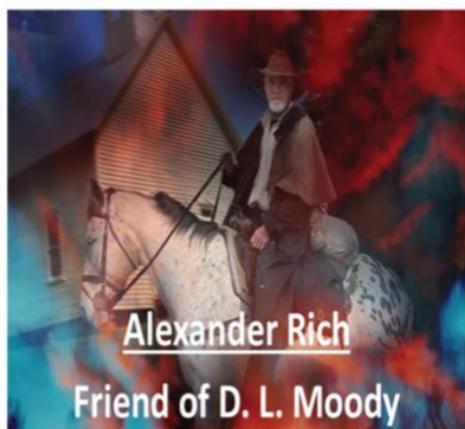




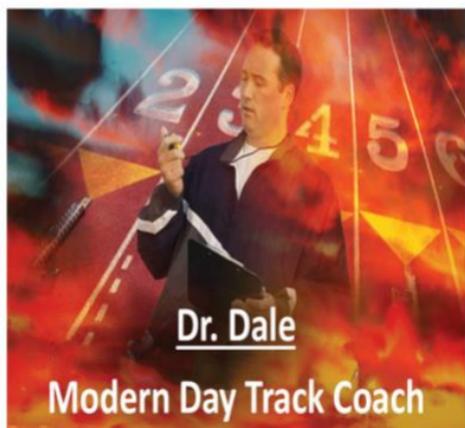
Thales

Epaphras' Nephew



Alexander Rich

Friend of D. L. Moody



Dr. Dale

Modern Day Track Coach

Prayer Shaming

**There is NOTHING
New Under the Sun**

**This New Short Story
Shows Prayer-Shaming
in ALL 3 Eras**

Prayer Shaming

“Dale, look at social media. They’re going bonkers.” She said incredulously. Margie and Dr. Dale were in bed for the evening and she was taking a last look at her FB page before she read a few scriptures and then turned out the light.

“Look Dale,” she continued. “These people are telling others to quit praying!”

She was becoming agitated now and Dale knew he needed to step in. Putting down his Sudoku book he rolled over to snuggle her; but felt her pull away.

“I just don’t understand why people are like this.” She said angrily, and then added. “And it upsets me.”

“I can tell baby,” Dale soothed, choosing not to go back to his book. Instead he gently ran his hand down her arm, gently kissing her shoulder. Then he propped himself on his elbow to talk to her and she began to calm down. He just stared at her though, because he could tell she was not ready to engage. She just wanted to vent.

After a while she continued. “This so infuriates me Dale because they act like our praying does

nothing. They make it sound like our praying is worthless.”

She paused and then Dale inched forward and queried, “Maybe they’re right baby.”

Now she turned and met his eyes in a combination of panic and anger.

Dr. Dale, the men’s prayer leader at his church and the University track coach just smiled and continued. “This has been bothering me too Margie. The Lord and I have been talking about it, and I have come to believe that these *Prayer-Shamers* are right.”

Again, that intense stare from his wife.

So, Dr. Dale moved forward gently and asked. “May I continue baby?”

And with the briefest assent from her he added. “These are folks who are mainly non-Christians, but I think that this sentiment also comes from Christians.”

Another intense look from Margie, but this look was one of questioning and wondering more than panic and anger.

“Why would you say that Dale?”

“Well, because I have heard them mouth the same statements, that prayer is not the answer.” He paused and then continued. “You know that I listen to my men pray at the Issachar Men’s Prayer Group. In fact, I visit different prayer teams each week. And I’m telling you Margie, this is how many of them think. Of course, this is only until they need something from the Lord, then they plead with Him and plead with Him, even often praying louder and louder as if that will cause God to hear better.”

Margie chuckled and asked, “have you figured out why they do not trust prayer?”

“Yes, unfortunately, I have.” He paused and kissed her on the shoulder again.

“Stop,” she exclaimed. “Don’t do that!” She chuckled. “Listen mister, right now I want you to tell me why you think these people prayer-shame us.”

“Comfort, Margie. That’s the answer, C-O-M-F-O-R-T. Comfort. These people have never experienced God comforting them in prayer.” And with that Dale rolled away from Margie onto his back.

Margie now paused knowing that Dale was thinking, probably about the general state of praying.

After a few more moments he started to get up and Margie stopped him.

“Are you getting up now?” She asked.

“Yes, sorry.” He mumbled.

“It’s okay,” she responded. “I think I understand. Don’t stay up too late.” And with that she turned over to read a few verses of Scripture.

Dale went to the living room where he suspected that Hael would soon enter.

