

Locked Up to Look Up

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[0 : 0 0] Wonderful to be with you folks, to meet you for the very first time. And just to know that there are people out here on the West Coast that love the Lord, just like there are people over on the East Coast that love the Lord.

And I do commend, again, I said this last night to the men, but the camaraderie that I find in the churches out here is incredible. And it's not like that around the country.

You know, you don't find people traveling four hours to attend other people's meetings. And let alone, you know, I preached in San Diego for Josh Stevenson.

And, you know, by the end of, he did a Saturday through Thursday. It was a long meeting. But then by the end of the meeting, he said, for any of you that haven't gotten tired yet of Brother Paul, he's going to be preaching at Brother Angels, you know, 15 minutes down the road.

And go on over there and hear some more. You know, it's just the camaraderie and the lack of, no one's worried about sheep stealing and all the rest of that. Just the way you work together, it's really unique.

[1 : 0 3] You need to thank God for it. For those of you that don't know, my name is Paul Iannello. I'm originally from upstate New York, Rochester, New York.

In 1993, I moved to Nashville, just outside of Nashville, Tennessee, and started a church there in 1996, pastored it for 22 years, New Beginnings Baptist Church in White House.

And in 2018, I felt led to move away from the pastorate and into evangelism. And at the same time, my son, who was my assistant pastor for six years prior, took the church at that time.

And he's pastoring it to this day with a double portion of the spirit and just doing a fantastic job there in Middle Tennessee. Can you believe, though, in a city as big as Nashville and, you know, how popular that city is?

It's the only Bible-believing work in the Nashville metropolitan area. It's the only Bible-believing work. And so, you know, we thank God for that. And just pray that, you know, all the people in Middle Tennessee, though, got to remember this.

[2 : 1 0] They're all saved. Everyone's saved. You know, that's the Bible belt. Everyone's saved. Grandpa was a preacher. That makes me saved, you know, et cetera, et cetera. So I want to preach a message for you this morning that I consider, personally, the most important message that I preach.

Outside of salvation. This is obviously to the Christian. But it's the most important message, I believe, that I preach. So if you would, today, open your Bibles to Acts chapter 16.

Acts chapter 16. We're going to pick it up in verse 8.

The Bible says, And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis.

[3 : 25] And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony. And we were in that city abiding certain days. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Just ask for his help during this time. Father, we need the presence of your Holy Spirit. Spirit, we need him, Lord, to convict hearts, to comfort hearts, but in all of our cases, to conform our hearts into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. God, help us to think like you. Help us to listen to this message through your ears. And God, I pray that today that you'd have your will in your way in our lives, mine included.

And God, help us to be more so, Lord, pleasing unto you. That is the purpose for our creation to begin with. It's for your pleasure. I pray, God, you'd be looking down from glory today with a smile upon your face because of the decisions that are made from the preaching of your word.

We love you and we thank you. Pray you'd be honored and glorified in all things for these things we ask. In Christ's name, amen. Now look at verse 13 with me. And on the Sabbath, we went out of the city by a riverside where prayer was wont to be made.

[4 : 46] I mean, honestly, that's a smart thing to do. That if you want to pray, get away from all the commotion. Get away from all the busyness of life.

Get out of the city, Paul said, so that prayer could be made properly. A time of quiet. You know, we used to sing a song in that hymn book entitled, Sweet Hour of Prayer.

Did you ever wonder where that title came from? Sweet Hour of Prayer? I mean, if we were to name it and according to today's standards, would it be Sweet Ten Minutes of Prayer?

An hour of prayer? Wow. I wonder if that was like commonplace back then when that hymn was written. That people prayed for an hour.

I mean, I remember that, you know, Charles Spurgeon from Metropolitan Baptist Church in London said that the power in his preaching came from old women that were down underneath the altar praying for him while he preached.

[5 : 53] I just wonder, you know, Sweet Hour of Prayer. Boy, that would be good. I can honestly tell you that every time I pray, it's not for an hour. Maybe it should be.

