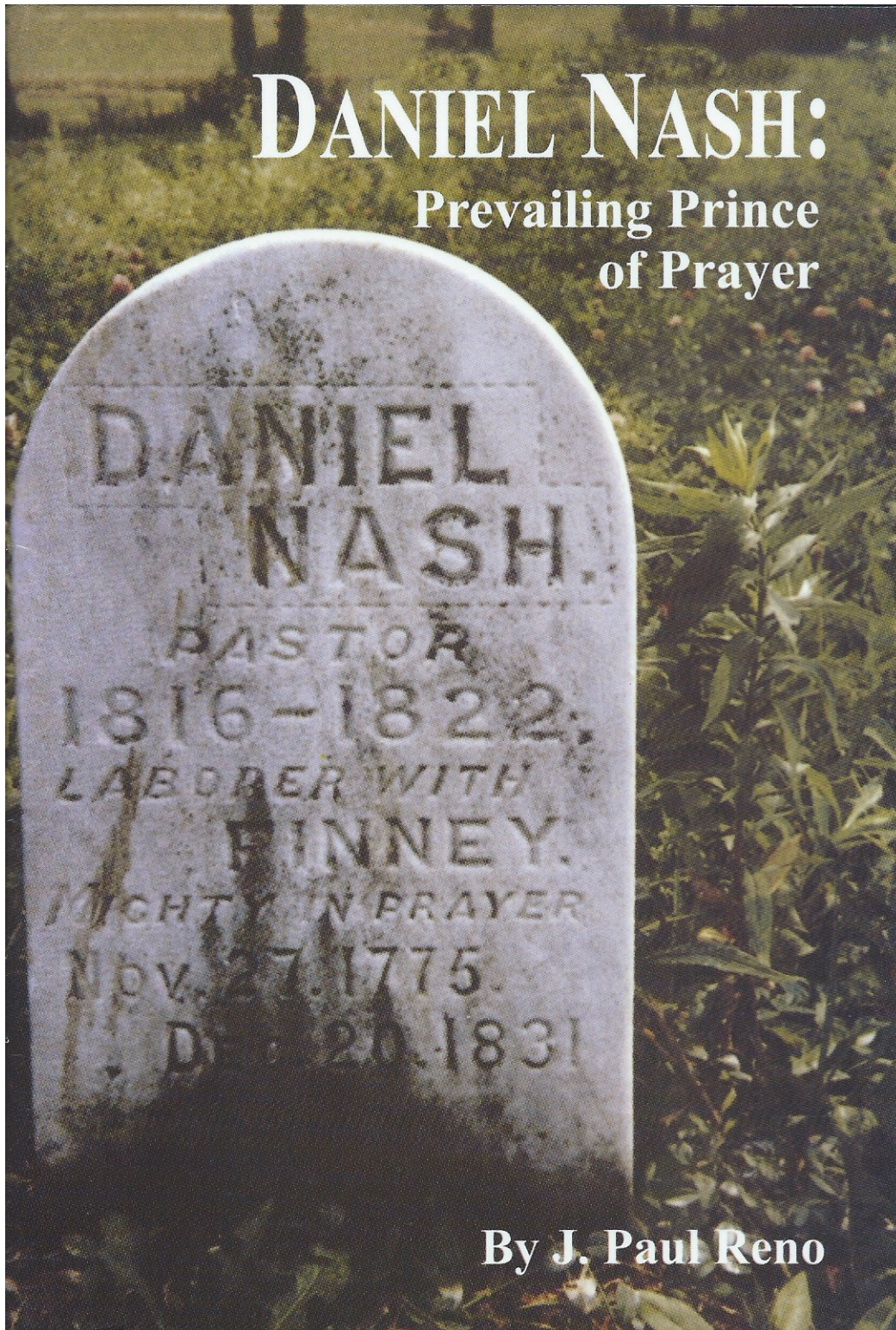


# DANIEL NASH:

Prevailing Prince  
of Prayer



By J. Paul Reno

**DANIEL NASH:**  
**Prevailing Prince of Prayer**

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## PREVAILING PRINCE OF PRAYER

He pastored a small church in the backwoods of New York for six years, and traveled with and prayed for a traveling evangelist for seven more years until his death. As far as we know, he never ministered outside the region of upstate New York during days when much of it was frontier. His tombstone is in a neglected cemetery along a dirt road behind a livestock auction barn. His church no longer exists, its meetinghouse location marked by a historical marker in a corn field; the building is gone, its timber used to house grain at a feed mill four miles down the road. No books tell his life story, no pictures or diaries can be found, his descendants (if any) cannot be located, and his messages are forgotten. He wrote no books, started no schools, led no movements, and generally, kept out of sight.

