

1 Thessalonians 5:17

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the necessity of continuous prayer, rejoicing, and thankfulness as essential aspects of the Christian life in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Duration: 48:09

Scripture: Mark 1:35, Luke 18:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:15-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of prayer and rejoicing always. He emphasizes that even in difficult circumstances, believers should find joy because it is God's will for them. The speaker also highlights the need to be devoted to prayer and to have a discerning attitude through careful study of the Word. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of praying at all times and not losing heart.

Transcript

All right, well, let's read our text. It's 1st Thessalonians, chapter 5. I want to begin once again in verse 15. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophetic utterance, but examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good, and abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's ask for the Lord's help. And this is not a rite or a tradition. Please bow your head and ask for the Lord's help.

Both that the speaking be His and the hearing be His. Let's pray. Father, I ask you, please have mercy on your people.

Once again, reveal your goodness. Teach us your will and empower us to obey it. Lord, help.

And in such a way that we will know there has been help. In Jesus name, Amen. Now, in verse 15, I want you to look at the end of that verse.

It says, seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. We need to seek after the good of the body of Christ, the believers whom we have declared to love. And for all people, we need to be a blessing to all men.

And then if you look down in 23, it says, now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely. Now, we have here two pieces of bread, and there's a lot of stuff sandwiched in between. But first of all, it's do good.

Be a blessing. And I mean that in a biblical way. Promote the redemption of people.

And then he goes on and in verse 23, the other side of the sandwich is, now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely. And so how can we be a blessing with regard to the promotion of redemption of all people? And how can we ourselves grow in sanctification? Well, we see the answer in between these two things. Now, even though verse 23 is going to talk about a sovereign act of God, also we see in verse 16 through 21, what can be done on our side that these two things come to fruition in our lives.

And he says, rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances, but examine everything carefully. Hold fast to that which is good.

Abstain from every form of evil. Now let me just give you a summary of that whole thing. Verse 16, rejoice always.

Even in the midst of the most horrible circumstances, why? Because you're super spiritual? Absolutely not. It's because of what you know. You know who God is.

You know what God has done for you in Christ. You know what God is doing in you and will do in you through future grace throughout all of eternity. That's how you can rejoice, even when you're walking through what seems to be hell on earth.

And then he goes on and says, pray without ceasing. In the Greek, that means pray without ceasing. And we're going to talk about that tonight.

And then he goes on, in everything give thanks. How can any sane person obey this? Well, first of all, I want you to realize something. You need to obey it.

Because he makes it clear here, it's God's will. Just as much as thou shalt not murder, it is God's will that you do what? That you give thanks for everything. And how can you do something like that? Because you know that God is working through everything in your life.

You think to yourself, he can't be working through this. This is horrible what is happening to me. Let me ask you a question.

Is it an accident? Is it something that slipped in on God that he didn't know about? Or did he get something wrong? Or is it true he knows exactly what you must pass through in order to be conformed to the image of Christ? And if that's true, then the only question you have to ask is, do I want what God wants? Or do I want what I want? There have been times even this preacher here has passed through something of at least what he thought, probably in an exaggerated state. But what I thought was hell. Only to find out that's

exactly what I needed.

I would have never chose that for myself. But I had to have it. And in all my fighting and whining and crying and spitting and blaming and everything else, finally I had to come to a great conclusion.

Paul Washer, you must make a decision. Do you want what God wants? Because obviously he knows you must pass through this in order to be conformed to the image of his Son. Well, let's go on.

And he says this, Do not quench the Spirit. Yes. You can grieve the Holy Spirit.

You can quench the Holy Spirit. You can do such and such things so that his power and most importantly his life and his joy giving presence is withdrawn. God will never, as the Confessions state, utterly and totally leave you.

He who began a good work on you will finish it. But know this, through our sin, our lack of faith, our rebellion against God's providence, the Spirit can be both grieved and quenched. Then he goes on and he says this, and we're going to talk about every one of these in detail.

He says, Do not despise prophetic utterances. Now, you notice this comes right after the idea of quenching the Spirit. You want to know why? One of the greatest ways we quench the Spirit is when we despise prophetic utterance.

