

Importunity in Prayer

Paul Washer | illbehonest.com

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before You in the name of your son, Jesus. I praise You for Your presence, for Your kindness, for Your smile, favor, grace abounding to the chief of sinners, mercy, a good portion of Your Spirit. Father, You know me. You know my great limitations. You have taught me to trust Thee, oh God. Lord, I praise you and I love you. I worship You, Oh God. Let every tongue be silenced. Let Your presence be with us. Your presence, real and abiding, life giving, changing everything it touches. God help us. And help us Lord in such a way that men will know that we have been helped. In Jesus' name, Amen.

It is always very difficult for me to come to a place like this. I don't really fit. I feel most comfortable in the bush, on the mission field. And I don't mean it as an insult. I feel more comfortable actually in large churches filled with people who've gathered in the name of Jesus but do not know Him. I'm here today, and well, Brother Riddle has forgotten more, probably, than I've ever learned. Some of you are better well read than I am. You know more. What can I tell you?

But I can ask you this... How much did you pray this morning? How much do you tarry before the throne of God every day? There's a scary thing to me about this Reformed, Puritan, Biblical, sovereign grace resurgence. Oh, I love the doctrine. We rejoice in the Puritan doctrine, do we rejoice in the Puritan piety? Do we know the experience of David Brainerd? Have we cried out all night, in the snow, in the woods, exposing ourselves to the elements or whatever may be required. Do we even believe anymore, that the presence of God can come into a place and lay every person low? Do we know the power of the Holy Spirit? Do we know the presence of God in such a way that it seems to literally disintegrate us? And then put us back together again.

Oh, dear brothers, there's so much to be done in this world and the power of the flesh will not accomplish it and the power of the intellect will not accomplish what must be done. It is the power of the living God, and I don't understand the mystery, I can't defend the reason, but I know this, that apart from prayer, abiding, enduring, believing prayer, we're as dead as a doorknob with all our doctrine. How I need God! I feel sometimes I can't breathe unless I have Him!

Some of you know. And maybe you have forgotten. You remember those times of tarrying in His presence. And you knew God was there, not just because of a doctrine that told you He was omnipresent, but that the presence of His was manifest in that room with you. Once that has touched your life, you can't live without that. I'm not talking about some charismatic experience. I'm not talking about something that was foreign to the fathers, theological fathers that we most love and honor. Read Edwards. Read Brainerd. Read my dearest, Charles Spurgeon. Read Flavel. We have Scripture and we are to be wise in it. Our people perish for a lack of knowledge, you know that. But knowledge itself, in this book, is supernatural, is it not? It does not come by the wrangling of reasoning, necessarily, it comes also through the revelation of God, and that is a spiritual matter. Our people perish for lack of knowledge. They need God's

Word, but they need the Spirit of God to reveal it. We need the Spirit of God to touch our mouths to touch our hearts, to touch our lives, as preachers, as pastors. We can't live without this!

Oh, that some of you would tear yourself away and go into the woods and not return for a week! That you would climb up one of these mountains and grab rocks from the ground and throw them to heaven and say, "I will not surrender this wrestling until you touch my life! Until you change me! Until there's something of God on me!" I'm so tired of words. Yet words are precious. But without the Spirit of God, it's nothing. Oh, to know Him!

Brothers, I have sometimes jokingly said that when a Jehovah's Witness knocks on my door and they say "We're Jehovah Witnesses," I will open up the door and say "Well, come on in, so am I!" And I let them talk for about 10 minutes and I'll say "You're not a witness for Jehovah. You are lying about Jehovah." Now why do I do it that way? Because I heard a man years and years ago say, "I will not allow a cult to steal my name from me, my heritage from me." Now... nor will I allow TV preachers and evangelists, many of them heretics, and movements, to steal the Holy Spirit from me. I will not be afraid of him. I will not turn in my heritage or my mantle as a man of God, because other people speak falsely with regard to the Spirit of God and His power upon their lives. I will not!

