

Prayer 04 a Praying Saviour

by Bob Clark

The sermon emphasizes the vital role of prayer in understanding and yielding to God's will, illustrated through the life of Jesus.

Duration: 37:14

Scripture: Psalm 16:2, Matthew 6:6, Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:15, Luke 6:12, Luke 11:1

Topics: "Prayer Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of prayer in the life of a believer. He highlights how even Jesus, in his earthly ministry, demonstrated the significance of prayer by frequently engaging in it. The preacher emphasizes the need for believers to separate themselves and align their will with God's will. He also mentions the concept of baptism as a symbol of repentance and the remission of sins. Throughout the sermon, the preacher encourages listeners to prioritize prayer and seek a deeper connection with God.

Transcript

Thank you, Mrs. Hill. Luke. Luke's Gospel in Chapter 3. We want to continue our little series of thoughts that we commenced on the Lord's Day.

You might remember that we've been thinking on the subject of prayer. And very little that has been said, and very likely that shall be said, will be particularly new or innovative. But our thoughts are to refresh our spirits and seek by the grace of God to remind our hearts of the great importance of this religious discipline, this exercise of heart, this concern that we should have about our communion with the Lord, our God.

You might remember on the Lord's Day, our thought was that prayer is the expression of the human heart in conversation with God. The expression of the human heart in conversation with God. And then on the Lord's Day evening, we supplemented that with an added perspective or shade of meaning to the subject of prayer.

And that is, prayer is the petitioning to God to accomplish the things already breathed into our spirit by the promises of the Holy Spirit. He gives us promises and we turn them back and petition God for these promises that he has given to us from his word. This morning we gave some thought to two aspects of our Lord's evidence of the importance of prayer in his life.

And the place of prayer in the life of our Lord Jesus was seen by his giving exhortations to his followers concerning prayer, and then also illustrations of how this can be implemented. And our thought was that prayer is the required mode of addressing God to obtain help needed in the varying pressures of life. Whether we are under attack, or whether we have practical needs like bread, or whether there are problems and dilemmas around us.

But this is the required mode of addressing God in this exercise of soul. Today we'd like to add another thought as we develop these shades of meaning to the thought of prayer. And that is, prayer is an attitude of soul in relationship to God which assists us in finding and yielding to the will of God.

An attitude of soul which will assist us in finding and yielding to the will of God. When I was a bit younger, I really had in my mind that prayer was primarily asking. In fact, I was given a book written by a very well-known evangelist, John R. Rice, and his emphasis in that book, the book titled Prayer, is asking.

And of course, with his evangelistic fervor, the whole thrust of the book was direct petitions, specific petitions, and the thought of just asking God. And I imagine that I was rather limited in my enjoyment or appreciation of the value of this privilege of communion and prayer with our God. But in time, just as with your own experience, we begin to enlarge and see more from the Word of God, and see there are vast aspects of spending time with God.

And if it's a genuine exercise of heart and soul, if this is something that is real, and a responsiveness toward the Word of God and time spent with Him, then there is bound to be that effect upon our inner life which will make me more plastic, soft, touchable, movable, adaptable, and more willing to see greater mobility in my own life to accommodate my life, my thinking, my attitudes and behavior to what is the directives from the written Word of God. Now, we can think of no better example, of course, than our blessed Savior, marking out in our thoughts, of course, His absolute uniqueness. And yet, the place of prayer in the life of our Lord Jesus, we have seen that place in His earthly ministry by His exhortations to prayer, by His illustrations of prayer.

And now, this evening, we'd like to look at the demonstrations of prayer. And there are a number of occurrences in the Gospel, and I think we have come rather close to putting them into a kind of chronological order, as best as I am able to determine. And we'd like to take a look at these experiences of our Lord in prayer, with that kind of central thought in our mind, that this is an attitude of soul in relationship to God, which assists us in finding and yielding to the will of God.

In Luke chapter 3 and verse 21, Luke makes an observation concerning the baptism of our Lord Jesus, which is unique to His Gospel. And that we find the perfect man, our Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer at His baptism. Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

In the earthly ministry of our Lord, He demonstrates the importance of prayer by being seen again and again in the act of prayer. And what my thoughts were, just in a simple devotional progress, to be able to perceive some traceable cohesion or unity or flow of thought in all of these incidences where we see our blessed Savior in prayer. And it suggests a few basic points.

