

March 2001: High Stakes (Part One)

by Aaron Greenway

A few weeks ago I was doing a concert in College Station, TX (i.e. Aggieland). To end the morning worship service, the pastor asked a friend of mine to pray. Well, this closing prayer was not a thirty second prayer. It turned into a fifteen to twenty minute prayer over the souls of lost men and women. My friend wept, crying out to God to empower His saints, to convict the hearts of people, and to be glorified. Quite honestly, I have heard prayers like this from very few people (including myself).

Not long after this, I was struck in the face with the reality of eternity again as I went in to talk to some people at a place where I valeted. I sat there for over an hour trying to explain to three people why they needed Jesus and why they were lost. I drove toward home it was as if the Lord was asking me, "Aaron, have you taken the time to pray for these people."

The battle is not won for the hearts of people by slick argumentation or even by miraculous signs. People disbelieve the truth because they are blinded no matter what you show them. People are rebels before God because they love their sin and want to stay in it. It is not up to us to try and convince them to believe. The first thing we need to do is to intercede for them in prayer because it is the Holy Spirit that is able to take the "blindness" off their eyes so they can see the Truth. Without the Spirit of God, salvation is impossible.

A lot of times, we pray without any sense of passion or intercession for the people we claim to love. This was the purpose behind making the recording, "Urgent." The whole idea behind the disc is that our time on this earth is so short and that the souls of men and women hang in the balance. And yet, we are more concerned with praying about trivial things. This is not to say that God doesn't care about the small things, but we tend to put a high priority on our immediate

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needs rather than agonizing over people who will spend an eternity separated from God, tortured forever by the wrath of God, if they don't repent and turn to the Savior.

The question is, do we care? Do we care enough to get down on our knees, cry out to God, to beg God's mercy on their lives and to believe God for their salvation. Trust me, no sinner can afford the kind of priority we put on praying for them in our prayer list. And yet we seem to be calloused. We must recognize that prayer is the only way that their hearts will be broken. This is the only way hardened sinners will be melted, because God in His mercy He will see a people united interceding on behalf of the ones they love. And He will move in His mercy and the Holy Spirit will begin to reveal Jesus Christ to that person. The blinders will not come off until we have put aside our immediate (I want this... I want that...) lists and honestly begin to see that the stakes are high, VERY high.

Perhaps we can ask God to give us a love and burden for people, to give us an eternal perspective as well as shred us of our self-centered dispositions. The more we see the needs of others, the less we will care about our trivial, surface things. And then we need to pray — to ache over — to groan over — to weep over — to beg God for — to passionately plead — to stand in the gap for the people for whom Jesus died. God has foreordained prayer as a means by which His will is accomplished. If we leave this component out, any attempt to witness (assuming we have enough love) will be done in vain.

Today, begin to tell God that you want His heart for the people He wants to save. Begin to ask Him to put people on your heart so that by the end of many nights, you have developed a bad case of "carpet face." If we had a spiral notebook, who could we put down on our prayer list? I have Steve, John and Nick on mine. And Lord willing, I will be adding more. Because of God's rebuke and because I am Scripturally commanded to do so, I have a mission to fight in the name of our Lord, the powers and the strongholds that are holding these people prisoner to their sin. After all, what if no one had interceded for me? Where would I have been? Probably as the people we are to pray for — blinded and on my way to Hell.