

Before the THRONE

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“Faithful... Faithful... Faithful... Fruit.”

The Prayer of Importunity – Filling our Prayer Bowls to Overflowing...By Mark D. Spencer

“And *Jesus* said unto them, “Which of you that has a friend who has come to you at midnight, and said, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?” And then he said from within his house, “Don’t trouble me: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and help you.”

So I say unto you, though he will not rise and help him, even though he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as much as he needs.” And I say unto you, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” (Luke 11:5-10)

Recently while overseas I was teaching this message and as I came to the word “importunity”, well, shall we say, it was one of those words that caused my translator an awkward moment. Indeed, importunity is one of those old,



The Essence - The book of Revelation teaches us that there are various prayer bowls in heaven that must be filled with faithful and believing prayer before the answer to those prayers can be released. We are called to be “faithful, faithful, faithful...” before we can experience the “fruit” of these prayers. Further, we are called to be in the right place at the right time in the right frame (or right “faith”) of mind, so that our prayers can be answered! Having been faithful in importunate prayer we will be positioned to receive the answers to our faith!

yet specific words that have fallen out of usage - probably because we no longer want to hear of anything that has to do with persistence or pertinacity. Pertinacity by the way, is; "a firm or unyielding adherence to opinion or purpose." In a world that has made gods of "relevance", "political correctness", and "tolerance", the virtues of truth and persistence and character building have suffered immeasurable damage! Before we begin to look into what the Word of God holds for us concerning the prayer of importunity, maybe it would be good for us to define the word importunity. Importunity "is the pressing solicitation, an urgent request; an application for a claim or favor, which is urged with troublesome frequency or pertinacity." (Webster's 1828 Edition.)

And what of this word importunity and the modern Church world? Could it be that we too often expect immediacy to our spirituality in the same manner as we do in all aspects of living - from fast food to weight loss without exercise, from get rich schemes to empty self oriented relationships? We want and demand all of our desires to be granted now!

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Yes, there is the "suddenly" of the moving of God's Spirit and we should wait upon Him with a confident expectation and joyful anticipation of such "suddenlies" of His breaking

into our lives. But to be quite candid, most "suddenlies" are built upon a life of consistency and faithfulness! One highly successful man of God when asked how his ministry seemed to blossom overnight, responded, "That "overnight" was the longest 20 years of my life!" How important it is then that we not shy away from such values should the words themselves become outdated. Such is often our culture's dupability; to give as little effort as possible and in return demand that we receive as much back as possible! We might say it this way, "Give us fruit, fruit and more fruit, and if we must, we will offer as little character or faithfulness as possible in return." As with most truths, the Kingdom of God's view is diametrically opposed to such humanistic worldviews!

"Faithful... faithful... faithful... fruit!"

Character development is never easy. There are never any three-step formulas for molding character within the human heart. Jesus stated the condition of Christian maturity when He said, "If you abide (continue) in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32). It has been said the Christians life is a long obedience in the same direction.ⁱ In matters of temporal things the world understands these principles.

One only needs to look to the devotion of the Olympian athlete to his sport to see this dedication and determination. This commitment is either for the pure love of the sport or to have an opportunity to win a fleeting honor. Sadly, it is the character traits of godliness and inner moral strength that are glossed over for more convenient and quicker routes to spiritual "fulfillment", hence we have a nation of religious yet immoral; spiritual yet empty people!



A Peek Into the Unseen

The book of Revelation offers us a glimpse into the prayer of importunity. Without an understanding of such prayer we may find ourselves confused and even discouraged when we are attempting to offer a prayer of faith in place of the prayer of importunity.

As a carpenter's tool belt holds various tools - "there is a right tool for every job", so there are tools in the Christian's prayer "tool belt" that must be used if we are to have a successful and powerful life of prayer!

We should clarify at the onset that all prayer, if it is to please God and obtain answers from Him, must be offered in faith! Without faith, you simply cannot please God! "So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that there is a God and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6 NLT). Without faith, your prayer, no matter how sincere, no matter how tearful, no matter how long, is just so many empty religious mutterings and idle, inoperative non-working words! Such words find no audience but the ceiling of the room in which they were uttered. (See Matthew 12:36 Amplified)

Filling our Prayer Bowls

"And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." (Revelation 5:8 NASB)

We can see from John's eyewitness account that there are bowls in heaven - golden bowls, which hold the prayers of the saints! While we cannot be dogmatic about this, it is not hard to construe that there may be various bowls for individuals, churches and even nations, and that these bowls, when full, release the desired answer upon the earth.

And we further read in Revelation, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the

"There may be nothing more thrilling than having a specific answer to prayer!"

saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and

an earthquake." (Rev 8:3-5 NASB) There may be nothing more thrilling than having a specific answer to prayer. When the Living God acts in response to a prayer offered in confident faith it is one of the most dynamic of spiritual experiences, indeed it is electrifying. Such answers may rightfully be called the "thunderings and lightnings of God!"