Firstly is, there needs to be a separation to God's will. A conscious, intelligent separation of ourselves to do the will of God. And we see that markedly so right here.

The people are at the river being baptized, confessing their sins. The people are there acknowledging that they are worthy to be immersed in the river of death. That they deserve the judgment of God.

It's a baptism with a view to repentance and remission of sins. They have in their mind that there will be a time coming where their sins will be remitted. They do not look, as best as I can understand it, at the baptism as doing this, but rather they are accepting a baptism of repentance with a view to having their sins remitted when God comes and effects this good work.

And our Lord Jesus comes in amongst these persons in an act of separating himself to do the will of his God. You well remember, don't you, that the psalmist wrote that in the volume of the book that was written of him, he delighted to do his will. We read on a number of times in John's gospel that affirmation.

In John 5, verse 30, the Lord Jesus said, I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me. I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. I do always those things that please him.

Now, if our blessed Lord is characterized by doing the will of his God and his Father, how much more so and how much more important is it for me, who say I abide in him, to walk even as he walked? And there is no better way for me to know the mind of God for my life than to be in fellowship. To be, and I use the word respectfully and reverently, to be in a camaraderie with my God. To be in a close tie with him, sensing what he is trying to speak to me and tell me about out of the word of God.

And our blessed Lord Jesus is willing to go down into those waters after the people have been baptized. Now, there is a distinctive that warrants our observing it. And the structure of the language requires they had been baptized, and after he had been baptized, in the aorist particle expression, he says, and having also been baptized, he is praying.

He is in a condition of prayer and communion with him, and then the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him. The Lord is identifying himself with his own. In a portion like this, I am reminded of ministry that I heard a long time ago at Stony Brook Conference.

And the person that ministered the word of God drew to my attention, by the Spirit of God, something about Psalm 16 that was most enlarging and really fascinating to my own soul. And how that Psalm 16 was apparently a prophetic statement of the great entire life of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the time he left the throne until he swept down into time, through time, through the article of death, and back into the presence of God.

And in this panoramic view, in just 11 verses, the whole life of our Lord Jesus is encapsulated by prophetic inspiration. And there is one statement, Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, to the excellent, in whom is all my delight. And that statement, well just contemplate it.

That the Lord Jesus viewed that motley company of souls, having been bathed in the water, openly confessing and identifying himself with him, the excellent of all the earth, in whom is all my delight. Now, verbiage is one thing, but action is another. And he openly identifies himself with that company of people that are acknowledging their sin.

Repentance of sin and confession of sin is the first step toward a genuine walk with our God. Now, if you're here this evening and you've never come to that place where you have openly acknowledged to

your own self and to your God that you are a sinner, and that you are much in need of a savior, then you really have no fellowship with God. But our desire is that somehow we might see our Lord as we walk through the pages of the gospel, and see his perfection, and his humility, and his love, and his care for his followers, and his dedication to do that which was the mind of his God and his Father.

As man, he submitted to the Godhead, and as the eternal Son, he was in constant fellowship with his Father. My, what a blessed person is our Savior, the Lord Jesus. At the very outset of his life, he identified himself with sinners.

And he is glad to do that on your behalf, and enlighten your mind today, that if God convicts you of your sin this evening, and you know that you are a stranger to his saving grace, and do not have your sins forgiven, he will be glad to let you know how he has borne the guilt of your sin, and the sins of all that put their trust in him, and that today you might have the forgiveness of sin. And our Lord opened up the heavens, and there booms forth from heaven this blessed announcement, this is my beloved Son. He did those things that pleased him, and while he was doing this, he was in prayer.

Now we must go back to Mark's gospel, because Mark introduces a thought that must not be overlooked, and it appears to be the next step in the progress, and it's Mark chapter 1, verse 32. And that even when the sun did set, they brought to him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with demons. I want you to notice, without any lengthy comment, that the Spirit of God makes a clear, distinct difference between physical illness and demonic possession.

They are not synonymous. And all the city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many demons, and suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him. The demonic world was a lot more spiritually in tune with who this person was and his own followers.

His own disciples had to go and wait many a long month and years before they openly confessed that he was the Son of God, but the demons knew who he was, and he kept on refusing the demons from speaking. The original text requires that we have that thought. There was a constant effort on the part of these demons, and he kept on refusing the demons to be speaking about him.