He had begun to learn these now familiar promptings of the Spirit. He knew, fairly well, when his nine-foot-tall guardian angel, Hael, would soon be appearing. And he had grown accustomed to head to the living room, outside of earshot from Margie where he and Hael could talk about a large range of topics.

A number of months earlier, the Almighty had given permission to Hael to reach out to Dale, and this would be another one of those nights.

“Two questions,” Dale blurted out when Hael appeared.

“Well, hello to you too. Glad to see you. In fact, I’ve missed you.” All three statements Hael said with increasing sarcasm.

“I’m sorry Hael,” Dale conceded. “But something has been bothering me and, well, I am still uneasy about it.”

“I know.” Hael said matter-of-factly.

“What do you mean, you know?” Dale asked, a bit more sharply than he intended to. And then he continued, “Usually the Lord sends you here and then you and I have to figure out what is going on and what we need to talk about.”

“Not this time big guy.” Hael said with an air of authority that Dale was not used to, from this humble giant. And Dale knew instantly that something would be different this visit.

Hael continued, “Dale, we don’t have a lot of time for character development since this is a short story and Mark wants to keep it under 2500 words. So, God has given me the opportunity to show you our archives, kind of.”

Dale was excited now, because he remembered being told by Hael about the angels’ ability to see clearly the events of the past by entering into their archives room. “Somehow,” Hael had said, “God Almighty lets us see the events in our mind as if we

were getting a bird's eye view of the entire history to which we inquired." Hael said that it gave them the insight they needed for their next task the Holy Spirit had for them.

Thinking he now had access to this room, Dale raised his eyebrows in expectation. "Cool, when are we going, Hael?"

"Dale, you know I can't read your mind, but listening to you and Margie speak in bed a few minutes ago, and knowing you like I do, I can guess what your two questions are. Also, before I left, God made it clear that I am to answer your queries about why people prayer-shame. And I get to share this insight with you by showing you two examples from the past."

Excited now, and wide-awake Dale saw Hael begin to enshroud him in his wings, and far from being scared, he felt comforted and strengthened. And in his mind's eye he saw a nineteenth century burial scene.

All of a sudden brother Ishmael cried out, "No, no, no. You crazy Christians do not know what you are talking about. Prayer isn't going to help me! I never believed in it, and now I'm proved right! Get away from me Alex."

As Alexander Rich gently tried to reach out to him, Ishmael swung away, "Leave me alone preacher. No amount of praying will bring back my wife and boy. They are gone. They are not coming back. They drowned, and I am now alone."

Ishmael, a young man of twenty-two years of age who had been a Christian nearly his entire life, married his long-time neighbor and friend just three years earlier when he returned from seminary.

While on a picnic with his wife and three-month-old baby the trio were walking along the sandbar of the Ohoopie River. They had just turned a sharp corner and the wind came up strongly. On his wife's insistence, Ishmael returned to the buckboard for a baby-blanket when he heard his wife's cry.

Rushing back to where he had left her and the baby, there was no sign of them, only a long scrape on the sand, presumable from the branch whose broken end was still visible but whose leaves were not, as they bobbed up and down in the water.

All that would ever be surmised was that the branch came around the turn in the river, blindsiding his wife as it hit her, knocking her down and into the water and her heavy dress drug her

under the water, where she clung tightly to her baby.

As Dale looked on from inside his mind's eye he saw the sorrowful look of a woman alongside his great-great-grandfather, Alexander Rich. Dale recognized her from pictures. It was his great, great grandmother Gretchen. But Dale did not focus on them, except where they intersected with his concern about prayer-shaming.

It was amazing, even though he wanted to take in every glimpse of this scene from the past, somehow, in his spirit, his over-arching focus remained the prayer-shaming issue.

Gretchen began to gently cry and a young boy, her son Thomas held his mother's hand tighter, encouraging her.

Gretchen's tears, Dale knew, somehow, was not for the man's loss of a wife and child, but it was because he was losing his faith.

Immediately Dale's view of this time period changed, and he was watching Ishmael, as if from above. Dale was flying over Ishmael. Dale saw him pleading to God for acceptance into the seminary, pleading to God for his childhood friend to be his wife. And then he saw Ismael pleading to God for a

child, as husband and wife had tried for two years and could never have one.

And then, just as abruptly, Dale was back in the present and Hael had asked, “Dale, what did you NOT see in Ishmael’s praying?”

Dale knew the answer instantly, but before he could respond, in his mind’s eye he saw Gretchen and her tears for Ishmael. “I saw no relationship with God, Hael. All I saw was a man using God as a genie.”

Dale’s tears bothered him, for he no longer saw Ishmael, he now saw Buster, a man in his Saturday Issachar Men’s prayer group. And then he thought of Jude, another man whom Dale knew “used” God similarly.