Yet this man saw revival twice in his pastorate, and then was a key figure in one of the greatest revivals in the history of the United States. In many ways he was to the U. S. what Praying Hyde was to India. He is known almost exclusively for his powerful prayer ministry.

The great evangelist, Charles Finney, left his itinerant ministry for the pastorate within three or four months after this man's death. Finney never counted on his theology, messages, preaching style, logic, or methods to save souls. He looked rather to mighty prayer and the resulting powerful work of the Holy Spirit to sweep in with great conviction on his audience, that his conversions might be thorough. This may well explain why 80 per cent of those converted in his meetings stood the test of time. Years later Moody followed a similar pattern but without such a prayer warrior. He saw perhaps 50 per cent of his converts last.



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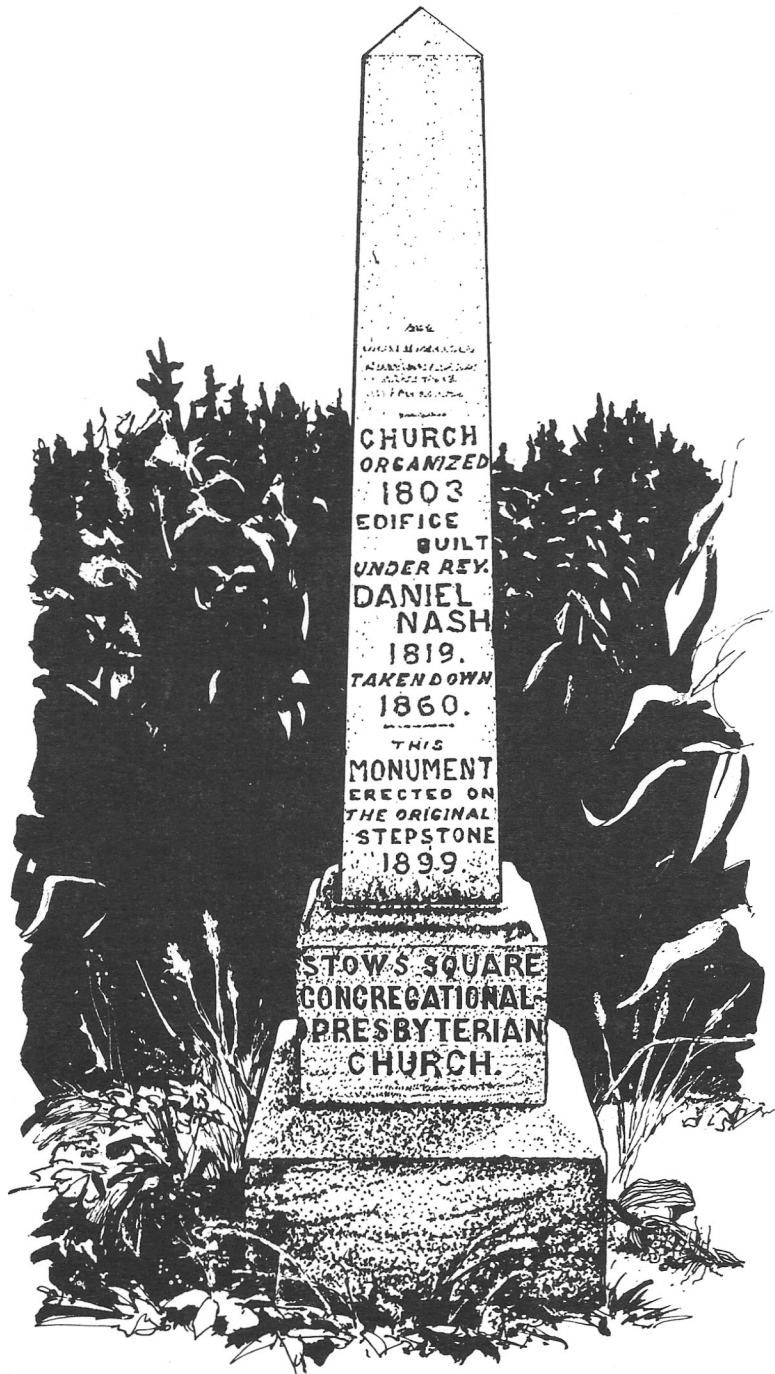
Today, a well-known evangelist (well-financed and highly organized) recently stated that he would be delighted if 20 per cent of his converts were genuinely converted. In this day of apostasy with many decisions but few true conversions, with many programs but little prayer, with much organizing but little agonizing, we would be wise to learn lessons from the past. One of our godly forefathers whose life can teach us such is Daniel Nash.

