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Prayer Is a Risky Business

(This message was preached by Evangelist Reggie Thomas at the NATIONAL PRAYER CLINIC in Grundy, Virginia)

Thank you Brother Joe. I certainly am thrilled to be with you men here on top of this mountain at the Prayer Clinic. I'm thrilled to be invited by your Chairman, Brother Clarence Greenlee. He wasn't here this afternoon to hear the comment about how we loved to hear him pray. I go right along with the rest of you; I'll drive all the way over here just to be with Brother Clarence in a prayer meeting. I heard an amusing story about him from a preacher over in Kentucky where I was holding a meeting last week at Springfield.

He said that we all know how Brother Clarence talks to God so informally as if God was sitting beside him, and sometimes he raises his voice like he might be in the next room or something like that. But anyway, Clarence has that habit of talking to God like He was his best friend, and while we love that, sometimes it is amusing to those of us who don't get to hear him pray regularly. This preacher said that some terrible story came out in the newspapers here in Grundy, a shocking, awful story. It came out on Sunday morning and Clarence got all worked up. He ripped that out of the newspaper because he was going to use it as an illustration in his sermon that Sunday morning; and he was just so wrought up about it he was going around showing it to everybody before Sunday School started and in between Sunday School and Church he was showing it to more people and was getting himself more worked up about how awful this was. So when it came time for the preacher's prayer during the worship service, he raised his voice and said, Oh Lord! Didn't you read the paper this morning?

Really, it's the truth. I had to drive about a thousand miles for me to get here - one way. It was worth every mile for me to be with Brother Clarence just for a little while upon my arrival yesterday, and to be able to make a call with him and to pray with him. And, it has also been worth it to be with you men - to be with Harvey Bream again. I was surely thrilled at Harvey's message. When I arrived yesterday, he asked me, "What are you preaching on?", and I said, "What are you preaching on?" - so we compared notes to see if we were going to be stepping on each other's territory. You know, what Harvey has said tonight has not stepped on anything I intended to cover, but it has opened up a point or two, and if you'll pray for me, I just know that I have something to say that I can expand that Harvey opened up in his message - something I have on my heart that I believe needs to be expanded.

I want to speak to you tonight on the subject:

"Prayer Is A Risky Business"

Reading from Moffitt's translation of Psalm 107: 23-24 *"They that go down to the sea in ships do a risky business in great waters. These see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep."*

The Jews always dreaded the sea. To them it was thing of menace and mystery. They were never a seafaring people. There is a supreme risk in becoming a voyager. It meant goodbye to home and loved ones. It means homesickness, seasickness, and perhaps death among the crawling things at the bottom of the sea.

When John, that great old seer of the Isle of Patmos, wrote the Revelation, he thought of heaven as a place not marred by dividing oceans and thundering seas. And so he wrote, in Revelation 21:1 *"And there was no more sea."* While John shared this dread of the sea, he still realized that the daring voyager had something to say for himself. While embarking on the sea meant running great risks and enduring great hazards, there was also the beckoning call and possibility of great gain. The man who remained in his sedate and quiet village ran the lesser risk, but too, he lost part of the thrill of living. Daring little, he gained but little. And so the Psalmist said, *"They that go down to the sea in ships do a risky business in great waters. These see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep."*

I ITS RISKY TO BE BORN

The author of this Psalm is actually saying; "To win anything worth the winning, we must risk something." There is a real sense, I believe, in which all of us are gamblers. Each day it may be said truthfully that we bet our lives one way or the other. Perhaps some of you might not care to live your life over again because you would know every turn of the road. And sometimes it is the thrill of adventure that leads to the tang of life. I might point out in the first place that it's risky business for you to be born! Of course this is a risk about which you were never consulted. Had you been consulted, some of you might not have made the venture. I am persuaded that there is quite a large number of you who, if it were left for them to decide whether they would be born men or whether they would be born into one of the lower orders of life, might choose the latter. Which would you choose? Would you run the risk of the high road, or would you take the low road?