But it's not going to happen if I surround myself with the busyness of this world. I'm not going to get it if I try and squeeze it in here or squeeze it in there.

You know, even Jesus said, remember to his disciples, couldst not thou watch one hour? And then he said, what? Watch ye and pray.

Could you not watch for one hour? I wonder if a Sweet Hour of Prayer is what the Lord wants us to do. Very well could be. Ask him. He'll tell you.

Busy, busy, busy. How many other things accompany your prayer time? Bible verse that always meant a lot to me is Psalm 46:10. Be still and know that I am God.

[6 : 49] Be still. In other words, we don't know him as long as we're moving around at the speed of light. That we have to be still to really know God.

But there's no exaltation without knowing him and we can't know him while imitating the ever-ready bunny. Constantly on the move. Constantly on the go. You know why that is?

We relate production with busyness. In other words, if we're still, there's nothing. We're not producing. We're not doing anything. Nothing's being accomplished as long as we're still.

That's a lie from the pit of hell. We need to learn how to be still. When our kids were growing up, when we could just tell they had ants in their pants, we'd tell them, sit in that chair and do what?

Sit. Can I have a book? No. Sit. Can I watch TV? No. Sit. You can't do anything. I want you to sit there still for 20 minutes.

[7 : 50] We taught them how to sit still. And God wants us to have that time of being still. And I wonder how much of that goes on in our lives.

I mean, you take your life in your hands out here driving in California. Seriously. You folks are crazy. And I thought we were crazy in New York. You guys put us to shame.

But, you know, I'm going to give you a little test right now and you can tell me how much you like being still. You're approaching a traffic light. You're 200 feet from it. The light turns yellow.

What pedal do you push? The gas. I want to get through. I don't want to have to stop. There's somewhere I need to be.

I want to go. And the Lord convicted me one day, which was one of the things that prompted this message years ago. And he said, Paul, what if you prayed at every stoplight?

[8 : 50] What if you just took the three minutes, four minutes, five minutes, whatever, that you were at a stoplight and just prayed to me? How much more time would you and I have to speak over the course of a month, let alone a year?

Huh. Interesting. Well, why don't I think about that? Because I don't want to stop. I don't want to be still. You know, speaking of staying busy, these things are enemy number one.

These are the biggest destroyer of communication. Not only between us and God, but between us and each other. They don't know how to communicate anymore unless I text it or email it.

And, you know, I was in an airport and I watched this group of, these are church kids, getting ready to go on a missions trip somewhere. And in the airport, the seats were facing one way and facing this way.

They were facing each other. They were literally five feet apart. And this person was texting this person. And this person was texting this person. They could not talk.

[9 : 58] They didn't know how to communicate it unless it was on some smart device. You know, but these things are terrible. You know, I was in Houston and I was bull riding and broke my foot.

At least that's what I tell people because I think bull riding is a lot better than I was walking and stepped off of a curb. And I had to call my wife from Nashville, come pick me up, honey.

I can't walk. I need your help. Why? Because I was too busy on this while walking. You know, unbelievable. You know, when I'm talking to my wife, my wife and I might be talking, having a conversation.

All of a sudden, somebody texts me and immediately I go down here to see who it is. And then about two minutes later, I figure out that she stopped talking. And I said, honey, you were saying, she goes, no, that's okay.

If that's more important than talking to me, then that's fine. You can finish that and then we'll carry on our conversation. You know what she wanted? My undivided attention.

[11 : 05] You know what she wanted? My eye contact. She wanted me to look at her. She wanted me to communicate to her that she is much more important than anything this thing could bring up.

And I wonder how often we say to God, we're in the middle of prayer or whatever the case may be. Something interrupts your prayer time or your Bible reading time.

Hey God, something more important has come up. Can I put you on hold and I'll come back as soon as I get that finished? Really?

You're going to put the one that died for you, that gave you eternal life, that created you, you're going to put him on hold because what? Someone knocked on your door? Because the phone rang?