I have a book here. And in this book is that book of Acts. And I see in that book, mighty works of God. It's not the 'acts' of men, it's the 'acts' of God through men. And I see things that, apparently, Christ saw that His men needed. Do you realize they saw Him resurrected and yet some still doubted? They were still afraid, and it wasn't until the mighty wind of the Spirit of God blew through them, was poured out on them! There's so much wrangling today about the text and we miss the entire meaning of the text. Yes, we have to look at it correctly to defend ourselves and our blocks from those who would interpret it wrongly, but at the same time, do not miss the point. They needed power from on high. They had seen Him die. They had seen Him resurrected. But it wasn't until the Spirit of God was poured out, in a Joel, New Testament, new covenant type way, that they were able to stand and bear witness to this Word and to Christ. There is absolutely nothing withheld from God's beloved, from Christ's beloved. There is no spiritual blessing withheld from you. There is no measure of His presence that He will deny you, but you have not because you ask not! Oh dear brother, what a banquet, what an abundance, what a sea of joy in His presence. And power to minister as though we were carried by another.

Be very, very careful. Although I do believe I am saying something you need, some of you are so worried and will even say when you leave this building, "Well, he didn't even open up his Bible until the first 15 minutes." Can't you not hear that God is speaking Biblical things are being told to you at this moment? I am not a great systematic theologian. I know my limitations. I am not a scholar. I will not stand in seminaries. And I so appreciate men who do. If it weren't for them, I don't know where the direction of my life would have gone. I so need brilliant men. I am not one of those, but the one thing I can tell you is that all my life I have been needy and I have been weak, and I have been slow, and I have been afraid, but it caused me to run to Him! And in running to Him, there is such glory! There is such power! There is such life! You see it's not just "They need correct thinking." For men to even be able to grasp with their mind, it must be a thing of Ezekiel, 'Can these dead bones live?' You see, we are to be scholars but we are also to be prophets. We are not to be business men and administrators. We are to have the power of the living God upon us. And when we proclaim the Word, we are proclaiming words to dead

men! And it must be the Spirit of the Living God who comes and raises them from the dead. And then when they are raised from the dead, but yet, not mature, they need Christ formed in them. They need to reach the full stature of Christ and that 'requires' knowledge.

Again, our people perish for lack of knowledge, but, oh my dear God, lift up your pants and show me your knees. Was Paul not an intercessor? Was he not? Oh my dear brother, listen to me. There is nothing impossible in prayer. There is nothing impossible. There are so many believers with besetting sins in their life and they think that literally that's just always the way it's going to be. So content with slavery, instead of going to their knees and crying out to God until they're delivered from that sin. As pastors, we preach, and we preach, and we preach, but where's the demonstration of power? Yes, men are changed through preaching, but have you ever seen men changed through your prayer life. Have you ever silently labeled a few men that you were going to focus your prayer life upon and hit your knees and fought and fought and wrestled and wrestled until Christ is formed in them and you saw a maturity and a glow and a life that was absolutely unexplainable apart from the power of the living God?

Most ministers today have sold their ministry to 5th Avenue and to marketing. And to culturally sensitive business models. Church, it's absolutely pathetic! But don't sell your ministry to mere scholarship. You are a man of God! That should mean that you dwell with Him in secret prayer... secret prayer... secret prayer. Is the presence of God a reality in your life? Even that statement sent some of you trembling and afraid. Will he go off on us? Is he really not of our camp? Is he a little bit too, well, given to experience.

Again, go back and read those old books of yours. Find those men. Oh brothers, we are more than administrators. We are more than mere scholars. We are men who dwell in the presence of the Most High. Every conflict in your life, every brokenness in your body, has one purpose. It's to send you to your knees. Every conflict, every battle- today, there's no battle fought in this pulpit. It was fought this morning at 5 o'clock. It's not fought here. It's fought in prayer. It's won in prayer. The thing is done in prayer. The thing is done in prayer. I want you to look for a moment.

