

In Everything by Prayer

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity of prayer in all aspects of life and church, contrasting it with worldly reliance on money and prestige.

Duration: 35:54

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of prayer in everything we do in God's Church. He shares a personal anecdote about listening to an interview where the interviewee emphasized the significance of social prestige and networking. However, the preacher disagrees with this worldly perspective and asserts that prayer should be the foundation of all our actions. He references the fourth chapter of Philippians, specifically verse six, which encourages believers to be careful for nothing and to instead bring their concerns to God through prayer. The preacher also mentions the apostle Peter, who preached a powerful sermon that converted three thousand people, despite not having strong Greek language skills.

Transcript

I want to talk about prayer, and in the 4th chapter of Philippians, the 6th verse, be careful for nothing, that is, have no care about anything. But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And so I'm going to choose this phrase, in everything by prayer, and in doing it I will not be doing violence to the scriptures, because what it actually says is, in everything by prayer and supplication, but supplication is a form of prayer, with thanksgiving, but thanksgiving is a form of prayer, let your requests be made known, and letting your requests be made known is a form of prayer.

So in everything by prayer is what the Holy Spirit said. Now, this is a remarkable phrase, and it is a key to the treasure house of God, and all that God has is ours. But we are not enjoying all that God has, either because we don't know it's ours, or because we have not practiced in everything by prayer.

Here we have an unfailing technique for spiritual success, and this motto, in everything by prayer, is one that might well be on the cornerstone of every church building. It ought to be in every pulpit, and it ought to be in every boardroom. In fact, for the average boardroom I would suggest four of them, one for each wall, large enough so that no matter which way a board member was looking, he'd see it.

In everything by prayer. Now, I don't know whether my method is a good one or not, but Brother is going to speak on absolutely nothing. I whispered to somebody that I do that myself frequently, but I don't know whether the philosophy of things, but I like to do it that way.

So I want to show you why this morning. Everything we do in God's church has to be done by prayer. I want to show you why.

It isn't simply that the Lord said it, now you believe it. But there's a reason why he said it. There's a reason for it being true, and the reason is that there coexist two kingdoms.

There is the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God, and these coexist, and to some measure they mingle, but not too much. They touch in any way, and they live side by side with each other. And it's the kingdom of man into which we are born.

When we are born, and the doctor says it's a boy, it's a girl, we are born into the kingdom of man. That's the exiled man who is in rebellion against God. That's fallen man.

We were all born to fallen parents, into a fallen society, and became members of a fallen race by nature. And this fallen race, this race of man, they disagree an awful lot, but they are in agreement on certain things. You remember how Herod and Pilate had been enemies.

Then when they came to judging Jesus, they made themselves friends again. They were apart on certain political things, but they were together on this that they weren't going to have anything to do with Jesus. And so in the world out there, we have the West against the East, and we have races against races, and we have political party against political party, and all this kind of division.

But those are local things. Actually, the human race agrees on one thing. The human race agrees on the basic principle that we call human self-sufficiency.

We believe that we are sufficient unto ourselves. People believe that. Oh, you occasionally will find a poor little chap with no chin, infected and distressed, who goes about not thinking much of himself.

But if you will press him and press him, you will learn after a while that he has quite a high opinion of himself and his ability. And if he doesn't have of himself, he does have of humanity. And he believes in what they call the instinctive wisdom of the race.

Now it's a strange thing that the great philosophers, I'm thinking particularly now of Emerson, talk about the instinctive wisdom of the race, whereas God talks about the folly of the human race. God says that we are fools, and men say we're wise men. God says that we act like foolish children and know not as much as an ox knows, for he knows his home and knows how to come back, and a bird knows its nest and knows how to fly home.

But we don't know our spiritual home, and we don't know the hand that feeds us, and we're not sufficient unto ourselves. And then we believe in the soundness of moral judgments. The human race believes that there may be a little mistake here and there, and there may be a juvenile delinquent and a beatnik occasionally show up, but that for the most part we know what is right, and we believe in the soundness of our moral judgments.

