept of how powerful praise is in the battle for souls – could it be that we haven’t used it enough to understand its mighty power? Listen as Francis McGaw shares the crucial role of praise in John Hyde’s quest for souls: “I remember John telling me that in those days if on any day four souls were not brought into the fold, at night there would be such a weight on his heart that it was positively painful, and he could not eat or sleep. Then in prayer he would ask his Lord to show him what the obstacle was in him to this blessing. **He invariably found that it was the want of praise in his life.** This command, which has been repeated in God’s Word hundreds of times – surely it is **all important!** He would then confess his sin, and accept the forgiveness by the Blood. Then he would ask for the spirit of praise as for any other gift of God. So he would exchange his ashes for Christ’s garland, his mourning for Christ’s oil of joy, his spirit of heaviness for Christ’s garment of praise (the Song of the Lamb – **praising God beforehand** for what He was going to do), and as he praised God souls would come to him, and **the numbers lacking would be made up**” (Carre 39).

Fasting is another powerful but little-used weapon in our arsenal. It has been called the “most potent power” we have at our disposal. My personal opinion is that fasting enhances the power of prayer by at least **tenfold!**

The purpose of our warfare is to defeat the enemy and fasting is designed to do that effectively. Listen to Isaiah 58:6, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? **To loose** the bands of wickedness, **to undo** the heavy burdens, and **to let** he oppressed go free, and that ye **break** every yoke?” On one occasion when the disciples were unable to cast a demon out of a little boy, Jesus told them that “**This kind** can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and **fasting**” (Mark 9:29).

One other weapon that exerts much force in the spiritual realm is **love**. The one who loves the Lord with all of his being and loves lost souls as himself cannot be stopped!! Revelation 12:11 says, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

When you love someone enough, you will do whatever it takes to keep them out of hell. As a matter of fact, love cannot fail. Love “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things... NEVER faileth” (I Corinthians 13:7-8).

So what happens when we pray, using the weapons God has given us? II Corinthians 10:4-5 tells us: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

The weapons wielded in prayer are designed to pull down strongholds, cast down imaginations and capture thoughts. Strongholds are mind-sets that are against the word and will of God. So we can quickly see that the battle-field is a person’s mind, because we are dealing with mind-sets, imaginations, and thoughts.

It is crucial that we understand this because whoever controls the mind controls the person. If Satan can continue to control the mind of an unsaved individual, he will be able to keep him from being saved. The only way for him to do this is to keep the person blinded to the gospel, for anyone in his “right” mind will choose Jesus over Satan and heaven over hell EVERY single time! When the legion of demons was cast out of the Gadarene, and he could think and choose for himself – he not only chose Jesus but also became a flaming evangelist for Him (Mark 5:15-20).

“Man is a free agent, to use the old phrase, so far as God is concerned; utterly, wholly free. And he is the most enslaved agent on the

earth, so far as sin and selfishness and prejudice are concerned. The purpose of our praying is not to force or coerce his will; never that. It is to **free** his will of the warping influences that now twist it awry. It is to get the dust out of his eyes so his sight shall be clear. **And** once he is free, able to see aright, to balance things without prejudice, the whole probability is in favour of his using his will to choose the only right...Our prayer is 'rescue him from the evil one,' and because Jesus is Victor over the captor, the rescue will take place. **Without any doubt** we may assure the conversion of these laid upon our hearts by such praying. The prayer in Jesus' name drives the enemy off the battle-field of the man's will, and leaves him free to choose aright" (Gordon 192-94).

