

Prayer

by Don Courville

Don Courville emphasizes the critical role of prayer in the Christian life as a means to access God's power and deepen our relationship with Him.

Duration: 27:02

Scripture: Genesis 3:8, Psalm 14:2-3, Psalm 15:1-2, Matthew 6:33, John 15:7, Philippians 3:7-14

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer in the life of a believer. They highlight the need for the church to awaken and recognize the power of prayer. The speaker references various Christian leaders who have emphasized the significance of prayer, such as E. Host, A.W. Tozer, J.H. Jowett, and Hugh Redwood. They also quote a poem that emphasizes the need for more prayer in our lives. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to prioritize prayer and seek a deeper relationship with God through it.

Transcript

"...to the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increases strength.

Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Heavenly Father, we come before you today asking that you would minister to us.

We come before you needy. I pray, Father, that you would speak to our hearts today on the subject of prayer, that we would be challenged, Father, to use our weapon, the weapon of prayer. And we pray, if there are any that are not saved, Father, that you would speak to them about their need of Jesus Christ to be their Savior and not to trust themselves, that they might avoid an eternal hell to spend an eternity in fellowship with you.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, last week I shared with you on the subject of prayer, and God encouraged my own heart even as I was sharing that and challenged me in an area where it was looking like defeat to believe God to work, to believe God to move in.

And so I felt like that God would want us to be challenged again. Maybe from time to time we ought to take some prayer breaks and challenge our hearts to pray. The work of God done in God's way will be done by the way of prayer.

Well, I was sharing with you a little bit from the little book, *Kneeling We Triumph*, compiled. It's actually a compilation of many different authors on the subject of prayer. Fantastic little book, *Kneeling We Triumph*, by Edwin and Lillian Harvey.

They put this thing together. And I just was sharing with you, and I thought maybe it would take another week to share on the area of prayer. If we would learn to pray, we would learn to see God work in His way, and we would quit trying to do things so much in our way.

Well, I wanted to share a little bit more with you, and it might be a comment from time to time, but the main thing is I'm asking God to challenge our hearts to pray. We, someone said that the church is a mighty giant, and something to the extent that they dare not wake her up. I think the enemy said that, somebody on the other side, that the church was a mighty giant and that they dare not wake her up.

Prayer is the gateway to God. In Genesis 4, 26, the scripture says, "...then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." In 1 Peter 3, 12, "...for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Notice that God's ears are open unto our prayers. Slocum said, "...prayer is the Christian's greatest resource and the one least used.

It is his greatest obligation and the one most neglected. It is the most common form of devotion, yet the one least understood. Prayer is the gateway to God's presence, but few enter.

Prayer is the channel of God's grace, but in most lives it is clogged. It is commonly supposed that anyone can pray, but only those who are accepted in Christ have full access to God. Many regard prayer as optional, but God requires prayer as the condition of His working, and where there is no prayer, there is no power." A prominent Christian leader, acquainted with spiritual conditions, said, "...if I were to put my finger on the greatest lack in our Christianity, I would unhesitatingly point to the need for an effective prayer life among laity and ministers." And E. M. Bounds warns us that, "...past praying cannot suffice for today's needs." He said, "...the church that is dependent on its past history for its miracles of power and grace is a fallen church." Speaking of Hudson Taylor, Dr. E. E. Post says, "...he was of necessity a busy man, but he always regarded prayer itself as in reality the most needful and important part of the work.

He practically recognized that much time must be spent in seeking God's guidance if a right understanding was to be obtained of the problems and difficulties that confronted him. In carrying on the work of the mission, he knew that in no other way was the power of the Holy Spirit to be obtained for himself and his brethren as they sought to develop the work. I venture on this occasion not only to impress upon myself, but upon you as well, the importance of our copying him in this respect." And Ms. Howard Taylor, in her biography of Hudson Taylor, quotes him as saying, "...am I hoping to give special time to prayer and Bible study on the voyage? I do want our whole life to be an ascending plane, not resting in anything we have learned or felt or attained, but a pressing on and up.

