

A Major Trap!

Recently, one of Gospel for Asia's missionary training centres faced serious trouble from anti-Christian authorities in a neighbouring country. A number of people in the border region of that country had accepted Jesus through the witness of the students. The school received a letter with an order to close down immediately.

In every country where Gospel for Asia works, our native missionaries, staff and friends prayed earnestly for God to intervene. The decision was reversed within a week and the school was allowed to remain open. Praise God for his wonderful answer to prayer. If I could pick one thing out that Jesus - as well as Paul and the rest of the Apostles - constantly emphasised, it would be prayer. In the scriptures we are charged to "Watch and pray" to "pray without ceasing" that "Intercessions be made for all men" and so on.

Most followers of Christ are convinced that prayer is a vital part of our Christian life. Through prayer, we communicate with God. As we petition him, in his love he meets our needs, heals our sicknesses, and delivers us from Satan's attacks. In fact, we know from scripture that prayer is our mightiest weapon to defeat the enemy. As we pray, all heaven fights for us. Amazingly, despite our vast knowledge about the importance of prayer, we struggle constantly to find the time for it. Prayer usually ends up near the bottom of our priority list.

There is a reason for this! You see the Devil hates prayer. He hates it more than choir practice, seminars, conferences, and Christian concerts. He will do anything in his power to stop us from engaging in this dangerous activity. In fact, prayer is so destructive to him that he is more than happy to see us choose instead to listen to a sermon, read a Christian book or work for a charity. However, the Devil can't hinder us from praying, he uses several other effective tactics to zap the power out of our prayers. One of those tactics is this: without us knowing, he slips in slowly and makes us believe that all these great victories have happened because of US and OUR PRAYERS. For example: this endangered training centre was saved because WE knew how to defeat the devil. The radio broadcast received 10,000 letters this month because WE made it happen through OUR intercession.

Unless we are very careful and extremely sensitive, we can end up at a place where even our prayers can become a trap. You see when things are happening, the enemy tempts us to trust in our prayer activity OUR expertise on spiritual warfare, OUR elite group and OUR dynamite church leadership. Suddenly our confidence is placed in ourselves and what we are able to accomplish instead of in the Lord alone. Thus, our prayers have turned into a work of the FLESH, something God detests and always rejects. On every page of the Bible, we see battle between the FLESH and the SPIRIT. God clearly demonstrates throughout history that no product of the FLESH is accepted or receives any glory. We have a good example of this in the life of Abraham.

Abraham's entire struggle was to learn to quit placing his confidence in his own flesh and his ability to father the promised son. When he trusted in his flesh, he produced Ishmael instead of Isaac. With great hopes he brought Isaac before God, asking him to bless his son. The Lord looked at Abraham, and (to paraphrase) He said, "You can pray for a thousand years, Abraham, and it will change nothing. I had nothing to do with producing this child. It's your own work. He looks real and is absolutely vibrant, healthy, and strong. He talks, walks, moves and jumps. But if you look behind the story of Ishmael's conception, you will not find me there!"

God had to bring Abraham and his wife Sarah to a point in their lives where there was no hope left whatsoever. It was then that God commanded Abraham to be circumcised. This was Abraham's testimony that he no longer had any confidence in the flesh. God became his only hope for receiving the promised son, and that is when Isaac was born. Our prayers and intercession are vitally important to reach the lost world. There is no substitute for pulling down the strongholds of the enemy. Therefore we must keep our weapon of prayer sharp and effective at all times, when happens only when we examine our hearts daily to see if we are placing our confidence in anything other than Jesus alone. God seeks followers and intercessors who believe with all their hearts that it is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of Hosts". (Zechariah 4v6)

A few minutes of prayer with total dependance upon the Lord are worth more than days of weeping in our own strength. Don't forget the priorities. We may cry out all day long and see nothing happen, Yet Elijah prayed a few words and fire came down from heaven!
When will we ever learn?