

'Prayer for the Glory of God I'

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of praying for the glory of God, rather than selfishly seeking personal benefits.

Scripture: James 4:2, James 5:16

Topics: "God's Glory", "Prayer"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the significance of prayer for the glory of God, asserting that true prayer is an elevation of the mind to God and should be motivated by a desire for His glory rather than selfish interests. He highlights that many prayers today are self-serving, and urges believers to focus on two primary requests: the restoration of God's glory and the purification of the church from worldly influences. Tozer warns that without a return to reverence for God's holiness, the church risks disillusionment and decay, ultimately failing to fulfill its mission. He calls for corporate prayer that aligns with God's purposes, prioritizing His glory above all else.

Transcript

Prayer for the Glory of God I

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

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Without any doubt, I have spoken on the text I will be using this morning. Not once, but I suppose 100 times, more or less. But on Tuesday, or perhaps it was Wednesday, I was with the Lord in prayer and it came so very clearly to me, not from heaven direct. I don't claim inspiration in that sense, but through the Word, that I was to talk to you twice today. And I grabbed a pencil and took down some notes. It's almost as though I were taking dictation. I don't mean to make the Lord responsible for all my mistakes, but only say that at least the gist of what I'm going to say, certainly, came from the Scriptures and from God.

So, I want to read a very familiar verse, part of a verse from James 5, the latter part of verse 16. It really starts another verse, another paragraph: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Now, there is a positive statement, positive. Then 4:2,3 of the same book: Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it on your lusts. There's a negative statement. Fortunately, James hadn't read any books about presenting the truth positively only.

He presented the other side. Then our Lord in Luke 18:1: and He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men are always to pray and not to faint.

Now, there are the three texts. And we're to talk about prayer. And I want to give you a definition of prayer which I got from Molina, the great Spanish saint, who said this: that prayer is an ascent, or elevation of the mind to God. Very simple, isn't it? Prayer is an ascent of the mind to God. It is an elevation of the mind. Saying that it is an ascent, simply means that it ascends to God, but saying that it is an elevation of the mind indicates that there's something you've got to do to elevate it. God is above all creatures. And the soul cannot see Him nor converse with Him unless she raise herself above all creatures. Now, that's what Molina said, that prayer is the elevation of the soul, the flight of the soul of the mind to God.

Now, that's a definition of prayer, but the texts we have before us say some specific things about prayer. The first one says that prayer is a potent thing; that it availeth much. And I would cite those words "availeth much" as constituting a terrific understatement. For the Old Testament and the New Testament combine to teach and demonstrate how much prayer availeth. And the Holy Ghost Himself, labors in this same James, the fifth chapter to show us by example how much prayer available by citing Elijah's ability to turn to heaven off and on; the clouds to make them rain or not rain as he please. Now, that's the one statement: prayer availeth much. The second statement says that sometimes we do not have the advantage of prayer for one of two reasons: either we have failed to ask or we have asked selfishly. And therefore, we do not have the benefits that prayer could bring. That's the negative side. Prayer availeth much, but you're not getting much availed. Therefore, it could be because we have failed to ask or having asked, we've done so selfishly. That's what James says.

Then our Lord says that, nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties and the problems that are before us, we ought always to pray. And in this 18th of Luke, as far as I know, the only parable that starts out by telling what it's going to teach. This is one parable that none of the commentators ever quarrel over. Mostly, they quarrel in a good natured, nice way, but they disagree over what the parable teaches. But this one they can't disagree over because we are told, He spake a parable unto them to this end. In other words, before He told us the parable, He told us what the parable would teach. He made His statement and illustrated it with a story, a short one, but a story. And He said, the reason I tell you this story is, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, and I want to make that point. So, there we have those three texts.

Now, my friends, there's a lot of prayer going on these days, a lot of prayer being sent up currently. In fact, I don't think it would be irreverent to say that God seems to be on everybody's mailing lists. Because you know, mailing lists are made up of persons who have something that the mailee can get or that he wants from the mailer. The mailer is the man who sends it out and the mailee is the man who receives it. And so, if you're on the list, you're a mailee. And the mailer knows that you have some thing that he wants, and therefore he writes you. And we have now a God who is on everybody's mailing list all over the country and all over the world, asking for things. But I think that mostly the motive is not any higher than the motive of the man who sent the mail that we referred to.

Some years ago, I read a very amusing and also a very enlightening article about rich men. Somebody had gone around, investigated and interviewed rich men of the Edsel Ford and Rockefeller stripe, and had gotten enough anecdotes and information that he wrote a very fine article about it in one of the national magazines. And you wouldn't believe it if you didn't know that it's been documented and was true. What these rich men suffer are from the people who want to get something out of them. They're being bombarded continually by people who want something of what they had.