And then they believe in human righteousness, allowing for a few flaws. We believe that human beings are right and good. I wrote something one time to the effect that people were bad, the world was bad, and a woman, a very intelligent woman obviously from her letter, wrote me a very sharp letter and wanted to know what was the matter with me, that I would make such a statement that the human race was bad.

Didn't I know that they were conquering cancer? Didn't I know that they were conquering polio? Didn't I know that men were becoming brothers? Didn't I know that there were hospitals everywhere, that we were taking care of the insane? Didn't I know that we had children's asylums where children went and were cared for? Didn't I know that insane people were not driven out into the bushes as they used to be, but were cared for? Didn't I know these things? Well, I don't know whether she was asking me merely rhetorical questions or whether she thought that I just had never been to school. But I did know those things, but I still believe in the basic badness of the human race. I do know those things, but I believe in the basic evil of the human race.

I came up from New York Friday night, and sitting to my left was a man who told me, a middle-aged man, who said he had been 30 years a newspaper editor in the city in Canada. And when you're up against a man like that, you're careful what you say. But pretty soon I forgot that I was talking to a man who knew the world pretty well, and we got to discussing politics and communism and religion.

And I told him he was very much distressed. He was a very fine gentleman who was very much distressed over world conditions, particularly over the breakdown of the home. And I said to him, well, don't you know that this is simply a proof of John Calvin's belief in the total depravity of the human race? And he said that he did.

Now, his name was Pat Kelly, and he was an Anglican. He was an Anglican, and I believe he said, if I recall, that he was the chairman of either the Red Cross or Harker Cancer Society of Canada. He believed in that, and he said, I hope you won't think that I am too pessimistic.

And I said, no, I've just written a book that's worse than that, it's just about as bad. Because I don't believe in humanity, I don't believe in the goodness of people, unless God helps us, unless God gets into us, or unless we get into the kingdom of God. People are not good by nature, they're bad.

But we don't believe it. Humanity doesn't believe that, people don't believe it. And there's man's kingdom, filled with the subjects of Satan.

And it's organized, and it's implemented by science, and it has in its favor history, and familiarity, and visible success. And it is of the flesh, and it's from the flesh, and it's for the flesh, and it's dedicated to the flesh and to the passing world. Now, that's the kingdom of man, into which you and I are born.

Regardless of our race, that's the kingdom into which we're born, a fallen, hostile, alienated race. Then there's another kingdom, and that is the kingdom of God. And that kingdom consists of recreated persons, persons who have been born again anew, persons who have made Christ their Lord and in whom Christ is honored, persons who have no confidence in fallen humanity, persons who have no confidence in the soundness of man's moral judgment, but believe that left to himself man law would go wrong, persons who know that they can do nothing in themselves and have no confidence in the flesh or in their own strength, persons who trust in God alone to do an immortal work in them and through them.

These are called Christians, and they make up the true Church of Christ of whatever denomination. But it's a different kingdom altogether. There is the kingdom of man, and there is the kingdom of God.

And those two kingdoms coexist, and sometimes they spill over into each other as water spills over into the boat and has to be bailed out to get together. And I suppose there isn't any church anywhere that is totally, totally, totally committed to the kingdom of God to a point where everything is done by God. I suppose there will be a little bit of flesh and a little bit of old Adam and a little bit of the kingdom of this world get into all churches.

I've never heard of one that didn't have a little of it. Then there are churches that have almost totally given themselves over to the kingdom of man, and their philosophy is man's philosophy. Their beliefs are man's beliefs, and their viewpoint is man's viewpoint.