Now that we understand that God uses our prayers to pull down Satan's strongholds, let's see how Satan uses strongholds in the lives of people to keep them from being saved. The strongest of all strongholds is **UNBELIEF**. It is the major stronghold in every person – saved or lost!! In a Christian it is designed to keep him from really believing certain truths in God's word that will make him powerful and effective in God's kingdom. But in the unsaved it is designed to keep him from believing in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Since unbelief is the **only** sin that condemns one to hell, Satan regards it as **priceless**, guarding it with other strongholds. Any mind-set that is against God's will and word will do. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking how he could inherit eternal life, Jesus **NEVER** told him how to be saved. Rather, he told him to distribute the proceeds of his wealth to the poor. But the young man was unwilling to do this and went away just as he came – lost. Jesus knew that **greed** controlled his mind and heart, preventing him from being saved, and until that was broken, the gospel would be ineffective (Mark 10).

The stronghold of the Samaritan woman of Sychar was **lust**. She conversed with the Lord on social and historical subjects, avoiding the main issue of her life. But when Jesus plainly told her that she had been married five times and was presently living with a man – he had her attention. In this case the stronghold was shattered and she was gloriously saved (John 4).

Satan often uses **bitterness** to block out the truth of God's love and prevent it from being received. For example, a little girl is sexually molested and now, years later someone shares the gospel with her – it

will never get past the bitterness in her heart. That stronghold must be torn down by prayer before she will be able to receive the good news of God's love.

It's difficult to win homosexuals to Christ – not because God doesn't love them or because the gospel is not powerful enough or because you don't care enough. But this is such a powerful stronghold that much prayer, fasting, persistence, faith, etc. is needed to break it. And we usually get discouraged and quit before the victory is won.

One day as I was praying for one particular person, I asked the Lord to reveal to me why he continued to reject the gospel. He impressed the word "control" upon my mind. I really didn't understand what that meant. But as I got to know him better, I discovered that he controls everything within the sphere of his influence with an iron hand. Now I understand why control is the stronghold that keeps him from Christ – for in order to be saved, one must submit to Him!

Although the scope of this book does not allow an in-depth study of strongholds, I want to speak briefly to those who may be praying for someone with a major addiction problem such as drugs or alcohol. These addictions only mask the real issue. The real problem is usually a damaged ego where the self-esteem and self-image has been shattered in some way – either through rejection, abuse, or some major disappointment in life. The addiction itself only covers and compounds the problem. So ask the Lord to show you the root of the problem in order that you can get the victory.

When Eddie Smith needed to know how to help a particular counselee, he asked the Lord to show him what he needed to know about her situation. He impressed Eddie to ask her about "the country western dance." When he did, she immediately burst into tears and screamed, "Who told you about that?" Then she related her story that at age fifteen she reluctantly accompanied her friend to a country western dance. There she saw her Sunday school teacher staggering around in a drunken state. Then and there she turned her back on God saying to Him, "If this is all there is to Christianity, You can have it." And then she told Eddie, "Since then, my life has been a living hell. I am hopelessly addicted to alcohol and illegal drugs. I've had multiple marriages, and I'm totally miserable." Knowing the root of her problem, Eddie was able to pray with her and God set her free (Smith 71-73).

I suppose there are hundreds of strongholds Satan uses to guard unbelief, but the fundamental truth we must understand is that there is always **one key stronghold** in the life of each unsaved individual that hinders that person from receiving the gospel. The battle is **NEVER** fought over a multitude of sins (though the individual may have many) but rather over only **one!!** That particular stronghold is the armor on which the strong man depends, but when his armor (stronghold) is destroyed, he is defeated and the person is ready for salvation (Luke 11:21-22).

Another absolutely essential element in the spiritual warfare aspect of winning souls is that of exercising our authority in Christ. He has given unto us His incredible authority (Matthew 16:19) but we must use it. “Just as the policeman on the street corner can direct the flow of traffic because of his authority, so can a believer pray for the souls of men bound and blinded by Satan and cause them to be delivered. The powers of darkness find their strength is broken through the blood of Jesus Christ; and when we exercise our authority in Him, they can no longer withstand us... God has called us to be instruments through which He can exercise His authority. Let us by faith accept this position and stand firm regardless of the opposition. He will then be able to do things through us that we never dreamed of” (Epp 108-10).