One I remember, this sticks in my mind. It might have been the most ridiculous, but I do remember this one, that a man wrote into one of the two great, rich men Ford or Rockefeller, and said, Dear Mr. so and so, I have a little proposition that I want to make. You are a rich man, and you also are familiar with finance. And you know where money can be best invested to multiply itself. Therefore, my request is that you lend me \$500, and then invest it for me. And then send me the proceeds. Now, can you imagine anything as foolish as that, and yet they say things like that happen. Not only lend me the money but invest it for me and then send me the proceeds. Well, that's philanthropy was a double "F".

And now there is danger, my friends, that God shall simply be the great rich man, the composite of all rich men. That He shall be the buyer, the consumer, with His big pocket book at which we aim all our advertising, and whom we try to win to our side in order that we can get something from Him. There's a great danger, because you see, every sort of personal and selfish interest these days is being baptized with the waters of prayer. And though they may be unscriptural or unspiritual and even downright injurious, and they may have no higher motive than to relieve the receivee from the necessity of earning an honest living, or, to provide him an opportunity to travel at other people's expense. There are a lot of people that are doing that. They don't want to earn an honest living and they want to travel. They like to do the two things, and wouldn't you like to travel? And wouldn't you like to do it at other people's expense and have no obligation and audit your own books and be responsible to yourself?

Well, a lot of people are praying and boasting of how they're succeeding because they're praying; asking everybody everywhere to pray, forgetting that after you've persuaded a man to pray with you for a sum of money, he is psychologically persuaded to give you that amount of money. Well, we even call prayer meetings and continue all night in prayer in order that a project might succeed, and that project, I say, may be nothing, but to save a fellow from going to work and getting the 8:17 and sitting at a desk and doing an honest job or driving a truck or running a grocery store. And the fellow wants to run around.

Well now, let's not imagine that you can't take personal things to God. In fact, there is nothing so personal that you can't go to God about it. Brother McAfee and I have often quoted together and talk together about a little saying of Julian, the lady Julian, that Saint of Norwich, England who lived 600 years ago. He calls her my girlfriend. And when I go, he says are you taking your girlfriend along? Well, my girlfriend is a little book that you could put the average woman. Oh, well, that's no illustration. You could put a dictionary in your pocket book. But it's just a little book you could slip down here and not notice it. And she wrote on the revelations of divine love.

And she tells about how utterly amazed and filled with joy she was to think that her Lord, so high and lofty, yet not considered Himself too high to humble Himself to be concerned about the commonest, little things that belong to our earthly lives and to our bodies, she said. The Lord looks after everything, and the Lord is more concerned about your temperature than your nurse is. And He's more concerned about your health than your doctor. He's more concerned about your business than you are. He's more concerned about your family than you are.

So, all the little details we dare take to God, let nobody preach that out of you. That's in the Bible. We can talk to God about the little, simple things. But always remember that these things should be talked over with God. There are things you men don't talk over even with the family. You talk them over with your wife. Well, there are things then that you can't even talk over with your wife. There are things that you talk over only with God. God is the final One who understands and who will hear us for all the personal, intimate things. These things need not be and mostly should not be brought to prayer meetings.

I think we kill most prayer meetings. And most prayer meetings I've ever been in are dead. Some people don't like the way I conduct a prayer meeting, but I've never been to one conducted any better. They just meet and then we go over the same things. These things are brought up and we take our friends into our confidence and tell us things that we only ought to tell God. When we pray in private, we ought to pray about private things. And when we pray corporate prayers, we ought to pray about things that pertain to the corporate body and to the glory of God. Often, it's embarrassing and a waste of other people's time.

For me, I have a cousin in Oil City, Pennsylvania. I don't, but suppose I had, and his son is getting into bad company. And the teacher wrote and said, would you want to do something about Elmer. And so, I get that letter from my cousin in Oil City, PA. So, I take that to a prayer meeting.

Now, my brethren, that's too intimate a thing to take to a prayer meeting, and that concerned me and my cousin and his boy Elmer. And that does not concern the corporate body. There's a lot of waste of prayer, and I believe the Holy Ghost is displeased because of our so-called prayer requests which turn out to be personal, private, and sometimes I'm afraid, selfish things. So, the Holy Ghost says you don't get your prayers answered often because either you don't ask. You get discouraged and quit asking, or if you do ask, your motives aren't right.

Now I want to talk about the corporate prayer in the time I have left. That is, the body praying, the people praying, we, praying together Wednesday night, the women praying on Wednesdays and Tuesday nights, and the men praying as it did here last night, and we praying as we do and will be praying.

