

Persevering in Prayer

—part 2

BY PASTOR BRIAN BRODERSEN



Praying ... being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:18

In this issue, we will conclude our look at prayer taken from Paul's admonition in Ephesians 6.

Be Watchful

Paul says to be watchful in prayer. Be alert; be on your guard. It is the picture of a sentry at his station, watching out. You're vigilant, looking out: What's going on? Is there danger? Are there things developing on the horizon? We must pray for those things. How many situations might be radically altered if we would but commit ourselves to prayer.

The film *Faith Like Potatoes* is about a farmer from South Africa named Angus Buchan. After accepting Christ, he began to share the Gospel and to be used by the Lord. In South Africa, there was much political unrest and racial tension; many of the farmers were being killed by rogue groups. In addition, the land was in a severe drought. Angus has a burden to gather God's people together—by the thousands—and pray for South Africa. The Lord miraculously opened up the local rugby stadium. At the first prayer rally, a crowd of 35,000 people—astonishing for its size and for being a racially mixed group—came to hear him share about God and to pray for rain. This was in the late 1990s, and it has continued for almost two decades, with crowds numbering up to 200,000. They are watching out for their country; they are committed to intercede and to see God work—not just once, but on a continual basis.

Persevere in Prayer

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.”

Luke 18:1

Not only do we need to be watchful in our prayers, but also we must persevere. Sometimes God answers prayer immediately, but often, we don't see an immediate answer. We discussed how, earlier in Luke's Gospel, Jesus told us to “ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9b)—and that, in the original language, the verb tense means that we are to keep on asking. We're to keep on seeking, keep on knocking. Even when we don't see results, we must continue to bring the matter to God.

Consider George Muller, a Christian evangelist from the 1800s who cared for thousands of orphans, with few resources, by being a man of prayer. He prayed for many unbelieving friends to come to Christ, five men for whom he prayed for 50 years. The first person was converted after about 10 years of prayer, the second after 20, and the third after 30. At the 50-year mark, George Muller saw one more person come to Christ, and then Muller died. At his funeral service, the fifth man received the Lord. Muller never saw it, but God answered his prayers. Somebody asked him at one point, “Do you think God intends to answer these prayers?” His answer, “Well, I can't imagine God would keep me praying all these years without an intention to answer.”

Serious prayer takes perseverance, and it is hard work. Paul spoke of laboring in prayer (Colossians 4:12). Sometimes prayer comes fairly easily, but other times you find yourself groaning and agonizing for someone, and you wonder if it's making any difference. Don't lose heart, Jesus said. Keep on praying.

A Ministry of Prayer

Paul said we are to make “*supplication for all the saints*” (Ephesians 6:18b). Supplication means to entreat God, to request or petition—and notice, he says for all the saints. Are you bored in your Christian life? Do you feel useless? You can pray for all the saints!

Pray for every pastor who is a true servant of God. Pray that God will pour out His Spirit upon those pastors, anoint them with fresh empowering, keep them from evil, and give them clear wisdom and direction in how to lead God's people. You will be doing a tremendous service to the body of Christ.

How many situations might be radically altered if we would but commit ourselves to prayer.

Pray for evangelists and missionaries, those who are sharing the Gospel. Pray that God will give them the power to keep proclaiming. Pray that God will arrange for them divine appointments. Pray that God will open the ears of those who hear them that they might receive Christ.

Pray for Sunday school workers—those unsung heroes in the church. How many people walking with the Lord today are doing so because a Sunday school teacher impacted them in their youth?

Pray for Christian families all over the nation, all around the world. Pray God will bless dads and moms and husbands and wives and children.

Think about the amazing privilege, the ministry of prayer. One day, we will realize that the people we thought were the most important, the ones that everybody saw, weren't really the key persons involved in building the kingdom. In the end, we will realize it was the people behind the scenes praying. And this ministry is available to everyone! So, pray always, pray in the Spirit, be watchful, persevere, and pray for all the saints. You can bless the church of God and radically impact the world through prayer. ☞