Do we not want more, really, to meditate on God, to gaze on Him, to take in what we are even now competent to take in of His greatness, His resources, His assurances and promises? Dwelling thus on Him, should we not be enabled to grasp more of the heights and depths of His character and purposes, and to be more ready and able to do His will?" One of the La Miramar party writing home to England said,

"...oh, that we may be made capable of bearing much blessing. Do pray that we may each be drawn close to the Savior, and kept walking with Him in such sweet fellowship that for us to live may be Christ. Then what wonder should we see? The destitution in the light of eternity is awful.

It stares us in the face. Human effort cannot meet it. Nothing can, short of divine power.

So do pray. Oh, we need to lay hold upon God about it. May He make us really in earnest.

How can we trifle? How can we be listless in view of His unfailing promise that what we ask in faith we shall receive? Why are we not Israel's? God grant that we may learn how to pray." Someone said, "...prayer power is not only the most direct, but also the most effective force that can be brought to bear upon the many difficult problems that exist in the Lord's work. Prayer is not only more effective than other methods of carrying forward the work of the Lord, but it has also the further great advantage of being free from human schemes and carnal manipulations. He who waits upon God moves on in quite confidence and needs neither the blare of trumpets nor press agents methods to announce his success, but in godly fear leaves until the day of Christ's return the record of achievement.

The whole tendency in the life of prayer is to bring us to the place of crucifixion and to school us in the great principles of righteousness, justice, and love." Arousing men to pray, Ezekiel 22:30, the word of God says, "...and I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it." And then these lonesome words come on the end, "...but I found none." As God called you to pray, God is calling out prayer warriors today. The battle will be won or lost in the area of prayer. Will we believe God? A.J. Gordon said, "...to arouse one man or woman to the tremendous power of prayer for others is worth more than the combined activity of a score of average Christians.

What David Brainerd did, others may do. God is no respecter of persons." My friend, are we praying or are we playing? Is your church a praying church or is it a playing church? Are you busy or are you busy about other things? Are you busy in prayer? E.M. Bounds left his settled pastorate to stir ministers to the importance of prayer. W.H. Hodge here gives a personal glimpse into this intercessor's importunity on behalf of himself and others.

He said, "...I have been among many ministers and slept in the same room with them for several years. No smoking among them, no secret orders, no jokes. They were beautiful, clean and good.

They prayed, but I was never impressed with any special praying among them until one day a small man with gray hair and an eye like an eagle came along. His statue and little handbag were against him. We had a ten-day convention.

We had some fine preachers around the home, and he and one of them were assigned to my room. I was surprised early next morning to see a man bathing and rubbing himself before day and then see him get down and begin to pray. I said to myself, he will not disturb us, but will soon finish.

He kept on softly for hours, interceding and weeping softly for me and my indifference and for all the ministers of God. He spoke the next day on prayer. I became interested, for I was young in the ministry and had often desired to meet with a man of God that prayed like the saints of the apostolic age.

Next morning he was up praying again, and for ten days he was up early praying for hours. I became intensely interested and thanked God for sending him. At last I said I found a man that really prays.

I shall never let him go. He drew me to him with hooks of steel. I entertained him, rose up with him, brought him to New York City at quite a cost of money to have him pray for my people and for me.

He was a great admirer of David Brainerd. He would read his diary for hours and try to impress his life on others. He remained two months with me in sweet fellowship and mighty prevailing prayer.

On the twenty-fourth day of October, I took that dear sweet wrinkled face in my hands and kissed him for the last time. That face lit up with the divinity of thought, those eyes gazing and peering into immensity. An eagle man, an intense man, yes, one of God's eagles.

I shall never see him again in this world, nor the like of him, I fear. What a vast difference in this man of God and the ministers of today. They know no battles with the powers of darkness.

They know no wrestling with the mighty forces of the air. No hours of travail when the crush of battle looks as though Satan would win. Many a minister has buried his spirituality in the grave of his activities.

Eight years ago, I commenced to pray early. This early rising is no longer an experiment. It is with me a success.

E. M. Bounds waited fifty years for two men. Only two adopted his early praying, one minister and one layman. Joseph Parker said, Blessed is the day whose morning is sanctified.

Successful is the day whose first victory was won by prayer. Holy is the day whose dawn finds thee on the top of the mount. Health is established in the morning.

Wealth is won in the morning. The light is brightest in the morning. Wake, psaltery and harp.

I myself will awake early. Joseph Parker. Are you praying or are you playing? We must train others to pray.

