

Helps to Prayer

by Bill McLeod

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and fasting in waiting on God and receiving guidance and direction for our lives and ministries.

Duration: 46:57

Scripture: Psalm 102:13, Psalm 102:16, John 15:7, Acts 3:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 12:22-24

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of knowing God's blueprint for the past in order to make wise guesses about the future. He mentions Peter's promise of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and suggests that we are living in lawless days. However, he also expresses hope for another great spiritual awakening. The speaker emphasizes the significance of prayer and the need for Christians to spend time with the Bible, as it is through abiding in God's word that we can ask and receive what we will.

Transcript

You know, sometimes we sort of wish we could see God's blueprint for the future, but we can't. But if we know something of God's blueprint for the past, we can guess a little more wisely, perhaps, at the future. Peter promised in Acts 3 that there would be times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law. And we're living in lawless days. So we're living in days, then, that are pregnant with hope that God will send another great spiritual awakening.

There's a verse in the Psalms that indicates to me that the Lord Jesus will return at a time of worldwide revival. I want to share that verse with you. It says that, well, there's two verses.

One says, Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion for the time to favor her, yea, the set time has come, for thy servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof. And the other verse is this, Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion. Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion for the time to favor her, yea, the set time has come.

The other verse, then, it simply says when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. And you must remember that in the New Testament, the church is Zion, because in Hebrews 12.22, to

Christians, God said, You are come to Mount Zion. And unto the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the church of the firstborn who are written in heaven, to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of the sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

So there is a spiritual Zion, and we're part of that. And when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. And so I base my feelings concerning a worldwide revival preceding the advent of Christ on that particular thought there.

Now you might argue with me that Zion refers to Israel, but you know that the Zionist movement, you may not be aware of this, but it is strictly political. The Jews themselves will tell you that. It's strictly secular and political.

It is not even religious. And so, just as there is a spiritual Israel, he's not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children, but in Isaac shall I see be called, and so on.

So I'm sure, I feel very sure and positive that there will be a worldwide, I think we're seeing the beginnings of it even now, when you have some overseas countries where 18% of the people profess to be evangelical, or 25%, or 28%, or 38%. Certainly something unusual is happening. We're not seeing it in North America, but we are seeing it in many, many countries.

And I finished reading a book called The Church in China, and they tell us that there are counties in China where every single person is born again. They mention one city, 800,000 people, 400,000 profess to be saved. And God has done a marvelous work in China, in spite of the communist rule and so on.

So I think we're seeing, but the trouble is North America, we think North America is the world. If it doesn't happen here, we don't think it's happening anywhere. But it isn't happening here, but it is happening in some countries.

And you know that Nagaland in northern India, it's one of the states of India, there's been a powerful revival going on there for years, and it's spilling over into Nepal and into Assam and other areas. And this will make the heart of Baptists glad, I guess. They say that Nagaland is the only Baptist state in the world.

85 or 95% of the people are born again now in Nagaland, and practically all of them are Baptists. I don't know whether that makes you sad or happy, but they're born again. And I had meetings in Lucknow in India for Christian workers, and there were some that came down from that area, and they were on fire for God.

Maybe that's where it'll start, I don't know. It could be from that corner. Somewhere it'll start, and blaze, and it'll catch fire, because of the means of communication we have today, which is just superb for the spreading of the Gospel.

It could engulf the world. And Satan will do all he can to oppose that and destroy it. Do you know there was a time when France was 40% evangelical? Before the slaughter of St. Bartholomew's Day, they said that there wasn't probably a household in France where there wasn't one born-again believer at least.

And today, France is 2% evangelical, because the Christians were wiped out. And France slew the cream of her people, and has never recovered morally since. It's almost as if there's a judgment of God in the

country.

But I'm sure that France, there are many earnest workers there praying and sowing the seed. Do you know that some of the early missionaries went as long as 13 years and never saw a convert? If that happened today, we'd put them in another place. We'd say, well, there's something wrong.

Either he's not called to be a missionary, or there's something wrong here. We'd have to put him in a more fruitful field. But they stayed with it.