We have all seen the troubles that can come to man. And we can say in all truthfulness that we could never imagine so much suffering as there is in the world. We have seen men embittered by unjust economic and social conditions. We have seen the weak trodden underfoot by the strong. We have seen the charming, lovable infant sink like a stricken flower to the grave. We have seen brave men fall in battle. We have seen convicts die on scaffolds with a deep curse upon their lips. We have seen our dearest loved ones, as Carlisle wrote of Mother; fade away like the last pale smile of the moon fading down in the deep blue sea. We have heard that great Saint of God wail *"deliver me from blood guiltiness"*, and we have heard another stand in the presence of the mystery of death and question pitifully, *"If a man dies, shall he live again?"* [Job 14:14]. Yes, to be born a human soul in this world is to take a terrible risk.

The lower road has fewer dangers. Let's take one example: an oyster, and consider his life. You might like to be born an oyster. Such a career has much in its favor. I've never known a wretched oyster, have you? I've never heard an oyster sob. I've never seen an oyster wring its hands. I've never known an oyster to get its feelings hurt. Then, too, all up and down in oysterland you'll find little pain and heartache. Oysters certainly seem to have an easy time. Before you decide that you might want to become an oyster, I must call your attention to the following facts:

An oyster does not suffer greatly; neither can it rejoice greatly
If he has no capacity to take the wrong road and stain his life with guilt and wreck himself, neither does he have the capacity to come to a joyous hope of eternity. If he has no capacity for hell, he can have no capacity for heaven. As any oyster, you would have little risk of any great

loss, but you would pay for this by having no chance at all for any great gain. As a human soul you run a tremendous risk but you are compensated by your glorious chance for tremendous gains. It is worth all the nervous energy, pitfalls and efforts. Now that Bible character who cried, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness" was a little later saying, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." And that man who was breaking his heart over the mystery of death, was a little while later saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth and though after my skin worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God." In spite of all the hazards and risks we conclude that life is after all worthwhile.

ii ITS RISKY TO CHOOSE A PROFESSION

I would point out in the second place that it is also a risky business to choose a profession. You never know at the beginning whether you can succeed or not. You never know whether you're going to be a "fit" or a "misfit." Some of life's greatest tragedies have grown out of men and women just never finding their places in life. Most of a life's work is quite a risk.

Two weeks ago, I had the unusual opportunity of listening to Charles Colson speak on two occasions. Perhaps you will recognize that name. Charles Colson was one of the right hand men of President Nixon. He was known as Nixon's Hatchet Man - the first one to be convicted as one of the Watergate Conspirators and to spend time in prison. During the course of his speech, which was quite interesting and quite moving, he related some of the interworkings of the President's Circle - the intercircle - the right-hand men of the President.

Colson said that every day for four solid years he was in and out of that Oval Office. He sat down with President Nixon, along with Henry Kissinger and all of the other big men in the government. Colson described how that Kissinger would be the last man to walk in the Oval Office every day, always arriving a few seconds late with two great big, giant briefcases, which he would plop out on the table with the many papers that he had brought, prepared for the meeting. He said Kissinger always had a scowl on his face, just like the whole world was dying that very day. Every day that they came into that Oval Office, Kissinger would always open the meeting by saying: "Men, today we are going to make a momentous decision that's going to affect the lives of every human being on the face of this earth."

Colson said it never failed; he would always say that same thing, day after day. So he said after he was convicted of his crime and sent to the penitentiary, he had time to think there; he had a lot of time to read the Bible. He had a lot of time to think about what life was all about. He said, "During my time in the prison, I came to the conclusion that the little group of men that I was a part of, that had met in President Nixon's office all of those times during those four years, making those decisions that we thought were so important, weren't very important after all. I came to the conclusion that the greatest and most important decision that a man can make is his decision concerning his relationship with Almighty God. Charles Colson chose a profession in politics. It turned out to be a mighty poor choice and he paid dearly for making that choice.