Legally, all souls belong to Christ because He paid for their sins on Calvary (I John 2:2). But Satan, illegally and forcefully, continues to hold them captive, resolutely refusing to let them go. And he will continue to hold them bound in spiritual darkness until we take our rightful place and exercise our throne-rights by demanding their immediate release on the basis of Christ’s shed blood and our delegated authority from Him.

There is absolutely no reason for even **one single soul** to die and go to hell because Christ has already paid their redemption price. And the **only reason** why anyone will go to hell is that we have **not** taken our place of authority and bound the strong man, insisting on their salvation. The devil will not release them until we make him.

General Jonathan Wainwright, along with other allied prisoners of war, was incarcerated on the Island of Formosa. Although the war was over and the Japanese commandant knew that, he neither told his prisoners nor released them. But shortly an allied plane landed on the island with news of victory. Then General Wainwright announced to the

Japanese commandant, “My commander-in-chief has defeated your commander-in-chief. I’m in charge now.” And this is what we do, announcing to the strong man (the chief demon in a person’s life), “My commander-in-chief has defeated your commander-in-chief. I demand the immediate release of this illegally-held captive.” And if we **insist**, the release and rescue **will take place!!!**

The last but incredibly important element in praying for souls is to continually **RESIST** the devil. We are instructed to put on God’s armor (Ephesians 6:10-18), so that we can “Stand against the wiles (methods) of the devil...able to **withstand** (resist) in the evil day.” When we really get serious about the salvation of souls, Satan uses difficult circumstances either in our lives or in those for whom we are praying in an effort to make us back off and quit. This is why a husband or teenager for whom a wife or mother is praying will often tend to get worse instead of better – Satan wants them to quit praying, for he is losing his grip on those souls!!

So, to resist the devil means that you do not let the negative reactions, circumstances, etc. stop your continued fervent effort of prayer. When something, such as asbestos, is fire resistant that means it is unaffected by fire. Something that is water resistant, means that it is unaffected by water. To be Satan resistant means that, no matter what he does, it does not affect you, you just keep on praying for your lost loved one’s salvation.

The most amazing display of resisting Satan for a soul is in the following testimony heard by Charles Blanchard who was president of Wheaton College for forty-three years. He verified it to be true and recorded it in his book, Getting Things From God, as quoted below:

Friends, about two and a half or three years ago I was in the hospital in Philadelphia. I was an engineer on the Pennsylvania Lines, and although I had a praying wife, I had all my life been a sinful man. At this time I was very ill, I became greatly wasted. I weighed less than one hundred pounds.

*Finally the doctor who was attending me said to my wife that I was dead, but she said: “No, he is not dead. He cannot be dead. I have prayed for him for **twenty-seven years** and God has **promised me** that he would be saved. Do you think God would let him die now after I have prayed twenty-seven years and God **has promised** and he is not saved?” “Well,” the doctor replied, “I do not know anything about that, but I know that he is dead.” And the screen was drawn around the cot, which in the hospital separates between the living and the dead.*

*To satisfy my wife, other physicians were brought, one after another, until **seven** were about the cot, and each one of them as he came up and made the examination confirmed the testimony of all who had preceded. The seven doctors said that I was dead. Meanwhile my wife was kneeling by the side of my cot, insisting that I was not dead – that if I were dead God would bring me back, for He had promised her that I should be saved and I was not yet saved. By and by her knees began to pain her, kneeling on the hard hospital floor. She asked the nurse for a pillow and the nurse brought her a pillow upon which she kneeled.*

*One hour, two hours, three hours passed. The screen still stood by the cot. I was lying there still, apparently dead. Four hours, five hours, six hours, seven hours, **thirteen hours** passed, and all this while my wife was kneeling by the cotside, and when people remonstrated and wished her to go away she said: “No, he has to be saved. God will bring him back if he is dead. He is not dead. He cannot die until he is saved.”*

At the end of thirteen hours I opened my eyes, and she said, “What do you wish, my dear?” And I said: “I wish to go home,” and she said: “You shall go home.” But when she proposed it, the doctors raised their hands in horror. They said, “Why, it will kill him. It will be suicide.” She said: “You have had your turn. You said he is dead already. I am going to take him home.”