One missionary stayed 22 years before he saw a convert. But in those cases where there was this long wait, when the blessing came, it came with suddenness and astounding power, and thousands would be converted. In one of those places where missionaries waited 12 or 14 years, when God finally broke through, they built a church that was 800 or 900 feet long with a pulpit at each end, because they couldn't be heard from the one pulpit, so they had one at each end and had two congregations in the church at the same time carrying on from both ends of the church.

That's a little different. They didn't have PA systems, you see. They didn't have George Whitefield either, whose voice could be heard a mile away.

All right, that's kind of disjointed, but this is how I feel. I think we need to keep praying and trusting God. And here's something I do personally, which you might want to copy, you might not feel led of God to do it, but every night I ask God to waken me for prayer, and I usually sit up in bed when I'm out.

When I'm home, I sit on one of the sofas or chairs or something, and I just pray for worldwide revival. And sometimes that prayer goes on for an hour and a half as God gives me a burden to pray. It might only be 15 or 20 minutes, but it could be an hour, an hour and a half, and that's not important.

But God has given me that burden. And I can think back in my own life, you know, burdens God gave me, like 35 years ago or more, God gave me a burden to pray that the power of the Catholic Church would be broken. And it has been broken all around the world.

The power it once had. We knew people that were stoned to death by Catholic priests setting drunken mobs on them in South America, in Manitoba, Canada. A girl named Helen Reimer was stoned and almost killed by some Catholic people set on by a priest because some Mennonite Christians were holding an open-air meeting.

I knew of that personally. But that has all stopped around the world, and the power they once had over the hearts of men is broken. Do you know in Canada, 30 years ago, at any time of the year, they said, they did a documentary on TV, this is where I got this information from, there were 2,000 priests in training in Canada.

Not training for Canada, but in Canada and going to many countries in the world. Do you know how many there were when they did the documentary four years ago? There were 14. That's all they had in training.

And not one of them was under 35. And their largest seminary, I think in Montreal, would take care of 400 students, and they had six. And its power has been broken, the power it once had.

And there's some gospel light among them now in some areas too. And God gave me a tremendous burden. I'm not the only one that prayed.

I'm sure that thousands and tens of thousands of people prayed, but we keep praying. I prayed for South America, that God would open it up, that thousands would be saved there. Well, hundreds of thousands have been saved there.

I was in Chile. I saw churches, evangelical churches, sitting 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, 15,000. I was in Temuco in southern Chile, a city of 100,000 people, 40% are born again.

They told me there wasn't a home and a place that didn't have at least one Bible. Brazil, 18% evangelical, and it's growing, it's like a prairie fire. And I prayed for China many times.

And so we need to keep praying to people for specific areas around the world. And if you don't have that book, Operation World, get one, get one. They'll cost you \$10 probably, I think.

The fellowship can get them for you if you want to write for it, Operation World. How many have that book? I see two hands at the very back, that's all. It gives you information on every country in the world, including the United States of America.

It will tell you the size of the country, the population density of the country, the ethnic origin of the various peoples. It will tell you what religions are there. It will tell you how many evangelicals are in the country.

And then it always ends with each country, it will give you maybe 10, 12, 14, or 20 maybe, even 20 items for prayer. And here's what I do. I use that book and I pray for two countries every day.

Specifically, I read the accounts of the countries and then I go to prayer for two countries every day. Yesterday, one of the two countries was Canada. That was interesting.

Operation World, get it, use it. Get involved in what God is doing. It's around the world.

God is working. And we need to know what God is doing. It's a great blessing for our hearts.

Well, years ago, God gave me a message entitled, Hindrances to Prayer. And there's a few people here from the fellowship that have heard me bring it before. I'm not going to bring that message this morning.

I have another message which I don't think I've ever preached. It's called, Helps. And that's the message I want to bring today.

When I was first converted, the first book, I think the first book I ever read, was the life story of George Mueller of Bristol, England, the famous man of prayer. The man with 85,000 recorded answers to prayer in a prayer book, a prayer ledger he kept. And I learned all about the faith walk through George Mueller and all about prayer.

And it was a tremendous help to me as a very young Christian. There were other great men of God that God used in my life. For example, Spurgeon.

His love for Christ was so unusual. They said his language at the communion table was so extravagant that sometimes people thought, well, it just can't be true. Nobody could really feel that kind of love for Jesus Christ.

