

It seems that it normally takes a severe crisis in our life before we truly cry out to God from the depths of our heart. Our relationship with God seems to have lost a real passion. We have lost the sense of desperation regarding our own condition as well as the desperate condition of our family and friends. It is that desperation that drives us to cry out to God for His intervention. For the most part we seem to handle things fine without Him. I think that the failure to cry out to God stems from a failure to understand the seriousness of our desperate need. As our entire world seems to unravel before our eyes literally a rising sense of desperation occupies our thinking.

The Bible records numerous examples of the practice of calling out to God. I urge you today to consider a new appreciation for a passionate cry to God regarding our own lives, the lives of our family and friends, our community and country and the whole world. I urge us to raise a cry to God for our sisters and brothers in desperate situations around the world. I urge us today to raise a cry for the lost both near and far. I urge us to raise a cry concerning our own lack of passion for God. Jesus is coming. Our country is crumbling. Our Christian walk is struggling.

The enemy seems to be winning. All while we try to avoid the pain by our favorite means of escape.

Over two-thousand years ago Paul wrote to a church surrounded by godless influences.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:1-17

Be careful how you live. Don't live as unwise men who have no sense of urgency.

Live as wise men who redeem the time; who make the best use of every opportunity.

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time. Colossians 4:5

Why? Because the days are evil. Are we in evil days?

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 3:1-7

Does that describe the condition of our world today? A clock is ticking.
One of God's chief instructions concerning living in evil days is to make use of time.

Time is:

A Limited resource

Only 24 hours per day per person

An Unrenewable resource

Can't manufacture any more time

An Unsaveable resource

Use 'em or lose 'em

An Uncontrollable resource

Can't stop it or put life on pause.

An Unpredictable resource

Never know how much you may have left.

Would we live differently if we knew we had only three weeks to live or if Jesus would return next Sunday?

Paul called Timothy to be a good soldier in God's army. What is the key to being a good soldier?
Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 2 Timothy 2:3-4

The word "entangled" means ENTANGLED. It is just what you think it means; to get intertwined with unnecessary stuff. Civilians can, soldiers can't.

Hebrews addresses entanglements.

Let us lay aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and the sin (prohibited weight) which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1

We live in serious times. Serious times personally. Serious time for our church. May a renewed awareness of the seriousness of our day inspire a new cry to God.

The practice of calling on the Lord fills the Old Testament and spills over into the new. One word translated cry out expressed the idea of "to call out to" or even accost. It also applied to the naming someone or something. The root (7121) appears over 700 times.

This passage uses the term in two different aspects.

*Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and **called** him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he **called** his name Enosh. Then men began to **call** upon the name of the LORD. Genesis 4:25-26*

Psalms 107 shows a variety of difficulties where God delivered them because they "cried out" to Him.

***Call** upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." Psalm 50:15*

*I **cried** with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Your statutes. I **cried** to You; save me And I shall keep Your testimonies. I rise before dawn and **cry** for help; I wait for Your words. Psalm 119:145-147*

Another term means to shriek (2199) from anguish or danger. 84 times

This term first appears in Exodus.

*Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they **cried** out; and their **cry** for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them. Exodus 2:23-25*

It is a cry of desperation and also a cry of repentance.

*Then the sons of Israel **cried** out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, for indeed, we have forsaken our God and served the Baals." Judges 10:10*

Still another intends a deep cry (7775 11 times)

*"Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my **cry**; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner like all my fathers. "Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again Before I depart and am no more." Psalm 39:12-13*

Crying to the Lord and prayer are often linked and treated as synonyms.

*Hear my **cry**, O God; Give heed to my prayer. Psalm 61:1*

*I **cried** out to You, O LORD; I said, "You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Psalm 142:5-6*

Included in all the terms is the idea of a sense of desperation and need for God's intervention in my situation. The idea of crying out to the Lord is a passionate cry to God out of desperate need or sometimes a deep sense of majesty and awe.

*They raise their voices, they **shout for joy**; They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the LORD. Isa 24:14*

Such a cry flows from a desperate heart that has come to the realization the ONLY God can intervene or bring me through my distress. Sometimes we fail to call upon the Lord because we are not finished trying all our solutions to address the situation; we haven't yet come to the end of our own resources. At other times we don't really trust God. Another factor is that we are unaware of the gravity of our condition. We have no trouble recognizing a family crisis and often readily cry out to God. However, when it comes to our own spiritual condition we sometimes fail to recognize the need and thus fail to cry out to God.

Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Revelation 3:16-18

It is easy to become accustomed to our sinful attitudes and words and actions.

We sometimes gloss over Scripture passages that expose our true condition.

Here are some details gleaned from a brief study of some of the two thousand plus references. The sheer number of passages ought to signal the importance of this practice. The practice rises above general prayer. It erupts as desperate cry for God's intervention. The state of mind and sense of desperation varies. i.e. brought very low, distressed, sighing, suffering, persecuted, troubled, alienated from God and people, oppressed, helpless, desperate, darkened, in bondage, in need of revival,

- **The expectation in this cry is that God will actually respond.**

- The writers of the Psalms repeatedly cry for God's ear.
- The writers of the Psalm repeatedly testify to the fact that God answered their cry.
- The reality is that God sometimes allows the trouble to continue.
- Sometimes it was accompanied by fasting.

*Then (when you fast) your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will **call**, and the LORD will answer; You will **cry**, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, Isaiah 58:8-9*

Sometimes God refused to respond in spite of crying out and even fasting.

"As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you. Jeremiah 7:16

"They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers." Therefore thus says the LORD, "Behold I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape; though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them. Jeremiah 11:10-11

Thus says the LORD to this people, "Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the LORD does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account." So the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the welfare of this people. "When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence." Jeremiah 14:10-12

- It includes a cry for God's intervention in a case of injustice.
- It is done on our behalf and also on the behalf of others. (Samuel for Israel).
- Sin and pride prevents us from crying out to God.
- Heart issues block positive answers from God.
- Sometimes the cry was audible. (Cry aloud)
- Sometimes the cry went for long periods of time. (All day, 400 years)
- Sometimes the cry was early in the morning.
- Sometimes it was a cry for understanding.
- Sometimes it was done by a person or a group.
- He responds to those who fear Him.
- The timing of the "call" was important. (Call the Lord while He may be found.)

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. Psalm 130:1-4

The New Testament also includes admonitions to call on the Lord as well.

Some of it followed the Old Testament concept of crying to the Lord out of a desperation. We find both a cry of petition and a cry of praise.

*And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to **cry out**, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." Matthew 15:22*

*And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who **cry** to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:6-8*

*So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, **crying** out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" John 12:13*

*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we **cry**, “Abba! Father!” Romans 8:15*

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and **crying** out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” Revelation 7:9-12*

*Everyone who **calls** on the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans 10:13 (Joel 2:32 quote)*

*To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place **call** upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: 1 Corinthians 1:2*

*So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who **call** on the Lord from a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22*

There you have a brief overview of a practice mentioned nearly 2000 times in the Bible. God has stirred my heart regarding not only by my lack of consistent prayer but most certainly by my failure to recognize the gravity of the need in my own life, my family, my church, community, country and the world.

Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Ephesians 6:18

The New Testament commands us to DEVOTE ourselves to prayer. Seven times in the book of Judges, when Israel “cried to the Lord”, “the Lord raised up a deliverer.” Doing what was right in their own eyes (refusing to cry out to the Lord) returned them to bondage.

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. James 5:16-18

Given the testimony of Scripture as to the power and importance of prayer, why don't we?