I now weigh 246 pounds. I still run a fast train on the Pennsylvania Lines. I have been out to Minneapolis on a little vacation, telling men what Jesus can do, and I am glad to tell you what Jesus can do (Blanchard 94-95).

There are only **two reasons** why any prayer for the salvation of souls will remain unanswered: either there is sin or unbelief in the one doing the praying, or else Satan is hindering the answer. So, if you get your life right (John 15:7) and keep on praying, the answer will come, for Satan cannot continue to hold out against bold, fervent warfare praying!!

Now in a war, plans must be made. The soldiers don't just go around everywhere shooting at anything. The same is true in prayer warfare for souls – we need a strategy. Let me give you several that are extremely effective.

The **ultimate** strategy is for the entire church to give itself continually to prayer. The early church did this: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14) with amazing results – “and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41) and “many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about **five thousand**” (Acts 4:4).

In another prayer meeting “the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31) with a continual

harvest of many souls: “**multitudes** both of men and women” (Acts 5:14), “the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly” (Acts 6:7), and “all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon... turned to the Lord” (Acts 9:35). And there are many other passages in the book of Acts describing similar accounts. If the church of today would follow the prayer example of the early church, it would experience the same kind of evangelistic results.

Another very productive strategy is to form **prayer groups**. The ideal set-up in most churches would be Sunday school classes or home cell groups since they already meet on a regular basis. They could consistently and persistently pray for their combined list of lost persons until they saw them come to Christ.

Evelyn Christenson recommends **triplet praying** as being one of the most effective, yet simple methods of pre-evangelism prayer. This involves three Christians willing to discipline themselves to pray every week for nine lost souls. She describes the extremely fruitful results of this kind of praying in two Billy Graham crusades in England: “Triplets produced the greatest results Billy Graham had had up to his 1984 Mission England crusades where 90,000 Christians in England formed into groups of three for **pre-crusade praying**. Each of the three Christians chose three non-Christians, and then got together once a week for the year preceding the evangelistic crusades and prayed by name for their nine to find Jesus. The January, 1989 Decision magazine, encouraging triplet sign-ups for Billy’s 1989 Mission England II, reported that many of the prayer triplets saw all nine for whom they were praying accept Jesus **before Billy even got there!** With over 7,000 churches each having many, many triplets for Billy’s Mission England ’89, the results were earth-shattering. What a powerful way to battle Satan for souls in a whole nation” (Christenson 110)!

Prayer partners is another productive strategy in praying for souls to be saved. It is much easier to get two together than it is a larger group. A husband/wife team is great because they are usually together every day, plus their burdens for relatives, friends, neighbor’s, etc. will be similar. But any pairing of prayer partners will work. Jesus even guarantees that their prayers will be answered (Matthew 18:19).

I mention one last strategy that works well for the individual praying alone – a prayer **list!!** I, along with thousands of others, have used a prayer list for years, having seen many souls come to Christ

through this method. I leave you with a story that blessed me, hoping the same for you:

“Some years ago in Springfield, Illinois, an earnest man gathered about him a praying band and made this suggestion to them: ‘When you reach home this evening write down the names of all persons in Springfield whom you would like to have saved, and then pray for them by name, three times a day, that they may be saved. Then make your best possible efforts to induce those persons to turn to God for salvation.’

There resided in Springfield at that time an invalid woman who physically was almost absolutely helpless. She had been bed-ridden for seventeen years. She had been for a long time praying to God in a general way to save a multitude of souls. When her family told her of the suggestion made to the praying band, she said: ‘Here is something I can do.’ She could use her right hand. There was an adjustable writing table at the side of her bed. She asked for pen and paper. She wrote down the names of fifty-seven acquaintances. She prayed for each of these by name three times a day. She wrote them letters telling them of her interest in them. She also wrote to Christian friends, in whom she knew these persons had confidence, and urged them to speak to these persons about their souls’ welfare and to do their best to persuade them to repent and believe. She had unquestioning faith in God. In her humble, earnest dependence upon Him she thus interceded for the unsaved. In time every one of those fifty-seven persons avowed faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour” (McClure 124-25).