Yes, it's risky business to be born. It's risky business to choose a profession.

iii ITS RISKY TO GET MARRIED

And, in the third place, I'd like to state that it's risky business to get married. How much joy and how much sorrow depends upon your choice of a life's companion. Man either meets his heaven

or his hell in the woman that he marries. You can't ever be sure positively that you're suited for each other. However well you may know the one you marry, it's still a bit of a gamble.

I heard a rather amusing but tragic story the other day that illustrates this so well. It seems as though a certain maid who worked for a rich man had decided to get married. So she took all of her rings, necklaces, and earrings; all of her jewelry and valuables down to the bank and told the banker, "I want you to put these in a lockbox for safekeeping." The banker looked at this maid and said, "Why in the world are you locking up all your jewelry like this?" She said, "Well, I'm going to marry the chauffeur at the house where I work." The banker looked at her and said, "My goodness, how long have you known this chauffeur?" The maid said, "Two weeks." The banker said, "Oh, my, my how tragic! You mean to say that you've only known this fellow for two weeks and you don't even trust him and yet you're going to get married to him?" And the maid said, "Oh, I trust him personally, but not with my valuables."

Isn't it sad and tragic, the decisions that people make, and then the suffering that they go through for making the wrong choice. But, while the risks are great - on the other hand we see homes that are filled with love and devotion that makes America the greatest nation under the sky.

About the time that you are ready to give up in despair, then you meet some couple that in spite of their occasional arguments and distraught tempers are ready to really fight for one another.

My own wonderful Mother and Father have just celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary, and they are more deeply in love today than when they got married 50 years ago. And so we conclude that marriage is a risky business, but after all, it's worth it.

IV IT'S RISKY TO BRING CHILDREN INTO THE WORLD

And may I point out in the fourth place, that it's a risky business to share with God in His creation of children. How much some of us parents have suffered! The pain that a child can inflict upon its parents is more tragic than any physical pain that we could ever endure. Many of us parents in this room tonight have learned through experience *how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child*. On the other hand, the gains are phenomenal.

It was only three months ago that I had the great joy of traveling to Cincinnati, Ohio, to offer one of the prayers at the graduation exercises of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, as three "Thomas's" walked down the aisle to receive their diplomas. Two days after Tony and Tracy and Jamie had graduated from the halls of CBS, I had the additional thrill and privilege of preaching the ordination sermon and participating in the ordination prayers as my son, Tony, entered the Christian ministry because he desires to spend his life preaching the gospel. Oh yes, I've concluded that while it is risky business to share with God in the creation of children, after all it is worthwhile.

V PRAYER IS A RISKY BUSINESS

And now we come together on top of the highest mountain in Buchanan County at Brother Greenleaf's invitation for this famous prayer clinic and I've come to stand before you tonight to say something that's quite controversial, I know. Prayer can be a risky business.

When Brother Clarence wrote to me sometime ago and said, "Send me your topic," and I sent him this topic, I wouldn't have been surprised if he had written back and canceled my appearance on this program. After all, he believes in prayer. Every time he writes he says, "I'm praying for you - pray for me." And I'm sure that he must have wondered what I meant when I sent him this topic: "Prayer is a Risky Business."

I first thought about the risk of prayer many, many years ago when my three oldest sons were tiny boys and they were like the three stooges, all just about the same age, always together, always playing together, always in monkey business and in trouble together. Every night before they went to sleep I always made it a practice to read the Bible and then we would get down on our knees and pray together. Little did I realize some of the shenigans that went on in our prayer meetings! I thought that they were always praying but I found out that wasn't the case. Tony, the one who was just ordained to the ministry three months ago, was always the clown in the family and he was usually the one that started the trouble. Now this one particular night Terry was praying. And, of course, I had my head bowed so I didn't know what was going on. Tony, the clown, was tickling Terry's feet while he was trying to pray. Terry was always very serious when he was a little boy and he was earnestly trying to pray, I suppose. And Tony, no doubt, pressed him beyond the breaking point. All at once I suddenly realized that something was going on besides prayer when Terry said, "Excuse me, God, just a minute, while I knock the stuffing's out of Tony." I began to think from that time onward, about prayer being a risky business.