Luke 11 1, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples. E. M. Bounds said the plea and purpose of the apostles were to put the church to pray in. They did not ignore the grace of cheerful giving.

They were not ignorant of the place which religious activity and work occupied in the spiritual life, but not one nor all of these in apostolic estimate or urgency could at all compare in necessity and importance with prayer. The most sacred and urgent pleas were used. The most fervent exhortations, the most comprehensive and arousing words were uttered to enforce the all-important obligation and necessity of prayer.

Someone said, In traveling among the nations, John Armand made it a practice to study the sources of the spiritual movements which transformed whole communities. Invariably, when he could reach the source, he found it to be a necessary prayer. I heard of a man, he says, who spent three hours a day in intercession.

When someone asked him, How can we multiply intercessions? He said, I used to lay down a great many points on how to get people to pray, but I have made up my mind that the only way to get them to do it is to do it myself. Leaders of men and movements have seen this importance of prayer training. D.E. Host's successor to Hudson-Taylor places this need above all other branches of instruction.

In connection with the training home, the thought sometimes comes to me in view of the growing emphasis on prayer and intercession in those parts of the field where there has been special spiritual blessing, whether the exercise of them should not have a more definite and larger place in the course of preparation. The leadership would need to be by someone who, through much exercise and even travail, has himself been baptized with a true and fervent spirit of prayer. He said, Should it not be recognized that the practice of prayer and intercession needs to be taught to young believers, or rather developed in young believers, quite as much, if not more so, than other branches of the curriculum? And the late J.D. Drysdale, founder of Emmanuel Missions and training school, had the same vision.

He said, If I am concerned that my flock be men and women of prayer, then as their pastor I must lead the way. Apathy in me will produce apathy in them. The church prayer meeting ought to be the best attended in the week, and if it is, success will follow the ministry of the word at the weekends.

I would rather a thousand times set men and women to pray than to teach them to preach. The homiletical class can teach them to preach. J.H. Jowett, a most godly and moving preacher, emphasized the same need.

He said, I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach. In Bristol fashion, an autobiography of Hugh Redwood, he states that as a young convert, no one had taken the pains to teach him how to pray, and to this he attributed his missing those years that could have been so useful. After years, he rediscovered Christ through prayer.

What books we might have had from the pen of this journalist had some simple Christian introduced him to access to God by prayer. More ships, some cry, more guns, more fighters in the air, but wise the king who calls for more prayer. Remember, angels use this ancient thoroughfare, so keep the highways clear, more prayer.

One day will not suffice to meet times well, wear and tear, each hour of life must see more prayer. Again and yet again, the scrolls of God declare deepest need of men, more prayer. Are we praying? Or are we playing? Man's strange reluctance to commune.

Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, Genesis 3.8. Are we hiding ourselves? Psalms 14.2 and 3, the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They're all gone aside. Beware of the busyness of barrenness.

More prayer. Are we praying? The increasing knowledge of God from A.W. Tozer has some thoughts that maybe we should pay attention to. If prayer is so marvelous a privilege, why is man so loath to enter into its rich heritage? The observation of this reluctance has puzzled many believers.

The answer can only be found in the story of Adam's lost communion in the garden. Disobedience brought departure. Obedience means communion.

The old Adam, the flesh, does not delight in God. Only the enthroned spirit within enjoys the fellowship of the Father. A.W. Tozer, at a greater length, he clears up the mystery when he says that first picture of God and man at the time of the creation shows them in close and open-hearted communion.

Adam listens while God explains how it is to be with him in his Eden home and lays down a few easy rules for his life on earth. The whole scene is restful, relaxed, and altogether beautiful. But the communion did

not last.

Adam's very likeness to God, for example, his freedom to choose permitted him, though it did not compel him to make a choice contrary to the will of God. So sin entered and the wondrous fellowship was broken. Seen from our human standpoint, redemption must rank first among all the acts of God.

No other achievement of the Godhead required such vast and precise knowledge, such perfection of wisdom, or such fullness of moral power to bring man into communion with himself. God must deal effectively with the whole matter of justice and righteousness. He must dispose of sin, reconcile an enemy, and make a rebel willing and obedient.