As these prayer bowls are filled with prayer that has been offered in faith we see an amazing thing transpire. An angel from the presence of God brings a censer filled with fire and adds it to the bowls of prayer. It is after this fire from the altar of God is added to the bowls that they are then hurled to the earth. This hurling of the prayer bowl to the earth clearly signifies the answer to prayers that the saints have been waiting for - the manifestation in this natural realm of what has been diligently believed for and "seen" by the eye of faith while in prayer and intercession.

Filling our Prayer Bowls - the Practical Working.

Nothing is better on a cold Colorado winter's day than a bowl of rich, steaming soup full of fresh vegetables, hearty meat, and savory broth! No one likes a watery and weak broth made with scant few vegetables and poor cuts of meat. Soup without rich substance is a meager gruel, satisfying neither palate nor stomach! And yet when it comes to prayer most believers spend their time filling their prayer bowls with weak or non-existent faith mingled with emotional pleas, human opinion, murmurings and complaints. Such prayer is nothing more than a lukewarm spiritual pottage! Strong confidence and vibrant faith based upon the Word of God mixed with heartfelt praise produces overflowing answers from the Throne of God!

"Faithful... faithful... faithful... fruit!"

It may be that some prayer bowls are larger than others and so demand more intense prayer, greater patient endurance in prayer, united prayer, or forgiving prayer. Whatever the situation we are facing, the Lord desires to answer prayer to the end we might be blessed, other people be blessed, and His Son glorified! (John 14:14; 15:7; 16:23-26.)



"And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8

"Faithful... faithful... faithful... fruit!"

A Contrast not a Comparison!

Jesus is not comparing the unjust judge to God the Righteous Judge and His righteous judgments; rather He is contrasting the goodness and rightness of God's judgments to the wicked and injustice of the unjust judge. And so the contrast is invoked to encourage the believer, who aware of the goodness and rightness of God's character and mercy, may be confident that the heart of God can be persuaded far easier and moved far quicker than the arguments needed to convince an unjust and stubborn judge to act on their behalf! This parable is designed to stir hope in the believer's heart as well as release our faith for answers to our prayers. "...shall not God?"

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Defining Our Words

Because words are containers conveying ideas and the contents of man's heart, it becomes crucial that we use precise words to convey as accurately as possible those thoughts. Defining words that may give us trouble or confuse our thoughts will help us to communicate with greater precision thus avoiding ambiguity. Once our words are clearly defined and understood we may convey our thoughts with far fewer restrictions and greater clarity.



When communicating with us the concepts found in this passage of Scripture, Jesus chooses words that penetrate religious traditions, stripping every pretense and charade that holds men in spiritual and religious bondage. Jesus' choice of words is exact and accurate, bringing to bear life-changing concepts. "Shall not God *avenge* His own elect." The word "avenge" is often shied away from in today's politically correct climate, but it is a good word pregnant with meaning. The word "avenge" means to vindicate a person's right or to avenge a thing. Simply put then, it means, "to make things right." Our God delights in making things right! After all, He is the Redeemer, the Rescuer, and the One Who makes all things right once again!

"Shall not God avenge His own *elect*". The word "elect"ⁱⁱⁱ means to select, and by implication it means the favorite, the chosen, or the elect. Yes, God has favorites! While never respecting one person over the other because of social rank, race or gender - and while He is always fair, those who chose Him become the chosen, the favored of God, and the elect of God! To be sure, God's children are His elect and favored ones! "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering." (Colossians 3:12) God's elect will never suffer the disgrace of a fraudulent poll or the humiliation of a recall.

"Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" The word "cry"ⁱⁱⁱⁱ means far more than the shedding of a few tears! This word means to cry out for help in an impassioned and unrelenting manner. From the Amplified Bible we read; "So we take comfort and are encouraged and confidently and boldly say, 'The Lord is my Helper'^v, I will not be seized with alarm - I will not fear or dread or be terrified! What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6 Amplified). The Greek word for Helper is not the word we are most familiar with when we speak of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter or Helper - the Paraklet. Rather this Greek word for helper is Boethos. Its meaning is not unlike the emergency worker, local police, fireman, or paramedic who is on call, standing by and ready to rush to our aid with sirens sounding and lights flashing - whenever we call upon His name! "Respectfully then, He is the "Boethos", our Divine 911 Emergency Number!" How encouraging to know that the Lord is our safety net; completely covering us by the presence of the Holy Spirit who has been sent along side to help us, but is also ready to rush to our aid when we *cry out* for His help!

"Respectfully then, He is the "Boethos", our Divine 911 Emergency Number!"

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And our final word definition. "I tell you that He will avenge them *speedily*" The word "speedily"^v does not mean what we traditionally think when we hear the word speedily. It does not necessarily mean quickly. This specific Greek word holds rather a meaning that implies the necessity of our being in the right place



at the right time in the right frame of mind! Or we might say for our purposes here, "being in the right place at the right time in the right faith frame of mind and heart." What a key then to our prayer success! The willingness to wait upon the Lord and further, the willingness to prepare ourselves spiritually and emotionally, coupled with a yieldedness of heart enables the Lord to get us into the right place at the right time to be in position to receive His response or answer to our faith filled prayer!