And you know, you can get into a lot of trouble over prayer in church. I have a dear friend out in Oklahoma, a preacher, named Lincoln York, and Brother Lincoln tells me this story about his own ministry and I don't have any reason to doubt that it is the truth. I won't name the place where he was preaching, but he was at a certain church and nobody would come out for prayer meeting. He got tired of just going there every Wednesday night and being the only one there. He just cancelled it; nobody was coming anyway. After six months went by the Elders found out about it and fired him. So, you know, when I say prayer can be a risky business, well I know a little bit about what I'm talking about.

I believe in prayer as much as you do, and I have observed just like you how important prayer was in the life of Jesus. When the disciples of Jesus, those men upon whose shoulders rested the responsibility of Christianizing the world, came to Jesus, they had one supreme request. And please notice, they did not say, "Lord, teach us to preach," nor did they say, "Lord, teach us to do miracles," and they didn't say, "Lord, teach us to be wise," and they didn't say, "Lord, teach us to speak tongues." They said, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*"

And where do you suppose that these disciples had learned the supreme importance of prayer? Certainly they had learned it from their teacher, Jesus. Jesus considered prayer more important than food. For the Bible says, [Hours before breakfast], "*In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*" [Mark 1:35]. To the Son of God, prayer was more important than the assembling of great throngs. The Bible says that *great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed but he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.* Luke 5:15-16. The precious hours of fellowship with his Father meant more to our Savior than sleep. For the Bible says that *it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray and continued there all night in prayer to God.* [Luke 6:12]. Jesus prayed at funerals and the dead were raised. He prayed over five loaves and two fishes and a multitude were fed with a boy's lunch. He prayed, "*Not my will, but Thine,*" and a way was made whereby sinful men might approach a Holy God. His disciples noticed a direct relationship between Jesus' unusual ministry and his devout prayer-life. Hence, their first and most fervent request was, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*"

I was born into a praying family. Every day of my life I thank God for my dear Christian Mother and Christian Father. I always tell people every place I go that my Mother and Father are the best Mother and Father in the whole world. Christian parents, maybe you want to argue with me, but I would still say that my Mother and Father are the best in the whole world. My Mother and Father never did ask me to become a Christian, they just taught me God's Word and prayed for me, and they couldn't even hold me back. I became a Christian when I was eight years old. Not because they had asked me to do it; not because they had talked me into it. They just taught me; they set the example. Every night before I would go to bed, my Mother would read the Bible and my Father would get down upon his knees and pray God's blessings upon our family. This continued right up until the day I left home when I was 18 years old. I never knew what it was like

to go to bed at night without hearing my Mother read the Bible and my Father pray. They did not ask me to become a preacher, but when I dedicated my life to the ministry and came home and told them about it, they said, "We're not surprised; we have prayed, even before you were born, when we first knew that you were expected, we started praying that you would be a preacher, so it's just another prayer that God has answered for us."

a. We risk seeing ourselves as we really are

Jesus taught us to pray, and it is a risky business to pray as Jesus taught us. Jesus taught us to pray, *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* You know, if we pray like Jesus taught us to pray, we are running the risk that we will see ourselves as we really are. That's something that most of us never do. We only see ourselves as we think we are, or as we want others to think we are, but we don't honestly face ourselves and see what kind of men we really are. We read in Luke 18:10 *"Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up even so much as his eyes unto heaven, but he smote himself upon the breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