His early years seem mostly lost from the records. This much we do know—he was born November 27, 1775, and by November 11, 1816, at the age of 40 he had accepted the pastorate of the Stow's Square Congregational-Presbyterian Church, Lowville Township. He had moved there from Onondaga County (the area around Syracuse), and had a farm at least by 1825, the time of the first census in the area.

During his first year of pastoring this union church, he saw Revival with at least 70 being converted. One of the first he baptized was a Sally Porter (December 18, 1816), to whom he was married by February of 1817. He baptized five of her children before spring and possibly a sixth several years later. Typical church problems were dealt with clearly by church discipline—broken contracts between members, heresy regarding the Trinity, etc.

A meetinghouse was built beginning June 7, 1819, and "dedicated to the service of God" December 13, 1819.

There was a group who split from the main group during the period of the building program or shortly thereafter. They located four miles south where the village of Lowville was beginning to develop. Pastor



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Nash was able to peaceably work with this group and establish it as a mission throughout the rest of his pastorate.

Upon the completion of the meetinghouse and while working with the mission work to the south, he was able to start a Sabbath School in the union church.

Such a ministry would seem to be the basis for a long term relationship. However, on September 25, 1822, a strange church meeting was called at an unusual time and he was voted out by a vote of nine to three! The only reasons surviving to this day in the records were that they wanted "a young man to settle in." At the age of 46 they felt him too old, and resented his traveling.

While his term as pastor was ended as of November 10, 1822, he often came to preach, act as moderator, baptize converts, and hold communion over the next several years!

During this ending of his pastoring and the ministry that followed, there was a second move of revival (1822-23) where over 200 were converted. This occurred in a township of only 308 homes with a population of approximately 2,000 people! Imagine God blessing a rejected pastor with such a revival, and the church taking no steps to recall him! Through all of this God was breaking and preparing the heart of His man to leave a public ministry of preaching for a private one of prayer.

Such rejection by those he loved and had ministered to did its crushing work, and by 1824 he was so damaged spiritually that any human hope of a prayer ministry seemed impossible. At this time Charles Finney was to be examined for a license to preach, and he records his first meeting with Daniel Nash as follows:

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At this meeting of the presbytery I first saw Rev. Daniel Nash, who is generally known as 'Father Nash.' He was a member of the presbytery. A large congregation was assembled to hear my examination. I got in a little late, and saw a man standing in the pulpit speaking to the people, as I supposed. He looked at me, I observed, as I came in; and was looking at others as they passed up the aisles.

As soon as I reached my seat and listened, I observed that he was praying. I was surprised to see him looking all over the house, as if he were talking to the people; while in fact he was praying to God. Of course it did not sound to me much like prayer; and he was at that time indeed in a very cold and back-slidden state.

After this meeting Nash was struck with a serious case of inflamed eyes. For several weeks he had to be kept in a dark room where he could neither read nor write. During this time "he gave himself up almost entirely to prayer. He had a terrible overhauling of his whole Christian experience; and as soon as he was able to see, with a double black veil before his face, he sallied forth to labor for souls."