Because the dog barked? And we allow everything in the world. You ever notice how many things happen on a Sunday morning? Or on a Wednesday? Right when you're supposed to go to church?

[12 : 06] You ever notice he get really tired on Wednesday before coming to church? Really tired. I mean, oh, I could take a nap. You ever notice that happens on certain days?

You know, the devil's good at what he does. And he's so happy when he can disrupt. You know, back in my day when we were kids, we had these things called answering machines.

And people could leave a message at 8 o'clock in the morning on your answering machine knowing that you were at work all day, knowing that you were going to come home and have dinner and had no problem with you returning the call at 7 or 8 o'clock at night.

No problem. But today, you get a text and you don't answer it within 30 seconds? You have 500 question marks on your phone.

Why aren't you answering my call? I expect you to reply right away. Yeah. And it's things like that that keep us interrupted with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13 : 06] I want you to notice why this happens. Look at that verse 13. You notice it says where prayer was want to be made?

You know it's spelled W-O-N-T instead of W-A-N-T? W-O-N-T means tradition, custom. It's what we do.

We go to church 9 o'clock Sunday mornings. It's what we do. But there's a difference between W-O-N-T and W-A-N-T. W-A-N-T is desire.

It's your heart. I want to be in church. Not W-O-N-T. I have to go to church. You see the difference? Prayer was want to be made.

It's time, guys. It's tradition versus W-A-N-T. But you know, I used to travel a lot in my engineering business.

[14 : 07] And I used to love coming home like three days later when my kids were young. And I'd pull into the driveway and I'd see all of their faces pressed up against the storm glass window.

Daddy's home. Daddy's home. Daddy's home. And that was so wonderful to see them so excited that I was home. And I wonder why they were so excited.

I used to think it was because I'd come home. But then I figured out it was those long tootsie rolls that I would bring them home that they really got excited about. But I wonder if our Heavenly Father looks down from Heaven and says and when we say it's my prayer time it's my prayer time it's my time to talk to the Lord.

I'm so excited. It's my W-A-N-T. It's not my W-O-N-T. I really want to talk to Him. I really want Him to talk to me.

Remember when that remember your prayer time used to be like that? Maybe it's not anymore. Remember when you used to get excited about praying? That time you could be alone you know in a prayer closet?

[15 : 13] It's important. It's important. Desire will beat out duty every day of the week. The W-A-N-T will beat out the W-O-N-T every day of the week.

You're going to make it to the finish line? You're going to need a W-A-N-T. You're going to need desire. It's not going to happen out of duty. Yeah, I got to read my Bible. I'm a Christian. Yeah, I got to come to church.

Yeah, I got to check that off. It won't cut it. You need desire. God looketh on the heart. On the heart. So point number one the interruption of society.

We have to get away from it so that we can have that personal time with the Lord. Now look at the second part of verse 13. It says and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

Wait a minute. What happened? They were going to pray and instead they sat down and started speaking unto the women which were thither. The goal of going to pray was conveniently overlooked because the W-O-N-T was stronger than the W-A-N-T.

[16 : 30] Now soul winning is good. I'm not saying soul winning is not good. But what is best? What is best? You know, I wanted to pray but mother called.

The dog barked. The cat threw up. The kids got crazy. I wanted to pray but. Yeah. I know. But you know, we always talk about we want to go do some street preaching.

We want to go pass out flyers to all these that's all great. You ever hear the stewardess on the airplane say if the pressure drops in the cabin oxygen mask will fall from the ceiling?

place yours on first so that you're then able to help those around you. What in the world are you going to do for them out there when you yourself are not what you should be with the Lord Jesus Christ?