Now I'm not talking about some prophet standing up in the middle of the congregation and telling us the world's going to end in 2011. What I'm talking about is when the Word of God is preached. Not some opinion of a preacher, but when the Word of God is preached.

Whether it is the Word of God preached in the street, or the Word of God preached behind a pulpit, or the Word of God preached to you from a counselor's desk. The Word of God. And you're confronted with your sin.

The quickest way you can despise prophetic utterance, or the quickest way you can grieve the Holy Spirit is to despise what you've been told. I remember years and years ago on a train coming back from Cusco in Peru. I was probably 22 years old, somewhere around there.

And I was always a person that was very withdrawn from everyone else, even after I became a Christian. And one day, brother confronted me. And I said, you just don't understand my situation.

You don't understand how I was raised. You don't understand the difficulties. He goes, Paul, I don't care.

I don't care about how you were raised. I don't care about your difficulties. I don't care about your past.

All I want you to know is you're responding in a manner that is sinful. And you have no excuse whatsoever. I was so mad at him, I could have spit nails.

But then in the Andes Mountains, in an old, dilapidated hotel, staring out the window all night, about dawn, I realized I was self-centered and loveless, that my whole life was about me. And I despised that prophetic utterance. I despised the Word of God being preached to me.

You see that? And we need to understand this. Now, he says, Yes, but examine everything carefully. Hold fast to that which is good.

Abstain from every form of evil. It doesn't mean that every time someone walks up to you, or every time a preacher preaches, or every time you hear some YouTube sermon, that you're supposed to bend down and repent of something the man is saying. But you are required to go to the Scriptures and ask yourself, Am I the man? Have I sinned? Is this true? Now, you may be thinking right now, I followed you around.

The fact of the matter is, I'm preaching through the book of 1 Thessalonians, and we just got here. And this is for all of us. Don't despise it.

When someone comes to you and tells you the truth about you, they are doing the most loving thing they can possibly do. I can't tell you. Sometimes I tell people, When were you saved? And I say, Well, you have to qualify that, because I've been saved many times.

And they go, What do you mean? I go, I have been justified through faith in Jesus Christ, and I know the moment that happened. But there have been many times in my 30, more than 30 years of walking with Christ, when I was ready to head down a road that would have been disastrous, and somebody, like the great evangelist in Pilgrim's Progress, like the prophets of the Old Testament, stood there and confronted me, slapped me upside my head with the Word of God, and turned me around and saved my life. And so these are things that we need to realize.

Examine it. Go to the Word of God. Ask yourself, God, show me.

Show me, Lord. And when the Word of God speaks clearly, don't say to yourself, I'll pray about it. You don't have to pray about it.

If it's what the Word of God says, obey it. You see? Now, let's go back and look at this. Last week I was going to preach through the entire text, and I failed you terribly.

We only got to rejoice always. But now we're going to look at verse 17. Pray without ceasing.

And I want us to look at this. First of all, the word here, for prayer, is a general term for praying. Kind of, you could say this, referring to all types and kinds of prayer.

Now, let me ask you a question. Do you identify in your prayer life with all types and kinds of prayer? You know, a lot of people who tell me they really struggle in prayer, I usually ask them to define what they mean. And you know what most people tell me? Whether they use the word or not, I realize that for them, prayer is intercession.

And that's it. It's intercession. And they say it's hard.

Well, I want to tell you something. Intercession is a great part of prayer, but that's not all that prayer is. You need to understand that.

I usually divide my prayer life up into praying with my boots on and praying with my boots off. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, let me tell you this first. If all prayer was, was praying with my boots on, I would probably tire of prayer quickly.

So what do I mean? Praying with my boots on. Prayer, as you know, intercessory prayer. Whether it be for a brother who's wayward, or whether it be for the gospel entering into a place where it has never been preached, or whether it is some trouble in the church, or the encroachment of evil in our country, whether it's anything like that, and you pray against it, you pray for the advance of the kingdom, that is intercession,

and it is praying with your boots on.

And my dear friend, if you think it's work, know this, it's work for everyone. It's easy for no one. In the same way that going to battle is not easy.