Chapter 6

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

I taught this material at Crestview Baptist Church, Farmerville, Louisiana, in May, 2002. The pastor, Brother Wayne Whiteside, wrote me a letter saying, “We have seen strongholds ripped out of peoples lives...The materials that you shared have begun a revolution in the lives of those putting into practice God’s principles of praying for the lost.”

Wayne has a God-given burden for inmates on death-row and spends much time in the prisons trying to win them to Christ. He continues his story: “A major victory involves a death-row inmate recently executed at the prison in Huntsville, Texas. He was a very dedicated Muslim, morally better than most Christians I know. I had been working with him for about two years, sharing the gospel with him and having my church pray for him – all in vain. He would write to me, ending his letters with, ‘Allah be with you.’ I never felt more hopeless or helpless over any case.

Then, about two months before his execution date in September 2002, I encouraged our church to pray specifically to bind the strong man of False Religion and to plead the blood of Christ over him. Instantly a change began to take place. He began to admit that Jesus was a good teacher and his letters now ended with ‘God be with you.’

He invited me to be present at his execution. I made the trip to Huntsville to see him one last time. How my heart thrilled when he asked me, ‘What must I do to trust Christ for salvation?’ At 3:05 p.m. he asked the Lord Jesus to save him. Fifty-one hours and twelve minutes later he was dead. Just two hours before his execution he winked at me and said, ‘I love you and I’ll be waiting for you in heaven.’ And the very last words he spoke on earth were these: ‘God forgives. He’s the greatest!’ He died with such a peaceful look on his face that even the warden commented on it.

Everything we tried to do in our effort to win this inmate to Christ was absolutely in vain until we forcefully engaged the strong man of False Religion in his life and bound him through the blood of Christ. Then we saw an immediate breaking that continued to the point of his being so open to the gospel that he even asked me how he could be saved. He is in heaven today because we learned how to pray for the lost

– especially in the area of binding the strong man like Jesus said in Mark 3:27. Thank you for speaking the liberating truth to our congregation. May the Lord grant you much success in the harvest of the last days!”

When we begin to pray for someone’s salvation, God seems to draw a circle around that individual and then gets in the circle with him. That is what happened to Ricky Gresham when his wife Helen and her pastor Mickey Hudnall began to pray for him. Here is Ricky’s side of the story: “It was during the months of February and March of 1990 that I spent some of the most miserable days and nights of my life. Though I did not understand at that time, I was under the conviction of the Holy Spirit of God. I did not know what was happening to me but I know that everywhere I turned during those two months I saw or heard something that pertained to God. It was as though every day when I awoke, there was God. People I had known for years were now telling me about the Lord. I just could not seem to hide anywhere!

I remember one day in particular while my best friend and I were riding in his truck that a friend of his stopped us on the side of the road. This fellow walked up to the truck on my side and began to talk. During the conversation, he began to talk to my friend about the Lord, encouraging him to accept the Lord as his Savior. Once again I had to listen to another word from God. It seemed like I just couldn’t hide. I sat there in the truck not uttering a word. On the one hand I wanted to hear more but on the other I wanted my friend to drive on. Finally, after what seemed to be an hour (five minutes), he drove on.

As the days went by, God showed up everywhere, day after day – even at work. At that time I was self-employed in a machine shop. There was a black gentleman that would come by and talk with me from time to time. During this time of my being under conviction, he came by the shop. In my pride I wasn’t going to ask someone I knew about the Lord. Finally, I got up the courage to ask him about the Lord. Though I wasn’t ready for his answer – He was!