I am very much afraid that most of us have looked at ourselves at the Pharisee looked at himself. He looked at himself in relation to his neighbor, as most of us see ourselves. And so, we go around patting ourselves on the back. "My, what a good man I am. I don't get drunk like my neighbor over here. And I do go to church; I don't skip like my neighbor does down the street this way. I don't chase around with wild women like my neighbor does down the street over here. Why, I even pray once in awhile when I get into trouble. Yes, I'm a pretty good person. That's the way most of us see ourselves. But if we would pray like Jesus taught us to pray we would see what kind of a person we really are. We would pray, *"Forgive me of my sins, as I forgive those who sin against me."*

I heard about a man who went into the bus station. He was a grumpy, grouchy sort of an individual and he never smiled. He walked up to the window and he slapped a ten dollar bill down and said, "Give me a ticket for Bluefield and change for that ten dollars and hurry up!" He looked up into the face of the meanest, grouchiest fellow that he had ever laid eyes on in his entire life. That mean guy who looked back at him didn't say a word. Well, this only infuriated the old grouch, and he slapped his fist down on that ten dollar bill and he said, "Now, you heard me; give me a ticket to Bluefield and change for that ten dollars." He looked up again and the same mean old grouch man was staring back at him and suddenly he realized it was a mirror he was standing in front of. Oh what a shock to see what he really looked like.

Are you, dear friend, willing to take that honest look at yourself? Don't pray as Jesus taught you to pray unless you are! When you read Exodus Chapter 20 - the Ten Commandments, what do you think about? Of course we are not living under the Old Testament dispensation nor the commandments. They were nailed to the cross. Suppose you read the summary of those Ten Commandments given by Jesus in the New Testament [Matthew 22:37-40], as he elevated them to a higher standard and made them more difficult than they ever were under the Old Testament. The first four commandments, having to do with a man's relationship with his God, and the last six, man's relationship with his fellow man, and so Jesus just summarized them all by saying, "Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself."

What happens if we really read the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament and think about them, or if we read Jesus' two commandments in the New Testament. We can't read either

passage without bowing our heads and making honest confession and prayer to God: "God, I didn't know that I was so low down and mean." You see, if you pray like Jesus taught us to pray, you will see yourself as you really are: a poor, lost sinner.

b. You may do something about it

But there is another risk that you run if you're going to pray like Jesus taught. You're not only going to see yourself as you are, but you're also going to take the risk of doing something about it. When Jesus taught us to pray, he said that we were to pray, "*Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" What would happen to each one of us if we would pray like Jesus taught us to pray? Well, we would start loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength; and we would stop taking God's name in vain, and we would stop being unkind to our neighbors, and we would stop filling our minds with lustful, evil, dirty thoughts. And we would start doing all of the things that Jesus told us to do and stop doing the things that Jesus told us not to do. If you pray like Jesus taught us to, you're going to find yourself rededicating your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you're going to find yourself becoming a far better Christian than you ever dreamed it was possible for you to be.

c. God may answer your prayer!

But there's a third risk if we pray like Jesus taught us to pray; and perhaps this is the greatest risk of all. God may just answer that prayer; and then what's going to happen? "Forgive me of my sins as I forgive those who have sinned against me"; and if God answered that prayer, you'd go to hell, because you haven't really forgiven those that sinned against you, have you? Think about it! What a risky business it is to pray like Jesus taught us to pray! If you would, some of you would start tithing. If you would, some of you would start being a regular church caller. Some of you would go out and start witnessing and trying to lead people to Jesus. If you would pray like Jesus taught us to pray, some of you would join the choir immediately. Some of you would start teaching a Sunday School class. Some of you would answer Harvey Bream's prayer and you would dedicate your life to preach the gospel and you would go to Bible College and prepare yourself. Some of you would go to the foreign mission field.

Once or twice in my life I've heard people get really emotional and pray: "Holy Spirit, come down, like you did on Pentecost!" What, if God answered that prayer? Most of you would be so frightened that you'd run in the opposite direction. What happened when the Holy Spirit came down on Pentecost? Why, for one thing there were 3,000 baptisms; and that would just shock most of you to death; it would blow your minds and you wouldn't like it. Because, like it is, you're watching your clock and you're saying, "Preacher, hurry up, hurry up, get it over with by 12:00 o'clock so we can beat the Baptists and Methodist down at the restaurant." Now just suppose that some Sunday the Holy Spirit came down like He did on Pentecost and there were 3,000 to be baptized. You wouldn't want to stay for the baptismal service - you wouldn't! You know you wouldn't! Three thousand baptisms. Can we even imagine such a thing?