He rejected the testimony of the demonic world. For what reason, that would be another study. But here, he is doing this, and under this intensity, this assault, this activity in the spirit world, although he had power over it, in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

It would appear that the success, the crowd, the conflict of the demonic world, required that he find a recess, a communion, a fellowship, and were specifically told that the servant of God, in whom God announced that he was well pleased, behold my servant, mine elect, this one who would never raise up his voice in the streets, or never cry out, the one who would never stifle the smoking flax, or hurt the bent and bruised reed, this gentle, godly God-man, our Lord Jesus. Although he was the repository of all the attributes of deity, yet he prayed. It is a critical time now, and it is necessary that he rise up early in the morning, and be alone in the fresh early hours to commune with him.

And Simon and Nada were with him, followed after him, and when they found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said, Let us go into the next town, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth. The popularity in the crowd must not dissuade us from doing that which is the will of our

Father.

Whatever plaudits and whatever attention we get, whatever success may be here, there are other ministries, other steps of progress, and we must go on. For therefore came I forth. Separation to do his will.

Now we come back again to Luke chapter 5 and verse 15, and it's a very similar circumstance here. It's the remarkable healing that precedes the event. In Luke chapter 15, a leper was healed, the crowds come, and in verse 15, so much more went there of fame abroad of him.

Great multitudes came together to heal, to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. It appears to me, just by a simple suggestion, that there is a way in which prayer serves us as finding separation to do his will.

There might have been the assault of the demonic world and Mark's gospel, but in Luke it's just the fame and the popularity and the press of the crowds. But he must find quiet time. And haven't you found that to be so? Have you ever worked in a daily vacation Bible school and found that there's no time for prayer? The children running around, the crafts to be done, the building to be cleaned up, and if you're lucky, if you can get home and have a meal and get a little bit of a rest, and then there's the next morning of activity again.

And the one thing that seems to be strikingly missing from the program of a vacation Bible school is time to pray. Now that's only a simple illustration that many of us have understood or seen. Not that it has to be, but it is frequently that.

How about our own lives? So busy, so active, and those of us who possibly are the greatest are those that seek to serve the most. And we're so busy, and there's a phone call here and a person there and a job there and an assignment here, and it just seems like we're just so busy, we cannot spend time with him. And that we miss out not only on that blessed opportunity of fellowship, but far more important, if there's any intonations of his purpose, any directives to come from him, anything that I should be doing to fit his pleasure, I may well find myself too busy to find and to do the will of my Father.

We need time to sanctify or set apart ourselves to do his will. Now in Luke chapter 6, there is a prayer time that has to do with significant crisis in his will. Luke chapter 6 verse 11.

And they were filled with madness, and the context is the heated opposition, and communed one with another that they might do to Jesus. And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. About what? Might it not be explained in the next phrase? And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples and chose twelve.

Such a significant crisis. Ministering and the opposition of the scribes and the Pharisees, their communion and welding together because of the offense of his working on the Sabbath day, they were in just heated opposition against our Lord, and now is a significant crisis in finding the will of the Father and doing that. It's time now to single my attention upon this little company that will be the foundation stone of the church.

And to make that decision, that critical observation, out of all the disciples, I will choose twelve. And the night is spent in prayer. How many decisions do you make regarding your business, or an investment, or a vacation, without ever praying? How many significant decisions are made by our dear children and grandchildren that they hastily go into without spending time in seeking direction from the Lord? In this, a

very blessed, simple, but clear picture for me, the Lord demonstrated the place of prayer in his life by praying.

And at this critical juncture, he spends the night in prayer and then chooses the twelve. Linked with this in my mind is back in Mark's gospel, the next progressive step, and that's in Mark chapter six, and in verse forty-five. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when the evening was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them.

And about the fourth watch, all night long, on into the early hours of the morning, they were tortured with the rowing against the storm. And if the verb is in the passive tense, that means they were harassed. It's a milder form, but it's a strong picture of their struggle against the elements.

And where is he? He is trying to picture to them his deep concern, but he waits until their sense of futility and nothingness. He is on the mountain praying, and they are down there toiling and laboring, doing the will of the master. It is not always easy, is it? And it's so important to have those that are ready and willing to intercede for you.