They felt it was just kind of an emotional thing. But those who knew him said, oh no, that's how he felt. You know the last words he ever uttered to his wife Susanna as he was dying? He said, oh wifey, I've had such

a good time with my Lord.

That's the last words he ever uttered. And he was a tremendous inspiration to me. Sometimes when Spurgeon was preaching and the wind of God was in the sails, the whole congregation, 6,000, 15,000, 20,000 people would jump to their feet.

They didn't want to miss the movement of the finger when he preached because the Spirit of God was on in such an electric way. But it was his love for Christ that blessed me. Then George Whitfield was a tremendous blessing to me, particularly his zeal for God.

He was sick and spit blood most of his life and died young, 56 years of age, preached only 16,000 times before he died. He used to complain that when he was not well and he would say that he was reduced to the short rations of preaching only five times a day. His zeal for God, he crossed the Atlantic 13 times.

Back in those days, an old leaky sailing tub that would take three months sometimes for one journey. And he called it, The Delightful Task of Seeking for Sinners. He loved the souls of men with an unusual love.

And I learned a lot from Whitfield. But I think I had more input from George Mueller because of the nature of his teaching, respecting the place of prayer in the Christian's life. He used to spend an hour a day just praying with his wife.

He spent three hours a day praying apart from that. And he said, If I don't spend three hours a day in prayer, I just can't get the work done. That's not how we look at it.

We, you know, put the prayer on the end. If I've got time, I will pray. He read the Bible through 200 times from cover to cover.

The average Christian probably doesn't get through it more than once in a lifetime, and some don't even manage that. He read it through 100 times on his knees. I mean, he made time.

So people say, Well, I guess he had lots of time. No, as a matter of fact, he didn't. He was co-pastor with Henry Craik of Bethesda Chapel in Bristol, England that had 1,200 members.

Now that would be enough to keep him busy. There were only two pastors. That should be enough to keep him busy the rest of his life.

That was just a sideline. He started a missionary organization which sent missionaries and money and literature around the world. He sent more money to Hudson Taylor, the China Inland Mission, than any other organization or individual ever did.

That was a sideline. His main job was looking after the Bristol orphanages where he had 2,000 children and a staff sometimes as high as 400. And this he had to administrate.

And for this he had to raise money. And he never made his needs known. He simply prayed it all in.

That's where he got these 85,000 answers to prayer. And when you think of it, you know, this immense enterprise, where did he find four hours a day to pray? Well, the thing was, these other things came second. And prayer came first.

And it was through prayer he saved himself immense amounts of physical energy because if you don't pray and get the will of God, you may try 14 plans before you hit the plan of God. Churches do all kinds of things. They're not fruitful.

They don't produce anything. So they scrap that program and they try a new program. Whereas if we would fast and pray and get God's program, we wouldn't make these mistakes.

You know, Bak Singh is a preacher in India. They used to call him the Billy Graham of India. They had a preacher in China called John Sung.

This is Bak Singh. And here's something very interesting. I think heaven has a laugh now and then.

Bak Singh was converted in Winnipeg, Canada. And John Sung was converted in the United States. And they were both great evangelists.

But Bak Singh, he's no writer. His books are rather dull in some respects if you overlook. But if you overlook the grammatical errors and excesses and whatnot, and look at what he's saying, you'll get greatly blessed.

He has a book called The Return of God's Glory. And he tells how in India, he worked as an evangelist for Western missionaries. And they were really glad to have him because he was a great recruiter.

And many thousands of people were converted in his meetings and joined various evangelical associations and so on. And they thought this was great. But Bak Singh was troubled.

Because it wasn't really reaching India's masses. They add now 17 million people a year to their population. It's incredible.

That's over half the population of Canada. So he broke with the Western missionaries amicably and went on his own. And he said, there's got to be a better way.

Well, he got a few people gathered around him, nationals. And they began to evangelize in marketplaces. And they gave out hundreds of thousands of gospel tracts, and nothing happened.

So, they went to prayer. They added fasting to prayer. And one day when a group of them were praying and fasting, God made the whole group aware of the fact that they hadn't waited on him for guidance as to which marketplace to go to.

So they got that straightened out. And they prayed and fasted, and God showed them which marketplace to go to. They went to this marketplace and gave out thousands of tracts, and nothing happened.