When your relationship is not what it should be how do you think you're going to help them? You're going to be you know just a no oxygen mask on me I'm delirious and I really can't you know get my bearings to help somebody else if your relationship is not what it should be how are you going to improve their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

[17 : 49] It's imperative Christian that we make sure we have that personal time with the Lord Jesus Christ. E.M. Bounds one of the foremost writers on prayer he said this spiritual work is taxing work and men are loath to do it praying true praying costs an outlay of serious attention and of time which flesh and blood do not relish it's true it's hard work what did he say of Epaphras laboring fervently for you in prayer labor work we always associate work with being busy you mean to tell me that he's laboring he's working fervently while being still yeah it's hard work when Jesus was praying in the garden he sweat great drops of blood it's hard work that's why we don't like doing it our churches and our lives would be so much better if we put first things first and put prayer where it belongs look at verse 14 and a certain woman named

Lydia a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshiped God heard us whose heart the Lord opened and she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul so the second thing we see here is the interruption of soul winning the interruption not just of society they had to get out of the city but also now soul winning is taking a precedence over getting with the Lord and praying you know for us Bible believers the greatest enemy to God's best is not the devil often times it's God's good I was sharing with the men last night you know there's the good the acceptable and the perfect will of God three different wills the good the acceptable and the perfect which one are you aiming for you know often times our greatest enemy is God's good we can do many good things but have we done that which is best and that's as I said last night that's my gap theory good acceptable and perfect and the gap is right there and the gap is between good and perfect and so many of us are content with striving for the good when there's a perfect to be shooting for and that's what we should be doing

Mary and Martha Martha was doing good she was serving Mary was doing that which was best you know David and Daniel prayed three times a day evening morning and at noon will I cry aloud he shall hear my voice so what do you need to do I know trying to fit all this stuff in in a day it's tough so you know what you need to do you need to take out your Christian eraser and erase your entire calendar get everything off of it everything everything is off now what do you do fill it in with the things that have to do with God first rather than trying to fit God in in between all your other things the cares of this world put him first I'm going to go okay Bible study in the morning my prayer time I'm going to go to church on Sunday Bible study morning service and evening if it's there and then midweek service and my prayer time every morning and my Bible reading every morning then you want to play golf fine after you put God up there first go play golf where you have an opening go shopping go see your grandkids have a family reunion or a picnic but you put

God first seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto thee yeah put them first that's all it's a priority you know Paul the apostle when he he came came and saw some of the other disciples he said I'd be I I I I joy that's the word thank you I joy beholding your order they had first things first they had things prioritized he says that does my heart so good to see that you've got first things first and we need to keep it that way it's important I know what you say he said yeah but you know my heart's not in it they'll make me a hypocrite I really don't want to pray okay I don't like praying I don't like sitting still okay I can get that I remember being that way so I'm not going to do it because my heart's not in it I said no no no you still need to do it the Bible says commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established shall be means future tense means doesn't mean today it means future tense commit thy works today and thy thoughts shall be established and you know yeah but I'm going to be a hypocrite listen I want you to be a hypocrite be a hypocrite okay because if you're a hypocrite today shall be you'll be a happy crit tomorrow he'll take you from being a hypocrite to being a happy crit he'll change your heart about it when I was first saved my wife was saved before me and you know she told me about this tithing stuff and I go what's this tithing stuff she says where you give 10% of your money to the Lord oh this is back when I was making six figures of income so I was computing okay anything else well yeah there's missions how much as much as you want okay and what anything else well you know there's building funds and you know there's special speakers and love offerings and I was walking around went to the other room

I really wanted to do right I was walking and I said hey honey she goes yeah is that on the gross or the net and she said gross I thought about it for a minute and I said sure is I didn't want to do it but guess what I did it anyway I was a hypocrite I did it anyway what God do changed my heart about it now I love tithing no problem tithing I love writing that check love it same thing as witnessing soon as I got saved people said yeah you got to go home and tell your mom and dad are you crazy my mom and dad are born catholic will die catholic you know if I even open my mouth I don't know what to say if I even try my dad is going to ask me how they put dinosaurs on the ark I know what's coming he said it wasn't the red sea Paul that parted they actually called it the reed sea it was shallow with reeds

