

*“Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;
all day and all night they will never keep silent.
You who remind Jehovah, do not be dumb;
and do not give Him quiet until He establishes
and until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”
—Isaiah 62:6-7*

March 31, 2020

Dear saints,

The church of God has a strategic twofold commission—to pray to God and to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to men. We often focus on the work that we do for the Lord in reaching men, but the prayer ministry of the church is actually much more important. The present situation on the earth is a call for all the saints in the Lord’s recovery to rise up to fulfill the neglected function of the church: to cooperate with God in prayer for the advancement of His interests on the earth. To that end, we are asking the saints in the churches around the globe to sign up for a fifteen-minute time slot every day from April 1 to April 21, 2020 to pray in private or with companions. We will provide some suggestions concerning what to pray for, but first let us enter into a fundamental understanding of the type of prayer the Lord needs.

Too often we think of prayer as something we do only when we are aware of a particular spiritual or practical need or when we want to accomplish something for the Lord in a way of service, whether personally, with others, or as the church. Prayer for these things is legitimate and even necessary, but the highest and deepest prayers in the New Testament are, first and foremost, for God’s work in the saints and for His move on the earth (Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Acts 4:24-31; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4). Intercessory prayer is a matter of co-laboring with Christ in His heavenly ministry. Such prayer is the pinnacle of the church’s service to Christ. He as the heavenly Intercessor needs His people on the earth to echo His desire. Matthew 18:18 says, “Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Brother Watchman Nee helped us see from this verse that God in the heavens is waiting for the church to execute His will on the earth through prayer. Something may have been bound or loosed in the heavens, but it is only through the church’s prayer that it can be bound or loosed on the earth.

The book of Revelation shows us God’s divine administration in His consummating of this age. In this book we do not see the churches carrying out so many activities. Rather, we see prayer in relation to God’s governmental move. The saints’ prayers are present in the scene in heaven at Christ’s ascension and the opening of the scroll of God’s economy (Rev. 5:8). God responds to the cry of the martyred saints (6:9-10) with the opening of the sixth seal, which marks the beginning of the great tribulation (vv. 12-17). After Christ as “another Angel” offers the saints’ prayers with Himself as the incense before the throne, fire is cast to the earth followed by supernatural calamities, marking the beginning of God’s judgment of the earth and its inhabitants (8:3-5). In each case the prayers mentioned have dispensational significance and enable God to carry out His administration.

The Lord desires to end this age and to establish His kingdom on the earth (Rev. 11:15; 12:10). He is waiting for an adequate number of believers to be made ready as His Bride and as His army (Rev. 19:7, 14). Now, more than ever before, we should beseech the Father according to Matthew 6:9-10 that His name would be sanctified, that His kingdom would come, and that His will would be done on the earth. On the one hand, the pandemic that is currently wreaking havoc throughout the world is a warning from the Lord to the nations. On the other hand, it is a call from the Lord to His people to carry out His commission to be one with the ascended Christ at the incense altar and match His intercession.

The Bible shows us that the created race of Adam, the called race of Abraham, and the church as a whole all failed God in cooperating with Him to accomplish His purpose. For this reason, in Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord called for overcomers. We must realize that God's move depends upon overcomers, and a key characteristic of overcomers is their prayer. The martyred saints crying out beneath the altar in Revelation 6 become the overcoming man-child in chapter 12, and when the man-child is caught up to heaven, Satan is cast down (12:5, 9). One aspect of the Lord's recovery today is to produce overcomers who will fully cooperate with the Lord so that His purpose can be fulfilled and He can return. We must be those overcomers who are praying at the incense altar in the house of God to correspond with Christ, our heavenly High Priest, and to cooperate with God by praying on the earth what is out from His throne.

The saints in the churches in the Lord's recovery should all aspire to be overcomers. However, we must realize that such spiritual warriors are not produced overnight. We need to build up our praying and fighting capacity. We believe that the unprecedented restriction many of us find ourselves under is sovereign of the Lord to grant us the opportunity to recover and uplift both our personal and corporate prayer life. If you read the New Testament carefully, you will realize that the apostle Paul's ability to minister from prison was quite limited, but he prayed much. Similarly, Brother Nee carried out his public ministry for thirty years, but while he was in prison during the last twenty years of his life, he could minister only in a limited way to those around him. Yet during that time of confinement, he was able to join with the interceding Christ in a hidden ministry of prayer.

We are accustomed to viewing all the provisions of God, the bountiful supply of the Spirit, and the riches that we have received from this ministry as the spiritual supply for our growth in life for the building up of the church. This is not wrong, but we should realize that all these things are also to strengthen us to carry out the church's paramount ministry of prayer. We need to read the Bible, know the anointing, and be nourished by the ministry of the age so that we can know how to pray according to God's will and not our own. We all want to have the Lord's presence, but we should realize that the Lord's promise to be with us when we gather together in His name is in the context of two or three offering binding and loosing prayer in harmony with one another and with God's will (Matt. 18:18-20).

Finally, as we join ourselves to the Lord in prayer, we need to remember Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:48, in which he spoke of God's people praying to God toward the holy land, typifying Christ as the portion allotted by God to His people; toward the holy city, signifying the kingdom of God in Christ; and toward the holy temple, signifying God's house, the church, on the earth. This indicates that God will listen to our prayer when our prayer to God is toward Christ, the kingdom of God, and the house of God as the goal in God's eternal economy. This means that no matter who we are praying for, our prayers should be aimed at the interests of God on earth, that is, at Christ and the church, for the fulfilling of His economy.

Brothers and sisters, we need to advance. We should be deliberate during these days to build up this ministry of prayer, both personally and with one another. All our shortages, whether individual or corporate, can be traced back to the lack of prayer. Presently, we may not be able to pray that strongly or for very long, but the restrictions we face afford us a way to build up our capacity for prayer if we have a mind to persevere. Moreover, though we may be isolated physically, the Lord has given us a way through modern technology to still pray together. To seize this opportunity we need to budget our time and exercise to pray in a regular way.

The saints in the churches in the Lord's recovery have never been so ready to enter into such prayer. Today, more than ever, there is a strong one accord and rich blending among the co-workers and the churches on the earth. We can truly pray as one Body, even as one new man, joined to Christ, our ascended Head. Together let us put on the whole armor of God to stand against the rulers and authorities of darkness and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies. Let us continue steadfastly to pray at every time and in every place for God's will to be done on the earth.

Therefore, to meet the need at this crucial juncture, we call on all the saints from every continent, nation, and locality in the Lord's recovery to attend to this prayer ministry watchfully and earnestly. Specifically, it is our hope that many would participate in this worldwide, round-the-clock prayer as appointed watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 62:6) for these 21 days and until there is praise to Him throughout the earth!

The co-workers in the Lord's recovery

*“And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints
out of the hand of the Angel before God.
And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth;
and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.”
—Rev. 8:4-5*