And they came back and asked God again, what is the problem? And after fasting and praying, God made the whole group aware of the fact that when they got to the marketplace, they didn't wait for his guidance. And he said, when we learned how to fast and pray and get God's guidance for everything we did, the glory of God returned. And he had meetings as powerful as any meetings Charles Finney ever had.

Thousands were saved. In the fellowship of churches of which he is the human head, they have over 600 churches now, and some of them have 2,000 people in fellowship. They have annual conferences with 20,000 people.

In Hyderabad in central India, the glory of God returned. When they started doing God's work in God's way, but were too wise in North America to do a thing like that, to fast and pray, you're wasting time. We could be doing things.

And that's their problem. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work were unto I have called them. And then you read this unfortunate phrase, it says, And they had also John to their minister.

But the Holy Ghost had not said John. He had said Paul and Barnabas. But they took John along because they thought, humanly speaking, he'd be great to have along to minister to their needs.

He didn't stay with them long. He went back to Jerusalem because he discovered it wasn't his bag. He shouldn't have been there.

Of course, we do the same thing today. The problem is we normally don't fast and pray and wait for God to speak. All right, health to prayer.

Let's get to it. One of the greatest health to prayer is the Spirit of God. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And he that searches the heart knows with his mind of the Spirit that he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. So it's not in man that walks to direct his own steps, the Bible says. And certainly, there's a prayer in the Old Testament, Teach us what we shall say unto him, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.

We know not what we should pray for as we ought. So we roar unto the presence of God, maybe fall on our knees and flap our lips for ten minutes, and call it prayer. Billy Sonny said the average Christian prays like a rabbit nibbling at a cabbage.

And I'm afraid that's what we do. I heard of a funny thing recently. It actually happened.

In the southern states, a plane crashed several years ago. I read this in a book. And so Sunday morning, the pastor referred to this, and a lot of people had lost loved ones in the area.

And so he called on one of the laymen in his church to get to his feet and to lead the congregation in prayer for the families that had been bereaved. And he caught this fellow off guard. The guy, apparently, was half asleep.

And he shot to his feet, and he began to pray. And it went like this. He says, Lord, there was this plane accident over in County.

He couldn't remember which county. And he said, Hey God, didn't you read the newspapers? Was he praying in the Spirit? I guess not. The Bible says, praying in the Holy Ghost.

Which means, as he leads, for what he leads, and when he leads. Praying in the Holy Ghost. In Ephesians 6, in the book of Jude.

But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. And then Ephesians 6.18, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. That's being called all prayer.

Seeking the help of the Holy Spirit. Confessing to God. I don't know how to pray.

Do you ever feel dead when you get down to pray? Well, if you don't, I do. I feel totally dead sometimes. I tell God, Hey God, I told God this morning, God, I said, I feel like a dry stick lying on the ground.

You're going to have to warm me up, or I won't be able to pray. I often feel like that. And I wait on God.

And he warms up my spirit. In one way or another, I don't know how to pray. But the Spirit knows.

And I'm to pray in the Spirit. That's a great help. Then, secondly, the Word of God.

We mentioned before that there are 7,487 promises in the Bible. Don't forget now. And 2 Peter 1 says, According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue, whereby, or by whom, one translation says, are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that's in the world through lust.

The promises. Prayer is pleading the promises back to God. It's very difficult, if not impossible, to exercise faith when you pray if you're not able to stand on some promise of God when you pray.

We sing it, Standing on the promises of Christ my King, through eternal ages, let His praises ring. But when we pray, we have to stand on the promises of God. That's a second help.

A third help is the preaching of the word of God, and we who preach the word of God should from time to time seek to exhort our people to prayer. Paul did. I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.

I've been exhorted by that myself. I'm exhorted now as I repeat it. In the same second chapter of 1 Timothy verse 8 he said, I will therefore that men pray everywhere.

That verse has blessed me many times. Men should pray everywhere, no matter where you are. So the preaching of the word of God.

Listen, let me ask you a question. What were the people doing on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came? Almost every Christian will say they were praying. There is no evidence they were praying.

It just says they were sitting. They may have been listening to a discourse from the word of God. I have as much right to say that as to say they were praying, because it really doesn't say that.