His labors did not take the form of personal evangelism or of evangelistic preaching. Instead he began one of the greatest ministries of prayer evangelism recorded in history. This rejected and broken former preacher gave himself to a labor that would influence praying people to this day.

Charles Finney's labors in evangelism began in the region of Evans Mills, New York, and here Daniel Nash



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headed to start his special prayer ministry. When he arrived, Finney stated, "He was full of the power of prayer." The two men were drawn into a partnership that was ended only by Daniel's death seven years later. Their goals were stated simply in a letter as follows:

When Mr. Finney and I began our race, we had no thought of going amongst ministers. Our highest ambition was to go where there was neither minister or reformation and try to look up the lost sheep, for whom no man cared. We began and the Lord prospered. . . . But we go into no man's parish unless called. . . . We have room enough to work and work enough to do.

This evangelistic team operated on the basis of prayer being essential for the preparation of an area for evangelism. This idea was so strong that Finney often sent Nash to an area to prepare the place and people for his coming. Often it would take 3 or 4 weeks of prayer to get the area ready. Let us examine a little more closely just how such a thing was accomplished.

When God would direct where a meeting was to be held, Father Nash would slip quietly into town and seek to get two or three people to enter into a covenant of prayer with him. Sometimes he had with him a man of similar prayer ministry, Abel Clary. Together they would begin to pray fervently for God to move in the community. One record of such is told by Leonard Ravenhill:

I met an old lady who told me a story about Charles Finney that has challenged me over the

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years. Finney went to Bolton to minister, but before he began, two men knocked on the door of her humble cottage, wanting lodging. The poor woman looked amazed, for she had no extra accommodations. Finally, for about twenty-five cents a week, the two men, none other than Fathers Nash and Clary, rented a dark and damp cellar for the period of the Finney meetings (at least two weeks), and there in that self-chosen cell, those prayer partners battled the forces of darkness.

Another record tells:

On one occasion when I got to town to start a revival a lady contacted me who ran a boarding house. She said, 'Brother Finney, do you know a Father Nash? He and two other men have been at my boarding house for the last three days, but they haven't eaten a bite of food. I opened the door and peeped in at them because I could hear them groaning, and I saw them down on their faces. They have been this way for three days, lying prostrate on the floor and groaning. I thought something awful must have happened to them. I was afraid to go in and I didn't know what to do. Would you please come see about them?'

'No, it isn't necessary,' Finney replied. 'They just have a spirit of travail in prayer.'

Another states:

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Charles Finney so realized the need of God's working in all his service that he was wont to send godly Father Nash on in advance to pray down the power of God into the meetings which he was about to hold.

Not only did Nash prepare the communities for preaching, but he also continued in prayer during the meetings.

Often Nash would not attend meetings, and while Finney was preaching Nash was praying for the Spirit's outpouring upon him. Finney stated, 'I did the preaching altogether, and brother Nash gave himself up almost continually to prayer.' Often while the evangelist preached to the multitudes, Nash in some adjoining house would be upon his face in an agony of prayer, and God answered in the marvels of His grace. With all due credit to Mr. Finney for what was done, it was the praying men who held the ropes. The tears they shed, the groans they uttered are written in the book of the chronicles of the things of God.

It is said of Finney that "his evangelistic party consisted of prayer partners, who went before him and sought the Lord in some secluded spot. And when Finney was preaching Father Nash and Mr. Clary were hidden away somewhere praying for him. No wonder cities were stirred and a vast harvest of souls reaped." This concept of an evangelistic party made up of praying men has nearly been lost in these days of organizers,

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promoters, big names, etc. Such praying men not only sustained Finney's ministry, but explain the power in preaching and long-lasting results.

Charles Finney could always go to Brother Nash when an obstacle arose in the meetings. One such occasion occurred at Gouverneur where some "young men seemed to stand like a bulwark in the way of the progress of the work."

In this state of things, Brother Nash and myself (Finney), after consultation, made up our minds that that thing must be overcome by prayer, and that it could not be reached in any other way. We therefore retired to a grove and gave ourselves to prayer until we prevailed, and we felt confident that no power which earth or Hell could interpose, would be allowed permanently to stop the revival.