He said, ‘Just a minute,’ and went to this truck coming back with a Bible that looked to be a hundred years old. He began to turn the pages of that Bible, reading the scriptures to me. I didn’t really understand what he was sharing but there is one thing with me today that I have never forgotten: ‘Ye must be born again!’ He repeated that statement over and over and over – it never left my mind!

During this time, something was drawing me to God's word. I was too proud to ask someone for a Bible, so I looked up 'Christ' in the encyclopedia, and there was a picture of Christ hanging on the cross. Something just kept drawing me to that picture of the Lord. **Night after night I would sneak around looking at that picture.**

During the next few weeks, I began to try to change myself. I had come to a point in my life that I could not stop cursing – every other word was a curse word. I desperately wanted to stop but it seemed as though I could not control it – it controlled me.

Finally, one day at work, when I was by myself, I just spoke out to God, 'Lord, I can't take this anymore, help me God. I don't understand all of what Jesus did for me on that cross, but just show me and I will follow you.' And from that day, something in me changed. I not only quit cussing, I even lost the desire – it was as if the language had never been there.

I had to tell someone what was happening to me, so I asked the pastor if I could say something to the church. All I knew to say was that God had brought me to the place of loving the Lord Jesus and being willing to follow Him for the rest of my life.

What I did not know during those two months of conviction was that my wife and her pastor had committed themselves to pray every day for my salvation – what I was experiencing was God answering those prayers. I now know that I was a product of faithful prayer, and if you have ever been there you know what I mean! I am now the pastor of a church, and I am continually experiencing more and more of God's grace."

When we pray for God to save someone, we must be willing for Him to do whatever it takes to draw that person to Himself. Wesley Deuwel says, "Many prayer answers require the wills of certain people to submit to God's plan. God does not shuffle people around like checkers on a board. He persuades by many **influences and pressures** that he brings upon people" (Deuwel 262). However, the pressure can become very intense! This was the case with Tony Fontenot: "I was born into a Christian family with many prayer warriors, including my mother, grandmothers, aunts and uncles. Though they had been praying for me for many years, I kept doing things 'my way.' But when God tries to deal with us and we just keep doing it our way, He allows things to

happen to us that can be very traumatic. And I can assure you that **He will get our attention!!**

God got my attention on May 22, 1982. I had just finished spraying chemicals on a soybean field and was flying back to our base when my plane crashed in an isolated area of trees and burst into flames. I was on fire too!! After rolling on the ground to extinguish the flames, I stood up and saw that my shirt was completely burned away and the skin on my arms was hanging down from my fingers, resembling spider webs. I was also blind in my right eye and fluids were coming out of my body – I knew I was in a bind.

I began to yell for help but there was no one to hear. I ran until I became so weak that I could not go on. I lay down under a tree and that is when I began to pray. I asked God to please let someone find me and not let me die. All of a sudden things began to happen; it felt like Someone reached down and picked me up and energy began to flow through my body. With new strength I began to run again, finally spotting a pickup truck. I approached the truck, yelling for help. A man working on some equipment looked up, and seeing my condition, rushed me to the hospital. I was then transferred to John Sealy Burn Center in Galveston, Texas, spending the next two months in the intensive care unit.

Through this traumatic ordeal, God finally had my attention. In November, 1982, Brother Lee Thomas preached a revival meeting at Indian Village Baptist Church. During this time he shared the gospel with me and I trusted Christ to save me. He said to me, ‘Tony, this plane crash may have been the greatest thing that has happened in your life because through it you found the Lord.’ I agreed!!”