People think, well they prayed for ten days. I think it would be physically impossible to pray for ten days. I don't see how you could pray for ten days.

You could meet together and have what we might call ten days of prayer and break it up with singing and some preaching and some meditation and some fellowship and this sort of thing. I think likely that's what they did. But there's no evidence that they were praying when the Holy Spirit came.

I am not saying they weren't praying. It says they were sitting. I think one translation says they were simply waiting.

So it's hard to say. We can't really say as to that. But we can certainly say this.

The Gentile Pentecost. This was the Jewish Pentecost. Acts chapter 2. The Gentile Pentecost in Acts chapter 10.

Peter was praying when the Spirit came. Pardon me. Peter was preaching when the Spirit came.

And sometimes when the Word of God is being preached, the Spirit will come in a very unusual way. And people start to pray. I had that happen some weeks ago in London, Ontario, at a Bible college, a seminary.

Bible college and seminary. I didn't give an invitation. As I was preaching, a very unusual thing happened.

I can't even explain it. It was just as if the hand of God came over the whole congregation. There were students and staff and some outside visitors there.

And everybody seemed to be reduced to about one-third of their size. I just can't explain it. And there's just a sense of the wonderful presence of God.

I closed the meeting in prayer and sat down. And nobody stirred for five minutes. There wasn't a sound.

And people started to pray all over the congregation. And the Lord was with us. God was there.

Well, helps to prayer? The preaching of the Word of God. Helps to prayer? You might not believe this. Persecution.

In Acts chapter 4, when the apostles were persecuted and threatened and told not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus Christ, they went back to the home church, got the people together, told them what had happened. And what happened? The people broke out into prayer. They lifted up their voices to God with one accord.

And it was a mighty prayer meeting which resulted in a second Pentecost. Great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, it says, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.

But it was the result of persecution. If you went to Europe today and visited every country in Europe, you'd find the strongest churches are in the communist countries. They're not in the West.

The churches are lackadaisical and apathetic there, but under communism they're strong because they have to be strong. Persecution. I read something that a preacher in Russia said.

He said, We have found out that if we don't have some kind of pressure from the government at least once a month, the Christians get cold. Now, isn't that interesting? Maybe that's why we're so cold in North America. We don't get any pressure once a year.

Persecution can be a godsend. Look at China for an example then. Hundreds of thousands of people, thousands, tens of thousands of Christians were martyred there.

But look at what's happened. The blood of the martyrs is always the seed of the church. So persecution can be a big help.

You don't go looking for it, but if it comes, don't complain, because it'll certainly drive you to prayer. I mean, if you knew some people were going to call at your house, you'd hear the guns going off down the block, and hear people screaming, and they're coming to your house. I'm sure you wouldn't be reading the newspaper.

You'd be on your knees, crying to God with all your heart. So persecution is a help to prayer. Another help to prayer is good news from a far place.

I know often when I read some, or maybe it's a missionary publication, I read about some great happening, some things God is doing. Somebody went into an area, and seven churches sprung up in two years, or something like that. I just have to lay it aside and start to pray, to praise God for what He's doing.

And you know, Paul had the same experience. A man called Epaphras came to Paul and said, Paul, God's done a mighty work at Colossae. And he spilled over and told Paul the whole thing.

What did Paul say? He wrote to the church at Colossae in Colossians 1-9, and he said, Since the day we heard it, we do not cease to pray for you. Since the day what? Since the day we heard it. Since the day we heard this good news about what God did in your city.

We don't cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, he said, unto all longsuffering, with joyfulness. But Paul prayed because he got good news from a far country. And sometimes we pray because we get bad news from a far country.

Bad news may be good, in that it will drive me to pray. Paul heard that the Christians in the region of Galatia had become cold, and they'd gone back to legalism, and it drove Paul to pray, and so he said in Galatians 4-19, My little children, of whom I travail and birth again, until Christ be formed in you. So bad news will drive me to prayer.

Good news will drive me to prayer. These are all helps to prayer. And God knows they are, and God works in all these ways and areas to drive, to try, and push us to pray.

The thing we need the most of all. Maybe I should say again that Jesus said, My house shall be called a house of prayer. For all people.

And what do I find as I travel around North America? Church after church, closing down the prayer meeting. That's what I find. One preacher said, We used to have a good prayer meeting.