You know, a few times I have seen that happen; not 3,000 in one day, but I have seen over 3,000 baptized in one campaign. I've seen it in Korea; I've seen it in India, and twice in Africa. And, Oh my goodness, people don't really want the Holy Spirit to come down like he did on Pentecost. It's unbelievable the remarks that you hear when anything happens in a great way like that. You hear people say, "Well, it was probably just a bunch of ignorant savages that didn't know what they were doing anyway, and they'll all backslide; they'll never be faithful." It is unbelievable the attitude that people have when God's Holy Spirit does do something really great. And just suppose that the Holy Spirit did come down like He did on Pentecost and you had 3,000

baptized, that would really upset some of you because you'd have to have a building program and you wouldn't want to pay for another building. You wouldn't want to enlarge your building; you wouldn't have the faith to do it. You'd probably say, "They'll backslide and they wouldn't stay with us long enough to pay for the building program."

Oh, men, do we really mean it when we say we believe in prayer, and do we really want God to answer our prayers? Are we serious, or are we just playing around with it? Just suppose that God did answer our prayers, like He did on Pentecost. That would mean that some of you would sell your houses and land and give all the money to the church like they did in the first century.

And, if the Holy Spirit came down like He did on Pentecost, some of you would start helping the poor people, and the widows, and the orphans as a church instead of letting Social Security do it. Do we really want God to hear our prayers and answer our prayers? Because if He did, we would become like the unpopular jailbirds of the first century, and do we really want to go to jail for preaching the gospel? We **say** we believe in prayer, but do we really believe in praying like Jesus taught us to pray? The greatest prayer of all that he prayed, in my opinion, was that victorious prayer as He prepared Himself to take all of the sins of the world. As he prepared for that awful moment when God would turn His back, Jesus, in anticipation of all that this would mean, cried, "*Let this cup pass from me,*" but then brought Himself to that full surrender and victory, "*Not My will but Thy will be done.*" How many of us have really, honestly and sincerely prayed that prayer? I tell you, it is a very risky prayer to pray.

I prayed that prayer back when I was a teenager, and God answered the prayer and led me into the ministry and it has been a costly experience, but I can say after having preached now for 61 years, that I would not change it. I'm so thrilled and happy that God has used me in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it is a risky prayer to pray; there's a cost to be paid.

In 1966, I prayed that prayer while I was preaching at the East Point, Georgia, Christian Church.

Now the interesting thing about this is that I had never been interested in missions. I had not been a preacher that had promoted missions in my ministry in the local church. I had never been interested as an individual in going to the mission field. I'm sorry to say, when I was a student at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, I never attended the World Missions Volunteers Meetings. I never even attended because I wasn't interested. I wanted to preach in the United States of America; I had no desire, ever, to leave the United States, not even to go to the Holy Land on a ten-day trip.

As a matter of fact, it even frightened me to even think about leaving the United States of America. It was certainly not my will and it was nothing that I was interested in. God brought tremendous pressure upon my life to be interested in going overseas. And finally, FINALLY, after God had dealt with me for many years God answered the prayer by causing me to leave the United States and I've been traveling now overseas, since 1966, for 40 straight years, and they have been the happiest, most rewarding, most thrilling, the most victorious as far as souls won to Christ and churches established, of all the rest of my ministry put together, but at the same time the cost has been fantastic. I want to give you just one example from my own life - my own testimony as to what God has done to me through the power of prayer. It's nothing that I did, but it is what God has done through prayer.