[24 : 59] I go dad give me a break you know and I got a witness to them I didn't want to but I did it I did it why the book said to so I was a hypocrite but God made me a happy crit and allowed me to lead both mom and dad to the Lord and preach both their funerals in the catholic church and I'm so thankful for that but what did I have to do I had to commit my works unto the Lord so what am I saying to do regarding prayer commit five minutes a day total stillness you and the Lord alone no cell phones no PCs no TV no animals no kids no spouse nobody you and him alone commit five minutes a day and after you do that guess what you're going to want to do I think I'll go to ten I think I'll go to ten who knows maybe one day you'll get to a sweet hour of prayer wouldn't that be something with the right heart not a

WONT but a WANT you know we're creatures of habit my wife yelled for me one day and said honey there's water leaking from the master bathroom sink coming out the bottom I said okay alright I'll be right there I went and got a Tupperware bowl ran into the bathroom put it underneath there started undoing all the joints because I'm sure it was clogged or whatever undone it and poured all the dirty water into the Tupperware bowl and you know got it all cleaned out and I took that bowl and all this dirty water so what do I do now so I dumped it so I dumped it in the sink before which time I closed everything up oh just a creature of habit what a dummy you know we a couple years ago we had 15 tornadoes rip through middle Tennessee one went right down our street not even a quarter of a mile from the house sucking all the air out of our house we were in the bathroom with our kitty!

cats just hunkered down and we didn't have power for three days after that how many times do you think I went into a room and flipped a light switch yeah creatures of habit so all we need to do is just change our habits just change your habits start a new habit they say in 20 days it'll be firm do it for 20 days commit it to the Lord Lord I'm going to be with me just me and you be still and know that I am God you know then we see look at verse 15 of our text and when she was baptized in her household she besought us saying if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord come into my house and abide there and she constrained us point number three the interruption of social socializing yeah fellowship is good come on in let's have a little fellowship let's have a little get together come on in have something to eat that's all good but that's not what

Paul set out to do he set out to pray but all of a sudden all these good interruptions soul winning socializing all these good interruptions all start coming when he did what when he had chosen to go pray that's what happens Christian fellowship is good but the Lord's fellowship is best social distancing is a good thing amen Christians Christians are not short on fellowship but often forsake the most important fellowship of all so you might be saying well I don't know that Jesus would forsake the opportunity to soul win I don't know that Jesus would forsake the opportunity of socializing with brothers and sisters in Christ let the Bible speak for itself turn your Bible to Matthew chapter 14 Matthew chapter 14 in verse 23 and when he

Jesus had sent the multitudes away he went up into a mountain apart to pray when the evening was come he was there alone Jesus sent away the multitudes what a great soul winning opportunity Jesus sent away the multitudes what a great socializing opportunity why did he do that because he needed to go up into a mountain apart to pray I want you to notice in that verse if you don't mind marking in your Bible circle those three words away apart and alone away apart and alone that is triple a prayer protection away apart and alone I was down at Josh Stevenson's and one of his members who makes shirts he made me a shirt entitled the title of this message and on the back away apart and alone it was very thoughtful of him but that spoke to him that right there away apart and alone how often do

[30 : 32] I get away in order to pray how often do I get apart in order to pray how often am I alone in order to pray to be still and to know that I am God you know the average amount of time that Christians spend in prayer is 10 minutes a day that's the average and just 16% of pastors are satisfied with their prayer lives Jesus prayed!

He did so let me ask you who's the most important person to you in the entire universe Jesus really how much time do you spend talking to him would you be able to support that claim that he's the most important person to you in the entire universe based on the amount of time you spend talking to him each day I remember when I was getting to know my wife we'd be on the phone for two hours and it was like ten minutes you know I just want any chance I had I wanted to pick up that phone I wanted to talk to her yeah yet we say we love the Lord how much time do we talk to him it's good for us to think about that you know I remember being in my home when my kids were young and I noticed one particular child would come down the stairs right past me