But at this juncture here, and at this particular time, there's a tendency on the part of the people to want a king, to presume and hustle ahead in God's program, and he gives his disciples a very simple but valuable lesson, that it may be not the appropriate time yet, but I will care for you, I am interested in you. And he spends time on the mountain praying, and he sees them all night long, in that dark, stormy night, toiling and struggling, and then he comes to meet their needs. Our Lord demonstrated his genuine commitment to prayer by praying.

It's one thing for me to spend a few moments out of the day sharing some thoughts with you out of the Word of God concerning prayer. It's quite a nice and interesting thing to be able to pull off your shelf books concerning prayer, but it is quite important to practice prayer. And whether it's convenient for us to kneel by a bedside, or whether we do it as we walk, or if we're seated in a chair, or muse and reflect, whatever form it takes, the expression of our heart in conversation with God, speaking to God and asking for the things that he has breathed into our soul out of the Word of God.

And here, that companionship with him, sensing his mind and his purpose and his will by that spirit communion, being able to delineate what it is that he wants me to do to please him in this life here below. Now in order to accomplish this, his disciples need strength. So if you would look at Luke chapter 9, we see that prayer is linked for the strengthening of his own.

Firstly, we joined a few thoughts together concerning separation to his will, then the significant crisis to find his will, and now strength for his own in performing that which God desires. And in Luke chapter 9, there is drawn together two experiences regarding prayer, and they deserve a lot of reflection and meditation on our part, and they're familiar for most of us. Verse 18, and it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him, and he asked them, almost just in conversation, while he is praying, and he turns and speaks to his disciples, what is it that he is seeking to uncover? What is it that he wants from them? Whom say the people that I am? And of course there's many reports and varied ideas, Elijah, John the Baptist, and then varying reports come back, Matthew adds to it, some say Jeremiah, and you couldn't

find any greater divergence of view than John the Baptist and Jeremiah, two totally different kind of people, and yet he seemed to be all that was needed, all that man respected, and he straightly charges them and says, now, whom say ye that I am? And Peter says, the Christ of God.

He is strengthening his own. Is he aware that we're moving near to this critical time of Calvary? Certainly. We're told that he takes them up onto the mountain to pray.

In verse 28, it came to pass, about eight days after these things, he took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and blistering, and behold, there talked with them two men, which were Moses and Elias, and we understand this to be that great mount of transfiguration. And years and years later, when Peter looked back upon it, what did he say? We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

When? When he was praying. He was revealed to them. He was transformed before them.

Some of that great, inherent, essential person, radiant, for what purpose? To strengthen those men like never before. This is the Christ. He is God.

Such an awesome experience. Like you might expect, unfortunately it created a little bit of division amongst the disciples, and Mark particularly notes it. That's Mark's characteristic.

He seemed to be well aware of the weakness of the disciples, and he alludes to conflict down at the bottom of the mountain later by those that weren't up on the mountaintop, maybe trying to put them in their place. But it had a tremendous impact upon Peter, and he held on to that. And it was experienced during prayer time.

Now, I don't believe that I've ever seen an individual physically change as a result of prayer. But beloved of God, I have seen many persons whom I knew were men and women of prayer by their demeanor, by their patience, by their quiet confidence in God, by something of the worshipful spirit that exuded from them, not only at propitious moments in public meetings, but because they loved the Lord Jesus. The delightful thing, spend time with God.

And one of the by-products is, one of the rich blessings, is that we soon find out what He wants us to do, and what He wants us to be. Now, we cannot think about prayer without looking in the latter days of our Lord's life at John 17, in that remarkable portion of Scripture where He intercedes for His own. And we're coming into those later, not only days, but hours in John chapter 17.

And that remarkable prayer occupies our heart, but it's a magnificent expression of intercession for the twelve, succor for His own. He has portrayed Himself through prayer, and in these times of prayer, as Christ, the Son of God, deity Himself. And now He turns, recognizing the rapidly coming to these climactic moments, and the plans and the purposes of God, and how gracious He is able to face these encounters, because He is resolutely committed to do the will of God, and sustained by an ongoing communion and fellowship.

And so He prays, in verse 9, I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine. What a blessed source. How warming and encouraging and fortifying to John.

How enriching for him, at the end of his life, to pen these words, and to muse upon the dignity of the words that he overheard as the Spirit of God brought them back to mind. And not only for them, but for those who

would believe the words of these men. That's for you and me.

