

Effectual Fervent Prayer, Part 2 - Occupying Prayer

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Luke 19:12-13 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

Nearly eight years have passed on the calendar since President George W. Bush made his historic speech from the imposing flight deck of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003, declaring “an end to major combat operations in Iraq.” But as he stated that day, the coalition forces engaged in “securing and reconstructing that country” still have “dangerous work to complete.” His words echoed with almost prophetic authority: “The war on terror is not over, yet it is not endless. We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen the turning of the tide.”

Regardless of one’s political stripe, there is near-universal consensus on this fact: Military victory over a hostile and entrenched foe is but the first phase of warfare. Unwavering determination and untiring effort are required to preserve a precarious peace and defend a fledgling freedom against those whose ideology prefers dictatorship to democracy, and who will stop at nothing in their attempts to sabotage the process and reverse the progress. Victory may be declared, but occupying forces must see to it that victory is enforced.

Jesus’ parable in Luke 19 teaches us that the servants of God must also “occupy” hostile territory until He returns. The word does not mean just to bide one’s time (that’s what the slothful servant did); rather, it means “to busy oneself with trade.” Simply put, we are to do more than just “fill a place” in God’s Kingdom – we are to consistently carry out “spiritual business” for the King. And just what is our primary business?

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.

Paul agrees with Puritan preacher John Bunyan who once said, “We can do more than pray *after* we have prayed, but we can not do more than pray *until* we have prayed.”

One of the powerful prayer words in the New Testament is “supplication,” but we strip it of much of its authority when we define it only according to the English dictionary. There the sense is basically confined to “*begging*.”

However, the scriptural root words also carry the sense of “*binding*.” Yes, supplication involves making our requests known to God, but it extends the concept further. To supplicate is to *ask with passion, persistence and focus*. **Supplication is the prayer of occupation** – “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done!” Apostolic believers are equipped to do more than *entreat*; we are equipped to *enforce*.

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Jesus’ promise that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against the church is irrevocably connected to the actions of the church in the next verse:

Matthew 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Ancient custom was that the gates of a city functioned as the place of public discourse and official decree. Jesus is teaching that the church has been empowered by His victory on the cross to pray in ways that stop the strategies of hell dead in their tracks.

Supplication moves into the confusion caused by the fall of man – broken hearts, broken homes, broken health, broken relationships – and begins to bind up broken things, bringing them back to God’s original design. It is the business of believers to intervene in any situations that are not what Heaven intends them to be and see them through in passionate, persistent, focused prayer until they once again agree with God’s Word. Our binding and loosing accomplishes on earth what has already been willed in Heaven; we don’t *make* things happen, but our supplication does *release* them to happen. It is God’s power and timing coupled with our participation and tenacity.

This “binding” is not limited to our concept of something being tied up; it could be even more accurately understood by our concept of a “binding contract.” In the construction of our home in Saint John several years ago, I remember more than one occasion when I had to hold the contractor and his crew to the terms of our original agreement. This was possible because the terms and conditions of that written agreement were binding. However, it didn’t happen just because the document was stored in a filing cabinet somewhere; it happened because I insisted that the clauses of our contract be honored. My persistence ensured that contested or neglected features of the project were finished as they ought to be, *according to the will of the owner*.

In this world, Satan always attempts to construct things that are totally out of line with God's blueprint, situations that contradict God's Word and contravene God's plan for His people. He has a blatant disregard and a callous contempt for the Bible, the contract that governs the life of every saint. But God has appointed us to be the on-site observers of His work on earth, and we are to *occupy* until the owner returns. That's why we pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Jesus, what You paid for at the cross isn't being done in this situation – so let Your power flow through my prayer to accomplish Your purpose. As a member of the occupying army assigned to enforce Your will, I block the adversary's advance. According to the terms of Calvary's contract, I bind the enemy from success in this situation. I loose on earth what You have already loosed in Heaven!

A powerful weapon like supplication is not intended to be wasted on petty, self-centered, temporal concerns. Paul elaborates on this, giving us a divine directive to pray for issues that are grander and broader than our own immediate points of personal preoccupation.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

We have been equipped to pray for critical, Kingdom-minded, eternal issues. We are promised influence that can affect the climate of our culture and thus create an atmosphere where people can more readily "come unto the knowledge of the truth." It would be the ultimate act of selfishness to squander such supernatural armaments on inconsequential skirmishes, when the war for eternal souls is being waged all around us.

Another scriptural term defining this kind of prayer is "intercession," which in both the ancient Greek and Hebrew languages carries the same basic meaning – "to come between by chance." This peculiar expression is used of Jacob in Genesis 29:11, when he "lighted" upon a certain place, and tarried there all night. Only after he had awakened from his glorious dream did he realize that an apparently random place of stopping had become the cornerstone of His entire life – "surely the Lord is in this place!"

This is the very essence of intercession: circumstances and impressions that seem random, catching our attention when we least expect them, are not *accidental* but *providential*.

If we can just perceive that our day-to-day circumstances are ordained by the Holy Spirit, we will learn to respond to them with authoritative praying, confident that God desires us to "stand in the gap" (Ezekiel 22:30) at that very moment. Not every believer has the calling of an intercessor, but every believer is called to intercede when God prompts. Think about it – you may be the only representative of Heaven that God has on the scene to enforce His will!

Intercession occurs when believers realize that God has ordained "boundaries of blessing" around His people and that *unless someone prays* Satan will always try to violate the boundary line. You were not saved merely to be a helpless bystander in this conflict; you have been anointed and appointed to monitor the situation on Heaven's behalf, and then step in to occupy the territory every time the devil crosses the line.

Apostolic Christianity is not a spectator sport – it is a fight to the finish! *First of all*, we need prayer warriors with sufficient spiritual sensitivity to understand that God has put them "on location" to travail in prayer for a world that otherwise would experience only sin's consequences without hope of Divine intervention. We are – quite literally – the *occupying forces* for a Kingdom not of this earth.

Some two thousand years have passed on the calendar since our Lord Jesus Christ made his historic declaration from a nondescript mountain near Jerusalem, declaring an end to major combat operations with Hell. But as he stated that day, the prayer warriors engaged in saving and reconciling fallen humanity still have dangerous work to complete. His words echoed with prophetic authority:

Matthew 28:18-20 All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

The Day of Pentecost happened because of SUPPLICATION ...

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and **supplication**, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

I STAND HERE AS HEAVEN'S AMBASSADOR AND I SAY, "GOD'S KINGDOM COME HERE, AND GOD'S WILL BE DONE NOW!"

Speak Heaven's covenant – pray the Word of God! The Bible is God's binding contract over your life – hold the devil to its terms!