I was sitting there reading my Bible you know praying or doing work that person that child would come downstairs walk right past me not acknowledge me at all come turn around go back upstairs come down maybe get a sandwich get something to eat go on back upstairs and this happened for a few hours they're just walking past me and I said to myself they've been walking past me all morning long and haven't said a word to me I wonder if there's a problem and I would sit that child down I say is there a problem well yeah dad there is yeah yeah let me share you know what I'm feeling so we got to talk about it but how often do we do that on our everyday lives we just hither and back and forth and the Lord is with us all the time and how often do we spend any time talking to him and yet we say he's the most important person to us in the entire world and we spend what five minutes they say the average is ten minutes a day talking to him it's interesting it's interesting so now let's see what happens now let's look at verse 16 and it came to pass as we went to prayer how about that that they're finally going to prayer now they set out to go to prayer they just got interrupted with some soul winning and some socializing activities but now they're going to go pray isn't that wonderful now watch what happens a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us which brought her masters much gain by Susan the same followed Paul and us and cried saying these men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation you see devils don't always attack by getting us to do bad sometimes they attack just by keeping us from doing best he's doing good he's socializing he's soul winning but now isn't it interesting now we're going to prayer finally now we have time to go to prayer bam what happens a woman with a spirit of divination a demon possessed woman just happens to cross this path at that time if you don't think there's demonic activity keeping you from talking to your heavenly father you are greatly deceived a distraction by something good is still a distraction these men are with the most high

God show us the way of salvation that's a good message it's still a distraction it still kept them from going to do what they were designed to do to go and pray you know you may not believe in demonic activity you may not believe in spiritual warfare as a pastor a woman came into our church and approached me and said could you visit my son my son is in desperate need of the Lord and my deacon knew this woman that's why she came she said hi Randy and you know could you and your pastor go and visit my son and Randy knew the young boy so we said sure you know Thursday night we'll go we'll visit your son well we drove up into the driveway and the grass was knee high so nobody lived there there were no lights on in the house there was a fence around the yard there was a

Doberman pincher and a Rottweiler that wanted to have us over for supper and couldn't get to us thank God but we went up to the door and Randy said it doesn't look like anybody's home and I said well knock anyway so he knocked on the door and nobody came to the door I said you know Randy there seems to be one of those diamond windows on the door and it seemed to be a glow a bluish glow coming from that window almost like if you remember back when they had black and white television sets and I said knock a little louder Randy he knocked louder and Ryan came to the door and when Ryan came to the door he had on this demonic t-shirt he had something hanging around his neck in a little bag of which I didn't want to know what was in the bag and you know he was he noticed Randy he said hi Randy how you doing and we said hey Ryan we wanted to come by and I wanted to talk to you tonight are you available he says yeah sure come on in and there were no lights on in the house no lights on but then when

[36 : 58] I walked in the door I saw where the bluish glow was coming from a television set with no sound coming from the TV and on the screen was picture of a skeleton sitting on a throne you say big deal he was watching some horror flick or something well you might think so but I'm looking at the screen and that skeleton on the screen is looking at me and as I walked across the room to sit on the couch that thing rotated on his throne and followed me across the room when I stopped walking it stopped rotating and just stand there staring at me no sound and I told Ryan I said Ryan can you please turn that off and turn a light on in this place and he did and I went to share the gospel with him the whole gospel and at the end of it I asked Ryan would you like to be saved he said yes I would I said you'll have to ask him

I can't do it for you! total silence I said Ryan Ryan are you going to ask the Lord to save you he goes yeah I want to ask the Lord to save me I said you're going to have to ask him whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved total silence nothing I said okay Ryan I'm not going to force you I just wanted to share this with you tonight give you the opportunity but if you're not ready sudden this boy was like 13 years old out of the pit of hell came a voice out of this boy that to this day makes the hair stand up on my arms blood curdling a voice that does not come out of a 13 year old boy and I don't even want to try and mimic it