Ever. And so you've got to realize, there is an aspect of prayer that is just hard labor. It is fighting against hell itself.

That's one aspect of prayer. And if that's all you ever think of when you think of prayer, it will wear you out. But then there's what I call praying with my boots off.

And that is fellowship. Just communion. Sometimes just silence.

Sometimes talking about everything in my heart. Sometimes listening that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob might speak to my heart through the Word and reveal something there. Sometimes it's just... Well, let me tell you, I've learned this, in the midst of horrifying battles, my greatest prayer is this, to sit in the dark and say, Lord, You know, You know.

That's enough. You know. Oh, it's such a delight to walk with Him.

And it's like a spiral, your prayer life. It's either spiraling up or it's spiraling down, because it doesn't stay neutral. You must learn to pray.

But you must learn that prayer is not just hard work intercession. Prayer is lovely communion. It can be as tender as a mother holding a baby and nursing it.

It can be as violent as kneeling down three feet away from an F5 tornado. As I have written many times, His love is oftentimes more violent than His wrath. One of my favorite singers from a long time ago, most of you won't even remember, a guy by the name of Keith Green.

A lot of curly hair. And he wrote a song to his son. Oh, Lord, I am weak and I'm trembling.

Oh, my son, I am weak and I'm trembling. For the Lord, I am always remembering. Oh, what a strong shepherd holds you in His arms.

He will break you and make you His own. And does He do that? Yes, He does it before the Word. Does He do it in the community? Yes, He does it through fellowship.

Does He do it through trials? Yes. But the most lovely, peaceful, violent place I have ever found on this earth is on my knees. On my knees.

And I would that you would pray. I would that you would learn how to pray. I would that you would read books on prayer.

I would that you would read biographies of men and women who pray. I would that you would realize this is a command. Pray without ceasing.

Pray. I used to teach young preachers, you can't preach without the power of God. Now I teach them, you can't breathe without the power of God.

You can't. Pray without ceasing. Now, just a little bit of your information.

This is again, like the other command, a continuous action. It's a habitual practice. It's a lifestyle.

It's something that, in one sense, is a work of the Spirit. In another sense, it is simple discipline and obedience to a command. You cannot live without prayer.

You cannot live rightly without prayer. Find me a man, as the old prophet said, sinning, and I'll show you a man who doesn't pray. Show me a man who prays much, and I'll show you a man with a little amount of sin.

Never make decisions without copious amounts of prayer. Do nothing without prayer. Assume nothing.

Presume nothing. Now, the adverb here, again, in our text, pray without ceasing, the without ceasing in the Greek text comes first. And that's very, very important because in the Greek language, like sometimes in English, that denotes emphasis.

The adverb is being emphasized here. Without ceasing. Pray.

Pray. Pray. You know why we don't pray? We really don't believe that He not only can do, but will do, the miraculous situations that everyone would call dead.

He is able to resurrect. There is nothing He cannot do. And although He is sovereign, and I follow the Westminster, the 1689, and all the confessions of the Netherlands.

He's sovereign, but know this. You have not because you ask not, and I can't explain it, don't have to, because it wasn't explained in the Holy Scriptures. Please understand.

He can. And I don't want you to get into that old reformed tradition. God can do anything, He just doesn't want to do anything.

I have seen that God wants to do far more than what any of us could ever believe. Pray. Pray.

Pray. Now what does it mean to pray without ceasing? Here we need to avoid super-spirituality, don't we? What does it mean? Well, this adverb is used in two other places in the book of 1 Thessalonians, and I want us to look there. Look in chapter 1, verse 3. Constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.

He says constantly, same adverb, constantly bearing in mind your work of faith. Now, if we want to be literal here, Paul thought about nothing but their work of faith. So how did he write the rest of the epistle? How did he ever preach? So obviously he doesn't mean that 24-7 he was only thinking about them.

That's not what it means. It can't mean that. Then go over to chapter 2, verse 13.

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it. Not as the word of men. Now, he wasn't constantly thanking God only for this, because if he was, then he couldn't have fulfilled what's in verse 3, chapter 1. So what is it talking about? Here's what it's talking about.