We only get five off now. I'm going to shut her down. I said, Brother, five is better than nothing.

Don't shut it down. Well, God gave us a revival in that church. He wrote me several weeks after and told me the prayer meeting was up in the 40s.

Well, praise the Lord. That's great. The fastest growing church in the British Isles, so I heard when I was over there three years ago, is in Tyneside, England.

At that time, this church had started very small. They emphasized prayer. The church began to grow.

They're in a constant enlargement and building program and they were up to 800 when I was there. But if they have 800 Sunday morning, they have 800 Sunday evening, and they have 800 Wednesday night at the prayer meeting. I don't know of a church like that anywhere in North America where they have as big a prayer meeting as they have a Sunday morning service.

And the whole thing is based on prayer. And they say all evangelicals in England are watching this church in Tyneside, but you know what I discovered when I was there? None of them are copying it. They're trying to come up with some plan to do it.

Any plan but prayer. Any plan but prayer. Anything.

Because prayer seems to be hard work. I saw this cartoon recently and I just had to burst into laughter when I read it, but afterwards I thought, well maybe I shouldn't be laughing about it. There was a cartoon showing this preacher.

He's in his study and he's kneeling at his chair and he's praying. Maybe you saw it. And some lady comes in and she opens the door and happens to bump him and she says, oh good, you're not busy.

I mean, that's how they look at it. If you're praying, you're not busy. You know, you can answer the telephone.

You do all kinds of things when you're praying because that's not important. That's the attitude we have. And until we get over that and get back to what God is saying in the Bible, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Let's tack that on instead of putting it first as we normally do. Helps to prayer. Here's another help to prayer.

Just a thankful spirit. Philippians 1, 4, Paul said, making requests with joy. Do you pray that way? Pray with joy? Well, it's a good way to pray.

Get along with God and start to praise the Lord. Billy Sonny said, you'll get a lot more from God if you yank out the groans and throw in some shouts. I kind of like that.

A little crude, but I know what he means. I hope you know too. Alright.

Making requests with joy. That's a great thought. When I first really noticed that, do you know that truth stayed with me for days on end? I couldn't get it out of my mind.

Making requests with joy. And every time I got down to pray, I just had to be joyful. Praise the Lord.

Make requests with joy. Because you know that God is listening. You know that God is going to answer.

So why not make requests with joy? I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving that your requests be made known unto God. Making requests with joy, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.

And that's very important. Then, love. To be filled with the love of God.

Paul said in writing to the church of Rome, he said, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, think of that, for His sake, and for the love of the Spirit, think of that, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. And the word strive is the word from which we get the English word agonize. Agonize.

For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, pray. For the love of the Spirit, pray. Agonize with other believers.

Do we do this for the love of the Spirit? And of course we need to be filled with the love of God, because when I'm filled with the love of God, when I begin to look at other people through God's eyes, when I begin to love people the way God loves people, then you simply have to share with them at some point. You have to share with them. And then faith, you know, in James chapter 5, there's that phrase, it's a fantastic phrase, it's the phrase, the prayer of faith.

I don't read about the prayer of unbelief, but I do read this, that without faith it is impossible to please God. He that comes to God, he says, must believe two things. One, that God is.

Two, that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him or carefully seek him out, as one translation says. He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him out. Because without faith it is impossible to please God.

The prayer of faith. Now, Amy Carmichael had a tremendous prayer ministry. She was bedridden for 20 years after she fell in a pit in Donover in India.

And she used to, she had such an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, you know what she would very frequently do? Lying in bed, she'd smooth out a place on the bed, and she'd say, Dear Lord Jesus, please sit down here, I want to talk to you for a while. You know, when I read that, that really blessed me. I've done that.

I've smoothed out the bed covers and said, Jesus, please sit down here, I want to talk to you for a while. And I want you to talk to me. Because I found this, I can't get down and start to pray, and really exercise faith, that is pray in faith, if I don't take time to be alone with God.

We have to prepare our hearts, you see. And that takes time. I mean, sometimes for me it might take five minutes or even longer before I can get my thoughts concentrated on God.