I don't want to give it any credence but basically he said Lord save me now do I believe that he was saved no I don't because the Bible says with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation it requires both the heart and the mouth I believe what came out of his mouth was not what was in his heart because they took him to a facility just weeks later found him trying to kill himself by beating how do you know it was demonic how do you know it was spiritual because I woke up the next day and the whole right hand side of my face was paralyzed and I couldn't preach right I had to preach with an eye patch wiping the drool coming out of my mouth for six weeks yes I believe in demonic warfare do I believe that Paul got intercepted by this demon possessed woman just as he was going to pray yes

I do and I think he does that to you and he does that to me just when we want to go pray something always just seems to come up something that has to get our attention now look at verse 18 how do I know Paul hadn't prayed already how do you know that Paul didn't pray okay look at verse 18 and this why did Paul wait so many days to deal with this thing did Paul not have a spirit of discernment did he not know she was demon possessed from the beginning why did he wait so many days this she did many days huh you ever hear the expression seven days without prayer makes one week you know a refrigerator the refrigerators are great today

I mean they're beautiful I mean they're nice stainless steel or chrome finish they're just beautiful a lot prettier than they were back in the old days the only problem is they don't work unless they're plugged in the same thing with us if we're not plugged in we don't have the power or the discernment that we should have in spiritual!

[41 : 28] matters what happens next verse 19 and when her master saw that the hope of their gains was gone they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace under the rulers and brought them to the magistrates saying these men being Jews do exceedingly!

trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive neither to observe being Romans and the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates rent off their clothes and commanded to beat them and when they had laid many stripes upon them they cried defend the police Roman lives matter amen no they cast them into prison charging the jailer to keep them safely who having received!

such a charge thrust them into the inner prison well wait a minute this is a good thing Paul this is a good thing why is this so good I just got beaten I'm in the inner prison I'm in stocks why is this a good thing you were looking to get out of the city to go to a quiet place to pray and look at what I did for you you're in that you're not just in the prison you're in the inner prison and it's dark yeah and you can't go anywhere nobody's gonna bother you they can't get to you and you can't get to them you are alone and I've got you in stocks chains so you can't go anywhere you don't have to worry about socializing you don't have to worry about soul winning you don't have to worry about spirits of divination you don't have to worry about anything it's just me and you wasn't that nice of the Lord to provide him rather than a prayer closet a prayer cell that was so!

nice! of the Lord so who caused them to be whipped put into the inner prison with feet fast in the stocks God or Satan and in verse 25 excuse me and at midnight Paul and Silas prayed you know do you read what I read Paul finally got to pray there was a want to pray w-o-n-t he went to pray but finally he had to be whipped to pray and I just wonder what kind of accommodations the Lord will make for us so that we'll find the time to pray David said in Psalm 119 at midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments at midnight that's exactly when Paul was praying at midnight and it says there and they sang praises unto

God and the prisoners heard them isn't that interesting that God always has an audience ready to witness how God's people handle trials who's listening the prisoners heard now the soul winning is in its proper place soul winning now is coming after my time with the!

[44 : 52] Paul prayed now's the time to do some soul winning God first others second the oxygen mask is in its right place and suddenly verse 26 there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed when we prayed powers provided to all the house my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee everyone's bands were loosed hey now listen you have lost family lost mother lost father lost children lost aunts uncles grandparents people in your family that you love and friends that are lost Paul prayed God opened the doors God loosed the bands!

maybe we have loved ones in our lives that are still lost because we don't put first things first God says do you remember the man with the palsy man that brought him with the palsy and they took him up to the roof and they let him down through the roof in front of Jesus you know what Jesus said your sins be forgiven thee to the man of the!

because of their people and our families and friends that are lost going to go to hell that God could save if we saw us doing what we should do whether it be carrying a stretcher whether it be praying unto God then all the doors were opened and all the bands were loosed yeah seek ye first set your affections!

