

FERVENT PRAYER

By John Abraham Godson

"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". James 5:16

The prayer that God answers is a fervent prayer. When something is fervent, it is hot and earnest. It is desperate. It is not the type of cold routine prayer that is noticed everyday in the church. It is not a prayer that is rehearsed and that has dignity. There is something about this prayer that is heart rending. Fervency is like when you are making a request that will determine your life or your death. Fervency is the heat that propels prayer. Fervency is like the fuel that makes prayer to burn.

Many of our prayers are not answered because they are cold and lukewarm. They are professional and do not come from the depths of the heart. They are simply the lips saying words that do not move God. God is moved by a heart that is aflame. God is moved by passion and fervency.

God is not moved by long Pharisaical prayers. God is not moved by "gentle man" prayers. They are superficial and at best poetic. God is moved by an all consuming plea for intervention. God is moved by cries that come from deep within the heart. Yes God is moved by his children who cry to him day and night.

How is fervency manifested?

There are a few examples of fervency in the scripture.

The story of Hanna 1 Sam 1:9-15

"So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD". (1 Sam 1:9-15)

Hannah had a wonderful husband but she had no children. Her husband, Elkanah had another wife Peninnah, who had children. Peninnah was always laughing at Hannah. Hannah had prayed for many years to have a son but nothing seemed to be happening. It was their custom to go to Shiloh every year to pray and to offer sacrifice to God. Hannah decided that this year was going to be different. In Shiloh, while others were rejoicing and drinking, she stayed back at the temple crying and praying to God. The Bible records this of her: And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. This is fervent prayer. It was no ordinary routine prayer. It was a prayer that came from the very depths of her being. Was that year going to be like every other year? No it wasn't. God heard her prayer. Samuel was the answer to her prayers. That is the result of fervency.

Many of your Samuels have been withheld because you have not prayed fervently. Many of you are being taunted by Peninnahs because your life is fruitless. People around you may be rejoicing, eating and drinking. Pray the prayer of Hannah with the fervency that Hannah had and you will get

Hannah's result. Your Samuel will come forth and your shame shall be removed. You have not for you ask not.

Jesus: Luke 22:44 "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke 22:44

We have read of many passages where we are told that Jesus prayed. It was his custom to spend long protracted times in prayer. His ministry on earth was coming to an end. He went with his disciples into the garden of Gethsemane to pray. They fall asleep. He couldn't sleep. We find him praying. After one hour, he comes and finds his disciples sleeping. He asks them to pray. But they couldn't. Now Jesus returns and continues to pray. He was strengthened by an angel. Now the Bible says that he prayed to such an extent that the sweat coming from him was as it were great drops of blood. The bible clearly characterized his prayer: He was in agony. He prayed more earnestly. He sweated blood.

I do not think that Jesus was just there in a lukewarm and calm state begging God for help. He wouldn't have sweated. Now in Middle East, at this time (early hours of the morning), it is usually very cold. It takes physical exertion or activity for any sweat to come out at all. Yet he sweated blood.

What I believe happened was that Jesus in fact did physically struggle in prayer. He agonized in prayer. He groaned in prayer. He prayed very earnestly. He wrestled in prayer. I call this Gethsemane prayer. Oh what a consuming passion and yet painful struggle it was. Until he was bathed with the grace and peace of God knowing he will overcome. This is prayer.

Now I know we don't see much of that prayer today. But this is the type of prayer we are called to pray. We are called to wrestle in prayer.

Paul talks about this prayer in Romans 8:26 "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

When we read the history of revival, we read about men who prayed such prayer.

- John Hyde so travailed in prayer, his heart moved its position from the left to the right part of the chest.
- John Knox prayed "Give me Scotland or I die"
- David Brainard was so consumed with prayer that he often spent hours kneeling in the snow crying out to God to save the souls of men.
- Evan Roberts was known to spend several hours groaning and when he comes out of his prayer closet, his face was aglow with heavenly peace.

We cannot afford to pray lukewarm and cold prayers anymore. May we arise and take hold of our God. Shall God not avenge his children who cry to Him and night? When was the last time you cried in prayer? When was the last time you wept that God will intervene? When was the last time you said " Lord give me Or I die" and really meant it? The prayer that God answers is a fervent and earnest prayer.

"Prayers must be red hot. It is fervent prayer that is effectual and that availeth. Coldness of spirit hinders praying; prayer cannot live in wintry atmosphere. Chilly surroundings freeze out petitioning; and dry up the springs of supplication. It takes fire to make prayers go." E.M. Bounds

About the author John Abraham Godson (formerly Godson Onyekwere) is a Nigerian serving as a missionary in Poland, Eastern Europe for the past 13 years. He is the international director of Pilgrim Mission International. The main vision of his ministry is "Revival" which comes through fervent and persevering intercessory prayer and bold uncompromising preaching of the Word of God. He also serves as the chair for the Lausanne Intercession Working Group in Eastern Europe/Eurasia, and International facilitator for the Network of Nigerian Missionaries Overseas. Together with his wife Aneta and 4 children, they make their home in Lodz, Central Poland.