Go with me to Luke 18:1 "Now He was telling them a parable to show them at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." You know, I hear it very common today, even among ministers, they say "well I don't really have a specific time of prayer, I just kind of pray all the time." I do not believe them, because I have learned that practicing the presence of God and practicing prayer, it is a learned discipline. It comes from tarrying with your God. What else would you want to do? What other greater privilege has been granted to you than to tarry with God, to worship Him, to cry out to Him, to commune with Him. You see we are to pray all the time, but how do we learn to practice the presence of God? How do we learn to pray all the time? I submit to you it is by the discipline of a separated prayer life. Of getting up in the morning, early, before day.

And I have come to believe that, in fighting this battle of piety, one of the best things for me to do is this: to discover what my flesh most hates and do that first, before I'm weakened or distracted. To get up in the morning and, I will tell you this, my flesh hates prayer more than Bible study, because Bible study can actually be used for my glory. I can know more than others. I can speak better than others. If I study well, I'll be able to speak at conferences but no

one will know about my life of prayer. I will gain nothing from men, but I will gain much from God. My flesh hates prayer.

Another thing just for you young ministers, we are never to be anxious. It's funny to me that men who believe so much in the sovereignty of God would actually be anxious. But I wake up sometimes in the morning anxious. The devil uses those things as distractions. It may be some imaginary thing causing me anxiety. It may be just a little problem, but it begins to eat at my mind. So the first thing in the morning, what do I do? Philippians 4, "I'm anxious for nothing." So what must I do? Take that anxious thought, whatever it is and go to God with it immediately and clear my mind of all anxiety. Now I stand before a sovereign God. Now I'm fully convinced of it. And then pray. Pray.

Pray for what? Pray for everything. For everything. Everything. Brothers, there is a sense of being 'carried' in preaching. Where you almost... it seems as though you don't even know what directions you're being drug in to. Now again, not to say that we're not to be expositors. We need to be better expositors. I need to be a better expositor, but you can have every "i" crossed, every "i" dotted and there's no power. You know what I'm talking about. You've seen men wax eloquently, and yet your soul was not moved. Nothing was dealt with in regard to your conscience. He taught a parable specifically to let men know that they should always pray. A parable is built around this with one purpose, that you would always pray and the Lord is not here preaching something He did not practice. The incarnate God was a man of prayer. Isn't it amazing that no one ever walked up to Jesus and said "Jesus, teach us to preach." They didn't say "Jesus, teach us to walk on water." But they did say "Lord, teach us to pray." So many people said "Oh, if I could do anything, I would see Paul preaching on Mars Hill." But if I could do anything I would see my Lord interceding. I would see my Lord interceding.

John Calvin said that the heart of man was an idol factory. We can make scholarship an idol. We can make expository preaching an idol. Although these things are things to be cherished, compared to Him, they're rubbish. The presence of Christ, the power of Christ. He says in verse 2, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man." Now what are we seeing here? He's putting before us a person who is the anti-type of God. I mean compared to God, he is completely at the opposite end of the spectrum, isn't he? He doesn't fear God, he doesn't respect man. There's not virtue in him. You can just picture this man.... a greedy, miserly man with a narrow spirit and a small heart who is consumed by self and self promotion. And there was a widow in that city. Now, please understand that widows at that time, like still in some places in the third world, is the most destitute, helpless person on the face of the earth. There's no one as destitute as she except for maybe her child. No help! No economic power, no social power, no political power, no power whatsoever. If she dies in the street, the only word in the public will be, "How do we get her body from us? "How do we remove her to somewhere else where we have to no longer see her rotting corpse?" She has nothing. And then it says, "There was a widow in that city and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling, but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God, nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise, by continually coming she will wear me out.'" Literally, "she will hit me under the eye." It's a type of word used when two boxers are fighting and one beats the other half to death and the one is just bruised. This woman is tenacious.

Absolutely tenacious and the only reason that this miserly, horrid man gives in to her is because she keeps coming, she keeps coming, she keeps coming. He can't take it anymore. She wrestles with him.

Now, verse 6, and the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said." Now, He's going to tell us exactly what all this parable is about. So many times people get confused in parables because they look for meaning absolutely everywhere in the parable. They find little minute things, nuances, but a parable, I believe, although it can teach many things, is always given to drive home one central truth. And He's going to reveal that to us right now. He says, "and the Lord said, 'hear what the unrighteous judge said.'"