Now what should be the aim of our prayers? Well, the aim of our prayers should be also the aim of our lives, so that our prayers and our lives parallel each other. That we don't live one way and pray another, but that we should want something and then we should live for that thing. We must pray in harmony with our work. I say that a great many people are carrying on work, and numerically they're successful, and financially they're successful because they happen to have strong personalities at the head of it, and they know skillfully how to take advantage of the known habits of the public.

You see my friends; you know how Christian people are going to behave. I know about how you will behave. You may fool me on details, but you won't over the long haul. We know the expectation created by the known conduct of God's people. And we know that God's people have a generous streak. Newspapers know how to play that up. They know that a beautiful woman not too well-dressed, always get the interest of the public. They know that a little animal, a little pet will always get the interest of the public and they know that a baby always will.

So these are the three things the newspapers play up continually. And we see it every day. We see it almost every time there's a pretty baby's picture appears for any reason, I hand it and say, look at this, to my wife. Well, I'm a sucker for pretty babies and I'm a sucker for pets. I confess that I don't go for the other, as avidly as some might. But there are a number of readers that it must, because the newspapers know the habits of the public. And all they have to do is know their habits and play to them and they succeed.

Well, it's possible for religious leaders to know the habits of the religious public and then play to their habits. And when they take bold steps of faith after praying all night, they're always careful to move in the direction that they know the public has proved they'll be there to support them.

Well, you and I don't want anything to do with that at all. I began preaching on the street corner and I suppose I can go back to it. But we've got to pray in harmony with high purposes, and we've got to work in harmony with high purposes and give in harmony with high purposes.

Now what are these purposes? Don't brace yourself for a dozen, for there are only two that I am going to bring to you now, just two. And out from them, they may grow others, but these are two. And I stand to say to you, my friends, that these two requests, or desires, should be primary. They should be critically prior. They should be first. They should take priority over all other prayer requests, including even the intimate and little prayer requests that I might want to make about myself and family.

One of them is the restoration of the vision of the Most High God to the world again. When our Brother Fuller comes, I don't know whether he will preach on any such sermon as that. But that's the one thing his cry has been as he's talked with me and as I've heard him pray and exhort in his Bible conferences. It is, that once more, this world should see a vision of the God who would strike them down. A God who wouldn't hesitate to drive them dumb as he drove Daniel dumb, or cause John to fall flat on his face as John fell. This kind of God is gone from the church. He's gone not only from liberalism, but he's gone from the evangelical churches almost entirely. The honor of God has been lost to men. And the God of today's Christianity is a very rich weakling that can be manipulated by certain psychological laws.

Now that the glory should return is imperative, my brethren. The glory should return, and that the glory of God should return and be seen among men. You know, we read it in the Psalms and don't know what we're reading. Let thy glory be above all the earth. Manifest Thy glory among the nations, cried the Psalmist. And all the way through the Old Testament it says, the glory of Jehovah should be known among the nations. And we come to the New Testament it is, do this said Jesus to His Father, that men may know, and that I have manifested Thy name unto the men Thou has gave to me, always given me. Always it was the wish and desire of Jesus Christ. He died for it in fact, that God's glory might be manifested to the world.

And the coming of Jesus to the world in the first place was, that a world that had lost the vision of God should regain it again. And when the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost, it was that He should give to the heart, as well as to the intellect, a vision of the glory of God.

Now, this is the first of the desires, and I have no hesitation to say to you, that God's glory should be rediscovered, and the world should see what kind of God God is, and that the church should once more worship a God whom they could respect, the God of the Bible, the God who is the only God. That is more important to God than the salvation of sinners.

Now, that may sound terrible, but the Baptists and Presbyterians in other days boldly preached that and didn't care what people thought. But we have gotten into this soft humanism in our time that will weep over rebels and weep over rebels and imagine that that's the divine order. My brethren, the divine order is that God should be glorified among the nations and His honor revealed to His people. And that's more valuable and more to be desired in heaven among the holy angels and seraphim and among all the elders and creatures around the throne than that people should be saved.

But here's the wonderful story. It is this, that the glory of God and the salvation of men have so been harmonized in the loving heart of God, that God's glory can be revealed as men are converted, so that it's not an either or, I must choose one or the other. But it is that both can happen, one at the same time as the other. God will both glorify Himself by saving men, but He also glorifies Himself otherwise. And so I

say, if we have to take a choice between the salvation of men or the glory of God, every being in heaven would say, Thine be the glory. Before they would say, man should be saved.

