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## **GOD NEEDS YOU!**

Robert Morris said that on a cruise with his wife to Alaska he was awed by the scenery and stood at the railing one day and praised God for His imagination and creativity. He was surprised to hear God speak to him inwardly: "I need you." Robert quickly explained to God that he must not be hearing right because what he thought he had heard was not theologically correct. God, he explained, is self-existent and self-sufficient and does not need anything or anyone. He reminded God of Acts 17:25, *Nor is (God) worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.* God quietly spoke again to Robert and repeated, "I need you." Then God took him through the scriptures from the beginning and explained:

**GOD DECIDED TO NEED YOU.** God doesn't need you to exist, He needs you to coexist with Him. He decided from the beginning that in everything He does on planet earth He is going to have a partner. God created man and gave him dominion over the earth. (Gen. 1:28) Genesis 2:19 reads, *Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the lair; and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.* Why did God ask Adam to name the creatures? Because God had decided to partner with men, and He needed Adam to name them.

(By God's design, the earth was already infested with the enemy of God, the devil and his ugly team. See Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and Genesis 3, the story of the serpent tempting Eve. Part of God's strategy, apparently, was to allow the devil to tempt and test Adam and Eve in order that they would have the freedom to choose for Him or against Him, and to enable them to grow in faith, strength, maturity, and character. God's gift to Adam of dominion certainly included power and authority over the enemy of God and man. All Adam had to do was to exercise his authority. Satan obviously knows this, so if Satan can prevent us from cooperating with God, he can limit the power of God on earth.)

1 Samuel 17 describes the confrontation of David and Goliath. Goliath was an anti-Christ. He taunted the army of God's people, saying, *Choose a man for yourselves to come out and fight me.* Couldn't God have sent a lightning bolt to take out that giant? No, He could not, because He had set up a principle that He would only work through a man. God needed David. Robert said he tried to think of a place in the Bible where God acted unilaterally without the cooperation of a man, and he finally thought of the occasion when God sent an angel, killed 185 thousand Assyrian soldiers, and rescued Israel. But God challenged him to and read the account in 2 Kings 19. Sure enough, God said to Hezekiah, *Because you prayed.....I will defend this city and protect it.* And you remember Ezekiel 22:30, when God said, *I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none so I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger.* That is a sobering passage!

And Romans 10:13, *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on Him to save them if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?*

Robert Morris concludes his teaching with three sub-points:

(1) **God is never going to do our part.** Many times we pray and ask God to do our part, and because He will not it causes anger and frustration toward God. "God, I know you could heal my marriage if you only would." He responds, "Why don't you love your wife like Christ loves the church?" "God, I know you could bless me financially if you only would." He might reply, "Why don't you stop stealing from Me by not paying your tithe?" A certain lady was working in the nursery. She was a new Christian who was very excited about God, but she had some unscriptural ideas about our part and His part. She was changing diapers in the nursery and started asking God to bring her a husband and bless them with many babies. She thought, "I will have lot of babies of my own to take care of and lots of diapers to change." She prayed, "God, will you help me? Will you change diapers for me?" She heard an immediate answer: "I am God, and I change not!"

(2) Our part is natural, it is never supernatural. All David did was sling a stone, God directed it to the exact spot.

(3) Our part is first, then God does His part. God invites us, encourages us, exhorts us to step forward in faith and act so that He can then do His part.

- *He who believes and is baptized will be saved.*
- *They will lay hands on the sick, and they will be healed.*
- *In my name they will cast out demons.*
- *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*
- Moses held up the rod and the sea parted.
- John Wesley said, “God does nothing on the earth except as the result of prayer.”

One other example I thought of: Back in 19<sup>th</sup> century England, a shoemaker named Hudson Taylor became a Christian, was filled with zeal, and felt called to China as a missionary. He told a preacher about his calling, and the preacher said to him, “That is ridiculous! If God wants those people saved, He will do it. He certainly doesn’t need someone like you. Why, you haven’t even been to seminary.” But Hudson Taylor believed that God had spoken to him. At great sacrifice, and with fear and trembling, he went to China. His example inspired scores of other zealous Christians to go and join him. One of the great missionary movements of the world grew out of his obedience. Question: Would that revival have occurred in China if Hudson Taylor had not gone? As I understand it, it would not.

This is a very significant matter and very scary. If you and I don’t “go and tell” someone about Christ, that person may be lost for eternity. If you and I don’t pray for the sick, they may not be healed. If you and I don’t learn about the deliverance ministry and step out in faith, someone may be destroyed by demons. If you and I don’t pray for our family, the church, our nation, missionaries, God may not be free to act.

