

A Life Changing Prayer

by Charles Stanley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in changing lives, specifically praying for others to know God's will and live a life worthy of Him.

Duration: 15:40

Scripture: Ephesians 5:8, Ephesians 5:15, Colossians 1:9-10, Colossians 1:13-14

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of ceaseless prayer and provides a six-fold request for believers to pray for one another. He encourages fathers and mothers to pray for their children and husbands and wives to pray for each other, believing that God will bring about transformation in their lives. The speaker also highlights the significance of living a life that is worthy of the Lord, reflecting the character and influence of Jesus Christ. He urges believers to consider the direction and quality of their lives, striving to make a lasting impact on others.

Transcript

The title of this message today is A Life-Changing Prayer, and if you'll turn to Colossians 1, verses 9 through 14, and I believe if you'll listen very carefully, get you a pencil and a piece of paper, write down a few things that I want to share with you, I believe not only can something happen in your life, but something can happen in the life of someone very, very dear to you. Because I want to share with you a prayer that Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians, which is a prayer I certainly would like for everybody to pray for me. I certainly want to commit myself to pray for some people that I know, want to pray for every member of my family, and I think as you and I examine what this prayer really requests, I think you'll get a whole new understanding of this first chapter of Colossians, verses 9 through 14, and you would say with me, Lord, that is exactly what I want someone to pray for me.

So I want to encourage you parents to listen very carefully, concerning praying for your children, whether you're single, whether you're married, listen to this prayer and ask God to raise up somebody to pray this prayer just for you. Listen, for this reason, speaking of having heard of the love and faith of the Colossian Christians, Paul says, for this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, to ask that you may be filled with a knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to His glorious might

for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, for He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Now, you say, my goodness, somebody pray that for me? You haven't heard what Paul says in this passage, so I want you to remember two or three things here, but let me remind you of this first of all before we look at this prayer, that the most powerful thing that anybody can ever do for anybody else on the face of this earth is to pray for them, because through prayer you and I can touch anybody, anywhere on the face of this earth, regardless of their circumstances.

And that the power is not in the praying itself, but in the release that God gives as the result of that prayer, the release of His power that takes place in the life of the person for whom we are praying. Now, let me ask you a question. Who is there today for whom you are consistently making a definite, specific request to God in their behalf every day? Is there somebody you are genuinely praying for every day, making a precise, definite request in their behalf? Or have you begun to pray for someone and then you've sort of tapered off? Are you consistently praying for anybody? Are you believing that God is going to change someone's life as a result of your praying? When you pray, do you always pray, Lord, bless this, bless that, and bless the other? What I want to show you today is how to pray a big prayer, how to pray a great prayer, and that has nothing to do with high-sounding words, big words, small words, has nothing to do with your English, has nothing to do with what you feel is your ability to pray a beautiful prayer.

To my knowledge, there's not one word in this book about praying beautiful prayers, or long prayers, or short prayers. Some of them are long, some beautiful, some short. Has nothing to do with that.

But how to pray a great prayer, how to pray a prayer that gets God's power released out of heaven, on earth, in the life of the person about whom you're praying. And the second thing I want to say about that is this, that so much of our praying, we end up by saying, Lord, if it be Thy will, which sort of cancels out the whole thing. Now, there's nothing wrong with praying that.

If you're making a request and you really don't know what God wants to do, or you don't believe that is according to your understanding of the Word of God, that there's anything in the Bible that makes it clear that He does want to or He doesn't, He will, He won't. And so you pray, Lord, if it be Thy will. Let me tell you what that is.

For most of us, that's an escape hatch. If God answers my prayer, wonderful, God answered my prayer. If God doesn't answer my prayer, it's an escape hatch, because we let Satan point his ugly finger at us and say, see there, you don't have any faith.

See there, you don't really have any faith. If you were living right, God would have answered that. So what we do is we tack on to the end of it, if it be Thy will, which is an escape so that I don't really have to get out on the limb and say, God, you said it, I believe it, that settles it, and I'm anticipating the exact answer that I have requested.

And if you'll notice beginning in verse 9, He gives us a little admonition here. For this reason also since the day we heard of it, that is your faith and love, we cease not to pray. Now listen, one of the reasons we don't see God doing more big things than we do is because we falter at the very first verse of this passage.

And that is we do cease to pray, we do grow weak in our prayer, we get all fired up for about two or three days. I mean, we rattle the bars of heaven, we shake the doors of glory, and about a week later, we forget all about the fact we've ever even prayed for that person. Our minds get so caught up in so many things, or we have the idea, well, I guess God's not going to do it anyway because He didn't meet my schedule.

I wanted it done yesterday, God. And so we cease to pray. Paul says, we have ceased not, that is, as the waves keep coming on the seashore, as the sun keeps coming up every morning so that we speak of it, and as this old earth keeps on rotating, he says, that's the way we ought to pray.

As consistent as the waves hit the shore, they may become large, boisterous waves, they may be almost as if a little ripple, but they keep on coming. They just keep on coming. You can't stop them from coming.

You can't stop the sun from shining. You can't stop this old earth from rotating. And listen, he says, ceaselessly, ceaselessly, keep on praying and something will happen.

Then he gives us a six-fold request. It is what I want somebody to pray for me. It is what I'm going to pray for you.

And I believe if every father and mother would pray for their children this prayer, you would see God dramatically do something in the life of your children. If husbands and wives began to pray this for one another, specifically, precisely, calling their name, reading these requests to God, petitioning Him in each of these, my friend, you'd see something happen in your marriage. You'd see something happen in your relationship.

You'd see something happen in your whole family. You pray this for your employer and see what happens to your relationship. Pray this for your employees and see what happens to the production.

