

# A CALL TO PRAY



*Helen Harray, 17 November 2013*

## **They turned their world upside down. Acts 17:6 AMP**

### **The PUSH parable is one perspective on praying that might inspire us.**

**P= Pray U= Until S= Something H= Happens**

A man was sleeping at night in his cabin when suddenly his room filled with light, and God appeared. The Lord told the man he had work for him to do, and showed him a large rock in front of his cabin. The Lord explained that the man was to push against the rock with all his might.

So, this the man did, day after day. For many years he toiled from sun up to sun down, his shoulders set squarely against the cold, massive surface of the moving rock, pushing with all of his might. Each night the man returned to his cabin sore and worn out, feeling he had spent the whole day in vain.

Since the man was showing discouragement, the Adversary (Satan) decided to enter the picture by placing thoughts into the weary mind:

"You have been pushing against that rock for a long time, and it hasn't moved." Thus, he gave the man the impression that the task was impossible and that he was a failure. These thoughts discouraged and disheartened the man. Satan said,

"Why kill yourself over this? Just put in your time, giving just the minimum effort; and that will be good enough."

That's what the weary man planned to do, but decided to make it a matter of prayer and to take his thoughts to the Lord. "Lord," he said, "I have labored long and hard in your service, putting all my strength to do that which you have asked. Yet, after all this time, I have not even budged that rock by half a millimeter. What is wrong? Why am I failing?"

The Lord responded compassionately, "My friend, when I asked you to serve Me and you accepted, I told you that your task was to push against the rock with all of your strength, which you have done. Never once did I mention to you that I expected you to move it.

Your task was to push.

And now you come to Me with your strength spent, thinking that you have failed. But, is that really so?

Look at yourself.

Your arms are strong and muscled, your back sinewy and brown; your hands are callused from constant pressure, your legs have become massive and hard. Through opposition you have grown much, and your abilities now surpass that which you used to have. True, you haven't moved the rock. But your calling was to be obedient and to push and to exercise your faith and trust in My wisdom. That you have done.

Now I, my friend, will move the rock."

At times, when we hear a word from God, we tend to use our own intellect to decipher what He wants, when actually what God wants is just a simple obedience and faith in Him. By all means, exercise the faith that moves mountains, but know that it is still God who moves mountains.

When everything seems to go wrong ... just P.U.S.H.!

### **IT'S NOT EASY**

Last week Richard talked of how important it is to grow but admitted that it isn't easy. We know in our heads that it's important but when it comes down to it, it just isn't easy.

The process to becoming organized, focused, strategic is critical but it's not easy. Sometimes it's like wading through mud.

I want to say the same is true of prayer.

We all know as Christians that praying is as vital to our spiritual lives as breathing, but when it comes down to it, it isn't easy.

Recently we had a women's prayer retreat. None of us would say it was easy to carve out that time to stop and do nothing but cease talking and doing and pray.

### **EVERYTHING BUT**

To be honest I relish times like this and the time to pray but actually doing it is another story.

I do everything but...even the dishes, I get distracted by facebook or the tv or by a fly or by reading a book, even a Christian book and before you know it the precious little time I did have to actually pray has flown away.

Or I convince myself that my two second arrow prayer is enough to change the world and its time to go to bed, after all there'll be more time in the morning.

But here's an enormous encouragement to pray:

*The physical effects of prayer have been also tracked through neuroscience; studies on brain activity during prayer and meditation showed that people who frequently practice it experience lower blood pressure, lower heart rates, decreased anxiety and depression, and have exceptionally focused attention.*

But I have no doubt that when many of us hear the *p* word it comes with all sorts of guilt and feelings of failure, and then there's the shoulds and oughts...I know I should pray but...

My mind is all over the place a lot of the time, it's ill disciplined and often unproductive. It's lazy. As for plain obedience to persisting in prayer, like the man pushing against the rock...well there's nothing easy about that.

Do not take away from this message today: I **must** pray more, I **should** be doing this.