Oswald Chambers says, “When we pray for others, the Spirit of God works in the unconscious domain of their being that we know nothing about, and the one we are praying for knows nothing about, but after the passing of time the conscious life of the one prayed for begins to show signs of unrest and disquiet... It is that kind of intercession that does most damage to Satan’s kingdom. It is so slight, so feeble in its **initial stages**, that if reason is not wedded to the light of the Holy Spirit, we will never obey it” (Chambers 102-03). This was the situation with Jacob Williams. Although he was under conviction for a long period of time, it was only when the prayer burden for his salvation intensified among his family and friends that salvation came. Here is his story: “I

was in my early teens when we moved to Westwood Baptist Church. Then I was immediately convicted, but I kept fighting that feeling every time I went to church. After a while the feeling diminished and I had no desire even to go to church. My mother really pressured me to go to church so I stayed away from home as much as I could. I was also involved in a very bad relationship with a girl and things seemed to get worse.

At this point, my family began to have a heavy burden for me. It was around Christmas when they really began to seriously pray for my salvation. Since I was coming home late at night to avoid my family, sometimes Dad would stay up so he could talk to me about my spiritual condition. I kept telling him that I got saved when I was thirteen, but we both knew that was not true.

During this period of time, I was under heavy conviction – getting saved was constantly on my mind, but I just kept resisting. Finally, in late February, I could hold out no longer – I asked the Lord to save me. Then, I found out that many people had been praying for me during that time, not only my family but also many people from the church. My younger brother, Josh, even had the youth group praying for me. I'm so glad God answered their prayers!!”

Rachele Barrentine was in a despondent state when she asked me to pray for her husband's salvation. His drinking and gambling and staying out all hours of the night had her totally defeated – it seemed that her prayers were useless. However, the devil wants us to feel this way so we will quit praying. Yet, one of the most interesting works of God is the **sudden crushing conviction** of the individual when there has been absolutely no indication of His prior influence in a person's life. This is the way it happened to Jimbo Barrentine: “Although I grew up in Westwood Baptist Church, I was so full of myself that God had no place in my life. Trouble seemed to pursue me. After marriage and the birth of my son, I found myself back in church, but I was just going through the motions. I was so self-absorbed that divorce was inevitable, and after losing my family, my life was basically just hell on earth.

I thought life would be better after I married Rachele, but I was wrong – it wasn't good at all. And to make matters even worse, she got saved! Then my bad habits really intensified because I stayed out all hours of the night drinking and gambling so I wouldn't be in her convicting presence.

I was out drinking and gambling all night on Tuesday, March 13, 2001. When I got home that Wednesday morning, I knew I had to have God in my life; I just couldn't live like this anymore. I went to the church to talk with Brother Lee about being saved, but he was out of town. So I drove to my Uncle Bob's house, knowing he could help me for he is a preacher and I know that he and Aunt Faye had been praying for me for many years.

Aunt Faye (my mother's sister) even told me that if I had been her husband, she would have given up on me a long time ago. I am so glad Rachele didn't give up on me, for that Wednesday morning I sincerely trusted Christ to save me and He has wonderfully changed my life."

Tears have been called "**liquid prayers.**" Perhaps they are the most powerful prayers of all! I discovered how powerful they are while conducting a funeral in Moss Bluff, Louisiana, for a dear lady I had pastored several years before in Orange, Texas. At this funeral, a man walked up to me, extending his hand for me to shake, saying, "You don't know me do you?" I said, "No sir, I don't believe I do." He said, "I live in Buna, Texas, and I read in the newspaper that a Lee Thomas was conducting this funeral. I came to see if you were the Lee Thomas I remembered." He told me this story: "My name is James Lynch. I was reared in a Christian home, but when I was living in Orange, Texas, I was a chronic alcoholic, hardly able to keep a job. One day as I sat in my living room suffering from too much to drink and confused about life, you knocked on my door.

I invited you in and just about as soon as you entered my home, I saw tears beginning to well up in your eyes. You told me that Jesus loved me and wanted to save me, but alcohol had such a hold on me that I refused God's offer of salvation.

You knelt by my chair and with tears streaming down your face, you begged me to trust Christ to save me. My heart was touched and I wanted to, but I couldn't – alcohol controlled me.

