



LIFE *On* MISSION

ADVENTIST CHURCH *in Sydney*

Why Bother?

Scripture Reading- 1 John 5:14-16 – 367 Rescue the Perishing

- When I was a college student, I was enthusiastic about evangelism. Yet I asked myself this question:
 - “Is God trying to save them?” “Sure is” “Can He?” “Sure can” “Without me” “Absolutely”
 - “If God is doing everything already, why does He need me?”
 - Do you agree? I tried to quickly answer
 - “Oh, it’s for our joy”
 - I’m happy as it is – and last time a door slammed in my face, the endorphins didn’t exactly dance around
 - “Oh, it’s character building”
 - Sure is – doing something that doesn’t work, pays nothing and leaves you depressed, discouraged and disillusioned definitely builds character
 - So why bother?
 - Why pray for people?
 - Why work to reach them?
 - If God loves them and is already doing everything, then why bother?

- Journey back in time 2,548 years ago

Daniel 10:1-3

- 3rd year of Cyrus king of Persia – **Isaiah 44:28**
 - Cyrus birth
 - Astyages – king of the Medes had dream of his daughter, Mandane producing water that overran city and whole of Asia. His wise men and counsellors suggested this was a really bad omen
 - The king gave Mandane to marry Persian vassal king, Cambyses
 - 12 months after marriage, Astyages had another dream of vine growing from Mandane which overshadowed all of Asia – magi interpreted this dream to mean that the child of Mandane would overthrow Astyages
 - Mandane was brought in back to the Median capital Ecbatana
 - Mandane kept under guard
 - When child was born, Astyages ordered one of his most trusted advisors, Harpagus to kill the child and dispose of the body
 - Harpagus decided not to carry out deed himself but called royal herdsmen/shepherd Mitradataes to do the dirty work, threatening him
 - Mitradatae’s own wife had given birth to still-born child, convinced husband to keep boy and raise him as their own, gave Harpagus the corpse of their still-born child, claiming it was the crown prince that they had killed as Harpagus had commanded
 - Cyrus developed into outstanding boy showing royal qualities of leadership

- One day, while playing with friends, he was given the role of king – one of the boys did not obey his orders, and Cyrus ordered the other children to beat him up – the father of the child complained to the king who in turn ordered Cyrus to appear before him to be punished
- When asked why he behaved so harshly, Cyrus replied that as he was pretending to be a king, he had every reason to punish someone who disobeyed his command
- Astyages realized the boy was more than a shepherd's son
- The king questioned Harpagus and the royal shepherd, and discovered the truth
- Astyages punished Harpagus by killing Harpagus's son, and feeding the meat to him without realizing it
- However this time his wise men and counsellors warned Astyages against harming Cyrus, so he was sent back home to his real parents in Persia
- Years later, Harpagus, to avenge the death of his own son, joined with Cyrus, who eventually overthrew Astyages, his grandfather, and united the Medo-Persian empire under his rule
- Harpagus became Cyrus's greatest general
- When Cyrus began his campaigns, he came with the attitude of tolerant liberator, not conqueror – he was open to other religions, cultures, and allowed nations to live under independent rule provided they paid their taxes and did not rebel
- In 538 BC, Cyrus liberated the Jews and gave them the funds to return and rebuild Jerusalem
- 3rd year
 - Daniel is about 85, likely retired, 3 years after the episode in the lion's den
 - Jews had gone back, work on rebuilding Jerusalem had begun
- Mourned for three weeks
 - Why?
 - Neighbors/Samaritans opposing building of the temple
 - Neighbors/Samaritans were mixed Israelites/pagans, polytheistic, idolaters
 - Send envoy to Babylon, royal decree to stop work
 - Zerubbabel comes to Babylon with the sad news
 - Daniel is mourning at the state of affairs of Jerusalem

Daniel 10:4-8

- Same description as Ezekiel and John of Jesus

Daniel 10:9-11

- Gabriel, who has appeared to Daniel before

Daniel 10:12-13

- Prince of Persia, not king
- Cambyses II – son of Cyrus, co-regent while Cyrus conquered the world, located in Babylon
- Ardent Zoroastrian – ancient religion worshipping Ahura Mazda – what car do you drive?
 - From Mazda (Automaker) website:
 - The Origins and meaning of 'Mazda' The company's name, "Mazda," derives from Ahura Mazda, a god of the earliest civilizations in West Asia. We have interpreted Ahura Mazda, the god of wisdom, intelligence and harmony...
- Intolerant, hated other religions, cults, cultures, unlike his father
- Samaritans would have found an easy ally
 - See Samaritan interference in **Ezra 4:1-4**
- May have been planning worse than just stopping the rebuilding
- Gabriel strives for 3 weeks – delay over spiritual warfare, not shortage of angels
- Eventually, Jesus Himself intervenes to turn the tide

Major Points from Story

- Daniel prays
- God intervenes through Gabriel, Jesus Himself
- Time delay
- Jewish nation saved

Why? Does God need our prayers and mission endeavors?

1 John 5:16

- When we pray and work, God intervenes to save others
- God has, is and will continue to do all He can to save everyone
- However God is love and will not force Himself upon anyone
- When person rejects God, there is nothing more He can do
 - If that person were to be lost, God would not be to blame as God has given Jesus, sent His Spirit, and done everything possible to save that person
- However there is another way in which God can reach those who have rejected Him
 - You and I praying, working, reaching out to the lost
- When we pray and reach out to others, it enables God to knock on that heart again – to plead with them yet again to respond to His love
- Satan cannot accuse God of using force when we pray for God’s intervention – God is acting on our behalf, responding to our invitation
- Proxy story – share trading
 - When I was young, started trading shares on the stock exchange, received letter to attend AGM in Perth or vote via proxy
 - A proxy vote is when I let someone else cast my preferred vote on my behalf
 - Us praying/working for others is like casting a proxy vote – allowing God to work on our behalf in situations where others have turned their back on Him already.

Luke 22:32 – Jesus prayed for Peter

John 17:9, 15, 20 - Jesus prayed for you and I

Hebrews 7:25 – Jesus is still interceding for us

1 Timothy 2:1-4 - we are encouraged to pray/intercede for all, that some may be saved

Personal story of father praying for me

- Deliberately chose to reject God at 18
- Asked God to ‘leave me alone’
- Holy Spirit kept on convicting
- Argued with God as to why He was still ‘bothering’ me through my conscience
- Saw father praying for me, on his knees in his bedroom
- ‘still small voice’ impressed me that God was still convicting because father was praying for me
- A few weeks after seeing my father prayed, I quit my business degree and went to study ministry

We do not pray and work because God isn’t, won’t or can’t

We pray and work because God respects and values the choices people make

Our prayers and work are not the first intervention that God has made to save people, but many people will be reached because they hear about the good news about Jesus from us

We do not pray and do mission work out of guilt, but out of joy, that maybe, just maybe, one more knock by the Holy Spirit, one more invitation through you and I will persuade them to open their hearts to God and experience salvation

Why bother? Because we are God’s specially chosen strategy to reach people who otherwise may not be saved because they have rejected God