Now what did he say? He said this is what I'm wanting you to learn about your Christian life, about prayer. Listen to what the unrighteous judge said. Listen to him. "Because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection. Otherwise, by continually coming she will wear me out." And then he goes on in verse 7, "Now will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night? And will He delay long over them?" The one thing among many that I appreciate about Charles Spurgeon is that he was solidly, solidly, as you would put it today, either "sovereign grace", "reformed", "1689", he was right there in the middle; but when Spurgeon came to a text, he just preached the text. And he did not try to reconcile it with some other doctrine in order to supposedly protect that doctrine. It's like trying to protect our doctrine from the Scriptures.

Listen, I believe that God is absolutely sovereign over absolutely everything and He decreed it before the very foundation of the earth and that has gotten me in more problems, that belief, than any other thing, but I know it is Scriptural and yet at the same time, I know I have not because I ask not. And I cannot explain it. And I have not been called to explain it. Along with so many other great doctrines of Scripture. Rather than spend my few years on this planet trying to supposedly reconcile everything in my mind, I would just as soon be obedient to the simple truths. To hold on to a sovereign God apart from which there is no hope for man, universe, or all of creation. I will hold on to that! And it is my security and my strength and the only means I have of knowing that prayer can be answered.

And yet in this great mystery that goes so far beyond my mind, I am told, I have not because I ask not. I am told to do, before my God, what this widow did before this terribly unjust man. Jacob, he wrestled with God. "I will not let you go until you bless me." There is some way that God gets delight out of that kind of faith. There is some way in which God is joyful in wrestling with His people, especially a man or a woman or a child who actually believes this stuff! Believes enough to ask, and ask, and ask, and ask, and ask. He says in verse 8, "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find the faith on the earth? Now I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly, and yet when we go through the book of Psalms, where, if you want to learn how to pray, begin with the Lord Jesus Christ, and then go to Psalms and then the Apostle Paul. You will learn how to pray.

But when we go to the book of Psalms, we discover something that seems to contradict this. He says that the Lord will answer quickly, the Lord will deliver quickly. And yet when we go to the book of Psalms, we are told David is waiting day and night. "How long, oh Lord?" is the cry of David, is the cry of the prophets, and there's this waiting, there's this enduring, there's this wrestling, persevering in prayer.

How does this work? Well, I know and all of you know, how common this occurs in Scripture and how common it has occurred in your own life. That you cry out to God, you cry out to Him and there is delay. You persevere and there is delay. And you keep crying out to God, delay, after delay, after delay but when He does move, the matter is settled in a few seconds. As in the Battle of Midian that was associated with the coming of the Messiah, as in that battle, you do not lift a finger, you do not even light a torch, you don't even break a jaw, and the battle is won. And why does He move so quickly? I will tell you why He moves so quickly, so that no man could boast that it is his own doing or especially some coincidence.

Now this is very important for young men. Learn this lesson. When you see a supernatural, miraculous deliverance, wrought by God's hand through prayer, when it occurs, you will be believing, you will see it, you will know that it was God, and you'll rejoice in it. But then, not the next day, not even the next week, probably not even the next month, but within a year or two, here's what will happen: the deceiver will come and he will hint to you, "You know, you were young then, when you thought God did something miraculous, but the thing could be explained entirely by natural means." Have you ever seen that happen? You have seen God work a great miracle among you, and then Satan always waits because he's so astute. A few years down the road, he begins to convince you that that was just youthful zeal, fanaticism, all explained, naturally. That is why when God did great acts of deliverance to Israel, He would tell them, "pile up a bunch of rocks," "write down the story," "never, never, never forget!" The thief comes to steal, even the testimony of God from us.

