

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

January 2016

Dear Friends,

And so a new year has begun. And begun with something of a bang, it seems. A dear friend's daughter is in the hospital. Another friend just got out. Yet another is launching a new mission venture while the son of friends leaves his career to start his own company. I don't know if it's the New Year itself or greater movements in the Kingdom, but my goodness—there is so much going on in the lives of the saints. *A lot* of good things; a lot of trial and testing.

Time to give a little attention to prayer.

Next month we are releasing a new book on prayer, and we are *very* excited about what it is going to do for you. Prayer is the greatest secret weapon God has given his people. But many dear folks have lost heart over prayer; they haven't found the breakthrough they were hoping for and they've given up on it. I understand; I have my own mixed story when it comes to prayer. I think much of the heartache and confusion can be cleared away with a better understanding of what prayer actually is and how it works...

First, prayer is not just asking God to do something and then waiting for him to do it. I know that's the popular view, but that is not what you see in the major stories of prayer in Scripture. Like the account from 2 Kings 18, where Elijah calls down rain to end a three-year drought. You remember the story—how the old prophet climbs to the top of the mountain, and sets himself to praying, then sends his servant to have a look. Elijah doesn't just take a quick whack at it; no little, “Jesus, be with us today” prayers. Elijah is determined to see results. He bows, and prays, and then sends his manservant to see if it's working—is it having any effect? I love his posture, his willingness to give it a go, see what happens, then adjust himself to the results. The servant returns with bad news.

This is the point at which most of us give up, but the old prophet sticks at it; he has another go and sends his man to have a second look. Nothing. So, he takes his cloak off, puts his shoulder to the wheel, and gives it yet another try. He's not letting the evidence discourage him. *Six more times he sticks with it.* By now the rest of us would have bailed down to Starbucks to commiserate about “the dark night of the soul,” and what to do with “the silence of God.” Not this old Israelite—he's still up on the mountain, persevering. After eight rounds of prayer—and “rounds” really does feel like the right word by this point; you get the feeling they are like rounds in the ring, full of sweat and grit and a real going at it—after the eighth bell the servant says, “Well . . . there's a puff of cloud on the horizon, not any bigger than your fist” and that's all it takes; the storm is on its way.

You get the impression that Elijah is *partnering with God* in the way he prays. Not just asking, but teaming with, joining in, enforcing the plans of God through prayer. It has dramatic results. And speaking of dramatic, what about the really startling report from Acts 12—where James is executed but Peter is freed from prison? Peter's rescue is clearly connected to the prayers of the young church: “But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him” (v. 5).

James seems to have been seized and executed rather suddenly; the church is not reported to have been praying for him. Were they caught off guard? Then Peter is seized, and the church is reported to be praying earnestly, and his outcome is different. The Greek for “very earnestly” is the word *ektenos*. It is the very same adjective used to describe the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. What a noble, and sober, comparison. There in the olive grove at midnight was held the greatest prayer vigil of all time; we can be sure Jesus was praying with every ounce of his being, empowered by the Spirit, eyes fixed on his Father. That is the comparison being given here for the church’s prayers; Eugene Petersen translated the action this way: “the church prayed for him most strenuously” (Acts 12:5 MSG). That is how the church is praying—strenuously—and it produces dramatic results.

This is the “Prayer of Intervention;” they are not just asking God and waiting; they are *intervening* in prayer for Peter, intending to change the outcome of events. Clearly, God does not just zap Peter out of prison. The church has to pray “strenuously” for him; the event goes on into the night. He does not zap the promised rain either—Elijah had to climb to the top of the mountain, and there he prayed rounds of intervening prayer. Intervening prayer often takes time. And it takes *repetition*, repeatedly intervening and invoking. (Eight rounds for Elijah).

These men and women in Acts had spent three years with Jesus learning the ways of the Kingdom (there is a way things work). In the famous “Lord’s prayer” he taught them to invoke the kingdom: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10). They understood that he had given them his authority: “I have given you authority” (Luke 10:19). The Prayer of Intervention involves a flow of “proclaiming, invoking and enforcing.” They proclaimed, they invoked, they enforced, just as the psalms taught them to do; just as Jesus taught them to do.

We do not have to be passive victims of life, waiting until a distant God chooses to do something. We are friends and allies of our intimate God; he has given us power and authority to change the course of events ourselves. Human beings are meant to intervene, to engage, to make a difference. We *can* move mountains. It’s in our DNA.

This feels like it’s going to be a big year. I think God has big plans. I think we are going to see some serious trials, too. So the timing of this book seems really extraordinary; it feels like God’s timing. *Moving Mountains* comes out February 16th, but if you pre-order it by February 15th, you will receive an exclusive *Moving Mountains* 30-Day Prayer Journal plus a free three-month subscription to our RH Tribe. This membership provides 24/7 digital access to the entire Ransomed Heart library of audio and video resources as well as free shipping for all orders from our online store. Go to RansomedHeart.com/MovingMountains for more details.

I think it will help you grow in your prayer life; I think you will begin to see far greater results.

That is my prayer for you!

Love,

John

PS – Stasi has written two new devotionals for the new year. *Beautiful Now* is for women and *Beautiful Me* is for teen girls. See the insert for our special offer on these books!