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## **TAKING YOUR CITY FOR GOD**

December 18, 2001

Each Tuesday I have been going to meet with a number of pastors from Durham that pray for the city, the nation and for revival. There may be 20 to 30 that show up each time we meet. Both black and white pastors attend in almost equal numbers. Among the group is a black woman named Alma McCauley who is the pastor of the Father Son Holiness Church in our city. In a rare acknowledgment of religion in our local paper on a day other than Friday, the day for the religion page, there is a big picture of Alma and some of her parishioners on the streets of our city praying for an area infested with drug traffic and crime. When interviewed by a reporter she said, "I want to be a witness that while evil holds the streets, good things are happening and will continue to happen if we pray. Prayer is the most powerful weapon we can use." Alma has been protected by the police department, and the mayor elect has joined her on one occasion. Alma does this with some of her congregation once a month.

The group with which Alma and I meet is praying fervently for our city. I am sure that we are beginning to see results. Crime was down last year, and we have had a reorganization of our city government. There has been much graft in the government in the past, but it seems that at last something is being done to bring it to an end.

It is an interesting fact, too, that the people who pray are persons from the Pentecostal, Holiness, Charismatic and Evangelical churches. There are a few mainline pastors, but very few. Even so, we pray fervently for our city. We pray that God will guide and direct our city officials, we pray for the President, Congress, the Armed Forces, the Supreme Court, and for our state government. In all of this we are also praying against the forces of evil, especially the principality that is over our city. Spiritual warfare is part of our effort. I am so glad that I can be part of the group since I believe in prayer of this kind. We are using the strategy that John Dawson outlined in his book, *Taking Our Cities for God*. It worked for him and we are praying that it will work for us.

This strategy has worked for a friend of mine, Fra. Rick Thomas S.J., in El Paso and Juarez, Mexico. Rick has a group that prays for the efforts of his ministry whenever they go out in ministry. When they regularly go to the jail, the mental hospital and in the past at the juvenile detention home there is a group that accompanies him and the evangelists for prayer support. They will sit in the courtyard of the jail and pray while the evangelists preach to the criminals. In the mental hospital they pray while the healing team is praying for the patients. On occasions they have parked their vehicles in front of the city hall and prayed for the election of Christian leaders for the city. The prayer team has also gone to a

room in the basement of the coliseum in El Paso and prayed against the heavy metal rock bands that were performing there. They had astonishing results.

Rick's groups have also gone to abortion clinics in El Paso, and while sitting in their vehicles prayed for the women going into the clinics. They also prayed for the children's souls that were being murdered there. Since spiritual warfare is part of their prayer life they pray against the spirit of murder that infests those establishments. They also pray for the souls of the employees.

It is important for all of us to realize that what Alma said above is a most important action for those of us who want to see good things happen. She is right--prayer is the greatest weapon we have in our battle against evil. It is also the greatest tool we have in evangelism. If we do not pray, souls will not come to Christ. In John Dawson's book, he tells the story of how many of the people of Cordoba, Argentina were won to the Lord by the prayers of a group of youth. Praying as a group on the street corners attracted a crowd, and the Holy Spirit did the rest when they offered them the Gospel. Rick's group is enormously successful in the prisons because of the prayers of his people.

When I was still on the faculty of Duke University we had a student group that met one morning a week to pray. We prayed for the school, the students and for our program, Christianity and Medicine. We were blessed by a lack of opposition and the opportunity to teach students how to integrate their faith into their medical practice. We rejoiced at finding out that over 60% of our prayers were answered positively and the rest were not answered or we got a delayed answer. One interesting sidelight was the fact that 5 residents' wives who had been barren in spite of medical interventions got pregnant almost immediately when we began to pray that they would conceive a child. One had been barren for 8 years when we prayed. To confirm that prayer works in this situation was a recent report that made the observation that when couples were prayed for the incidence of successful in vitro fertilizations and subsequent pregnancies was doubled.

There are many anecdotal accounts of God healing physical disease. I have seen many instances where He healed temporarily or permanently persons who had ankylosing spondylitis, asthma, peritonitis, arteriosclerotic heart disease, and other conditions. It has not happened often when I prayed, but it happens often enough for me to keep praying for healing.

Today in my office a man who was a homosexual for over half of his 65 years sat and testified to the power of prayer in his healing. He was healed first when he prayed a prayer of repentance. Later he relapsed, but regained his healing when he again repented. He was further healed when prayers of deliverance were prayed for him. Today he is a joyous Christian who is active in his community, church and family.

There are thousands who can testify to the power of prayer, still nobody prays. It is interesting to me that most churches have not considered the statement that everything happens with prayer and nothing without it as having validity. The history of Christianity documents the power of prayer. I urge you to learn to pray guided and directed by the Holy Spirit and find out how powerful prayer is. We have two tapes on prayer. You may order them from us. They can be had postage paid for \$8.00. Just send your check or money order to our mailing address.