It's talking about a lifestyle, and it's talking about, I want you to get this word, re-occurring prayer. Prayer is a habitual lifestyle. It is something that is constantly, not just in some so-called American version of a quiet time.

That's not the only time you pray. But that throughout the entire day, in every situation, you give yourself over to God, you call upon God, you commune with God. Not only because of need, but out of delight.

You love to simply talk to Him. You see that? I hope you do. Now, I want to quote Hebert here, one of my favorite people in the world.

Just listen to what he says. The practical demands of life make it impossible for them to give themselves to constant praying, but they are to live in the spirit of constant communion with God. In the Christian life, the act of prayer is intermittent, but the spirit of prayer should be incessant.

Or spirit or attitude. Now, let me give you an idea. Spurgeon was a great, great preacher.

Oftentimes, he would spend the night, Saturday night, and even those of us who aren't great preachers have done the same thing. Spend most of the night up trying to write out an outline or something and coming to nothing. And the whole floor is covered in paper, back when we used paper.

And Spurgeon would find himself going up to the pulpit on Sunday morning saying this over and over. I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit.

Crying out to God. So that when you get up in the morning, you are so unsure about yourself, without grace, that you're not willing to move a quarter of an inch to the left or the right without crying out to God. Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.

You get up in the morning and you notice a sense of frustration with somebody in your family or a child. Immediately, it is to go to prayer. Oh God, settle my heart.

And if that's not enough, if the temptation, and to be impatient with a family member is temptation unto sin, then pull away for a minute or two. Anything. Get out of there.

You see, our problem is we don't think that impatience is the same as murder, do we? We should be afraid of both. Anytime you look within you, whether it's unmet expectations or whatever, you realize it's idolatry. And you go to the Lord in prayer.

Every time you see a person coming toward you that is troubled about something, and you should know at that moment that all the knowledge that you possess is not enough to minister to that person. You need God. You see, in everything.

And really, it comes down to this. Remember I said we didn't believe God? That's one of the reasons we don't pray. And the other is we're just too strong.

You think only strong people pray. It's the very opposite. Only people who know they're weak pray.

The strong have no need of prayer. None. None.

But if you're weak, and you are. As a matter of fact, a great part of the Christian life is God just simply working in your life to show you how weak and unspiritual you actually are. And don't feel bad about that because there's therefore now no condemnation in Christ.

He's justified you and He loves you, but realize what's going on. All the hard wins in our life is simply to weaken us and show us we cannot stand. And then prayer is that great resource and recourse.

I just can't stand it when I hear people say, well, there's nothing left to do now but pray. Really? Should have done that from the start. I would say this, there's nothing left to do now but us get involved and try to figure it out.

And if you've prayed first, you probably won't ever get to that situation because God will have already worked. There's no mountain that can't be cast into the sea. It just doesn't exist.

Mountains are big to you, not to God. Not at all. Not at all.

Just when you're about to quit, if only you would hang in there, you may see a victory that's the greatest one you'll ever witness in your lifetime. Pray. Pray.

Now, similar injunctions, Romans 12, 12. Rejoice in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. Now, let's just stop before anybody says amen.

And let's ask ourselves a question. You ask yourself a question. Would someone look at your life and say, he or she is devoted to prayer? Would you say that about yourself without trembling? Well, there's just no way that this can be done.

There's no way this can be fixed. There's no way this can be helped. There's no way that Bible can be translated in that many languages.

So many different things. Are you devoted to prayer? Devote yourself to prayer for a couple of years and then come back and answer those questions. Ephesians 6, 18.

With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit. That does not mean to glossolalia. That's not talking about some ecstatic utterance or tongues.

It's talking about praying in the power of the Holy Spirit. And with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. I'm just reminded of this.

Hopefully, it's of the Lord. But, sir, are you in constant perseverance and petition and alert for your wife? Wife for your husband? Knowing the dangers that surround you? Parents for your children? Children if you're converted for your parents? Flock for your pastor? Pastor for your flock? On the alert, in prayer, watching? Why do so many things sneak up on us? I didn't really do this, but for sake of illustration, I'll say I did. Kevin, I don't understand why I'm not seeing any deer when we go deer hunting.

