

The Power of Crying Out to God in Prayer

Sermon by Stephen Judd

In the journey of life, we often encounter circumstances that render us helpless and desperate, prompting a deep yearning for divine intervention.

In this message, I want to delve into the transformative power of crying out to God in prayer.

Throughout the Bible, we are admonished to cry out to God in times of trouble and despair.

We are a Bible Reading Church, and you will note that my introductory textual readings come from the Book of Psalms that we are reading together during June and July.

Psalm 107:23-30

*Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters,
They see the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
For He commands and raises the stormy wind,
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.
They mount up to the heavens,
They go down again to the depths;
Their soul melts because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.
Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brings them out of their distresses.
He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.
Then they are glad because they are quiet;
So He guides them to their desired haven.*

David assures us in Psalm 34:15...

*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry.*

And in Psalm 61:1-2...

*Hear my cry, O God;
Attend to my prayer.*

*From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

And from Psalm 57:1-2, which was written by David while he was in a rough place, hiding in a cave from King Saul, who wanted him dead...

*Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until these calamities have passed by.
I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs all things for me.*

The essence of today's message is the distinction between merely praying to God and crying out to God.

Prayer is not necessarily synonymous with crying out to God.

Most assuredly, the spiritual discipline of prayer is vital in our relationship with God!

- Prayer is our spiritual communion with God, expressing our desire to know Him more intimately and maintain a closer walk with Him.
- Prayer is praying without ceasing by practicing His presence continually.
- It involves praising and adoration to God, thankfully acknowledging His blessings.
- An integral aspect of prayer is repentance and receiving God's forgiveness as well as listening to His voice through the Word and the impressions of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, there is another dimension of prayer that extends beyond our normal prayer life.

We have our familiar prayer recitations like:

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

And common prayers like...

Lord, I need your blessings.

Lord, I need your help.

But I suggest that in times like these, we need more than just help. We're living in perilous times. There has never been a day like today! We're living in the last of the last days. Wickedness is abounding. Men's hearts are failing them for fear.

And desperate times demand desperate measures. This is no time for passive prayer. In this hour we need to engage in powerful, dynamic prayers that move heaven and earth.

Crying out to God takes on a dimension of prayer that can be defined as a passionate, intense, fervent, and urgent appeal from the heart and soul for divine intervention, fully recognizing that only God Almighty can bring help, deliverance, and victory into an otherwise helpless and hopeless situation.

It might be public, but not necessarily. It might be loud, but not necessarily.

Upon further examination, we see that this crying out to God is typically a spontaneous response to an urgent need!

It may be motivated by the presence of danger. Oftentimes, we are in danger and don't even know that we are. How many are thankful for the tragedies that God protects us from? No doubt angels are working around the clock that are watching over us. That delayed flight, that traffic jam that causes us to be late for the appointment.

But then there are those times when we know that we are in danger, and our immediate response is to cry out to God because we feel so helpless.

So, the cry may be a spontaneous response to an urgent need, or it may be the response to severe pain and hurt! All of us have had experiences in life where we had physical pain, or emotional pain, and it was more than we could bear.

In Luke 22, Jesus prayed this prayer in the garden...

"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done...."

And then an angel appeared to Him and strengthened Him, after which the narrative continues in verse 44...

And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

This scene portrays Jesus as not just praying; rather, He was praying in earnest, crying out to the Father, His flesh crying out to deity.

So, our crying out to God may be a response to an urgent need, or to severe pain and hurt, or the cry may be the reaction to heartbreaking news—maybe something about your family or someone you love.

In times like these, a mental assent that you need the help of the Lord to get through the situation seems woefully inadequate and insufficient.

But thank God, when we cry out to Him in our grief and disappointment, He is right there by our side, enveloping us with His comfort and abiding presence—*our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.*

Notice the progression—not just a help, but a present help. And not just a present help, but a very present help!

So what is the message that we are sending to the Lord when we cry out to Him?