Do you have your thoughts run away on you sometimes? They zoom in this direction, they zoom in that, they just turn around your head like that. You ever have that happen? A lot of people tell me this happens to them all the time. It happens to me too.

And it's quite biblical. It says, In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. So don't be surprised if you can't get your thoughts under control immediately when you get down to pray.

You get down to pray and you smell the soup burning. You rush out the kitchen, the soup isn't burning at all. You know, I mean, you think you hear the doorbell ringing, you tear off and there's nobody at the door.

The devil's in business too when you get on your knees, you know. So you have to shut other things out and take whatever time is necessary to get alone with God, so that when you start to pray, you're praying in faith. You're not just uttering words and putting in 15 or 20 minutes.

You're having an audience with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Then he won't be a stranger when you get to heaven. I remember this fellow told me one time, he said, I'm an atheist.

And he said, You tell me there's a God. Don't tell me there's a God. He said, All these things going on in the world.

So he starts, you know, wars and tornadoes and fires and terrorists killing people and all this sort of thing. He says, You tell me there's a God. It's a bunch of garbage, he said.

I said, My dear friend, I talked to God this morning. Don't tell me it's garbage. And you know what happened? That atheist just went down to a little blob.

He said, Would you get your wife and call on my wife and I tonight? That was over in Scotland. And I got my wife from the hotel and we went to visit the atheist and his wife and they were waiting at the gate, 30 feet from the house for us. He said, Come at 9 o'clock.

And we got there just a little before 9. They were already at the gate waiting. Took us in. We had a great time there.

And we talked about the Lord and afterwards I said, Sir, Do you mind if I pray before I go? He said, I would be delighted if you'd pray in my home. I talked to God this morning. Don't tell me God doesn't exist.

That's impossible. Where do you live? And in closing, you know in John 15, 7, we all know this verse probably. Jesus said, If.

It starts with an if. And there's a qualification. There's a promise, but it's qualified.

If you abide in me. Which means if I walk in a sweet, unbroken fellowship with Christ. And the analogy in John 15 is a vine and the branches.

We are the branches. Christ is the vine. And to have that kind of relationship with Jesus.

If you abide in me. Don't let anything come between yourself and the Lord. If you become aware that this has happened, confess it and give it up.

And get back in a close fellowship with Jesus Christ again. If you abide in me and my words abide in you. I don't want you to answer this question except in your own heart.

How much time do you spend, on the average, with the Bible itself each day? When I went to Saskatoon in 1962, after I was there, I thought, boy, I've got a great church here. You know, they're faithful in attendance. And some of them were, quite a few were graduates of Bible colleges and so on.

And so one morning, the curiosity got the better of me and I passed out registration forms and the people were to sign. They didn't sign their names, so they were perfectly honest. And they were to answer questions like this.

How much time a day do I spend reading the Bible? How much time a day do I spend in prayer? Do I witness to people about Christ? Have I ever led a soul to Christ? Have I ever witnessed anyone about Christ? Do I give a tenth of my income to God? You know, that Sunday morning, I could hardly wait to get my hands on those forms, get to my office and go through them. And I ended up crying. I couldn't believe it.

I wished I'd never done it. Five minutes a day? Bible study and prayer? Two minutes? One person put down 30 minutes for a Bible study, then I guess his conscience wanted me to run a big line through it and put down a big goose egg. You know.

And I suddenly realized, I had a church, but they were not in love with God. But I find this is average in North America. The average Christian doesn't really spend much time with a Bible.

If you offer the average Christian a thousand dollars, he probably couldn't tell you who the ten apostles, twelve apostles were, what the ten commandments are. He probably couldn't repeat from memory the books of the Bible. He probably couldn't accurately quote ten verses from the Bible.

The average Christian. And I'm not being critical. We're talking about helps to prayer.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, fill yourself full. Colossians 3.16 says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Fill yourself full of the word of God.

And then he says, if you do these two things, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your grace to us, and thank you, God, for the example of Jesus.

The Son of God. The creator of the universe. Spending whole nights in prayer.

Rising up a great while before day, he went out and prayed. He prayed before choosing the apostles. Spent hours, apparently, in prayer before choosing the twelve.

Father, O God, strike the scales off the eyes of our souls, and make us see what you're saying about the place of prayer. Bless every person here. To your glory in Christ.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18414.mp3>

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