You know, some of you have been in the ministry longer maybe than I have been alive. You know the great works of God. And some of you have forgotten them, and you need to go back and you need to remember and remember and remember so that the next time a deliverance is demanded, you know you serve a God who delivers men! A God who delivers his people. Now, "However when the Son of Man comes will he find faith?" The faith? Maybe the Christian faith? Maybe this kind of faith that perseveres, Will He find it on the earth? I don't want to be too dramatic about this or read something into the text but it's almost as if, at this moment, the disposition or attitude of our Lord changes. It's almost as though He's saying, "Listen to me men, listen to me. I have brought you into fellowship with a God who answers prayer. You ask anything in My name, and He will do it. Rejoice in what God is going to do through prayer!" And then stops for a moment, a moment to reflect, and says, "But then again, when I come back, will anybody be believing what I have said?" Will you be believing? I can tell you how much you believe... How much do you ask? How much do you persevere? Men, is it not true in your own lives that you have wrangled in the flesh and you have struggled and you have worked and you have been sincere and you have fought and fought and fought in your own strength. And could do nothing. And then finally driven to prayer and it took so little prayer actually for the matter to be resolved. "Well the only recourse we have now is to pray." What a blasphemous, dirty statement. Oh, do you go to the closet expecting? Do you? Do you ask expecting?

Now, here is a problem that I want to deal with, and I am so sorry. I was actually going to preach on 1 Corinthians 15, but I want us to go for a minute and look at Chapter 11 of Hebrews. I want to resolve something, at least in my childlike faith, in my simple way of thinking. This has been resolved in my mind. In verse 1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Now this text is... I mean, it's book worthy. Several books could

be written on this and it has. But it is so wise, because the question we're led to ask from it: "How can I have assurance for what I hope for? And how can I have conviction about what I have not seen?" Because you are all rightly afraid of the great majority today who claim they have Christ who presume upon Him. They are demanding, presuming, guaranteeing things that they have no right to guarantee. We know that. But I sometimes say this: I think the charismatics believe things God's never promised. The reformed guys don't even believe what He has promised.

Again, brothers, I could come here and it wouldn't do any good for me to do some theological study, you know more than I do. So just bear with this for a while. This is maybe what you need to hear. You know, I discovered several years ago, I listen at times to men like John Piper and I read Iain Murray is my favorite of the modern day guys and I love John Flavel, his first volume. Spurgeon is my all time favorite. But you know after a while you begin to discover something, I really am not really discovering anything really new. Even though these men say it in such a great way.

But you know I was in a conference a few years ago, and before I spoke, they asked for 6 new converts to come up and share their testimonies. They'd been saved for 6 months to a year. And when they got up, I didn't learn anything new, but I remembered so many things I had forgotten. Their zeal, their childlike faith, their passion. Yes, they were sometimes seeing God as those who see animals in clouds - animals that aren't there. Yes, sometimes they were doing all sorts of foolish things, but those times, weren't they wonderful? You were believing God. It was new. It was fresh. It wasn't just contained in some thesis. It was a vital relationship. Maybe that's why God sent me here today... so that someone, more like a new believer, would address 'you' who know so much more... to return, to return. I'm not afraid of making mistakes in my prayer life because I serve a God of grace.

But here's something amazing about this passage. It says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Now how can we do this? How can we have assurance? Conviction about things not seen? There's only one way... the Word of God. The Word of the living God, the Bible. My body hurts most of the time. My right hand right now is numb. I've got problems in my spine and in my neck and for years the Lord has not healed me. Nor do I suppose He will. I don't even really want Him to. So much has been reaped from my pains, so many blessings. But he never promises in Scripture to specifically heal Paul Washer. He can, and He does heal people. In that great mystery and wisdom of His, He doesn't heal everyone. I'm content with that because my Lord knows. He knows what we need even before we ask Him. But I do have great assurance that "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." I stand on that. I'll die on that. I expect to swing out into eternity on a spider's web based upon that. With no fear.

You see, so we have great conviction and we have great hope. Why? Because "Thus saith the Lord". But now here comes the problem, at least in my mind, "Well then, Lord, how do I pray for someone who is sick? How do I do that by faith? How do I pray for certain things that my renewed heart and my renewed mind desires? How do I know to pray for those things?" Because there are many things that are not specifically promised in this Book. Now I know what so many people have heard, it's a cliché that I do not like, "God always answers prayer, it's just

sometimes the answer is no." I do not like that. I do not agree with it and I think that it leads to some misunderstandings.