For three years those tears haunted me. Not a day passed without my seeing you on your knees, begging me with tears in your eyes to repent and trust Christ. After resisting God for those three years, I did repent and God gloriously saved me and called me to preach. I have been preaching His word for several years now. I believe that if you had not come by my home that day, I would be lost without God and already dead and in hell."

It took over sixty years of daily prayer by George Muller to bring his friend to Christ. It took three years for tears to bring James Lynch to Christ. Yet, Jabez Carey came to Christ, the very hour two thousand Christians prayed for him, proving that the most effective way to pray for the lost is through unity!

This was the key to Mike Doles' salvation. Here is his story: "I grew up in New Hope Baptist Church, but I never trusted the Lord to save me. As a teenager I watched my school mates join the church, but I didn't. I watched my brothers and sister join the church, but I didn't. I believed in the theory of everlasting life and I knew that trusting Christ was the right thing to do, but I just didn't do it.

Although my mother was continually praying for me, nothing really happened until the night the pastor asked the congregation to write on a piece of paper the name of someone for whom they would be willing to pray to be saved. He later told me that he collected eighteen pieces of paper and that my name was on every one of them. Shortly after they began to pray for me, I began to feel empty and hollow inside and this feeling intensified until I began to read the Bible and to ask the Lord to show me what to do.

I had already been going to church on Sunday morning and on March 1, 1998, two weeks after these eighteen people began to pray for me, the Lord told me to step out into the aisle and take the first step and that He would do the rest. That was the beginning of my life with the Lord. Although I wasted the first forty-nine years of my life by resisting the Lord, now I know that our duty as Christians is to use all our resources to help spread His word. And this I intend to do with every opportunity He gives me!"

Chapter 7

MAKING A COMMITMENT

This book was not written to sit on a shelf somewhere, but rather to penetrate your heart with this awful piercing truth: someone's eternal destiny is in your hands – someone will die, and go to hell unless you pray!! Andrew Murray contends that intercession is indispensable, even the chief element in the conversion of souls: “There is a world with its perishing millions, with intercession as its **only hope**. How much of love and work is comparatively vain, because there is so little intercession...Souls, each one worth more than worlds, worth nothing less than the price paid for them in Christ's blood, and within reach of the power that can be won by intercession” (Murray 112).

My prayer is that this book will be your constant companion as you absorb its truths, becoming the mighty intercessor for lost souls that God so desperately wants and needs you to be. As you read this poem by Sandra Goodwin, I hope your heart will be stirred to say, “Yes, Lord, I'll take the job.”

TRAVELING ON MY KNEES

Last night I took a journey
To a land across the seas.
I didn't go by ship or plane –
I traveled on my knees.

I saw so many people there
In bondage to their sin,
And Jesus told me I should go,
That there were souls to win.

But I said, “Jesus, I can't go
To lands across the seas.”
He answered quickly, “Yes, you can –
By traveling on your knees.”

He said, “You pray, I'll meet the need.
You call, and I will hear.
It's up to you to be concerned
For lost souls far and near.”

And so I did, I knelt in prayer,

Gave up some hours of ease,
And with the Savior by my side
I traveled on my knees.

As I prayed on, I saw souls saved
And twisted persons healed.
I saw God's workers' strength renewed
While laboring on the field.

I said, "Yes, Lord, I'll take the job.
Your heart I want to please.
I'll heed Your call and swiftly go
By traveling on my knees."

(Lundstrom 207-08)

My God-given burden is to see multiplied thousands of God's people become prayer warriors interceding for souls. And I would be wonderfully blessed if you would let me know that you are joining me in the most glorious, powerful and effective of all ministries – praying for the lost!!

Also, if there is **one** particular person you **desperately** want to see saved, send me his/her name and relationship to you, along with any pertinent information that would give me insight into the situation and I will agree with you in prayer for his/her conversion according to the Lord's promise in Matthew 18:19. But, I ask that you do this **only if** you are desperate enough to pray according to the principles I have shared in this book. I would also ask that you inform me of God's working in the situation, especially when salvation comes!

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