

## Travailing for Souls

By Todd Bentley

### Travailing for Souls

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut [the womb]? saith thy God." (ISA 66:7-9)

Soul travail is an impassioned deep level of intercession (prayer) that affects the spiritual atmosphere so that the lost can hear the gospel and make a decision to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We literally push back the blinding oppressing power of the enemy so that the gospel penetrates the heart. Effective soul winning can never be done without a burden, anguish and true weeping for souls in prayer first!

We cannot have believers being stirred up to win souls out of duty or obligation because it's the Christian thing to do. But we can cry out and say, Holy Spirit come and burden us with his heart. Holy Spirit come and put inside of us the desire of God! Holy Spirit come and break us like You are broken for souls to be saved. Help us to travail for souls.

We need to be wrestlers with God for souls. We need to become like Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30) and say, "I'm going to get a hold of you Lord God. I am going to wrestle with You, O God. I am going to labor right here in the spirit until You bless me. I want You to bless me with souls; the lost and dying world getting saved, healed and delivered. I am going to wrestle with You, O God until my household gets saved.

The apostle Paul talks about travail: My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you (Gal. 4:19). Paul had already labored and traveled for their spiritual birth and once again he is in labor until Christ is formed in them.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, it's evident that his heart attitude was profoundly prayerful. He said, "For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:14). He was continually in that place of birthing. He knew that realm and he knew how to touch the heart of God and how to bring forth and birth what God desired. We need this attitude, too!

I believe that there is a fire, there is an anointing that can fall on us so that we are literally overcome with the heart of God. There is grace available from the Lord to bow before Him on our face, weeping, crying out, and there is grace for us to be touched by the Holy Spirit to labor and travail for souls. [And God can take us out of our comfort zone and compel us by His Spirit to go into the streets to share the gospel with the lost. We'll be moved into evangelism. One of the main keys in birthing (travailing) souls and seeing people saved is that we have to be touched by God's fiery love and broken, burdened with his heart. We need to love our neighbor "as our self" (Matt. 19:19). But what's first? The answer is to love God first (Mark 12:30). That's our greatest call to know Jesus Christ and out of a relationship with Him we'll have a heart of love that moves us with compassion to see the lost saved. Then we won't be operating from a sense of duty and obligation. Jesus never ministered to people because it was something he had to do or because it was His job. Rather He reached the lost because of His great love for them.

We have a great promise of Household Salvation and revival!

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (Act 16:31 [5])

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: One lamb was sufficient for the deliverance of the whole household." (Ex 12:3)

This is where travelling in warfare prayer can break satan's power. Then through the ministry of binding and loosing we can truly help push back the blinding power of deception keeping souls from making a decision for the gospel. Look at these verses about how the devil blinds the hearts and minds of unbelievers.

(2Co 4:3) "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

(Eph 2:2) "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

There is a demonic power that has an assignment to keep your household from coming to Christ. There is a power that keeps your family from seeing the truth. This is where we can pray them through. It is more than just asking God to save Jimmy or Sue, but taking authority over the devil's power and calling them by name to come forth. We need to learn in the spirit to take authority over the strongholds and open the prison for those oppressed.

(isa 61:1) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the "opening of the prison" to them that are bound."

In this passage of scripture, God continually uses the word me. The Spirit of the Lord is upon "me" to open the prison and proclaim liberty to the captives. I believe that there is a place where we stop asking God to give us what he told us to take. There is a place where we recognize that we have an enemy to the harvest God wants to give us. We need to rise up in the spirit and say Joe or Sue I set you free in Jesus' name. Come forth you who sit in darkness. I command you devil binding Joe to loose him to see. I lay hold of Joe in the spirit and I open his eyes to see. Lazarus come forth!! When we begin to take authority and become pregnant with God's heart for souls and travail through weeping and warfare prayer we can see a great harvest.

#### PRAYER REVIVAL

So many times we think about some of the former mighty crusades that have taken place in certain places that brought revival. Consider the Billy Graham crusades, for instance. Thousands and thousands of people over the years have made decisions for Jesus Christ at Billy Graham crusades (and other evangelistic crusades). But what many believers don't realize is that much of the time before most crusades are launched in a city, there are one or two intercessors that are sent ahead into that particular city where the crusade will be held. They lock themselves up night and day in deep intercession soul travail and they begin to birth the harvest by loosing souls in the spiritual realm. In other words, they win the battle over souls in the spiritual realm first in secret. Then later at the crusade, victory happens in the physical, natural realm because people are set free to make a decision for Jesus Christ! Their prayers help to bring the fuel for the fire that burns in those revival meetings.

#### CHINA REVIVAL

Years ago I watched a video of the church in China and I saw the believers meeting together in underground churches at four o'clock [6] in the morning. They were in heavy travail and intercession for their friends and families to be saved. And some of the sights that I saw on the video were absolutely incredible.

The Christians were so saturated with the vision and the heart of God that they went into intense labor and travail. The process of birthing those souls was an all-consuming passion. They moved into that process because they were pregnant in the spirit with a great burden for the lost. They were literally shaking, with tears running down their face. It looked like agony birthing, laboring and weeping for souls to be saved.

It's plain to see that the believers in China have a burning vision ignited in their hearts that drives them to travail for souls. That's why there are 25,000 people a day being saved!

#### WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

The song, Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord, is actually a reality for the believers in the underground church in China. They see the harvest with the eyes of their heart and now they are getting a revival. Are you provoked to jealousy? I am!! I believe that just like China is birthing a great harvest, so can we, here in North America, if we are willing to pay the price to see it happen.

#### BIRTHING

Another great reference to this kind of intercession which is not just for souls can be found in this great passage of scripture. In first Kings ch 18 verse 1 "the word of the lord comes unto Elijah," he has a word from God that the rain is about to fall. Further, into this text you see the prophet on top of Mount Carmel with his face bowed between knees, a picture of birthing. Elijah continues in this fervent act of intercession 7 times until there was a rain cloud the size of a man's hand. Elijah was pregnant in his Spirit with the word of the Lord for he said: "I hear the sound of the abundance of rain." That sound was in his spirit. We too need to be burdened with his heart in our spirit for Souls and pray until we see a breakthrough. That is true travail and birthing God's purposes in the earth. We need to sense God's plan in our spirit, too, and then move into that place of relentless intercession and prayer until we see a manifestation of his promise.

#### IDENTIFY WITH THE LOST

There is another part concerning soul travail that we need to discuss to get God's true heart for the broken. Let's begin by examining the ministry of intercession that Jesus had. You know that Jesus, in order for Him to be the greatest intercessor, to be the greatest High Priest and to have the ministry forever of intercession (Heb.4:14, 5:1-10), He had to really relate and identify with where we're at. He had to identify with us.

Therefore, He gave up His glory in heaven and became God in the flesh and took on a human body. What a drastic change! He gave up the glory and power in the heavenly realm and came down to earth as the Son of God, with no reputation. When He took on human flesh just like ours, He was tempted as we are tempted, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). He knew then, and He knows now, what we're going through. He identified with our human condition and He saw first-hand how needy and lost we are. In fact, because of His personal identification, He could become our High Priest and Intercessor (Heb. 4:13 -16, 5: 1-10).

You know, we need to be able to identify with the lost too. Perhaps we need to remember what our lives were like before when we were blind and walking in darkness. Because afterward we'll have more passion and feel the urgency to see that lost souls find Jesus Christ. God wants us to be moved with a burning heart for the lost to be saved! When we allow the Holy Spirit to take us into a place of identification, we will actually identify with the plight of the lost to the point that our heart and emotions become involved. At this point we need to persevere and allow ourselves to move into prayer in a deeper and deeper way, travelling for the salvation of souls.

#### REVIVAL

There is no growing in or sustaining revival without travelling prayer.

As persecution mounted against the early church, some of the apostles were beaten and jailed but later escaped when the angel of the Lord opened the gates of their prison during the night. In (Acts 5:17-20). It was a time of miracles and conversions! The church was growing and in the middle of all the excitement there arose a legitimate complaint (Acts 6:1). The apostles decided not to involve themselves in the problem and so they suggested a remedy (Acts 6:2-3). Here's the reason why they didn't want to become involved: but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). The apostles knew they had to be in that place of prayer, birthing souls into the kingdom of God.

Their wise choice to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word helped the word of God to spread to the point that the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and even many of the priests were obedient to the faith. The number of disciples went from "multiplying" to "multiplied greatly" (Acts 6:1, 7).

They realized that the key to the continuation of the harvest and the fuel to the revival with mighty signs and wonders was the word of God and prayer. Prayer was first and foremost! They placed such importance on that and we need to come back to that place of prayer for the lost, too.

#### THE UNSUNG HEROES

Soul travail can have even wider applications. There are many exciting historical accounts of revivals that happened because people were moved to pray and travail for souls to be saved. Before I briefly outline two such stories I want to share a quote by William Branham, considered by many to be the catalyst of the healing and charismatic revival that began in 1947. His ministry flowed from a life of prayer because this is what he said about prayer: I find it necessary to begin at five in the morning and pray at all opportunity till ten or eleven at night.

Now here are the two stories (paraphrased):

There was a minister who had a revival 14 winters in a row. No one could account for it until one of the church members got up at a prayer meeting and made a confession. Brethren, I have been long in the habit of praying every Saturday night till after midnight when the descent of the Holy Ghost comes. And now brethren (and he begins to weep), I confess that I have neglected it for two or three weeks! The secret was out!

This church member's soul travail brought great victories, revivals, 14 winters in a row! He was so faithful in his commitment to prayer that he was moved to confess (with tears) to his fellow church members that he had not prayed like he always had in the past, for two or three whole weeks. If one man can affect revival in such an outstanding way, just imagine the potential for a great revival to happen when a whole church congregation faithfully prays together week after week!

When Jonathan Edwards gave his famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, the Spirit of God was mightily poured out. God so manifested His holiness and majesty during the preaching of that sermon that the elders threw their arms around the pillars of the church and cried, Lord, save us. We are slipping down into hell.

We tend to focus on that great sermon and we think about the power of the Holy Spirit. But what helped to pave the way for such a great move of the Holy Spirit was soul travail! The whole congregation of that church was in fervent prayer all the previous night.

When we look into history and see some of the men and women of God who successfully brought souls into a salvation experience through prayer. I am aware of the unsung heroes travelling behind the scenes, in secret, for souls to be saved. Although most of you, who take prayer for the lost seriously, aren't looking for recognition or rewards, I still want to say that the Lord has eternal rewards reserved for you in heaven (Matt. 6:6).

In Him,

Todd Bentley

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