



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

September 1, 2019

The Insistent Prayer of a Friend of God

The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" –Genesis 18:17-19, 23, 26b

Christians are audacious people. Audacity is different from pride, because it's based on God's promise and not human vanity. Christian audacity insists by faith on receiving what is asked, believing that it's God's will. Christians audaciously call ourselves God's friends, because Christ calls us His friends (John 15:14), and we go boldly before God's throne in heaven, expecting to receive what we ask. God called Abraham His friend, and used Him to teach us how to intercede for others.

Abraham lived at a time and place where human sin was reaching a breaking point. Sodom and Gomorrah were so caught up in the pursuit of their pleasures that they willingly assaulted anyone who got in their way. Riches abounded and pleasure was everything, so life was cheap. And God had called Abraham to be a light of His holiness to the world (Genesis 18:18-19).

When the LORD went and looked at the grave sins of these notorious cities, He determined to wipe them from the face of the earth, and He told His friend Abraham His plans. Abraham never objected to God's judgment, but his heart went out for his nephew, Lot. If God was going to use him to display divine righteousness, Abraham needed to have a grasp of what it was and what it wasn't, so he pleaded with God to deliver righteous Lot from judgment. Abraham called God out and asked Him to protect Lot.

He asked humbly and cautiously, since He was confronting the *Judge of all the earth* (18:25). "*Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it?*" (18:23b-24)?

God conceded Abraham's point and relented. But Abraham wouldn't leave the issue alone and kept pressing. "*Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?*" (18:28a)? And Abraham persisted. "*Suppose forty are found there?*" (18:29) ... "*Suppose thirty are found there?*" (18:30) ... "*Suppose twenty are found there?*" (18:31) ... "*Suppose ten are found there?*" (18:32)?

Abraham wouldn't let God off the hook, but insisted that God's righteousness align with his own understanding. And God conceded Abraham's point and relented every time. This was more than just a logical argument for Abraham. This was personal. This was Family! And Abraham got what he asked for—and learned through his persistent prayer of faith, the heart and mind of a holy and loving God.

Never be afraid to tell God what's on your mind or to ask Him for what He puts on your heart. God's friends know that He is God and accept His will as *good and acceptable and perfect* (Romans 12:2). But God also reveals to us His heart and the wisdom of His ways, so we can grow into stronger and sweeter fellowship with Him and better share the truth of who He is.

Intercessory prayer isn't easy. It requires persistence, because God works out His will through the intercession of His people. Divine compassion far surpasses our own, but God invites our insistent prayer for others, so He can make us like Him. We'll never fathom the depths of His justice, but God welcomes our attempts and uses them to grow us in His likeness.

Remember my first truly adult conversations with my children makes me think that God found this exchange with Abraham satisfying—and made Him smile. To the praise of His glory.

Prayer

It's all too easy to take pot shots at our culture by making negative comparisons with Sodom and Gomorrah. That kind of rhetoric is becoming less effective even with Christians. Christ didn't leave us in this world to insult sin but to transform sinners by the Gospel of His grace. Our job is to call sin what it is—disobedience and a slap in God's face—and call people to repentance, accepting God's grace along with His standard of right and wrong.

I recently read that those who oppose abortion in Africa are being called white supremacists. Clearly righteousness is being labeled evil to coerce conformity to a standard that is far from God's righteousness. God calls His people to proclaim His truth, which is far more than denouncing sin and error.

By God's great might and power, He uses His people as part of His rescue. He uses us to lead people to Christ by sharing the Gospel with them. He leads us in speaking to others about the forgiveness and hope that are found in Christ alone. And He brings true conviction of what is truly sin, as we proclaim the eternal truth of His Word.

And who is sufficient for these things (2nd Corinthians 2:16). No one but God and those He has called to let Him work through them. That is why we must pray and pray boldly, expecting God to act miraculously in us and in the lives of others.

Continue to pray for Northpoint and our pastors, elders, and staff. Pray for God's leading and strength and protection for them and their families. And ask God to use them to lead us to leaders who will lead us to Christ—especially our new Lead Pastor.

- 1. Our Pastors and Directors:** Scott Williams, Tony Chute, Taylor Mendoza, Terilyn Brown, Geoff Grant, and Marti Wiegman.
- 2. Our Lay Elders:** Tim East, Steve Flood, Mark Kiker, Mike Russell, Vinoj Zechariah, and new elders who come onto the board.
- 3. Our Church Staff:** Michelle Balga, Bob Brown, Andria Brucks, Chelsae Grant, Carolee Jefferson, Amber McEwen, Tamene Menna, Mark Norland, Corie Saunders, and Teri Vaughn.

Praise Record

Note when and how God answers your prayers. It will help you to see that He really is paying attention.

| Date | Request | Date | Answer |
|------|---------|------|--------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. –Hebrews 4:16