Then Dale saw Patricia, Jude’s wife. She had recently shared with Margie that she wasn’t sure Jude was even saved.

“Lord, what are you trying to teach me?” Dale cried, letting loose a flood of tears that could only be tears of frustration and burden. Dale was burdened for these men’s prayer lives.

Dale again wanted to repeat his prayer, “Lord, what are you trying to . . .” But stopped, now hearing a cackling going on somewhere near him.

This had turned demonic, Dale knew, but he was not scared. He knew that it was real. And he knew that it was in the current in time. This had to do with Buster and Jude, he knew. Dale was no longer in the nineteenth century.

“But what God,” continued Dale, “are You trying to teach me?”

And immediately the lightbulb went off in his head, and he quoted the verse, “Our struggle is not with flesh and blood.”

He knew in an instant that his struggle was not with Buster or Jude. He knew that Alexander’s struggle was not with Ishmael. Nor was Gretchen, even though Ishmael had levied such harsh words towards her and to her itinerant preacher husband.

“Teach them the truth Dale,” whispered Hael. “Give them hope and pray for their faith. They don’t need a lot Dale, as little as a mustard seed, but they need faith in their Creator. Their faith will come when they know Him. And it will strengthen, in spite of circumstances, if they but humble themselves before their God.”

As Dale pondered these things Hael sat in front of his mind's eye, for he was still seeing this in his mind. "Dale," Hael, continued. "Do this last part in love, pray that God would open the eyes of their heart to show them wonderful things in the Word. Trust God's Word to not return void whereunto it is sent Dale."

As Dale took a deep breath Hael concluded. "Dale, God will use your burden for these men, He will use your fervency in prayer in ways that others cannot move the hand of God. You are burdened for these men. It is your responsibility to not sin by ceasing to pray for them.

Just when Dale relaxed he again saw a new view of the world from his mind's eye. He traversed Georgia to the ocean, traveled across the Atlantic (yes, faster than a speeding bullet, sorry) and came to rest in the holy land, some 2000 years ago.

What looked like a young pastor and his deacon, were huddled together praying vigorously for someone named Hagne, the deacon's wife, Dale realized.

Wanting to confirm this Dale started to ask, “Whose wife?” And then the confirmation came to his spirit, “the deacon’s wife.”

He hushed his heart to listen to these mighty prayer warriors.

“Father,” the older man prayed, “forgive me for standing idly by when Hagne refused to be comforted in the midst of difficulties.”

There was a pause and the older man continued. “Father, I have failed to entrust her to You. I have tried to have all of the answers. I have tried to always figure out the solutions, and I confess, I have failed. I call on You, the One who . . .” and then, in his mind’s eye Agathon saw his wife again, and Dale saw her to, from the same vantage point.

She was yelling at her husband, the deacon Agathon. “You, my husband, you think this praying that you do helps?” Her voice changed to icicles, “It comforts me not one little bit!”

“We have problems in this house Agathon.” She continued to bellow. “We have problems in this fair city of yours. And we have problems in the empire, and your measly prayers will not suffice.” And then she cackled, like the demon Dale had heard before.

Dale bowed his head, his heart in pain for this first century example of prayer shaming that he had just witnessed.

He remembered the nineteenth century prayer shaming, and his burden somehow strengthened.

And then he remembered his Issachar Men's Prayer Ministry and the two men, Buster and Jude. Dale wondered if God were calling him to spend more time rebuilding prayer foundations, and less time coaching track and field.

As Dale opened his eyes, Hael was gone. He took a deep breath and quietly made his way back to his bedroom.

When Dale walked into the room Margie sat up, "Why did you come back so quickly Dale?"

"How long have I been gone?" Dale asked, thinking it had at least been an hour.

"Just a few minutes sweetie," she said smilingly.

As they fell off to sleep, Dale said, "You know Margie, we cannot expect the unsaved to act like Christians. My concern is for the Christians who act like the unsaved."

Mark has written on “Prayer Shaming” and his posts are here:

<http://markmirza.com/prayer-shaming-las-vegas-massacre/>

<http://markmirza.com/archived-prayer-shaming-post/>

FOR MORE OF THESE THREE CHARACTERS, DR. DALE, A MODERN DAY TRACK COACH, ITINERANT PREACHER ALEXANDER RICH, AND THALES FROM THE FIRST CENTURY, GO TO "WWW.THEPRAYERS.COM" WHERE YOU WILL MEET OTHERS INCLUDING A 9 FOOT TALL ANGEL AND A HOST OF DEMONS.

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