Many years ago, during the Lenten Season leading up to Easter, in the city of Philadelphia, a large department store had a display of paintings about Christ and His suffering. One of the paintings showed Christ in His agony on the cross, and at the bottom the artist had written the words, “All this I have done for thee, what will you do for Me?” A big construction project was going on near the department store, and on the last day of the display a workman came during his noon hour, saw that painting, and stood transfixed by it. Just before he left to return to work, bystanders noticed tears running down his face, and he was heard to say, “You can count on me, Lord Jesus. You can count on me.” Can He count on you?

## **GOD, THE GREAT PUPPETEER?**

In line with the above teaching, we have heard many times that God does not want puppets serving Him, he gave us freedom so that we could choose Him. But some Christians believe that they are supposed to ask God about every little detail of their lives. I heard about a man one time, really, who had on different colored socks, and when someone asked him about it, he told them that he had prayed that morning about which socks to put on and for some reason God told him to put on these particular socks!

Read the following wise teaching by E. Stanley Jones: “Obviously God must guide us in a way that will develop spontaneity in us. The development of character, rather than direction in this, that, and the other matter, must be the primary purpose of the Father. He will guide us, but he won’t override us. That fact should make us use with caution the method of sitting down with a pencil and a blank sheet of paper to write down the instructions dictated by God for the day. Suppose a parent would dictate to the child minutely everything he is to do during the day. The child would be stunted under that regime. The parent must guide in such a manner, and to the degree, that autonomous character, capable of making his own right decisions, is produced. God does the same.”

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## **MORE ABOUT JONAH**

A couple of months ago I had a teaching about Jonah: I said that the Bible presents the story as literal and historical, and explained the reasons for his hatred of the Assyrians whose treatment of the Israelites was akin to the way Isis is treating their enemies.

There is another mystery about this story that I want to address: How could it have happened that Nineveh, the capital of the mightiest nation of its time, came to repentance when a stranger, a foreigner, marches through the city telling them to repent? The Assyrians were rich and prideful. They had their own “gods,” idols whom they worshipped. They had a powerful army that had defeated all the surrounding nations. Jonah was from a little, despised, nation that they invaded and sacked periodically. So a little “nobody” prophet marches through the city, proclaiming, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*” *The people proclaimed a fast, put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. The king arose from his throne, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* How come?

A couple of thoughts that I read somewhere.....that are, admittedly, only speculations: It is possible that some men were on the beach washing their nets when a humongous fish beaches itself and burps out a very strange looking guy. Perhaps the guy told the men what had happened to him and where he was going. Even without You-Tube, I’ll bet that story would have beaten Jonah to Nineveh. Amen? Or perhaps Jonah’s three days in the fish had bleached him whiter than an albino, and he looked to the Ninevites like a man from space.

An answer that is not speculation is that God’s Spirit moved on the Ninevites and granted them repentance. Repentance is a gift of God. Whether on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached to the multitude, or in the missionary journeys of Paul, the scripture is clear that only *Those who were moved by the Holy Spirit*, or *Those who were granted repentance* were the ones who came to faith and were added to the church. Jesus said, *No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.* And yet, at the same time, each person must choose to repent and come to God. *Whosoever will.....may come to God, and God desires all men to know the truth and be saved.* This is one of those great mysteries of God’s sovereignty and man’s freewill that is beyond our comprehension.

## **THE KINGDOM SUFFERS VIOLENCE**

My friend, June Fellhauer, the founder of Wake Up Ministries in our community, recently shared a great teaching on this topic, and I want to excerpt it for you.

“Over the past year I kept coming upon a verse in the Bible that just didn’t make sense to me. *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* (Matt. 11:12, NKJV) What? Violent men taking the kingdom? Then as I began to study the exegetical meanings of words in the scriptures like dance and rejoice, I began to find an interesting connection.

When David brought the ark of the Lord into Jerusalem, *He danced before the Lord with all his might.* (2 Sam. 2:14) The word dance means to whirl around, and whirl means to move in a circle with force: aggressively, violently. David’s dance was a violent expression of worship that brought the kingdom (presence) of God into Jerusalem.