Now, the first corporate prayer of this New Testament begins: Our Father. And by the word "our," it makes it a corporate prayer. That is, a prayer of a body of people. And the first request of that corporate body is what. Hallowed be Thy name. Have you noticed this, my friend, that when Jesus said, when you pray, you, as a body, pray and say "our," the Lord's prayer as we call it, is not for individuals, it's for corporate praying. It's for all of us to pray. It's when the body of Christians unite to want something, to do something, to desire something, then we pray, our Father. And the first request, the first, our Father, is a salutation. It's not a request. Then comes the request, hallowed be Thy name.

And before any other request, is that God's name should be hallowed. That His holy, sacred name should be hallowed before mankind. And if we are to follow the teachings of Jesus, then we are to follow this procedure. Hallowed be Thy name, this is first, and not second and not third, but first. That the glory of God should be restored and that the vision of the Most High God should once more appear to men. And I want to tell you that if this vision should ever appear to men in churches and should be preached again; if the ministers of the sanctuary should go back to preaching on the perfections and attributes and character and being of God and keep at it and keep at it, it would soon have an effect of bringing sinners to their knees in confession. It would have an effect of making Christians separate from the world and hate themselves and their carnal ways. Even as Isaiah, when he saw the vision cried, I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips.

So, the glory of God is first and John 14:13 says, Jesus speaking, whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. So, notice here, will you, that the reason Jesus said I do it, is that He should glorify the Father in the doing of it. And anything that is done that is simply to help people but doesn't glorify God, God will not answer. The humanist will. The tender, weeper will, but God won't. For God says that the Father may be glorified is the reason I answer prayer. If he shall ask it that the Father may be glorified.

So, you see that no project, no organization, no need, no anything, is valid till the glory of God is restored. And in all that we do in all of our prayers, we ought to pray. Don't take preachers for granted, dear people. They are the weakest of all the people. Don't take preachers for granted. They'll go along with anything.

I was a great, big boy when I learned that doctors went along with the advertisers. You go to Doctor Pill, and you say, Doctor, I've got a pain. And he remembers what he read in the medical journal, the advertiser. I looked at their advertising, their ads, and he prescribed something that he seen advertised. I was a big boy before I found that out. And I don't say that universally. I don't say that's all they do. Certainly, they earn an honest living. But I do say that they yield to it.

And preachers are like that. If we were all holy prophets who walked down out of the presence of God with the dew of holiness on our brows, then I would say you better listen. And I would say that you dare to take us for granted. But when I know that preachers are subject to all the subtle persuasion of the religious advertiser that you are, then we better begin to pray for God's ministers of the sanctuary, that they might get their eyes open to the fact that better than that their church should prosper, is that the name of God should once more be a hallowed among men.

Let me prophesy to you. Now I'm going to give you a prophecy. None of you will believe it probably, now. But the nice thing about true prophecy is, that it proves itself. Here's my prophecy: we are now riding the

wave of religion, and Christianity is more popular than it's ever been since Jesus Christ died on the cross. And even though over on the Bible-believing side, it's more popular. The very fact that this editorial of mine could get into newspaper proves it. They're ready for anything religious now-anything. All right.

Now, let me tell you something, friends, and here's my prophesy. The time is coming unless God should just upset the whole prophecy by a revival. If He did that, a genuine revival, then, of course, I'd be happy, happy if I'm around to say, Lord, I was mistaken. But I wouldn't have been if you hadn't come to our help. If the Lord doesn't help us and the glory of God isn't revealed and man's mouth isn't shut and God's glory isn't elevated, here's what's going to happen. We are going to have a reaction from modern popular Christianity that will be on a scale unprecedented in Christian history. We are going to have a bitterness, a disillusionment, and we are going to breed a cynical contempt for God and religion and the church that will turn this country of ours almost completely apart from believing Christians into a camp of religion haters. We're going back where we were in the 20s or further down than that yet. And you will find cynicism and disillusionment and disappointment and bitterness and hostility, because people are thinking this way, that what we've got is Christianity when it is not. And the reason I know it is not, is hallowed be Thy name isn't at the front of it, but it's something else. But if God ever hears the prayer of a few of us and hallows His name.

I talked about this to R.R. Brown, Stacy Woods, Paris Reidhead and James Stewart of the European mission. The five of us stood around and discussed it and said, what are we going to do? What are we going to do that the glory of God should be manifested again and that we might be able to stave off this awesome, awful backwash? Well, it's coming. I may not live to see it, but it's coming. And the day will be when the people who are now singing over the radio and on the barn dance about God, how good He is, wouldn't be caught dead singing about God, a disillusioned, embittered, hostile, angry, cynical crowd, the people that tasted Christianity that wasn't Christianity. We're going to have him on our hands. Well, that's the first, the glory of God.