And this he must do without compromising his holiness or coercing the race he would save. How two wills set in opposition to each other and both free could be harmonized with God's problem and his alone. And with infinite wisdom and power, he solved it through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Because Christ is God and man, he can properly represent each before the other. He is the daisman who can stand between the alienated man and the offended God and lay his hand upon them both. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2.5. All this is such a familiar part of evangelical theology that it may safely be assumed that the majority of my readers know it already, Tozer says.

That is, they know it theoretically, but the experimental aspect of the truth is not so well known. Indeed, large numbers of supposedly sound Christian believers know nothing at all about personal communion with God. In their lies one of the greatest weaknesses of present-day Christianity.

He went on to say, The experimental knowledge of God is eternal life, John 17.3, and increased knowledge results in a correspondingly larger and fuller life. So rich a treasure is this inward knowledge of God that every other treasure is as nothing compared with it. We may count all things of no value and sacrifice them freely if we may thereby gain a more perfect knowledge of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This was Paul's testimony in Philippians 3, 7-14, and has been the testimony of all great Christian souls who have followed Christ from Paul's day to ours. And he closed up with this statement, Tozer said, To know God, it is necessary that we be like God to some degree. For things wholly dissimilar cannot agree, and beings wholly unlike can never have communion with each other.

It is necessary, therefore, that we use every means of grace to bring our souls into harmony with the character of God. And my friend, that's why we must pray. Are we praying or are we playing? You see, prayer has a prerequisite, and prayer's prerequisite is co-crucifixion.

John 15, 7, Jesus said, If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. In Psalms 15, 1 and 2, Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? And the answer comes back, He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart. Is God speaking to you today about your prayer life, my friend? See, one of the reasons that some have no desire to pray at all is because they've never been brought back into the communion that Christ restored that Adam lost in the garden.

Why, we have a lot of Christians that don't have any, or professing Christians, have no desire to show up at prayer meetings. They have no link with God. There's no connection.

The Holy Spirit gives you that drawing, that compelling to pray. F.J. Hugo, he was a chaplain in World War I, and he later served as a missionary in Mexico City, and he said of his earlier ministry, quote, There were years of earnest toil and some little fruit, but in my secret soul I wept in shame, for there was a great lack. I was not victorious.

I was a victim of a thousand things I loathed. And God permitted him to pass through a very great trial during which he made the discovery that there were demon forces governing the world of which he had never before dreamed, and in the face of which his weapons were as a toy against a battleship, he learned that his self-life made room for these forces within himself, and neutralized his attack against them. And wonderful fact, it then dawned on him that God had nailed his old self-life to the Savior's cross centuries before.

Little wonder that the words below burned with reality as he urges co-crucifixion with Christ as a condition for authoritative prayer. And here's the words of F.J. Hugo when he said, The reason why many are finding prayer so unsatisfactory, and the life of prayer so unattractive, is because they have attempted to enter into the celestial realms of prayer in the strength of the old man. The old man can do no more will these weapons which are not carnal, but mighty through God, than he can love his enemies, or rejoice always, or have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, or fulfill any other Christian grace.

He, the old man, may imitate these graces, but actually possesses them. Never. They are the fruits of the Spirit.

They come from above. They are the outworking of the Christ nature imparted to the believer, and incorporated in his being on the basis of the cross. True prayer can only be inaugurated on the basis of co-crucifixion.

This is the prime condition. If you abide in me and I in you, you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you. We must be in Christ, but we cannot be in Christ in the fullest sense.

Without that, we commit to death, in the power of the Savior's death, the old life. It is when we realize our oneness with Christ in death, and in resurrection, that prayer becomes the marvelous force that we find it was in the life of the Savior. The invincible dynamic that it reveals itself to be in the book of Acts, and the ineffable experience of the great saints of the ages, it is then that our spirits, liberated by the power of the cross from the fleshly and the soulish entanglements, mount up on wings as eagles.

Are you praying? Have you been co-crucified with Christ? This is the cross life. It is the prayer life. And to mount up on wings as eagles is to live in fellowship with the Savior, abiding in prayer.

Heavenly Father, I pray that the message today would encourage us to pray in Jesus' time. Amen. Well, may God richly bless you, my friend.

But before we close, let me challenge you that Jesus Christ is all you need. As Colossians says, he's all in all, but is he all you want? God bless you.

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