And they go the way man goes, and they live the way man lives, and yet they call themselves churches. Then there are such churches as this, where an effort at least is made that the majority of what we do should be divine, and the majority should be on the side of the kingdom of God. But where undoubtedly around the edges there are things that God is not in, in the business of a minister, in the business of elders and deacons and church members and Christians everywhere, is to keep the church and make the church just as pure as she can be, and to keep all the kingdom of man out of her, and to keep her so replete with the kingdom of God that when you step into the fellowship of the Saints, you step into a divine fellowship, a fellowship dedicated to the proposition that all men are bad until they are made good by the blood of the Lamb, dedicated to the proposition that we're on the wrong road until we find the road home to God through the cross, dedicated to the belief that it's only God in us that can do an immortal work.

So we in the kingdom of God have for our motto, in everything by prayer, because we've already admitted we can't do anything. We've already admitted there's nothing in human muscle that can do the work of God. We've already admitted there's nothing in the human brain that can think the word of God.

We've already admitted there's nothing in human nature good enough to build into the temple of holiness which God is raising in his universe. We already have admitted that. How then can we do? What shall we do? Hunt a monastery somewhere and hide ourselves away? No.

We're to be in active work, but we're to do it by prayer, in everything by prayer. Now let me show you the contrast between the kingdom of man and the kingdom of the world, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man, and then you see how locate yourself, locate this church, locate me, locate us, locate ourselves in this. Now the world says in everything by money.

Just have money enough, you can do anything. Everything. Money talks, and money opens doors, and money, money, always money.

The more money, the better we get along. Always money. Christ hadn't a dime, but we say money, if we had more money.

But the church says in everything by prayer. The church says we're wise enough to know that money is needed in the kingdom of God, and that God uses it, and says let everybody lay up in store on the first day of the week. We know that.

And we know that when we give, God takes it and blesses it. He hath spread abroad, he hath given to the poor, scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness remaineth forever. We know that.

We know that in the kingdom of God, God uses money, but he uses it only because everything is done by prayer. But if you have money without prayer, you have a great curse on you. I believe the greatest curse could happen to have in your old church would be for somebody to will us \$100,000 and the Lord not to raise up praying people commensurate with it.

If God will raise up men and women commensurate with the gift, then I wouldn't hesitate to accept \$100,000 and put it to work. But you get money without prayer and you have a curse. Yet prayer without money is amazing what God can do and where he'll find money.

Amazing where he'll find money. So the world says, and everything by money. And then churches rise up and they're dedicated to the kingdom of this world without knowing it, the kingdom of man, and so they try to run the church the way man runs the church.

One man said, I'm a such-and-such, that is, he was a certain denomination which I'll try not to divulge. He said, there hasn't been anybody interested in my soul in all these years. I said, nobody.

He said, I make my pledge yearly and I send in my check monthly, and nobody has bothered me in years. I said, I never go to church. He said, why don't you go to church? I said, I never go to church because nobody's interested in me.

He said, they're only interested in my pledge and my check. And he said, I see to it that I get my pledge and my check in, and that takes care of my religious responsibility. Now he was sarcastic in that.

He didn't believe it, but he knew the church believed it. The church got his check and that's what they wanted. He could stay home.

Pastor could preach to his empty seat because the check was in. I'll take the people, you can have the checks. I'll take the people, God's people, God's good loving people.

I love the people. But you know, I find that if you get the fish, you get the coin. And you get the fish, there'll be a coin in his mouth.

And if you get the sheep, they'll have wool on his back. So it isn't a choice between getting the people and getting the money, because if you get the people, you get the money. The point is if you go after the money and don't care about the people, we're hirelings and not shepherds.

And the church that only wants somebody's money, it's no church at all. It's running after the principles of the kingdom of man. And then the world says, and everything by social prestige.

I flipped the radio on last night. After I'd gone to bed, I have a little radio. I don't listen to daytime to it, but at night I sometimes do, often do.

And somebody was being interviewed as Jagar Gabor was her name. I don't know whether you know Jagar or not, but she was being interviewed. And I listened a while to what Jagar had to say.

And everything by social prestige. Get up there, get up there, and get to know somebody. And they say it's not what you know, but whom you know.

