

James Goll: The Church Is Anemic in This Important Area of Prayer

What really moves the hand of God?

This important question has been asked throughout the ages, with a great variety of responses. Ponder it for a while. I am sure there are many right answers to the question; faith is a correct one, for sure. Purity, compassion and integrity would be other good answers to this simple yet profound question. But let me cast light for a moment on one strategic quality the Lord looks for: desire.

Webster's defines the noun form of desire as "a wish or craving; sexual appetite; a request; anything desired." The often-quoted teaching of Jesus on the subject of faith states, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24, KJV).

What do you desire? What is your passion? What do you want so badly that you can hardly live without it? James 4:2 (MEV) says, "You do not have because you do not ask." This verse could easily be rendered, "You ask for nothing because you desire nothing."

What you want motivates you. Do you have a deep craving within you that results in passionate pursuit? Do you want more of God? Do you hunger to see Him move in the earth? Desire is the beginning of the desperate prayer of the heart.

Maybe we need to back up a bit and ask another simple yet profound question: What is prayer? Ultimately prayer is nothing more than desire expressed to God. One proper definition of intercession is "the act of making a request to

a superior.” So we could say that prayer is the act of expressing a deep-seated yearning to a superior, God, for things to change. You have heard people say, “I’m so desperate I’ll do anything!” Well, how about reaching the end of ourselves to the point that we intercede as if there is no other option left?

Prayer and intercession are the passionate cry for lives to change and nations to be impacted.

What Is Prayer Passion?

I am convinced that the last-days battle is a battle of passions. The world flaunts her lustful passions daily across the stage of life full blown with no shame. But the Church has often been anemic in this arena. It is time for the bride of Christ to be filled with passion for her Bridegroom and perform extravagant displays of lavish love. What better place to exhibit boundless zeal and holy passion than in the place of prayer? Prayer is the bridal chamber of intimacy with our Master.

Prayer passion begins when we bask in the awesome love the Father has for us, His children—the supreme object of His affection. When you are in love, you will do anything to get near that person. One song puts it this way: “Ain’t no mountain high enough ... to keep me from you.” It might not be the current tune on the world’s pop chart, but it is the song the Son of God sings over His bride. A revelation of bridal love makes your communion more passionate than anything I know.

Consider the words of E. M. Bounds: “Prayers must be red-hot. It is the fervent prayer that is effective ... It takes fire to make prayers go. Warmth of soul creates an atmosphere favorable to prayer ... By flame prayer ascends to heaven.” The vital ingredient is what we call prayer passion—the characteristic necessary to fan desire into a full flame.

Expressions of the Heart Beyond Words

Has your heart ever been bursting with love for the Lord Jesus, so much that words cannot express what is inside of you? Sometimes when I am overwhelmed by the loveliness of His great presence, words seem inadequate. When I am captivated by the qualities of this man, Christ Jesus, my heart aches and yearns with the desire to know Him and to embrace His ways. This is when prayer passion is in full bloom. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34b).

But sometimes love speaks a strange language. First and foremost, you see, it is a language of the heart.

The Language of Compassionate Weeping

I think I hear you pondering another question: "Do you mean to say there are prayers of passion that go beyond the articulation of words?" Yes! Let's consider the power of compassionate weeping.

Several Salvation Army officers in the last century asked General Booth, "How can we save the lost?" Booth stated simply, "Try tears." Today, church growth seminars are held across the nation. Techniques and methodologies are discussed at great length on how we can have successful, growing churches. Cookie-cutters can be passed out, too. But a heart for God is forged only through the crucible of the cross.

Jeremiah 9:1 records, "Oh, that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Jeremiah knew the power of the language of tears.

From the Trenches of Those Who Knew

I love church history and going to the places where heaven has touched earth. I have been privileged to participate in meetings in the very location in Wales where a great revival

took place under the leadership of Evan Roberts. Evan Phillips was an eyewitness to the Welsh revival of 1904. He tells the following about those blessed days and the presence of the Lord that was with the young revival leader, Evan Roberts:

Evan Roberts was like a particle of radium in our midst. Its fire was consuming and felt abroad as something which took away sleep, cleared the channels of tears, and sped the golden wheels of prayer throughout the area ... I have wept now until my heart is supple. In the midst of the greatest fearfulness I have found the greatest joy. Now the bed belongs to the river and Wales belongs to Christ.

One of the most famous of all the great English pulpiteers was Charles H. Spurgeon. Consider this thought from a man of the tearful trenches:

Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will "weep" when I cannot plead, for Thou hearest the voice of my weeping.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said, "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels."

King David petitioned, "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye wastes away with grief, yes, my soul and my body" (Ps. 31:9). Again: "I am weary of my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Ps. 69:3).

Our beloved Paul, the apostle and writer of many epistles, wrote: "For three years night and day I did not cease to warn everyone with tears" (Acts 20:31). And: "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears ..." (2 Cor. 2:4a).

The heart of God for the prophetic purposes of the city of Jerusalem is revealed through the Messiah. Luke 19:41 states: "When He came near [to Jerusalem], He beheld the city and wept over it."

George Fox experienced a similar place in God for his generation: "I saw the harvest white, and the seed of God lying thick in the ground, as ever did wheat that was sown outwardly, and none to gather it; and for this I mourned with tears."

May we dig again the trenches of the passionate prayer of tears. Let's follow in the footsteps of the revivalists of old and call forth these seemingly forgotten ways of brokenness as a prayer language of the heart. Let the power of compassionate weeping lay hold of you.

The Invitation Is Extended

So what does all this mean? Simply that we have an invitation to enter into the intercession of Christ that goes beyond our limited knowledge. In no way does our experience compare with the depth of Christ's substitutionary, intercessory act of the cross. That has already been accomplished. Nonetheless, the invitation is given to us to enter the depths of the heart of Jesus and let sighs and groans too deep for the articulation of man's natural vocabulary surface. Whatever the distinctive purpose of these ancient forms of intercession—just yield. Let Him do it.

So here are my parting thoughts to you for now: "Pray with God's Heart. Add compassion as the missing ingredient to your prayers. In fact, "Try tears!" {eoa}