Now there are times when confidence gained in prayer requires action, and this was such a time. Brother Nash was by nature a quiet man, and by practice stayed out of the limelight. Yet confidence in prayer may cause this to change if God so leads. Here is Finney's own account of what happened in a service shortly after the victory was won in prayer:

The meeting-house was filled. Near the close of the meeting, Brother Nash arose, and addressed that company of young men who had joined hand in hand to resist the revival. I believe they were all there, and they sat braced up against the Spirit of God. It was too solemn for them



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really to make ridicule of what they heard and saw; and yet their brazen-facedness and stiff-neckedness were apparent to everybody.

Brother Nash addressed them very earnestly, and pointed out the guilt and danger of the course they were taking. Toward the close of his address he waxed exceeding warm, and said to them, 'Now, mark me, young men! God will break your ranks in less than one week, either by converting some of you, or by sending some of you to Hell. He will do this as certainly as the Lord is my God!' He was standing where he brought his hand down on the top of the pew before him, so as to make it thoroughly jar. He sat immediately down, dropped his head, and groaned with pain.

The house was as still as death, and most of the people held down their heads. I could see that the young men were agitated. For myself, I regretted that Brother Nash had gone so far. He had committed himself, that God would either take the life of some of them, and send them to Hell, or convert some of them, within a week. However, on Tuesday morning of the same week, the leader of these young men came to me, in the greatest distress of mind. He was all prepared to submit; and as soon as I came to press him he broke down like a child, confessed, and manifestly gave himself to Christ. Then he said, 'What shall I do, Mr. Finney?' I replied, 'Go immediately to all your young companions, and pray with them, and exhort them, at once to turn to the Lord.' He did so; and before the week

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was out, nearly if not all of that class of young men, were hoping in Christ.

There is no doubt that Finney's "over-wrought" concern "that his co-worker had gone too far" in this bold handling of the problem was relieved by such a speedy answer (from Sunday night to Tuesday morning). He never did get to speak words of warning and correction to "this man of prayer."

Nash's prayer ministry made him "as remarkable a character in his way as Finney himself." The importance of such to Finney's ministry and success cannot be over-estimated. "Finney depended more upon the prayers of Fathers Nash and Clary to bring down Holy Ghost revival than upon his own resistless logic. So accustomed are we to the Laodicean condition of the church that the all-pervading influence of prayer in Finney's time amazes us." Of the great revival in Rochester, "Finney said that the key which unlocked the Heavens in this revival was the prayer of Clary, Father Nash, and other unnamed folk who laid themselves prostrate before God's throne and besought Him for a divine out-pouring."

Considering the souls being saved and the very culture of the area being changed in such a thorough revival, it should be no surprise that persecution came to these co-laborers. Some came from jealous ministers, some from those of other doctrinal persuasions, and some from the lost. False statements were sent to newspapers by his enemies. Nash wrote a letter May 11, 1826, telling of some of the opposition. Part of it said,

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The work of God moves forward in power, in some places against dreadful opposition. Mr. Finney and I have both been hanged and burned in effigy. We have frequently been disturbed in our religious meetings. Sometimes the opposers make a noise in the house of God; sometimes they gather round the house and stone it, and discharge guns. There is almost as much writing, intrigue, and lying, and reporting of lies, as there would be if we were on the eve of a presidential election. Oh, what a world! How much it hates the truth! How unwilling to be saved! But I think the work will go on.

In this letter he refers to being hung and burned in effigy. Here is an account of the event:

Swinging above your heads are two distorted figures suspended on ropes. At the touch of the torch they leap into flames and the crowd screams in sheer delight. Sound like a scene from a lynching . . . a race riot? Not at all. It is a religious gathering. The charred creatures smoldering in the air represent the public's expression of opposition to the preaching and praying of America's greatest evangelistic team. Charles Grandison Finney and his partner-in-prayer, Father Nash, have just been burned in effigy. Preachers and pew-warmers alike joined forces against the two men who did more to spearhead revival than any other pair in American history.