- That we are facing a desperate situation, and we need the help that only He can provide.
- That we fear what the consequences will be if we do not have His intervention.
- That we feel helpless before our circumstances, and we don't know what to do.
- That we are admitting that we don't have the answer and that we are placing our hope in God alone.
- That we are acknowledging that our strength is insufficient and depending on Him.
- That we believe in God's awesome supernatural power to help us in our crisis.
- That we are expressing an unrelenting faith in God and that there is nothing He cannot do.

Song...

*Got any rivers
You think are uncrossable
Got any mountains
You can't tunnel through
God specializes in
Things tho't impossible
And He can do what*

No other power can do.

Throughout scripture, there is a powerful theme of crying out to God amid trouble, and the Lord mercifully providing deliverance and salvation.

The list of examples is almost inexhaustible, but here are a few worth mentioning...

- Elijah cried out, and God revived a dead child.
- Jehoshaphat cried out, and God delivered him from death.
- Hezekiah cried out, and God gave him victory.
- Jesus' disciples cried out to Him in a storm, and Jesus calmed the sea.
- Simon Peter cried out to Jesus as he was beginning to sink, and the Lord stretched forth His hand and saved him.

In Matthew 14:30...

But when he saw ^[a]that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

If you are drowning, you aren't just requesting help; you're crying out for help! You aren't just speaking in a low voice and calmly asking for assistance; you're desperately screaming for help!

When Mordecai heard of the decree against the Jewish people, he tore his clothes, and put on sackcloth and ashes. And the Bible records that he cried out with a loud voice.

When your heart is desperate, you typically don't pray a soft, quiet, lackadaisical prayer, you are more likely to cry out with emotion and passion! However, I would suggest that it's not necessarily the tone of the voice that makes the difference; it is the desperation of the heart.

I think of blind Bartimaeus crying out to the Lord as Jesus was passing through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. Jesus was never to be in Jericho again. If Bartimaeus did not get His healing then, he would be blind for the rest of his life.

Like Bartimaeus, the first step toward our miracle is to recognize our need.

Our greatest need is to know our needs! And then once we recognize our need, we must seize the moment of opportunity and begin to cry out to Jesus, as Bartimaeus did...

Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

It was more than just an expression of desire; He got desperate!

To the multitude that day, it was a nonchalant, haphazard—Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. They were calm and casual about Jesus' appearance. He had been here before.

But not to blind Bartimaeus! His supplication cry was an intense cry of importunity.

Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

Some tried to stop him, but he cried out the more, without apology. He pays them no mind.

When the crowd tried to quiet him down, he became even more vehement in his desperation. In fact, the Bible says that he cried "the more a great deal."

There is a difference in desire and desperation. We've got to have desire, but desire in itself is not enough.

Someone has stated that "desire is the currency of the kingdom of God," but I would add that desperation is the gold that backs up the currency.

Would to God there were desperate souls here today, whose cries to the Lord could not be stopped, who would even interrupt the preaching of this message because of such earnestness and desire to pray and receive help from God.

The Scriptural rendering states that...

Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.

Be reminded that Christ was bent on a mission. He is on the road to Calvary, to His cross. But above the noise of the crowd, He heard the cry for help from one single individual and stopped.

A simple, earnest prayer of desperation, has the power to stop God in His tracks and center His attention upon you--just you!

Let me point out that Jesus would have passed him by if he had not cried out. There would not have been even a glance over his shoulder. Jesus wouldn't have missed a stride. There would have been no pause in his journey onward, toward Jerusalem, to Pilate's judgment hall, and to Calvary's cross.

Is God playing games with us by seemingly ignoring us? I don't think so. Rather, He simply wants to evoke desire within us. This is the motive of Christ.

God hears our crying out to Him!

There are a few other passages that reveal more aspects of this matter of crying out to God.

1. Jeremiah 33:3...

'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and ^[a]mighty things, which you do not know.'