Do not hear in the parable: you better get out there and push that rock and not give up til you die trying.

This is a great example of wrestling with our theology or understanding of God.

Because there is paradox here:

PUSH – the very word itself might imply work. Better be obedient and not let God down.

*Pray without ceasing* might echo in our heads.

But what about: *Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.*

*Take my yoke upon you for my burden is easy and my yoke is light.*

## **YOU GOTTA HAVE A GOOD REASON**

Here's my advice: if you can't pray without legalism or guilt; don't pray for a time; cease striving.

Just don't do it. The sky won't fall down and God will still be in control. You don't **have** to pray.

There are plenty of other people for God to call on, and one day you will be ready!

But if God calls you to pray and it's your season, then do it with all your might and persist against that rock and trust God to move it.

Then go out and have fun. Perhaps we could add to the acronym PUSH-- PUSH-PLAY

## **In the end prayer is a call to relationship.**

It's a relationship of free will not shoulds and oughts.

It's a glorious relationship in which we partner with the Godhead in the world to bring about the Kingdom of heaven on earth. It can't be anything else but free.

Man oh man what a calling!! To join with God in prayer to turn the world upside down.

## **That alone is a good reason but let me give you a couple more.**

**MAKE NO MISTAKE--DON'T BE FOOLED** -we have an adversary whose main aim is to prevent this; to prevent us ever knowing how much power and authority we have in the Kingdom of Light. His determination is to distract, discourage, keep us busy, undermine and downright prevent us from praying at all costs.

And while that happens he takes ground.

Brethren, I think Paul would say to us: Don't be fooled, your struggles with prayer, your ignorance of his schemes, this is exactly how Satan plans it.

2 Cor 2:11

*To the degree we are ignorant of the way our adversary thinks and operates- of his plans, plots, schemes and devices- to that degree he will gain on us, prey on us, defraud us of what is ours and have or hold the greater portion.*

(See Dutch Sheets, Watchman Prayer p15)

Satan will and does take advantage of our ignorance and weaknesses. He exploits them.

*1 Peter 5:8 says: be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

We are to watch over ourselves, each other and the world.

*Eph 6: <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

**The next good reason to pray is this: You have the authority. Either you do that or Satan will take the bigger portion.**

**LUKE 7**

*When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum.*

*<sup>2</sup> There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup> So Jesus went with them.*

*He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

*<sup>9</sup> When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup> Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.*

I never understood this passage until I got older. Anyone who has grown to a place in which they have a position of power will begin to understand though.

The centurion understood authority.

He was in charge and people did what they were told at his command.

He also understood that Jesus was in charge. He perceived Him to have the power and authority to command the sickness to go and he didn't need to be physically present to do it.

All he had to do was say the word.

Jesus highly commended him for his insight and faith. "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. In all of Israel he said I have not found this sort of faith!!

We have this kind of authority delegated to us by Jesus too!

## What do you believe of your own authority in Christ?

This will affect the way you pray. It may even affect whether you pray. If you believe it's futile then don't bother.

In the beginning, Adam was told to **keep the garden**.

Gen 2:15 <sup>15</sup> *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. The word keep is the Hebrew word shamar.*

*The original picture painted by the Hebrew word shamar is a sheepfold. When a shepherd was out in the wilderness with his flock, he would gather thorn bushes to erect a corral to place his flock in at night. The thorns would deter predators and thereby protect and guard the sheep from harm. The word shamiyr derived from this root means a thorn. The word shamar means to guard and protect and can be seen in the Aaronic blessing, May Yahweh bless you and keep (guard and protect) you.*

**It involves protection and preservation.** But to keep it from what?

Our responsibility is to keep the serpent out of our God-given gardens. Satan has been interloping ever since the Fall and the fruit of this is all around us. He has taken the greater portion. We must learn to take back what Satan has seized.



You may not think your prayers are very important but God has set you in a field as a watchman or watchlady! You have an area to watch over and authority to pray into areas that He directs you to.