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The enemies of revival counted Nash a full partner to Finney in the work. They feared and hated his praying at least as much as they did Finney's preaching.

The best-known revival of this period in American history was that which occurred in Rochester, New York. Over 100,000 were considered to have been soundly converted during those meetings. Nash and Clary teamed up for the praying with the assistance of others. These two men were so similar in their praying that one is often described to explain the other. Such fervent praying in agony of soul brought sights that may seem strange to our eyes today. Our gentle prayers accomplish so little, but then they cost us so little. Finney wrote:

I have never known a person sweat blood; but I have known a person pray till the blood started from his nose. And I have known persons pray till they were all wet with perspiration, in the coldest weather in winter. I have known persons pray for hours, till their strength was all exhausted with the agony of their minds. Such prayers prevailed with God. This agony in prayer was prevalent in Jonathan Edwards' day, in the revivals which then took place.

During the Rochester meetings there are several accounts of these two men in deep agony of soul while praying day and night. Some accounts name Nash, some Clary, others both. It seems they were together in fasting and prayer much of the time, weeping and crying out to God. Sometimes they lay prostrate without strength to stand up. Their concern over sinners being lost brought



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great stress to their minds and souls. They groaned under the load, they risked health and gave up comforts that the battle of the heavenlies might be won. Sometimes they "would writhe and groan in agony" over souls. God honored their burden-bearing and sent revival. Privately they prayed and publicly God answered. "Practically everyone in the city was converted. The only theater in the city was converted into a livery stable, the only circus into a soap and candle factory, and the grog shops (bars and taverns) were closed."

Oswald J. Smith explains the importance of such strivings in prayer during Finney's ministry:

He always preached with the expectation of seeing the Holy Spirit suddenly outpoured. Until this happened little or nothing was accomplished. But the moment the Spirit fell upon the people, Finney had nothing else to do but point them to the Lamb of God. Thus he lived and wrought for years in an atmosphere of revival.

We refuse to so strive and should not be surprised at the lack of God's mighty stirrings. Is it not amazing that we have no problem with people wearing themselves out in sports for pleasure, work for money, politics for power, and programs for charity, but think it fanatical to so pray for souls? We would die for national freedom, but never for progress in the Kingdom of God. Is it any wonder we see so little of God's great working? Nash would pray until he had to "go to bed absolutely sick, for weakness and faintness, under the pressure." The world would have no problem with such dedication except that

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it was due to prayer for souls. Why should it be such a strange thing to the Church?

Finney told of this relationship of intense prayer and successful preaching. Speaking of Nash he wrote:

I have seen Christians who would be in an agony, when the minister was going into the pulpit, for fear his mind should be in a cloud, or his heart cold, or he should have no unction, and so a blessing should not come. I have labored with a man of this sort. He would pray until he got an assurance in his mind that God would be with me in preaching, and sometimes he would pray himself ill. I have known the time when he has been in darkness for a season, while the people were gathering, and his mind was full of anxiety, and he would go again and again to pray, til finally he would come into the room with a placid face, and say: 'The Lord has come, and He will be with us.' And I do not know that I ever found him mistaken.

Nash had great confidence in a God who heard and answered prayer. He was not satisfied to stop praying until God answered in mighty power. Praying day and night, great strugglings and weakened health were but prices to be paid that God might move in power. The results were opened heavens, glorious power, souls saved, and God glorified. This may well explain why over 80 per cent of Finney's converts stood without ever backsliding. This may also explain why less than 20 per cent of today's converts last a couple of years.

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We have seen some of the importance of Nash's prayer life through various events and results. Now let us look a little closer at its principles and concepts.

### Private Prayer

Someone asked Finney what kind of man this Father Nash was. 'We never see him,' they said. 'He doesn't enter into any of the meetings.'

Finney replied, 'Like anybody who does a lot of praying, Father Nash is a very quiet person.' Show me a person who is always talking and I'll show you a Christian who never does much praying.

The majority of prayer for those who would be so used must be in private. They do not seek either the eye nor ear of men, but rather the ear of God. They seek a closet alone with God. Nash used a cellar, a room in a boarding house, a nearby house, or a grove of trees where he could pour out his heart to God alone or with just a few others of similar burden and heart. James A. Stewart emphasizes this point, "As in the case of 'Praying Hyde' and Father Nash, it may be a life of isolation from the Christian public for the ministry of intercession."