He says, well, if you would just wake up in the tree stand instead of sleeping all eight hours, maybe you'd see something. It's not rocket science. In the same way, you say, well, so many things sneaking up on me.

Are you alert in prayer? Are you devoted to prayer? Have you learned discernment through your careful study of the Word? You see? Colossians 4.2 Devote yourself to prayer. Again, devote yourself to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving. Now, twice we've seen the word devote.

Devote yourself to prayer. Literally, that means to be close at hand. To have prayer close at hand.

Okay? You go out walking in the woods in bear country, I mean grizzly bear country, there's one thing they'll tell you. Keep your gun close at hand. That means right with you.

A policeman goes into a dangerous situation. He doesn't want to use his gun, but he's going to keep his gun close at hand. What should we keep close at hand? Prayer.

Always our first recourse. Prayer. Close at hand.

Prayer. Close at hand. Prayer.

The word comes actually from the Greek word, kateros, which means strong or steadfast. Be strong in prayer. Most believers that I talk to, the one place where they most acknowledge weakness, well, there's two places and one's above the other.

All believers mostly tell me they're weak in their Scripture reading. But then they say, I'm even weaker in prayer. The two things we most need to be godly, to be strong, to be useful.

You see? Be devoted. Mounts says this, to attend to constantly, to persist in, adherence to a thing, to be intently engaged in, attend constantly to. The Greek scholar Nida says, to continue to do something with intense effort, with a possible implication of doing it despite difficulty.

If you're laying in a hospital and you've been in a car accident and you have several ribs broke, and the doctor says breathe, you don't say, I'm not going to breathe, it's too painful. Because you know now, you have no option. Pain or not, you must breathe or you will die.

It's not a question of how difficult it is. It doesn't matter anymore how difficult it is. You must breathe or die.

It's the same way with prayer. You say, prayer is difficult. I know.

That doesn't change anything. Prayer or die. It's absolutely necessary.

Now I just want to close by looking at some examples of the Apostle Paul. No, let's go right to the only perfect man, Jesus. And let's just look at some examples.

And open your Bibles and turn with me, first of all, to the book of Mark, chapter 1, verse 35. Now before we read 35, I want you to realize that from 29 to 34, what you're going to see is that countless people find out that Jesus is in a certain place and multitudes run to that place. He's their only hope of being healed, of being delivered.

He's their only hope. And I want to tell you something. When people are in a state of you're my only hope, they'll tear the door down to get to you.

They will wear you out. I remember taking a doctor up into the Andes Mountains one time. Didn't tell anyone he was a doctor.

He brought almost no instruments or medical supplies. When they found out, there were probably 1,500 people in that conference, just dirt outside, tents, preaching. When they found out he was a doctor, for three days, day and night, there was a line out in front.

And when the conference was over, there were good men there, almost willing to fight to get to that doctor. They were desperate. And that's what Jesus is going through here.

I mean, in this, remember what it says? She touched Him and He noticed that virtue went out from Him. It drained Him. Here is a man totally drained.

Wore out physically. And look what it says in 35. Probably didn't get to bed until sometime in the dark, sometime in the morning, sometime after midnight.

But then it says in 35, in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went away to a secluded place and was praying there. He knew how to be strengthened. You're spiritually weak, how to be strengthened.

You're physically weak, how to be strengthened. Pray, pray, pray. And then they come to Him.

They don't understand, especially Simon and his companions, verse 36, searched for Him. They found Him and said to Him, everyone is looking for You. And it's basically, what are You doing here? I mean, Jesus, there's so many people with so many needs.

Why are You here? Because this is the place He was strengthened. This is the place He was strengthened. And this is the place that you and I are strengthened.

It is. And without this, there is no strength. You're no good to anyone prayerless.

Prayerless preaching. Prayerless counseling. Prayerless life.

It's no good to anyone. We're so quick to open up our mouth with so many cliches and wives tales and ideas and personal opinions. Give me the man or woman saturated with the Word of God, saturated with the Holy Spirit, and given to a life of prayer.