"Faithful... faithful... faithful... fruit!"

Never, Ever, Give Up!

How many believers have given up the moment before their bowl was filled and their answer poured out to the earth? How many times have we allowed circumstances to discourage us and we have fainted in well doing and thus we were robbed of our harvest?

Be not weary in well doing! Keep filling your bowl with faith. Keep diligently to your confession. Remain constant. As you continue faithful, faithful, faithful. You will reap the fruit! "So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time." (Galatians 6:9 NLT)

"And the angel took the censer; and he filled it (your bowl of prayer) with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake." (Revelation 8:5). Can you hear the sound of rain? From where I sit, it sounds more and more like rain!

"Faithful, faithful, faithful, fruit!"

Will You Be Found Faithful?

As we approach the final days of this earth's present condition and we face the coming of the Son of Man, we must ask ourselves if we will be found faithful. "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b)



The various roots of the world's systems are coming to full and final fruit. Evil is making the final manifestations of its hateful rage against God and His highest creation — Man.

"Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed: "Let us tear their fetters apart, And cast away their cords from us!" He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury: "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psalm 2)

For those who are found in Christ, "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness", this hour will be your time to shine forth with great intensity! "Arise, shine, for your light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you! (Isaiah 60:1). It is in this moment of History's final seconds that the fruit of all the ages is finally coming to full maturity and ripeness. Both evil and righteous harvests are growing in the earth concurrently. "He (Jesus) answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 13:37-43).

"Faithful, faithful, faithful, fruit!"

"Go on, go on, go on!"

To realize our desire of having our prayers answered and thereby becoming a blessing to those around us, and a great blessing to our world, it becomes critical that we exercise diligent and patient endurance. It is vitally important as well that we stand as the elect of God and take our rightful place as the children of God, praying confidently and looking expectantly for our prayer bowls to be filled and overflowing! Above all things then, get yourself into the spiritual place where you are in the right place at the right time in the right faith frame of mind and heart."



Go on, go on, go on, go on,
Go on, go on, go on.
Go on, go on, go on, go on,
Go on, go on, go on.^{vi}

"Faithful... faithful... faithful... fruit!"
BtT — The End

Standing in the Gap

(Practical help for the ministry of intercession.)

"Then the LORD replied to me, "If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5 NLT).



Intercession is not

for the weak nor is it for those who are impatient.

Intercession, though confident and bold in faith, of necessity takes a long-term view of life and ministry, fully expectant that the Lord will do what He has promised and fulfill His every word. The intercessor is also fully aware that he/she holds a responsibility to stand with the Lord in His intercessions! As such, intercessors take a certain personal identification and responsibility for seeing their prayer assignments fulfilled; hence there is a tenacity and determination of prayer and ministry.

Intercession is not for the weak nor is it for those who are impatient.

So saint of God, pray on in faith and as you do, remember that as you boldly stand at your post the bowl is filling and the moment is drawing nearer for the answer's release upon the earth! Alleluia!

BtT — The End

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ⁱ C.S. Lewis

ⁱⁱ Strong's Concordance 1588. *eklektos*, *ek-lek-tos'*; from *G1586*; select; by impl. favorite:--chosen, elect.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strong's Concordance 994. *boao*, *bo-ah'-o*; appar. a prol. form of a prim. verb; to halloo, i.e. shout (for help or in a tumultuous way):--cry.

^{iv} The Greek word for Helper used in this instance is different than the use in John 14:16 NASB "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." We are more familiar with the term *Parakletos*, *par-ak'-lay-tos*; which means an intercessor, consoler:--advocate, comforter. One meaning the that the *Paraklete* is One who comes along side to help. In this passage in Hebrews we see the Helper as the *Boethos* - *bah-ay-thoss* - That is the *Beothos* is one who come running when we cry for help. It pictures for us the Lord as poised and ready to rush to our aid and relief when we cry for help!

^v 1722. *en*, *en*; a prim. prep. denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by impl.) instrumentality (medially or constructively), i.e. a relation of rest (intermediate between *G1519* and *G1537*): "in," at, (up-) on, by, etc.:--about, after, against, + almost, X altogether, among, X as, at, before, between, (here-) by (+ all means), for (. . . sake of), + give self wholly to, (here-) in (-to, -wardly), X mightily, (because) of, (up-) on, [open-] ly, X outwardly, one, X quickly, X shortly, [speedi-] ly, X that, X there (-in, -on), through (-out), (un-) to(-ward), under, when, where (-with), while, with (-in). Often used in compounds, with substantially the same import; rarely with verbs of motion, and then not to indicate direction, except (elliptically) by a separate (and different) prep.

^{vi} A poem written by Mr. Richard Maton, when he was calling his Bible college students to the life of Christian perseverance - Bible College of Wales, Swansea.