Pray this for people that you have difficulty and hardship with. Pray this for your friends, but pick out, choose somebody today in whose life you want God to alter, alter radically. And, my friend, God will answer this prayer and you will see a demonstration of God's supernatural work in their life.

So, let's begin with his first petition. And he says, beginning in verse 9 now, For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask. Now, there are two words here for prayer.

The word pray is sort of the general word that the focus is on God. It's a general request we're making. But when he says ask, the implication is for something specific.

And so, the attention is on the thing asked. Listen, we pray for you and to ask. And this is the first request that we ought to pray for the other person.

We pray, first of all, that they may know the will of God. That they may know the will of God. That is, not just sort of wonder about it.

Not, Lord, give them some sort of general direction, but that we may know precisely and exactly the will of God. The Greek word is epigonosko, not some general knowledge, but precise, exact knowledge. That we may know the will of God.

Now, listen. If you read how God worked in the lives of the Old Testament saints as well as the New, God would tell them exactly what to do. He told Abraham to go a certain place, to do a certain thing.

He didn't say, Abraham, I want you to take a trip with your son. He said, I want you to go to Mount Moriah and I want you to sacrifice him unto me. God gives specific, direct directions that are clear.

And one of the petitions that you and I ought to pray for people whom we love is, Lord, show them, give them the full knowledge of your will. Not just sort of an idea, not some general direction, but precise, exact knowledge for their life. That's what I want to pray for my children.

Lord, show them exactly what you want them to do. Which turn to take, where to turn, where not to turn, but exact knowledge. Listen.

God does not intend for us to simply go in a general direction, making decisions on our own. Listen. If God has a will for our life, He has a will that gives directions that what? That is always best for me, that is always best for Him.

So God doesn't give just general directions. He gives precise, exact ones. When you and I begin to pray for someone else, for God to fill them with the knowledge of His will, listen, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, now watch this.

You can ask your friend tomorrow, somebody you work with, well, what do you think I ought to do about such and such? If that person's lost, they're going to give you worldly wisdom, which is absolutely, usually, absolutely opposed to God's way. If you ask a carnal Christian, somebody who's living in the flesh, not walking in the ways of God, if you say, what do you think I ought to do in this situation? What they'll usually do is give you an opinion that is based on the world system. What we have to remember is this, that we're living in a world system, the Bible says that Satan is the god of this age.

He is not in control of this world, but he's the god of the world system. The whole political, social, economic system in this world is run on a system and a principle that is in opposition to God. So that when believers go to non-believers and ask for direction for their life, friend, you're making a horrible mistake.

Listen, it isn't enough just to be saved to know God's will, friend. He says in all spiritual wisdom and spiritual knowledge, if we want to know God's will, what we're asking for is to know the mind of God. Lord, in this given situation, at this point in my life, at this particular time, what do you want me to do? And God isn't going to say, well, just sort of do your thing.

And that's the way a lot of people think. They say, well, I'm saved, and so I believe as long as I'm heading in the right direction. Heading in the right direction is not adequate to be obedient to God, to live life at its fullest, to reach the maximum of your potential.

Every single one of us has potential that we're unaware of, and the only way to reach the maximum of that potential is to precisely and exactly obey the will of God, and you cannot obey what you do not know. He says it with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, that is, getting the mind of God, seeing it from his perspective, being able to discern, listen, not only between the difference between right and wrong, but what's good and what's best. What's best and what's God's will.

That's what we want, not just the best, but we want to know what God sees. And the world oftentimes, most of the time, will give you counsel that is rational and reasonable, but absolutely, totally, totally on the opposite end of what God wants. Because the world system does not see life as it is, it sees life as it would like for it to be.

It is plastic, it is counterfeit, it is not fulfilling, it is not motivating that we might reach the maximum of our potential. So one of the first requests we ought to make for someone we love, and certainly I want someone to pray that prayer for me, that I may know the will of God with all spiritual wisdom and knowledge. Then I will know exactly what the Lord wants me to do.

Imagine, suppose you as a parent, you began to pray this for your children every day, Lord, that my son, that my daughter, that my family may know your will today for their life. Every decision, God, show them what you want them to do. They would learn to live in the center of God's will, not walking down some broad, broad way, but some narrow path of obedience to God.

So the first request that we ought to make is simply this, Lord, that we might be filled, listen, filled, running over, overflowing with the absolute, absolute assurance that we know the will of God in this precise, exact situation. All right? The second request, you see, that gives us direction for our life. The second request is in verse 10.

And that is that we might walk worthy of our name, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Now, when the Bible talks about walking, about walking around in trespasses and sins or walking here, it is a word which refers to our lifestyle, our conduct, and our behavior. When he says walk in a manner worthy, now watch this.

The word worthy means wait. He says now, for example, we're talking about, first of all, we're talking about the direction of your life, the will of God. Now we're talking about the quality of life.

What is the quality of life you want to live? What's the quality of life you want for your family? The quality of life, he says, in a way that is in keeping with that of the Lord Jesus Christ, in a manner that is worthy. That is, that our life would wait like his life. That is, the life of Jesus Christ is waiting because of its impact, because of its influence.

And you see, our life can be like his life in the fact that it can weigh enough to make an indelible impression on the lives of the people, or it can weigh, as the psalmist said, that some men's lives weigh as much as air. How much does that weigh? It doesn't weigh anything. Imagine, listen, imagine living 40, 50, 60 years of your life, and your life not weigh anything in influence, an indelible impression in the lives of other people.

He says that we're to walk in a manner that is worthy of our Lord. A life that is worthy of him. That is worthy of the name Christian.

Follower of Jesus Christ. A life that is consistent with the name. A follower of him.

Obedying him. Reflecting him. That's what he's talking about.

And I want you to pray that for me. And I want to pray that for you. And I believe if you and I would pray that for one another...

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