Get to know people, big shots. Well, I've always felt that social prestige won't do it. Christ was born in a manger, and Peter was a fisherman, and John was a fisherman, and Levi was a despised tax collector.

And the early church came up out of people that didn't amount to very much. Not many, not many are wise, not many are learned, not many are rich, not many. A few, but not many.

The early church was born up out of the lower strata of society, and not out of the higher strata. She came up from the common people. And the people who did miracles and went about everywhere doing miracles were common people.

And some of our modern critics, our modern scholars, shake their heads over Peter's Greek. They say, Peter's Greek wasn't so good, it wasn't anything like Paul's Greek. No, it wasn't so good Greek, but he managed to write some epistles that have blessed a few million people down the centuries, and he managed to preach a sermon that converted 3,000, and he managed to do a few other things, and yet his Greek wasn't so good.

I suppose that if he had been more proficient in the Greek, he would not have had one ounce of power more than he had, because everything was done by prayer. It was not by social prestige, but by prayer. And then in everything by publicity.

I sometimes tremble to think that my son is now head of a publicity, a public relations society, public relations. They are talking about getting a Bureau of Public Relations in the Christian Missionary Alliance. Bureau of Public Relations.

I don't even think I know what they mean. I don't really know. You go out and stand on the street corner and preach Christ to the passing crowd, you have public relations.

You preach Christ to the people you work with, and that's public relations. Be decent to your neighbor, and that's public relations. Behave yourself and obey the law, and that's public relations.

Live as a Christian should, and that's public relations. But I don't think we need a Bureau of Public Relations. I don't think we need somebody sitting back at the desk deciding how he can make everybody like him, and win friends and influence people for the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

My brethren, what we need is the power of God, and let the public think what they will. And if we have the power of God on us and live like Christians, regardless of what the world thinks of me. I want to stand well with God, and if I stand well with God, I'm likely to stand well with his best people.

And after that, I'm not much concerned. But the world says public relations. We ought to have a Bureau of Public Relations.

I went to a church when my wife and I went there before we were married. We continued there after we were married for a while, until I began to preach. It was a great church, really a great church.

They used to pray and testify and sing, and the power of God was there. They'd come at communion service and kneel down to take communion. I've seen them break into tears and break into laughter along the altar, and the joy of God was on the place.

The little church was packed full, and we were having great times. Then something happened, and they had a tremendous church row, and the pastor was thrown out and the devil was voted in. Then they established a Bureau for Public Relations.

We used to get literature from them, the such-and-such Bureau of Public Relations. Imagine that! When they grieved the Holy Ghost so he couldn't bless them, then they felt they should do something to keep themselves in good with the public. Scripture says in everything by prayer, not in everything by money.

In everything by prayer, not in everything by social prestige. In everything by prayer, not in everything by publicity. In everything by committees.

I claim that there is never one hour of the day or night from the beginning of spring to the last of winter, the next year, that there isn't some alliance committee up in the air somewhere floating around. We just try to do everything by committees. Something goes wrong, we get a committee together.

A committee, said Vance Havner, is a company of the incompetent chosen by the unwilling to do the unnecessary. We have these expensive committees floating around. Just one fellow! If the Holy Ghost had come on one man, he could make a decision and say, do it this way, bang, and it's done.

He can go off about his business. Instead of that, they have to sit around and talk for hours about trifles, talk for half an hour about whether to take a fifteen or seventeen minute coffee break in a religious office. They have to have it to relax.

Everybody knows coffee doesn't relax you. It does exactly the opposite. I drink it, but I know it doesn't relax me.

Everything by committees. I am for one more committee. I would like to see a committee formed for the abolition of all committees, for at least a little while.

No, you've got to have them, I suppose. They are like cleaning house and scrubbing the dog and doing things you've got to do. You don't like it, but it's necessary.

I suppose there have to be committees until the end of time. They had them in the Bible all down the years, and we've got them now. But the point is, if we realize that a committee could cut its time down one half if it prayed more.