### Fervency in Prayer

Though he prayed in private, yet he often prayed with such fervency that others became aware of his praying. This was not intended, but simply was the release of a deeply burdened soul. The lady at the

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boarding house became aware of his groans as he prayed. His enemies claimed "that it was impossible for him to pray in secret since, whether he went into his closet or the woods, he prayed with such vehemence that he could be heard half a mile away." While this was likely an exaggeration of his normal practice, there is a record of a single occurrence of note:

In the revival at Gouverneur (in which the great majority of the inhabitants, Finney believed, were converted), Nash rose very early and went into a wood to pray. 'It was one of those clear mornings,' said Finney, 'on which it is possible to hear sounds at a great distance.' Three-quarters of a mile away lived an unconverted man who was suddenly arrested by hearing the voice of prayer. He could distinguish that it was Nash's voice, and this brought to him such a sense of the reality of religion as he had never before experienced; he experienced no relief until he found it in Christ.

### Prayer List

An organized and systematic list of people and matters to pray for is a common tool of effective prayer warriors. Preparation of our case, listing our requests, and thoroughness in prayer help establish a meaningful ministry. It also helps us rejoice in written evidence of answers to prayer.

Nash used such a method:



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Nash had remarkable power in prayer and was in the habit of making a 'praying list' of persons for whose conversion he daily prayed in secret. . . . The answers to his prayers sometimes seemed almost miraculous, for he did not confine his 'list' to those whom he thought might be reached by the revival, but the most obdurate and unlikely cases were made the subjects of prayer, with results that were truly astounding.

Finney said of Nash and his prayer list, "Praying with him and hearing him pray in meetings, I found that his gift of prayer was wonderful and his faith almost miraculous." Nash would pray for these not only daily, but for some many times a day.

Another issue of prayer lists is knowing the will of God as to who to put on the prayer list. To go by appearances is to walk by sight and not by faith. To be able to believe God for a person's salvation requires some leading of God as to who to put on the list. Nash seemed especially sensitive in this area, as he put names on as he felt led, even if it seemed that they were the most unlikely candidates for salvation. Finney in describing Nash and his list said:

The plain truth of the matter is that the Spirit leads a man to pray; and if God leads a man to pray for an individual, the inference from the Bible is, that God designs to save that individual. If we find, by comparing our state of mind with the Bible, that we are led by the Spirit to pray for

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an individual, we have good evidence to believe that God is prepared to bless him.

One example of Nash praying for an unlikely person is often written in various books as an example of the power of prayer. Here is the account in Finney's own words:

In a town in a north part of this state, where there was revival, there was a certain man by the name of D\_\_\_\_\_ who was a most violent and outrageous opposer. He kept a low tavern in a corner of the village and used to delight in swearing at a desperate rate, whenever there were Christians within hearing, on purpose to hurt their feelings. He went railing about the streets respecting the revival, and his house was the resort of all opposers of the revival. One of the young converts lived almost across the way from him; and he told me that he meant to sell his place, or give it away, and move out of the neighborhood, because every time he was out of doors and D\_\_\_\_\_ saw him, he would come out and swear, and curse, and say everything he could to wound his feelings. He had not, I think, been at any of our meetings. Of course he was ignorant of the great truths of religion and despised the whole Christian enterprise.

Father Nash heard us speak of this Mr. D\_\_\_\_\_ as 'a hard case', and was very much grieved and distressed for the individual. He immediately put his name upon his 'praying list'.

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The case weighed on his mind when he was asleep and when he was awake. He kept thinking about the ungodly man, and praying for him for days. In this manner the Spirit of God leads individual Christians to pray for things which they would not pray for, unless they were led by the Spirit; and thus they pray for things 'according to the will of God.'

