

# Will You Pray the Price?

## *Praying to Victory:*

Isaiah 62:1-7

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A dog walks into a butcher shop carrying a purse in his mouth and knapsack around his neck. The butcher asks, “Do you want some meat?” The dog answers, “Woof!” The butcher asks, “Do you want pork, liver, beef steak...” The dog interrupts, “Woof!” “Steak,” the butcher responds. “How much, a half-pound, pound, two-pounds...” The dog interrupts again, “Woof!” The butcher cuts, wraps and places the steak in the knapsack, and retrieves the money from the purse. The dog turns and walks out. The butcher thinks, “This is the smartest animal I have ever seen. I’ll follow it and see where it comes from.” The butcher trails the dog into an apartment complex; and in the hallway he sees the dog jump up and scratch a door. A man opens the door and yells: “Dumb dog, dumb dog!” The butcher interrupts, “Stop, that’s the smartest animal I’ve ever met.” “Smart, you say?” the owner barks, “That’s the third time he’s gone out for groceries and lost our keys!”

Sometimes, we so focus on problems that the obvious and incredible escape our attention. That is so true with prayer. When my wife Diane was a single youth, she kept a daily prayer list of concerns. She tucked it away in her Bible. Of course, over time she acquired different Bibles... and a husband, and we moved several times. After one of the moves, unpacking a box,

her old prayer list fell out of the Bible. A dozen years had passed since she had laid eyes upon it. She reviewed the requests, which included school tests, money for a need and so on, and she saw how God was clearly responded. She was impressed by how God worked in each request. When she found that prayer list, she looked away from her present challenges long enough to see what is obvious and incredible. Our Creator loves us intensely and answers our prayers.

I'm excited to say that the Spirit of Jesus reminded me through the Scriptures that God is purifying for himself a people; that being born from above, through faith in Jesus Christ, he is growing us into the full measure of a child of God, the full measure of the stature of Jesus, the full measure of his intimacy with our Father, the full measure of his fruitfulness, the full measure of Jesus' prayer life. Have you read these words of Jesus?

***Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*** (John 14:11-14, NIV)

Let's not be coy. Your experience may not match this promise, but plainly Jesus promises that ANYONE who has faith in Jesus will do the miracles he does. ANYONE who has faith will do even greater miracles because as each of us prays in Jesus' name, Jesus acts to honor our Father. Jesus bates every one of us: "Ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

If you think miracles of Jesus' variety aren't happening, it is because you have limited your hearing and seeing. You've restricted your awareness (and possibly your relationships), so that the talk and experiences you hear and witness are comfortable, explicable and therefore controllable. However, our heavenly Father is doing amazing things in response to our prayers. You don't have to travel far to see it. You don't have to go to Colorado Springs to hear and see

what Jesus did in response to prayer when Pastor Dutch Sheets placed his hands on a comatose invalid in a nursing home regularly for a year and then the man woke up and began to walk. You don't have to go to the Roman Catholic Blue Cloud Abbey in Sisseton, South Dakota to hear what Jesus did to glorify the Father when three Native Americans from Minneapolis entered a prayer meeting with teeth full of holes and left it with each cavity filled, gold fillings on the top teeth, silver ones on the bottom. You don't have to go to a Pentecostal, evangelistic service in Argentina (although I would like to go) to observe how Jesus glorified our Father when people obese, walked away from a time of prayer with their clothes baggy, having shed 50 pounds or more. Are you uncomfortable with these reports? The religious scholars of Jesus' day were, and they debunked, diminished and dismissed as much as they could. Yet we don't have to go so far back in history or so far away to see remarkable answers to prayer. God is answering the cries of hearts right here in Rochester, to the glory of God and as a sign of how present and mighty the work of Jesus is for everyone who believes.

This summer we've pondered experiences and teachings in the Bible that reveal what shapes God's response to our prayers, and today's Scripture reveals a key truth. To see remarkable answers to prayer, we've got to pray and keep praying. Isaiah exclaimed:

***Because I love Zion, because my heart yearns for Jerusalem, I cannot remain silent. I will not stop praying for her until her righteousness shines like the dawn, and her salvation blazes like a burning torch.*** (Isaiah 62:1, NLT)

Isaiah would not stop praying until there was victory. This was God's doing. Indeed, God said through Isaiah:

***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, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.*** (Isaiah 62:6-7, NIV)

God calls some to be watchmen who watch over their communities and churches and pray. Beginning in October, Bethany will become a center for some of these watchmen from various churches. Churches in this community are beginning to mobilize round-the-clock prayer. At this moment, it appears that Bethany will be the physical center for much of that. However, God calls all of us to pray until victory is realized in our community and nation as well as our individual lives and families. God calls all of his children to pray the price. 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.*** (Matthew 7:7-8, NIV)

When Jesus says, “Seek and you will find,” in terms of prayer, he’s not telling us quickly survey and turn over a few pillows. He is calling us to pray the price. That is because Jesus did, and God is growing you and me to be like him. We will not be like Jesus by just listening to this sermon series. Jesus is leading us all to three actions and corporate experiences.

First, during the remainder of 2008, we will share answers to prayer (or favorite prayer promises) in worship at least once a month. Second, we ask all of you to pray both for Bethany’s provision and fruitfulness in ministry, Monday through Friday, as close to noon as possible, for a minute. We want you to keep this habit, at least until God removes all our corporate debt and we grow in numbers and multiply in various cultures. Third, we ask you to join to this prayer a fast of one meal a week, asking God to align all our attitudes and actions with his will.

Together we can grow into the prayer life of Jesus, so that God reveals to you, your family, your neighbor and this world, both what people can become and what blessings come to the world when people actually believe.