You see. Now, let's go on. Let's go to Luke.

Luke is known for two things in his gospel. Well, for several things, but there's two things that especially stick out in Luke, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit, a genuine work, and the life of prayer. Those two things are prominent in Luke's gospel.

And so go with me to Luke 4, verse 21. I'm sorry. Go to 5.16. But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Pray without ceasing. Habitual. He often did this.

Have your children found you slipping away? Have your children ever come in the room and interrupted you down on your knees? They see their mother, their father, in prayer. And they back out of the room. Even when you're studying the Bible, they walk in, they see you, they don't back out of the room.

They still go, Hey, Dad. But when they see you pray, they don't say, Hey, Dad. They back out of the room.

Because they know something's going on. Your roommates caught you doing that? I know a guy that was so given to prayer when he was in college, guys, that every night he'd go in the closet and pray. And roommates would come home at night from doing what they were doing and have him fallen asleep in the closet and think he lost his mind.

Make so much noise in the closet, they finally said, Please, just go outside. Do something. But none of us are getting any sleep.

Do they ever find you praying? I hope that people find you praying. Look at 6:12. It was at this time that he went off to the mountain to pray and he spent the whole night in prayer to God.

This is prior to selecting the twelve. Now, this is God incarnate. But before he makes a major decision, he spends the night in prayer.

Now, I'm not going to ask you if you spent the night in prayer, as though the night was something magical or intensely spiritual, but I'm going to ask you this. In making your major decisions, have you spent hours, maybe even days, in prayer? Until you've heard the voice of God through the Scriptures. Now, let's go on.

Let's look at 918. And it happened that while he was praying alone, the disciples were with him and he questioned them, saying, Who do the people say that I am? Again, he's praying and alone. I've often told this story that when I went to my first pastor and I told him that the Lord had called me to preach, the first thing he said to me was, College boy, can you be alone? And I thought he meant that if I preached the truth, I'd be alone.

That's not what he meant. What he meant was this. While all the other college boys are going off on the spring break ski trip or wherever they're going, and running around in bachelor packs on campus and going to Christian organizations everywhere, can you do this? Can you just be alone with God? One of the great tragedies in the ministerial world today are men who can spend all kinds of time with any sort of person, but they cannot spend time alone with God.

Shut up to God. Shut up to God. And not just studying the Scriptures.

Although I promote that. Hours of it a day. Go.

Study. But if you study and study alone, you'll become cold as a stone. You'll become lifted up intellectually.

All sorts of horrifying things can happen to the brilliant man in the Scriptures who does not pray. Now, I want us just to look at 11.1. It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples. I often ask this question.

Have people ever walked up to you, if you're in the ministry or something, and said to you, Wow, man, I wish I could preach like you. Or I wish I knew as much Bible as you know. Has anyone ever heard you pray and then walked up to you and says, I'd give anything to pray like you.

Where did you learn to pray like that? It's amazing. My dear friend that I always mention that's gone on to be with the Lord, Bob Jennings. Almost everywhere you go, even though Brother Jennings was a wonderful preacher, a beautiful, sanctified man, most people would say to me, I never heard anybody pray like that.

I just never heard anybody pray like that. All the people that attribute to Spurgeon, you know, his great preaching was the source, well, it was from the source of his great intellect. He would say, no, I preach like that because I pray like this.

His mind was sanctified, and yes, he was brilliant, but I want to tell you something, a brilliant human mind can't do what he did. Bethany Jones, Martin Lloyd Jones' wife said this, you can't understand my husband unless you understand first and foremost he was a man of prayer. A man of prayer.

They said, teach us to pray. Teach us to pray. There is a way to teach someone to pray.

The Scriptures are filled with teaching and examples on how to pray and encouraging us to pray. Now, go to the last text, and this is where we'll close. Because Jesus is going to, or at least show that Paul's on the right track in 1 Thessalonians, in chapter 5, verse 17. Now he was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.

All times means all times. It's a great way of putting it. He's not saying 24-7.

He's not saying lock yourself in a room and do nothing but pray. He's just saying at all times, every event, every circumstance, every temptation, every time you're fixing to open up your mouth and say something you probably shouldn't say. At all times, pray.