In January, 1972, I went to possibly the worst place in the whole world - Haiti. I had been warned by many people not to go. Haiti had been ruled since 1957 by the infamous dictator known as "Papa Doc." Dreaded secret police, or as they call them in French, "ton-ton macoute" are responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands of people. Nobody even knows how many people this mad dictator put to death during his reign of terror. In late 1971, Papa Doc died and his son, Baby Doc, at the age of 18 years, became the youngest ruler in the world. He took over the government of Haiti as President for life. His father, Papa Doc, laid his hands on his son just before he died, transferring his dictatorial powers for life. It was in January 1972 just after the transfer to Baby Doc that I went to Haiti for the first time. Some preachers who had known about Haiti actually told me I was a fool for going there. In 1972, with the help of God, we were able to establish one congregation in a very primitive area of Haiti, where nobody else had ever gone preaching New Testament Christianity - a place called Lestere - a place of tremendous population

on that island. In 1973 and 1974, I continued to do a little bit of work in Haiti and continued to follow up on some of the leads we had on establishing other churches and God just kept pressing upon me the need in that country.

During the three years of 1972-3-4, I think I spoke in the majority of our Bible Colleges throughout the United States and I always put forth a plea for Haiti. I spoke at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary during those years, and made a plea at CBS, and also at Lincoln Christian College, and at Ozark Bible College - our three largest Bible Colleges. I pleaded, nearly with tears in my eyes, for **somebody** to go to Haiti. No missionary of the Christian Churches or Churches of Christ had ever gone to Haiti - just 800 miles east of Miami, Florida - the poorest country in the world. The average annual per capita income was \$100. Can you imagine? You can't, can you? Your children get more than \$100 a year to spend on candy, ice cream and bubble gum. The average per capita income - \$100 a year. Men who earn \$100 a year have 10 or 12 children to feed and take care of - on that amount of money. And yet no missionary of the Churches of Christ has ever gone there to work permanently. I could not understand it. And - I could not get anybody interested, in three years of pleading.

In 1975, I went back to Haiti again during the month of July, and this was in the midst of the terrible famine that took a quarter of a million lives in Haiti that year. In spite of massive aid from the United States and from some European nations, 250,000 people died of starvation on the Island of Haiti in 1975. While I was there in 1975, God laid such a burden on my heart that once again, I was led to pray, "Thy will be done." I told God that if it was His will for me to become deeply involved, I would do it if nobody else was willing to do it. I was having bad problems then raising my own support and getting money to go overseas in my evangelistic meetings that I was holding. I was having to just plead and beg everywhere to get support and I thought, "How can I take on something else and beg for others?" But, God led me to do that and since 1975 that work has prospered that there are now over 600 congregations of the Church of Christ on the Island of Haiti, several orphanages have been established, many Christian day schools with thousands of boys and girls enrolled; 2 Bible Seminaries have been established, and more missionaries serving on the island than most any other field in the world.

THE LORD HAD A JOB FOR ME. BUT I HAD SO MUCH TO DO THAT I SAID, "LORD YOU GET SOMEBODY ELSE OR WAIT UNTIL I GET THROUGH."

I DON'T KNOW HOW THE LORD CAME OUT. NO DOUBT HE GOT ALONG. BUT I FELT KINDA SNEAKING LIKE FOR I KNEW I'D DONE HIM WRONG.

THEN ONE DAY I NEEDED THE LORD. NEEDED HIM RIGHT AWAY. BUT HE DIDN'T ANSWER MY CALL AT ALL-----AND I COULD HEAR HIM SAY IN MY ACCUSING HEART--- "YOU GET SOMEBODY ELSE OR WAIT UNTIL I GET THROUGH".

SO NOW WHEN THE LORD HAS A JOB FOR ME, I DROP WHAT I HAVE ON HANDS AND GO DO THE GOOD LORD'S WORK. MY AFFAIRS CAN JUST RUN ALONG OR WAIT UNTIL I GET THROUGH. FOR NOBODY ELSE CAN DO THE WORK THAT GOD HAS FOR YOU TO DO.