

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, March 21, 2010 – 6:00 PM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**A Call to Prayer - Isaiah 62:6-7**

**Introduction:** Once a pastor's little daughter noticed that every time her daddy got ready to preach, he'd bow his head for moment before he spoke. So one day after church she asked him, "*Why do you bow your head right before you preach?*"

He said, "*Well Honey I'm asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon.*"

The little girl looked up at her daddy and asked, "*Then how come he doesn't answer your prayers?*"

Tonight, we're going to be talking about prayer. Now almost everyone prays at one time or another. Generally, most people only pray when they are in trouble or facing a crisis. It has been said that there are no atheists in foxholes or on crashing planes. If the situation is desperate, we all pray. It is much like the notice on the High School bulletin board which read: "*In the event of nuclear attack, all bans on prayer on this campus will be lifted.*" Certainly at Columbine and Heritage High and Virginia Tech University a few years ago, a lot of people were praying.

When Edward Everett Hale was chaplain of the U.S. Senate, someone asked him, "*Do you pray for the senators?*" He replied, "*No, I look at the senators and pray for the country.*" Seeing how things are in Washington these days, we should be praying more for our country. Our situation is desperate enough to pray.

Prayer is one of the great mysteries of God. Many people either don't pray, or they don't know how to pray, or they pray selfishly, or they simply say a prayer and don't really pray. One thing is for sure about prayer, no one really understands how it works. At times we may not even sure that it works, especially when our prayers seem to go unanswered. I heard a good one the other day that I'll pass along to you. Someone once said that God answers prayers in four ways: "*Yes, No, Wait awhile,*" and, "*You've got to be kidding!*"

But most of the time, when God does answer a prayer our faith is renewed – that is, until the next crisis comes along. That's when our doubts and uncertainties may crop up again.

What I'm saying is; our theology of prayer may be cloudy at times. We want God to answer every prayer, but realize when we look back, we are glad He did not. Dr. Billy Graham's wife Ruth said, "*God has not always answered my prayers. If he had, I would have married the wrong man-several times!*" Although we do not always know how God works through prayer, we need to be absolutely sure of this: God is at work through prayer, and for that reason alone, we need to pray.

Prayer is the source of life and power for churches and individuals. Praying taps us into the mind of God. By prayer we move the hand that moves the world. By prayer we receive grace and faith and wisdom and direction.

Yet so often, churches neglect or minimize prayer. Christians neglect prayer. Even pastors neglect prayer. Billy Graham once estimated that 85% of all seminaries had no courses on prayer. I believe that estimation is way to high today because my seminary experience was that almost all the classes I took at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary had a healthy emphasis on prayer. Believe me, if you go to school in New Orleans, you'd better know how to pray!

The truth is, for the Christian, prayer should be a natural thing. Like breathing, prayer sustains our lives. Prayer is how believers communicate with God and how we can see God's will come to pass. Prayer changes things, and it changes us, and it is the most powerful weapon against Satan that we have.

Samuel Chadwick said, "*The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.*" Andrew Murray said, "*The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelization in history.*" Charles Spurgeon said, "*I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach.*" Prayer is powerful. If we were to understand the power of prayer, and practice powerful praying, we would see God do fantastic things.

Obviously, the Bible has a lot to say about prayer. These verses from the book of Isaiah are about prayer and offer insight into the secret of effective prayer. In this passage we see how to get God's attention, and thereby get things done through prayer. Tonight, we'll see three aspects of prayer that will help us become

powerful prayer warriors. Let's read **Isaiah 62:6 (NIV)** "*I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest.*"

First, I want us to discover:

## 1. The Objective of Prayer

What is the objective or the goal of prayer? Well, some people may think that the goal for prayer is to receive something. But this is where many go wrong. The goal for prayer is not to see our will done, but to see God's will accomplished.

In our text, God is calling His people to prayer. He tells those who pray to take no rest for themselves and to give God no rest until God does something very specific — until He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. This was to be the objective or goal of their prayer. But you say, "*Wait a minute! I thought you just said that the goal of prayer was not for our will to be done, but God's.*" Yes, that is true. But here, their object and goal of prayer was also the will of God. Prayer is always centered around and in the will of God.

Here, God's will **was** to make His people a praise to His glory. Indeed, this is always been God's will for His people at any time. It certainly was His desire for Israel. **Isaiah 62:1 (NIV)** "*For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.*" So it's plain to see that God's desire and God's will for Jerusalem and all of Israel was that they should show forth His glory in and through their lives.

This is also God's will for the church today. In **Ephesians 1:12 (NIV)**, Paul says, "*in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.*" It is still God's desire for the church today to be a praise to His glory. That is His will for us. That is His will for the church. He desires that we glorify Him through the church.

So the people of God in the Old Testament were called to pray to that end. We today would be wise to do the same. When we do so, we are praying according to the will of God. God desires that His church be a glorious church. He desires that through our good works we might glorify Him. He desires for the church to bear fruit, much fruit that remains, in order that He might be glorified. He desires to see people saved, set free, and serving Him.

So then, the key to prayer is praying according to the will of God. For prayer to be effective, it must be the kind of prayer that first seeks to discover the God's will. Then we must commit ourselves to pray according to that will. That will be effective praying.

What is God's will for your life? What is God's will for this church? Are you taking the time to discover that will? Are you taking the time to pray according to what God desires for His church?