Now, here's what I want you to see. For all those things that are great promises in the Scriptures, brothers, sisters, pray them. Pray those promises. Pray them. The promises with regard to spiritual things I mean Ephesians 1 in itself, pray that for your wife. Pray that for your congregation. Oh, the characteristics found in 1 Timothy 3 for an elder or any mature person in the church, pray that for your pastor. Those things that we know are the will of God. But how do I pray when I'm not so sure, when I have no specific promise, how can I pray by faith? This is the way I can pray by faith. And it's found in Hebrews 11:6, "and without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him. My faith is not that God is going to do the specific thing I ask Him.

Now, I know that you think the alternative is: 'Yes, He may say no.' No, I do not believe that. God may not do the specific thing that I ask Him, but He will reward the faith. He will do something. There will be benefit for seeking God in the matter. If I see a saint that is ill - I have one of the men that I most admire on this planet right now is dying of pancreatic cancer. I am asking God to heal that man. I am begging God to heal that man. Why? Because it's what I desire. It's the desire of my heart. Yes, I'm resting in sovereignty, no I do not have a sure word, but I am asking God to heal him.

But here's what I know, that if God does not heal him, God will still honor my praying. He will reward it. He will give to that man because of my prayers something more important that he needs. God always rewards praying by faith. And you see I can go to God not really understanding, "Is this the specific will? Is this perfect, my asking? How am I doing, Lord? Have I followed all the theological principles?" No, I don't have to. I go with the desires of my heart. I petition my God for what I see in Scripture, for what is in my own heart, and I know that even if I am wayward, even if the thing I desire is not the thing to be given, I know that God will reward, and there will be decisions made in the heavenlies. There will be things done. And there will be benefit from that seeking of His face.

So now I see this: God answers prayer, it's always yes. He may not do, in His wisdom, what I am asking; but if I trust in Him, if I trust in Him, I know that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him. God, I come to You. We're starting a church in Radford. God, I come to You. I've prayed about You raising up elders. I've prayed about this. I don't really know which one ought to come first. I don't know how to handle this situation. Lord, just know I plant myself at Your doorstep. I look up to You and I stay here. Even if I do not know specifically what to ask You, I stay here as a sign that I am utterly dependent upon You and I believe that even though I do not know what to ask, You are the rewarder of those who seek You. Oh, brothers there's so much comfort and power. Now you see how wrangling and wrestling with God is, and yet having full confidence in His sovereignty. Brothers, there are John Pipers and there are John MacArthurs and all these people. I'm a guy who's well known for one sermon. But in prayer, you know, it is so scary to be here.

But it's not scary to run away and to abide in the shadow of the Almighty and to be covered with His wing. It's not. Your problem is not that you're too weak, your problem is you're too strong. I encourage all the young men. I say, "Look, study Greek, study Hebrew, study systematics, study church history, read the old books, the old books, the old books." But I must

tell them all that will not avail. It is foundational, but you need life. You need life. Would it seem strange to you for a man to sense a weakness in himself, and to separate three or four days, or 2 weeks to fasting and prayer? Would it seem strange to you for a problem to rise up in the church, and rather than tackling it just all at once in our own wisdom, you might separate time to pray, to wrestle with God in the matter? Or even if you are asked a question to give an answer, that you would say, "May I have time to pray?"

Oh, brothers... brothers, your inheritance... it's not lands, and it's not cars and it's not fine homes. It's to dwell in the court of God. Above everything, you are men who dwell in the court of God. "Sweet hour of prayer. Sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care." I always tell young men who have not given themselves much to prayer- they say, "How should I pray?" I say "Pray, fight until you can honestly say with that hymn writer "Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer. I will give the Lord my first hour, sweet hour of prayer." And then, you see, praying is an amazing thing in that the less you pray, the more difficult it becomes to pray. The more you pray, the more you're carried in prayer. Brothers, you can pray until you think "What has happened to the time? I set my knee at 5. It's already 8:30. There's things that... what happened?" Oh, brothers, please! Give yourselves to prayer. There is absolutely no obstacle that cannot be overcome in prayer.