Moody said that the length of time a man prayed in public was sure to be an inverse proportion to the length of time he prayed in private. If he prayed a long time in private, he made his public prayers short. But if he was short in private, he was long in public.

I believe that the committee meetings that run endlessly are simply indicating that they haven't prayed enough. If we pray more, we can talk less. Then in everything by business methods.

We are trying to do the work of the Holy Ghost after the technique of modern businessmen. It won't work. In everything by prayer, everything by education, they say now.

What we need is a more educated clergy, more educated ministry. Well, I believe in education. I have said that many times.

I believe in education. And if you don't get it in school, you ought to get it in somewhere or other. There are books everywhere.

You can go down here to Eaton's, and for \$25 you can buy yourself enough good books to get yourself an education in some fields. And you can get it in a year's time if you read. But I have noticed that when a

denomination starts to backslide, they always start to elevate their standards academically.

The less we have of the Holy Ghost, the more we have to know about Plato and Aristotle. Call that being acquainted with contemporary theology. I think that we ought to be acquainted with the ancient theology of Moses, Isaiah, David, Daniel, Paul, Peter, John, and the rest.

And let the contemporary fellows kick the football around, because always there is a bunch of self-conscious intellectuals who are busy kicking around a current football having to do with theology. Nowadays it's neo-orthodoxy and neo-evangelicalism. Those are big, long words that don't mean very much, really.

But in everything by prayer, says the Holy Ghost, and he made good on it. Then the world says, in everything by compromise. I met a man not long ago, a Canadian man, who says that he is a goodwill ambassador for industry between the United States and Canada.

I pressed him to know what he did. He said, I go from United States to Canada, back and forth all the time, from city to city, representing Canadian industry in the United States to keep us in harmony. I like that job.

It's a nice job, but it's trying to get harmony between the two. He said this odd little thing. He said, the difficulty is to make the two countries see that they are foreign to each other.

He said, they don't act as if they were foreign countries. He said, they want to act alike. He said, they can't do that under law.

I said, it's a pretty nice way to be, though. He said, it's a nice way to be socially, but under law they are two countries, but they are one socially in friendships. That's a good thing, I suppose, to make compromises where you can.

But in the Kingdom of God, compromising is a pretty deadly business. As long as the Church goes out to the world and follows the world's ways, the Church says, Compromise where you can. Compromise everywhere and take in anybody.

I don't think there is a gangster anywhere from San Francisco to Long Island, but what could join some church in the United States? I don't know about Canada, but I suppose you're about the same. They could get in somehow, rather you know. If you smile and give them a check and dress well and comb your hair nicely if you have any, they'll take you in.

Nobody asks any questions. Compromise is a curse in everything by compromise. Try to get along with people.

Let the Church get along with the world. The Church in the days of her power never got along with the world, and the world never got along with the Church. In the days of her weakness, she gets along with the Church, and the Church uses her like a cat's paw.

A politician wants to get elected, so he makes love to the pastor, hoping the pastor will be silly enough to tell his congregation that they ought to vote for the big lug. I wouldn't vote for him if he wrote me a letter. Just the fact he wrote me a letter, I wouldn't vote for him.

Try to use the Church. The Church isn't to be used, brethren. The Church is to serve her generation by the will of God.

But she'll decide how she's to serve her generation, and the world won't decide it for her. The truth is, you can't delegate prayer. There are some things you can delegate.

I can delegate my singing, for instance. I can have Nathan McCracken sing my solos for me, because I can't sing solos. But I can't delegate my prayer.

Nobody else can do my praying for me, unless I'm unconscious. Then your wife sends for somebody to come pray for you if you can't pray for yourself. But normally, you pray and we'll do the practical things.

You pray and I'll sing. You pray and I'll give. You pray and I'll entertain missionaries.

You pray and I'll teach or sow or serve. You pray and I'll do the practical things. That is a deadly snare.

If you cannot and will not pray, God won't accept your sowing. If you can and will not pray, God won't accept your singing. If you cannot and will not pray, God won't accept your entertaining people.