Interestingly the word for boundary in scripture – the extent to which a boundary reaches- is also the word for intercession. In prayer and intercession we build boundaries of protection around ourselves and others.

There is both a general and a specific time to be praying these sorts of things.

If we see it in terms of **authority**, where is it that we have natural authority?

Pastors...keep watch over your flock...*Acts 20: <sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

Husbands/wives are sanctified through the faith of their believing spouse. Don't give up praying for spouses and children.

*1 Cor 7 If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*

Parents and grandparents have authority to pray over the family, never underestimate the power of a praying grandmother or father. Some of you are here today because of their prayers.



I worry about what I am going to do in my old age; but here's one thing I can do and that is go out in a blaze of glory as an intercessor. Because where's the power, its in prayer, on our knees admitting our weaknesses.



Principals, heads of Colleges, teachers, surgeons... You are in loco parentis and have the authority to pray over and watch over the gates of your school, your classroom, your theatre, your ward, your patient...

Story of the mother who prayed in the school carpark.

### **WILL YOU PRAY?**

In the light of our theme for next year and our budget and our attempts to get more focused, I think we are going to need some help.

So I present to you a call to prayer this morning.

Not a should or a must but an invitation.

If we want to grow, if we want to go, if we want to make good on our desire to be a great community in Christ, then the best place to start is on our knees.

**What if over the summer you prayed for yourself, church and your neighbors on a regular basis?**

We would see some remarkable growth next year I believe.

### **Where do I start?**

Paradoxically maybe it's with the actions: breathe...rest...walk...open up to God

- Breathe on me
- Awake my soul
- Lord teach me to pray
- Give me compassion
- Ask God to help us *go and grow* in 2014.
- for *favour* in our small communities.
- for the building of *great community*
- for release of *faith*, of *prayer* and of *compassion*
- for blessing on *leadership and ministries*
- for release of *finance*

### **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.**

Ask God to show you his strategy for your neighbourhood. Pray with a clean heart, with compassion and with persistence.

- Take deep breaths and find the pathway off to the side or underneath the bridge.

### **Dear Lord,**

So far today, am I doing all right.



I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self-indulgent. I have not whined, complained, cursed, or eaten any chocolate. I have charged nothing on my credit card.

But I will be getting out of bed in a minute, and I think that I will really need your help then.

- Walk slowly up and down your street and listen to it.
- **Bless the houses and the people in them. Pray for light and pray for peace. (See below.)**
- Do you need to be reconciled with anyone in your street?
- Ask God for words for your neighbours and pray them.
- Salt your street, call it offlimits to the enemy.
- RAK, street parties...win the right to develop friendships. Christmas and Neighbours Day

## BLESS

B- Body – health, protection, strength

- L –Labour- work, income, security
- E –emotions- joy, peace, hope
- S –social- love, , marriage, family, friends
- S –spiritual- salvation, faith, grace.

In Genesis 24:11 we read, "And he made the camels "kneel down" outside the city." The phrase "kneel down" is the Hebrew verb בָּרַךְ (B.R.K), the very same word translated as "bless." The concrete meaning of בָּרַךְ is to kneel down. The extended meaning of this word is to do or give something of value to another. God "blesses" us by providing for our needs and we in turn "bless" God by giving him of ourselves as his servants.

The noun שְׁלוֹמִי (shalom), often translated as "peace," comes from the verb שָׁלַם (Sh.L.M). The verb shalom means to "restore" in the sense of replacing or providing what is needed in order to make someone or something whole and complete. The noun שְׁלוֹמִי (shalom) is one who has, or has been provided, what is needed to be whole and complete.

## BACK TO PUSH

- Authority comes with persistence. A long tenure in prayer brings authority in the spirit.
- If you are flaky the demonic world knows it.
- Once you prove you are not going to be pushed around...you build strength on your knees or on your prayer walks, praying in tongues, confessing your sins, announcing your identity in Christ.

If you want to grow next year.

If you are serious about learning to go

I suggest we all start on our knees.