We are not men who simply give into the darkness and write a label on it saying "it's because of the sovereignty of God." We are men who fight that darkness! You going to blame this whole mess on God? Do not use the sovereignty of God as an excuse! We are men who believe God! Your eschatology may not be post millennial. Well, everything is just going to get greater and greater - it may be. Your doctrine of eschatology may be that things are just going to get worse and worse until Jesus comes. Let me tell you something, Jesus could come back tonight. Jesus may come back in a 1,000 years. I do not have a word on that and neither do you. Know this, there is no place in Scripture where it says that in my lifetime, I cannot see countries come to Christ. Why not? Why not? Why can I not see India fall and a banner for Christ be on every hill? God never told me that. Why must I accept America just getting darker and darker? God never told me that. You may disagree with the post millennialist, but I'll tell you what, they accomplished a lot more, didn't they? They believed God was going to do something. Regardless of your eschatology, unless you've got a word from Him that none of the rest of us know about.

Look, we plant our feet and we fight in prayer, and we fight in the pulpit. That's what we do. We expect God to do something. "Brother Paul, why are you sad?", my translator asked me in Holland, "Why are you sad tonight?" I said, "No one was converted tonight!" We must believe... gentlemen, the promises, not just the precepts. The promises, the promises. They're here, light shining in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. The power of the gospel. I believe that one of the greatest demonstrations if not the greatest demonstration in all of time, is not the creation of the world, but the creation of the new man. The work of regeneration which has been lost in our time is the most powerful demonstration of the power of God. He made this world out of nothing and that is amazing. But He creates a man anew from a massive depraved humanity. That is power! Why would I not believe that God wants to demonstrate such power in the conversion of men. Let's wrestle for the conversion of men. Let's

wrestle for the establishment of Biblical churches. Let's fight on our knees and let's believe God. Let's believe Him. There's so much to believe.

One last thing. I know I've taken up too much time, but beware of only praying with your boots on. I learned this years ago, a statement made by Alexander MacLaren, actually. He talked about in his study he wore his boots. And that got me to thinking. He was talking about what? That preparation for preaching is hard work. Then I began to think, must I always come to the Bible with my boots on? Must I always come to God with my boots on? The point I'm trying to make is that if the Bible becomes only preaching work for you, and the only time you approach it is with your boots on, you are in danger of losing a relationship. So I come to the Word with my boots on. But when I've wrangled with the text, to pull my boots off and walk with it, to delight in it, to just bask in it, to enjoy the Bible. It's not a riddle book for you to figure all out, but something for you to enjoy. To delight in the Word of God. It's the same way with prayer.

Yes, let me tell you something, intercessory prayer is hard work. Don't let anyone kid you. Most people do not pray because they think that it's easy for some people to pray. No. Intercession is hard and that is praying with your boots on. And you must do that.

But if all you do is pray with your boots on, you're in danger of losing a relationship. To walk with Him. To just walk with Him. To delight in Him. To think thoughts about Him. To talk to Him. Oh, my dear friend, to just praise Him for grass and trees. I mean this planet should look like the stage for "Waiting for the Godot," it should be all grey and ugly. There shouldn't be any joy here. The fact that there is, it's amazing. To delight in our children and to run beside them rejoicing in God. Don't make it all intercessory prayer, have communion. Oh, it's so good to get up in the morning at times, and just say, "Lord, today, could we just put aside the work of intercession? I just want to walk with You down to the creek, I just want to talk to You. I love You so much. You've been so good to me, God." To look at sunsets and go, "God, how did You do that? Which brush did You use? This is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen." Brothers, just take to heart what's been said. Pray about it. See if maybe the Lord has spoken to you today, something.

Let's pray. Father, I thank You, I praise You, I worship You. I have gone on Lord, but oh God, that it was with Your going on, with Your help. Strengthen these men, bless them, Lord take them by the hand and lead them into further and further depths of prayer. Lead me, oh God, I'm such a novice. Lead me, lead us, that we would not throw down our mantle for a calculator, our methodology, or even a pulpit. But that we would be first of all, men that belong to You, men who dwell in Your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.