The second, I'll be brief. It's 12 o'clock. The second great desire is that the church should be delivered, and maybe I've already said that. That the church, not this church only, but the church of God should be delivered from her Babylonish captivity. Remember that the Scripture talked about the great harlot and her daughters. Well, when the great harlot spread herself all over Europe, there arose a thick-necked man by the name of Dr. Martin Luther. And he brought a reformation that set that lady back on her honches and gave us the Reformation and Protestantism and the present evangelicalism.

Let me say to you, my friends, that her daughters have now gotten almost as bad as she was, only in a different way. We don't have a pope, but we have other things as bad. We don't have holy water, but we have water not so holy. We don't have holy bones, but we have other things. If you don't believe this, come up to my office and I'll let you run through some of the religious magazines that come to my desk. You'll see holy bones there all right. The daughters have become as bad as their mother. The great harlot has had children. And the Scripture says, I'll judge that great harlot and her children and her daughters.

Now, those daughters are in Babylonian captivity just as the church was in Luther's day. And Luther brought a part of that church out of Babylonian captivity. And the disgraceful fornication with the world now going on among the churches-this you must pray about my brothers and sisters. This you must pray about. This is what we ought to pray about. This should be our corporate prayer. This is the reason we have meetings such as the ones we've announced. And until this is accomplished and until the church has been delivered from her mental bondage and from her way of living and her Babylonian captivity, then I

say that nothing else is of first importance.

You say, evangelism? What does evangelism do but cause the church to bring forth in Babylon? The church's children are brought forth, but they're brought forth under Babylonish captivity when they ought to be brought forth in the land. You say missions, but what do missions do but transplant a socially corrupt and scrub Christianity on foreign soil? And you say books and schools and magazines and all the rest-very well- but my brother, many Christian activities are about the working of the bacteria in a decaying church, that's all. You go if you want to do it and can stand it to a barrel of swill. But barrel of swill, look at it and watch it and see what it does. It bubbles and hisses and whispers, but it's always active, always active. It is decaying and fermenting and rotting. And it shows itself by a constant activity.

And an awful lot of activity now is little more than the activity of bacteria in the decaying church. And we must pray and work that the church may be freed. We must pray and work that she may come back to separation and devotion and purity and sanctification. That she may come back again to the glory of God, and that she may devote herself not to being known, publicizing herself, but to the glory of God.

Now brethren, these are the two things that every church is under binding, terrible obligation to get done-to pray enough and labor enough and live in line with their prayers, that God's glory should one time more appear among men. Oh, that God might appear again as He did for the Moravians, when God bestowed upon them a loving newness of the Savior instantaneously. And they went out hardly knowing whether they were on earth or in heaven.

This can only come to a church that takes itself seriously. This can only come to a church that accepts truth and will yield itself and settle itself to do two things. To pray for the glory of God to be restored and the church to be purified. Another generation of decay and rot in our churches, and what will we be sending to the mission field? We'll be sending a decaying and burned-out brand of Christianity that will do the heathen very little good. To prove that this is true, you only have to go to some places now where liberal preachers have been and sociologists instead of preachers have been with their gospel of sociology and the toothbrush. Go where they've been. You'll find Christians that are not Christians at all.

A transplantation of a humanistic, sociological Christianity into the foreign field is not fulfilling the text which says, go ye into all around and preach the gospel to every creature. And the transplantation of a publicity-mad, entertainment-rotten evangelicalism into Borneo or somewhere else, is not fulfilling it either. We must go, taking the glory of God and the blood of the Lamb, and calling the people to separate and come together in two minority groups, hated by the world, but loved of God; to be different and changed and transformed by the glory and the power of God. We must take that kind of gospel.

And we continue to go downhill; and our religious colleges and missionary colleges and Bible institutes continue to go downhill and rot and decay and tear apart and pull away at the seams, the next generation of missionaries won't be worth sending to the field.

Oh, that we might have revival that would purge us, me, as a minister of the sanctuary and you and all of us, so that there may go out from us, not only evangelists and missionaries-and you can't be a Bible church and not have both-but that they may go out with those two great things in mind, particularly the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And take to the heathen world and take to the dying world, not the story only that God loves them, but the story of a great God, high and lifted up Who made heaven and earth, and before whose face the heaven and the earth will someday flee away. Who, in His Majesty, rides across the heavens, but Who also, in His love, gave His only begotten Son. That's the only kind of gospel

worth taking and the only kind of preaching worth hearing.

Father, we pray Thy blessing upon the Word this morning. Meet us and meet us tonight we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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