And especially pray in the midst of trial. Because He's going to go on and tell us about this widow who had over her an unjust judge. He's going to tell us about this widow that she literally beat him black and blue.

She badgered him. Would not let him go. Now see, it's very difficult for us to grab a hold of this, believing as we do in the sovereignty of God.

And yet, it means exactly what it says. Grab a hold of God and pray. What is it? Isaiah 62.

He's placed watchmen on the wall. They're not supposed to give Him rest. They're to cry out day and night until He's done what He promised to do for Jerusalem's sake.

I know that contradicts in some degree our thinking, but it most certainly doesn't contradict the perfect mind and thought of God. I remember one time again in Peru. I had one workbook left.

And I was saving it to see if another pastor would show up. And there was this new believer, this young guy. And I mean, he said, I need a workbook.

And I said, well, I'm saving this workbook for the pastor. Yeah, but I need a workbook. I'd get up in the morning, go to breakfast.

You know, it's a big pot of goat stew or something out there in the middle of the dirt. And he'd be standing there. I need a workbook.

After I get done sermon, he'd walk right up. I need a workbook. Son, I told you, I'm saving this for a pastor, but I need a workbook.

Finally, I just felt so badgered and beaten black and blue. I said, I didn't know. I had to make one option or the other.

Knock him in the head with a brick or give him a workbook because he wasn't going to shut up. He got the workbook. And that's a silly illustration, but look what God is saying here.

In verse 6, He says, And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge said. Now, what did He say? In verse 5, He said, Yet because this widow... Let's go up to 4. He says, For a while he was unwilling, but afterward he said to himself, Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection. Otherwise, by continually coming, she will wear me out.

Literally hit me under the eye. That's what it means, literally. Hit me under the eye.

Violent praying. There is a sense of God testing us and testing our faith. Really and truly.

I have heard people who are immature and not given much to the study of Scripture say bold, mighty and bold things about God and before God and realize they didn't have any sense in their head with regard to what they were saying. But I have also seen people who have spent a life of prayer and the Word of God. I have heard them in prayer in the most holy fashion say the boldest things you could ever imagine.

I will not let thee go. Slay me, but I will not let thee go. I know of one missionary I remember when I was a young guy.

He was a great preacher was telling me this story about his father. He was a missionary serving the Lord in Africa and just sacrifice after sacrifice and they are going through the desert and a car breaks down and he is there with his family. They have no water.

They have nothing. They are going to die. The youngest child's tongue is swollen.

It can hardly breathe. And he sees a big rock, flat rock. And he carries all his family out to that rock.

Then he gets up on the rock and gets up on his knees. And he says this. Oh God, hear my cry.

If we are to die, then I offer my family to you now as a sacrifice for your glory. But if I am not to die, then I command the God of heaven to send rain. Now that's a frightful thing to pray.

And yet it was prayed. And it was honored. As rain came and filled bucket after bucket.

And no one died that day. We are so just anemic in our praying. Shrug shoulders and walk away.

It's a Goliath. Well of course it's a Goliath. If it wasn't a Goliath, there would be no glory.

If you weren't so small, there would be no glory. Now while everyone in Israel is standing around looking at one another and talking about how big this thing is, where are the Davids who just says, give me smooth stones. Because he'll come against me with javelin and spear and shield.

But I come against him in the name of the Lord. The Lord. The sovereignty of God, if it makes you passive in prayer and passive in advancing the kingdom of heaven, you do not understand the sovereignty of God.

Well, we can take comfort in this, can't we? This time I at least made three words instead of two. We'll go on next week hopefully to the rest. But believers, you have not because you ask not.

Suffer so much because we do not pray. And I've heard so many sermons, you know, I've heard so many sermons and preachers saying sovereignty of God, it doesn't hinder prayer. And I've had to say so many times, well looking at the lot of you, I would say it pretty much does.

But truly it doesn't. If you truly understand God's sovereignty, His power, but not just His power, His willingness to intervene, to show His great strength, to bear His mighty arm. If you fully understand that, it will encourage you to pray.

So let's pray.

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