I'm not a Hebrew scholar, but the word for *call* here is the Hebrew *gara*, which generally carries the meaning of "calling aloud or crying out."

In Psalm 18:6, David pens these words...

*In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, even to His ears.*

Here, the word for David's outcry is the Hebrew, *shava*, which connotes a higher-pitched shout for help. It is used to describe the cry of anguish, the cry of those approaching the breaking point.

A shriek, or a high-pitched, piercing outcry, as associated with great grief or clamor, is the root meaning of the word, *tsa'aq*, which David uses in Psalm 34:17...

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.*

How long has it been since you truly cried out to the Lord?

Oooohhhh, God!!!!

In deep travail, with groanings that could not be uttered.

In closing...

Our textual reading in Psalm 107 describes a ship at sea in the midst of a great storm.

Ginormous waves carry the ship up to the heavens, then drop it down to the depths. Powerful winds toss it back and forth. The ship's sails are tattered and ripped, and wave after powerful wave crashes onto the deck.

The sailors have to struggle just to hold on. It looks like it's all over for them, and they're in total despair.

They are helpless, vulnerable to the power of the elements, unable to stop the storm, powerless to save themselves.

Again, picking up with verse 26...

*They mount up to the heavens,
They go down again to the depths;
Their soul melts because of trouble.*

The Hebrew word *melts* here means "fainting in fear."

Verse 27...

*²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.*

Perhaps you didn't know that there is a place in the Bible called Wits' End." It's the place where all of us find ourselves sooner or later, when we have lost or exhausted any possibility of perceiving or thinking of a way out. In short, it is the end of all human ability and resources. There is no escape--no help, no deliverance, other than in God Himself! When we are at Wits' End, we feel like we're at the end of our rope, so to speak.

You'll recall when we were kids on the playground, and one of the popular games we would play was tetherball. We probably didn't even know why it was called tetherball. It simply means that the ball is at the end of the rope!

This message may be for someone who is at their Wits' End. You're at the end of your rope! You're tethered.

Maybe your storm could relate to one of these scenarios. Perhaps your facing troubles in your business or your career, a financial struggle, gossip and slander, family problems – troubles in the home, some personal tragedy, loss of a loved one

You go to bed at night with a restlessness inside, a cloud hanging over you, and when you awaken, the dull ache is still with you. And it keeps hanging on until one day you wake up crying,

God, how much more do I have to endure? How long will You allow me to go through this? When will it all end?

Isn't it true that the storms of life seldom come one at a time? They're like cascading waves, coming one after another, fast and furious, mounting higher and higher.

Please consider the timing of when the storm stopped for the sailors. When did God bring them into their desired safe haven? We continue with verse 28...

*²⁸ Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brings them out of their distresses.
²⁹ He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.*

Notice that the deliverance came as soon as the sailors came to their wits' end, giving up on all human hope or help.

They declared,

There's no way we can save ourselves. Nobody on earth can get us out of this!

If you're at your Wits' End, the good news is that the Miracle Worker is in the House! The Waymaker is here!

If you'll do like these sailors, and cry out to the Lord in your trouble, He'll bring you out of your distresses, He'll calm the storm, and the waves will become still!

Do you need a miracle? A miracle is simply something so difficult that only God can do it. A miracle is something you need when you've tried everything, and everything has failed. When you've exhausted every resource available.

*If you've tried everything,
and everything has failed,
try Jesus,
He'll be your dearest
friend, Go with you to the end,
If You've Tried Everything
If you've tried everything,
and everything has failed,
try Jesus.*

Certainly, there is a place for doctors, counselors, attorneys, financial advisors, and therapists. But ultimately it is the regenerative power of the Holy Ghost that transforms lives with healing and hope.

Nothing is impossible with God. There's nothing too hard for the Lord!

Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

God is anxious to demonstrate His mighty power in your world.

He is anxious to deliver those who cry out to Him with passion and expectancy.