So, we've seen the objective of prayer, now let's turn our attention to:

## 2. The Provision for Prayer

God has made a provision to see His will accomplished. **Read verse 6.** God has set watchmen on the walls who never cease to cry to God. These watchmen are the provision God has made to see His will accomplished. Let me explain.

In the time in which Isaiah was written, the cities were fortified with walls surrounding them. People were stationed on top of these walls as look-outs. Their job was to keep a watchful eye out for the enemy who might attack without warning. They were the first lines of defense for the city. To see a watchman on the wall was common.

Here's the application. He describes these watchmen as those who cry to Him on behalf of the city. In verse 6 and 7, "*You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.*" These watchmen were those who were to call on the Lord. In the NASB and other translations, it calls these people, those "*who remind the Lord.*" Their job was to cry to God and remind Him of His promise to Jerusalem until that promise was fulfilled. Now this is an interesting and powerful view of prayer. It is a view that prayer is reminding God of what He has already stated that He desires to do. We could say, prayer is praying the promises of God.

Now why should anyone need to remind the Lord? Is God forgetful? What kind of God would forget His own promises? No, God certainly remembers His promises. So what is the principle here? You see, we need to realize what God is after in prayer. It is not that God forgets and must be reminded. It is that **we** need the

exercise of reminding the Lord. In so doing several things are accomplished.

First, we remind ourselves of God's promises. We keep them ever before us and ever fresh in our mind and heart. And when we do, we come to a greater understanding of what His promises are.

Second, and as a result of our being reminded of God's promises, we begin to understand the mind of God and see more clearly what His will is for the situation about which we are praying. Prayer is not so much for God's sake as it is for ours.

By praying in this way, we become a watchman on the wall. This is God's desire. He is looking for a people to stand with Him in His purposes. God is looking for intercessors who will pray according to His will. And God has tied the accomplishing of His will to the willingness of His people to pray. In essence, God has provided for the provision for prayer. We simply need to realize that it is there.

So, we've learned so far that the objective of prayer is to see God's will accomplished. We've learned that the provision God has made for this is for His people to pray according to His will and based on His promises. Now we come to:

### **3. Our Responsibility as Praying People**

As has been already said, God ties the accomplishing of His will to His people's willingness to pray. This fact is clearly seen in **Ezekiel 22:30 (NIV)**, where we find God getting ready to destroy the land because of the evil people in it. He makes this statement, *"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."* Sadly, sometimes God's purposes are not accomplished because His people will not pray. The obvious conclusion is that we have a responsibility to seek God's face through prayer.

God will establish us through prayer. God will accomplish His will in our lives through prayer. God will accomplish His purposes in our church through prayer. But God desires a certain kind of prayer. He desires persistent prayer.

Again, look at **Isaiah 62 6-7 (NIV)**: *"You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest till he establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* This is the picture of persistent prayer. Our responsibility in praying is not only to pray, but to keep on praying. We are to come to God again and again until His will is accomplished. We are to remind the Lord of His promises. We are to cry unto God. We must pray and keep praying.

In **Luke 11:9-10 (NIV)**, Jesus said, *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."* The tense of the verbs here indicate a persistent coming to God. We are to ask, and to keep on asking. We are to seek, and keep on seeking. We are to knock, and to keep on knocking. They also indicate an increasing intensity and expectancy to seeing our prayers answered. To ask is one thing, but to seek requires greater effort. And to knock implies even greater persistence. God honors persistent prayer.

**Conclusion:** The book of James tells us that we do not have because we do not ask. As we continue in a spirit of revival, let me say this. If we really want to see revival in our lives or continue the revival spirit, we must ask. If we really want to see God move in our church we must seek. If we really want to see God move in our world we must knock. In **2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)**, we read, *"if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and **pray** and **seek** my face and **turn** from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

R. A. Torrey, an associate of D. L. Moody and former President of Moody Bible Institute, said this about the place of prayer in revival: *"I can give a prescription that will bring revival to any church, or community or city. First: Let a few Christians get thoroughly right with God. If this is not done, the rest will come to nothing. Second: Let them bind themselves together to pray for revival until God opens the windows of heaven and comes down. Third: Let them put themselves at the disposal of God for His use as He sees fit in winning others to Christ. That is all. I have given this prescription around the world and in no instance has it failed. It cannot fail."*

We've been given the right prescription. But the only way medicine can do any good is when it is taken properly. God has given us an amazing tool in prayer, because it is how we can touch God. But it only works when we actually take the time to pray. We must plan to pray and then we must pray. This is what every church needs. It's the central and distinguishing mark of His church, for Jesus said His house would be a house of

prayer.

Are you willing to pray and pray and keep on praying until it makes a difference? Are you willing to become a watchman on the walls, crying to God day and night, taking no rest for yourself and giving God no rest until He accomplishes His purpose in your life, and in this church? This is the challenge for today. This is the call that the Spirit is giving to us. We're being called to become watchmen on the wall. We're all to call upon the one who can make a difference in this life. We're being called to commit ourselves to pray.

The invitation tonight is simply to come and pray. Will you begin now an all out assault on the throne of God? Will you begin now to humble yourself, pray in God's will, and plant yourself as a watchman on the wall? Come and join me at this altar. Come and let's pray about it.