God won't accept your money if you cannot and will not pray. It is prayer that gives power to all these other things. Singing, giving, entertaining, teaching, sowing, working, serving.

Those are all good things if we set them aflame by prayer. But if we try to do them without praying, it's wood, hay and stubble in the day of Jesus Christ. The true success of any church is going to be prayer.

We can easily deceive ourselves, but our purity and our power and our spirituality and our holiness will parallel our prayer. If you were to have a graph that businessmen love so well, and politicians, if you were to take a graph and put it up here and have two lines across it, zigzag lines. One you mark prayer, the other one you mark spirituality, including purity and power and holiness.

Spirituality, prayer. You would find those two graphs, those two lines on the graph, they zigzag a little, but they parallel each other almost perfectly. Because morality will be dependent upon whether I do everything by prayer or whether I think I can do it.

Now, I'd like to say this, and I hope it will be taken right, but whether it is or not, I'm going to say it, that no one has any scriptural right to teach a Sunday school class who doesn't do it by prayer. If he isn't a praying man, he oughtn't to be a teaching man, because no man can teach anything that he isn't. He may try to teach some truth, but it won't do him any good and it may not do anybody else any good.

The teacher ought to be a praying person. No one ought to head a department in Sunday school unless he is a praying person. No one ought to seek to counsel others unless they are a praying person.

No one ought to serve even in the humblest capacity in any church unless they are a praying person. No one ever ought to serve on the board unless they are a praying person. Nobody who doesn't practice prayer, at least in some degree of regularity, ever should accept a job in any church as deacon or elder.

Deacons and elders are picked because they are spiritual people, and if they are not praying, people are not spiritual people. I think it is a travesty and a tragedy that in some of our Alliance churches the women do the praying and the men do the bossing. The men sit around the boardroom and decide how the church is to go, and the women kneel in the prayer room and ask God Almighty to bless it.

It won't work. No man ever should sit and discuss the affairs of the church a holy body unless he is a praying man. If he hasn't prayed, he has no right to make decisions.

However, for us men, I'd like to say this in our favor. The women have the prayer bands, but there are a lot of men who pray and we don't know they are praying because they don't belong to a prayer band. So let's not divide between the two sexes and say the women do all the praying.

They don't do it all. I know some godly men who do some praying, too. I have no doubt that we have praying men, and plenty of them on our boards in this church.

But I merely lay down a rule which is good not only here, but it's good all over the world, wherever the Church of Christ is found, that if you are going to serve, you have to pray or else your service will be wood, hay and stubble. Everything we do must be done by prayer. If I'm not a praying man, my preaching will not do much good.

If I'm not a praying man, my writing won't do much good. It's said about Pere Grue, the great Saint, Von Hubel said about him, the reason Pere Grue's writings are so consistently and habitually blessed and help so many people is that Pere Grue refuses, absolutely refuses to write anything until he has blessed himself. He says he wants the oil of God on him flowing where he won't touch a pen.

I think that's beautiful. They said about Andrew Murray, was it, or George Mueller, one of the two, I've forgotten which, one of them said, I will not enter the pulpit stale, I will not enter the pulpit dry. He said, if I am to speak anywhere, I wait on God and see to it that the grace of God is flowing in my soul before I dare to address anybody.

Oh, friends, if we want this Church to be a rich, fruitful, God-filled Church, we're going to have to accept the Holy Ghost's philosophy in everything by prayer. We're going to have to accept the Holy Ghost's technique in everything by prayer. We're going to have to accept it as a rule for us, from everybody, from the newest convert to the oldest Saint in the Church, in everything by prayer.

And I promise you, my friend and your friend and our brother, Robert Gray and I, will take this as our motto. And we'll never try to throw our weight around, but we'll in everything pray, pray, pray that the power of God and the grace of God and the Holy Spirit of God may be upon what we're trying to do. Will you go along with this in that? Amen? Amen.

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