Way back then, He was interceding for us, that we might be succored and strengthened and capacitated to meet the needs of this struggling life in which we are now living. Did our Lord Jesus believe in prayer? Oh, yes. He demonstrated it all through His earthly ministry.

And the past example of our Lord in prayer is only exceeded by His present experience in prayer. What is it that we know on the basis of the written word of God that He does now in prayer? He ever liveth to make intercessions. He is our Advocate.

He is our High Priest. How can we treat communion with God and prayer casually? He demonstrated His deep convictions in prayer. Now if you would journey back to me again to the end of Luke's Gospel, chapter 22, there's a rapid sequence of events that we need to be reminded about in those last hours.

Luke 22, verse 31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath demanded to have you, that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee.

Satan makes his demand to do the sifting, but the person who does the sifting is always left with the chair. And the good wheat comes through. All the rough stones and the fine, smooth flour comes through.

And the very things that we avoid are designed to smooth out our lives and make them more Christ-like. And the very things that we would seek to spare our children from are the very things that God uses to sift them. And what comes through is the finer flour.

And He makes no effort to interfere with the demand of Satan. He makes no effort to interrupt the program and the animosity and the temptation or the trial that the man is about to go through. But what does he do? He prays.

Ah, the wisdom of praying for those that are being sifted. And there's hardly a teenager in your local assembly or a young married couple that are not being sifted. Are you praying? It's a lot easier for me to paternally try to give some advice.

But I've learned I need to pray. I need to pray much. And there needs to be much intercession.

Because the Lord has this program of chastening and trying and disciplining. And I always do not know the best. As good as my heart and affection may be, it's better for me that a millstone hung about my neck than I stumble one of these little ones of His.

So the best avenue is intercessory prayer. They need that succoring, strengthening time. And verse 39, And he came out and went as he went to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And as he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, he kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. This is a dramatic moment in the purposes of God. And he is found in prayer.

Now is our blessed Lord Jesus thus asking that he be spared Calvary's death? No. Because he's already carefully taught his disciples that he shall die. And he's given them the details in progressive revelations week after week, instructing them in those last few days carefully as to who would oppose and what would happen and what would occur on the third day.

What is it that he's actually saying? He is not saying, Father, I don't want to die, but if I must, I will. He says, this cup. Ah, the cup that comes to the individual through the experience of death.

There are the pains of death that the written word of God talks about, and for some the experience of death is more burdensome and aggravating and woesome than for others. Some seem to be able to slip quickly and easily from this world through the article of death and on into the presence of God. And others, why would they go through? But there is none, there is none that have ever drunken this cup.

He who was holy was made sin. He who was in constant fellowship and communion who could say, Father, I know that you always hear me, but for the benefit of those around, he speaks to him. That one who was going to have to have disrupted between God and man because it was necessary he be forsaken, that was the cup.

The anguish, the suffering, the extent of what that holy God-man had to experience. And it was all resolved in prayer. I think it's rather interesting that there are statements of pain and suffering and inner experience traceable through Mark's gospel and the remarkable languages used in the Greek language along with the expressions here that mark out this time in the Lord's life as more visibly, perceptively the time of suffering than at Calvary's cross.

Because here that great inner battle was fought where he was agonizing intense suffering that goes beyond our comprehension where faith alone can understand. The sacred writer said with strong crying and tears he offered up himself in supplication and he was heard because of his own personal piety. He is our intercessor.

He is the one that has faced critical times in prayer. He is the one that demonstrates that there is something unique about communion prayer that equips my willful, tempered spirit to be able to be soft and amenable and find out what it is that God wants and to be able to yield to it. There's treasures to be found in prayer.

Our loving God and Father, how we thank Thee for our blessed, wonderful Lord Jesus. We spend a few moments contemplating just a few scriptures and the musings of our soul and the reflection of our mind and heart. It's so staggering to see his immeasurable love his perfect life his gracious care for his own the remarkable way in which he proved to be the perfect burnt offering.

Bringing Thee such pleasure and delight from the earliest years until the final act. O God, our Father, we praise and worship Thee in His holy name. Blessed Lord Jesus, we give Thee our homage and ever-deepening love and we ask Thee that by Thy Spirit Thou would teach us to pray.

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