The phrase, “suffer violence,” means: “forced, over-powered, taken by storm.” Christ thus portrays the intense excitement which followed John’s ministry; the eager waiting and striving of the multitude for the promised king. This was demonstrated by the multitudes who followed Christ, thronged the doors where he was, and *would have taken him by force* (the same word) *and made him a king* (John 6:15). The phrase “take by force” means literally “to snatch away, carry off. It is often used of plundering.” Jesus speaks of believers who with an inner violence seize upon the kingdom and make it their own.

Another example is the woman with the issue of blood pushing her way through the crowd to get to Jesus and touch the hem of his garment. She didn’t politely go through and say, “Excuse me, please.” No! She was going to get to Him no matter the cost. She aggressively sought out her healing. She took the kingdom by force. Taking the kingdom by force is a picture of the walls of Jericho. The men marched around the walls for seven days and when they shouted the walls (strongholds of the city) fell. Their shout was a war cry purposed to arouse aggression and esprit de corps on one’s own side and causing intimidation on the hostile side. After the walls fell, the Israelites went in and killed every man, woman, child, and animal. Their only “plunder” was Rahab and her family: the woman who would be a part of the bloodline of Christ.

Taking the kingdom by violence is a picture of deliverance (sozo: complete healing, salvation, deliverance). When we deliver someone we are able to see the walls (strongholds) that were built one stone at a time around a person's heart and mind because the person believed the lies of the enemy. When a person willfully sins, a stone is put in place. Unforgiveness encircles a person's heart and mind with numerous stones. Generational curses are building materials for walls, and traumas make for a mighty fortress.

As we lead a person through prayers of forgiveness, we are forcefully ripping out the stones that have been put in place. When generational bloodlines are cleansed and traumas are revealed and mended, we have violently torn down strongholds. It is a violent act when a believer repents of his willful sins. As the walls fall, the deliverer goes in and cuts off the head of every demon that has been hiding in the stronghold. It is then that we pull out the plunder, the Rahab. The soul of the person who has just been set free can now live with the purpose and plan that God has for them.

Jesus showed His followers how to take the kingdom by force when sinners were loved, and were then led to repentance and salvation; when the deaf heard and the blind saw, the lame walked, when demons were cast out, and the dead were resurrected. He did this by the power (violence) of the Holy Spirit when he spoke it forth. The Spirit is waiting for us to release our authority, power, and faith to set the captives free. Jesus is telling them that they (we) can do it.

Will you sit quietly, numb to all that is going on around while people suffer in captivity? Or will you become a warrior and take the kingdom by force, operating in the signs, wonders and miracles that Jesus gave us His authority to do?"

## **GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND MAKE DISCIPLES**

This is the command of the resurrected Christ to His followers just before He ascended into heaven. It is commonly called "The Great Commission," and it is for you and me. Read and study the full statement in Matthew 28:18-20.

We aren't all called to go to Africa as missionaries, although I hope that everyone who can will go on a life-changing short-term mission trip, but there are five simple things that we all can do "as we go into the world" each day. I got this list from Bobby Schuler, the grandson of Robert Schuler, on the Hour of Power. Bobby is a super preacher, and besides that I heard him say that he is baptized by the Holy Spirit and speaks in tongues! He's my kind of dude.

## **FIVE THINGS WE CAN ALL DO AS WE GO INTO THE WORLD**

1. **Acts of love.** If you and I will simply open our eyes and look around, every day will present us with some opportunity to show love to someone. Right?
2. **Pray for people as you have opportunity.** Just ask the checker at Walmart, "How you doing today?" If she tells you she is feeling bad, ask her what is wrong and ask if you can pray. (I do this pretty regularly, and you will be surprised at the doors that open if you are not a chicken.)
3. **Be a quiet listening presence to those who are suffering.** People who have just lost a loved one, or whose spouse has abandoned them, or whose child has been arrested on a drug charge don't need answers/counseling/scriptures. Do not say, "Well, the Bible says all things work out for good, etc." Don't say, "The Bible says we should rejoice in our sufferings." Please, keep your mouth shut. If Job's friends had just continued to sit with him in his suffering, God would not have gotten so angry at them. But they started preaching to the poor man.
4. **Tell your story.** You have a story, a testimony, that in an appropriate context can touch someone. Not all of us have a dramatic story: "I was a drug dealer," or "I was a serial killer until Jesus rescued me." But every one of us has been saved from futility, from a life of rebellion and selfishness, from hopelessness. Be brave and tell your story.
5. **Invite someone to church.** Did you realize that the great majority of people in church say that they first came because someone invited them?
6. **Invite someone to your cell group.** (This wasn't in Bobby's list – it's from Pastor Kirk.)

God Bless

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