Not many days afterward, as we were holding an evening meeting with a very crowded house, who should come in but this notorious D\_\_\_\_\_? His entrance created a considerable movement in the congregation. People feared that he had come in to make a disturbance. The fear and abhorrence of him had become very general among Christians, I believe; so that when he came in, some of the people got up and retired. I knew his countenance, and kept my eye upon him. I very soon became satisfied that he had not come in to oppose, and that he was in great anguish of mind. He sat and writhed upon his seat, and was very uneasy. He soon arose, and tremblingly asked me if he might say a few words. I told him that he might. He then proceeded to make one of the most heart-broken confessions that I almost ever heard. His confession seemed to cover the whole ground of his treatment of God, of Christians, of the revival, and of everything good.

This thoroughly broke up the fallow ground in many hearts. It was the most powerful means that could have been used, just then, to give

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impetus to the work. D\_\_\_\_\_ soon came out and professed a hope, abolished all the revelry (including liquor) and profanity from his bar-room; and from that time, as long as I staid there, and I know not how much longer, a prayer meeting was held in his bar-room nearly every night.

Such is one evidence of Nash's power in prayer in the use of his list.

### **Praying with Others**

As has been mentioned previously, Nash customarily sought for a few others to help carry the load in each of the places he went to minister in prayer. Many times he had as a partner Abel Clary who was gifted and exercised in a similar fashion. This praying together multiplies prayer power: "One [shall] chase a thousand and two [shall] put ten thousand to flight." The efforts of several with such a burden for victory greatly increases the power of prayer.

### **Focusing in Prayer**

Strong praying must be effectual praying. There must be a desired effect. This effect must be definite and clear to the one praying. This effect will fill the mind of the saint and be a focus of thought, concern, and prayer. Scattered praying in general directions is of little value. A list is a starting point in this matter, yet the items on the list must be focused on one by one if we are to expect results. Hear Finney tell of Nash's way in this matter:

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I was acquainted with an individual who used to keep a list of persons for whom he was especially concerned; and I have had the opportunity to know a multitude of persons, for whom he became thus interested, who were immediately converted. I have seen him pray for persons on his list when he was literally in an agony for them; and have sometimes known him call on some other person to help him pray for such-a-one. I have known his mind to fasten thus on an individual of hardened, abandoned character, and who could not be reached in an ordinary way.

Such praying required mental effort to aim at the proper effect with true soul struggle. To move from real burden to solid faith often requires the path of soul agony. We are too committed to cop out with fatalism, unconcern, or shifting the responsibility to the lost. It may require a wrestling in prayer until we obtain the desired blessing. This is on a far higher plane than the physical. These struggles of soul and spirit may produce more than weariness in the physical realm. But the body agony is but a result of such praying, and not an integral part. Some would counterfeit this soul struggle by physical manifestations. This may fool man but such hypocrisy is of no help in the courts of Heaven.

### **Prayer of Faith**

Nash was convinced that we have a responsibility for the destiny of souls. He felt that God has committed

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the map of the world before him, and pray, and look over the different countries and pray for them, till he expired in his room, praying. Blessed man! He was the reproach of the ungodly, and of carnal, unbelieving professors; but he was the favorite of Heaven, and a prevailing prince of prayer.

Thus he entered glory on his knees December 20, 1831, at the age of 56. His body is buried near where he pastored in that former church's graveyard with a small stone to mark the spot.

Perhaps God will see fit to raise up others to have a similar ministry in these needy days. Dear reader, will you consider the cost, the need, and the opportunity? Will you give yourself to a ministry of prayer as God leads you and enables?





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## About the Author



J. PAUL RENO has been a pastor in Ohio and Maryland since 1968. During this time he has also been involved in church planting, training men for the ministry and speaking on mission fields in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, South America and Mexico. The church he presently pastors has just passed sending over three million dollars to missions.

He continues to speak at various Bible conferences, camp meetings and local churches. He presently serves on the Board of Directors for the Conversion Center, which is headquartered in Hagerstown, Maryland.

He has also written *To Fight or Not to Fight*, as well as over fifty pamphlets and booklets on salvation, the Christian life, Bible doctrine and the King James Version. His wife Carolyn authored *Almost But Lost*.

Paul is the father of five children, all of whom are active in the Lord's work with three serving presently as missionaries in Brazil.



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