on things! love the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much effectual and fervent again adjectives that describe prayer not just prayer but effectual prayer fervent prayer of a righteous man and the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open he drew out his sword and would have killed himself supposing that the prisoners had been fled but Paul cried with a loud voice saying do thyself no harm for we are all here Paul says don't worry I'm not leaving this is the only place I can actually practice social distancing he he was harassed he was beaten he was whipped he was imprisoned he was put in the stocks and at midnight that all comes together to equal prayer what does God have to do to get your attention and to get my attention it's interesting verse 29 and we'll close folks who told him that he needed to be saved this man was asleep when all this was going on this man is asleep all the prison doors were open all the chains came off this man was asleep and he comes rushing in it's the earthquake that woke him up and he comes rushing in and says sirs what must

I do to be saved who told him he needed to be saved who presented the gospel to him the Lord did that one man sows another man waters but God brings the increase God put that on his heart whether it was in a dream that he was thinking about or whatever or maybe he heard some of the songs that were being sung songs back then were so loaded with doctrine what must I do to be saved you know if you have loved ones that you want to see saved whether it's carrying a stretcher whether it's finding time to pray so that God could heal and save those around you God shared with this man that he needed to be saved and God will do that for you too!

[49 : 10] The title of this message is Locked Up to Look Up It's a message I first preached September 17th the year 2000 and my son who's the pastor now when he was I don't know how old was he 10 years old he wrote this little card and he kept it in his Bible Pastor Paul Sunday message September 17th year 2000 Locked Up to Look Up and all the verses on there on the back he says great message dad exclamation point I love you love from Luke that if you were to ask my son today was the best message your favorite message that your father ever preached he would say that one and it changed his life and I can tell you today he's the pastor that he is at the age of 35 because he believes in stop all this running around town thinking that we have to be busy or moving and busy in order to be productive we're kidding ourselves and to not think that the devil is at the helm of the whole thing bringing in the distractions of even the good things like soul winning and socializing just to keep you from talking to your heavenly father without prayer

Paul went to sinners with prayer sinners came to Paul the very thing that kept Paul from praying initially is what God brought to him after praying you know I just to let you know how much God's involved one year we wanted to canvas the entire White House community we made up this beautiful flyer oh it was nice flyer very pretty very attractive and we were going to canvas the entire White House community and we did we hit every door every door do you know what God did the next week we had five sets of visitors wow five sets of visitors the week after we hand out these flyers and so I go up to a gentleman I said hi my name Paul I know what's your name and he introduces himself I said I assume you know you got one of our flyers he goes no what flyer I said well we put flyers on every house every door in the all

White House community did you get my no I said why are you here and they said well you know one of your you know members here works with me and they been inviting me for a long time we just decided this Sunday we were going to come I said oh okay no flyers no no flyer no flyer why are you here well I drive by your church it's a log cabin church it's really pretty and I've been coming by here you know for years and we just decided this Sunday we're going to come and join it and visit you I said it's good to have you did anybody here get a flyer I wanted to think that it was because of me but it wasn't it was because of God he brought the increase and who knows what the

Lord could do in your life if you would more so put first things first and to seek the Lord and to have that special precious time with him have you been laying aside God's best to make room for God's good he gave you his undivided attention on Calvary do you give him your undivided attention is your oxygen mask on first so you can help those around you how's your gap theory working are you settling and satisfied with the good rather than striving for the perfect life's traffic light is yellow what pedal are you going to push away apart and alone triple a prayer protection you need to get a policy on that prayer closet or prayer cell the choice is yours the choice is mine

God will make accommodations for us either way because he wants to talk to his children is it time that you replaced your W-O-N-T with W-A-N-T because God can always get us locked up to look up if he has to why don't we all stand this morning if the Lord has spoken to your heart about prayer take some time with him while we get somebody to play the piano just take some time with him prayer the most important thing that you have if you're here today and you've never trusted Christ as your savior why don't you come why don't you come and receive him once and for all it's a free gift the same way that the prison doors were opened the same way that the chains fell off they can fall off of you as well why don't you come today trust for a reason you come as the

[54 : 48] Lord leads