

# Sinful Praying

by Rolfe Barnard

---

*Rolfe Barnard's sermon 'Sinful Praying' emphasizes the importance of praying with a heart's desire and dependence on God, rather than praying selfishly, as a matter of duty, or as a substitute for obedience.*

**Duration:** 29:09

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:7, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Peter 3:15

**Topics:** "Effective Prayer", "Genuine Obedience"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of personal obedience to God's truth rather than simply going through the motions of prayer. He highlights the fact that as believers, we are called to be witnesses of Christ and that our lives should reflect this. The preacher also points out that God uses the witness of His people to save the lost, and therefore, the church should prioritize evangelism. He challenges the congregation to examine their prayer lives and ensure that their prayers align with God's will and bring glory to Him. The sermon references the story of Saul in 1 Samuel 13 to illustrate the need for genuine obedience and reliance on God.

---

## Transcript

You want revival? Wait just a minute. Suppose we had one. Suppose we had one.

We'd find out what it is to be persecuted. We don't know now. The reason God's people not having a hard time in America now is we've got no power over it.

There couldn't be any gospel preached over the radio. If we had revival, the Jews of this country'd say, uh-oh, those folks mean business. And an Orthodox Jew hates the name of Jesus.

He's been taught that Jesus is the illegitimate son of a fallen woman. And the only reason the Jews in America don't start a protest in any minority now to get the government to do anything, turn handsprings or anything, all they got to do is just say the word and the gospel will go off the radio and television, newspapers and everything else. You ever thought about that? The reason they let us preach the speech on the radio now is they know the Jews know we ain't getting nowhere.

Our little brand of Christianity wouldn't hurt a flea. You ever thought about that? You know, I'm going to tell you something that sort of scares me. Did you know that the Jews in Israel and the anti-God Communists in Russia have cornered the gold market? Did you know that Israel and Russia can bankrupt the world

while you're through preaching, they take a notion? That's the God's curse.

Did you know our government is bankrupt with \$3,500,000,000 in debt on Social Security alone? They ain't got a dime in the Social Security fund. They done spent that something else. Suppose those anti-God people over in Russia and those anti-Christ people, the Jews are anti-Christ and the Russians are anti-God.

Suppose we had a revival in America. It meant something to be a Christian. The churches weren't ignored, the gospel was being honored and prospering.

Men's lives would be changed. Those Jews, anti-Christians and those Communists, anti-God, they could bankrupt America just like that. Did you know that? That's true.

I don't know whether we want revival or not. Your home, you'd lose it. Your insurance policy, you'd lose it.

And everything on God's earth you've got, you'd lose. And that's joined the bread line, I expect. Because if God ever visits America, the anti-Christian Jews who let us alone because we ain't bothering them and the anti-God Communists that are taking this world fast, they'd wake up and turn off the water and take the meter out so we could say, skip.

You want revival? What we preach now is so little offensive because there's so little power in it. Nobody much objects or just ignores us. But if God should anoint his preachers and his people and his church and vindicate his gospel, brother, the world couldn't ignore any longer.

And we'd learn what it is to be hated by a world that crucified the revival and split every church indeed. It'd split this church, split yours, brother Brown. Yes, it would.

Do we want God to come and intervene? If we do, I want to call your attention to three things that God's people desperately need to examine that prayer line by first. We pray sinfully when we pray selfishly. We pray sinfully when we pray selfishly.

You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, but you may do what? Consume the answer in your own lust. That word lust is not a bad word there, it's a strong desire, but it's something I want. One of the classic examples of a man who prayed selfishly was Balaam.

If you'll leisure, go back and study the book of Numbers, chapters 22 through 24, and you'll recall that Balaam was a prophet. The Broughton offered him money if he pronounced a curse on God's people. You'll study there that Balaam did three things that are fine.

First, Balaam was an habitual prayer. That sounds good, doesn't it? It was his habit, it was his custom to pray. You read those chapters from the King Balaam, some of his supporters will come and make Balaam a proposition.

Balaam will say, Well, you just hang a little while and I'll get in touch with the Lord and see what he has to say about it. It is his habit to pray. That's good, isn't it? That's good.

In the second place, you'll find by reading those chapters that Balaam prayed in secret. He'd say, Now, you just stay here and I'll go and get in touch with God. The scriptures talk about when you pray, enter in your closet and shut the door.

That's good, isn't it? That's nothing wrong with praying in secret. Mr. Moody wouldn't pray with anybody and said he didn't have time to listen to folks pray all around the world and never ask God for anything definite, and he just prayed by himself. Well, that's not so bad.

Praying in secret is good, isn't it? Making it a habit to pray, that's good, isn't it? That's the third thing good about old Balaam. You read that and you'll find he sometimes prayed all night long. He prayed all night long.

He'd say, I inquired with the Lord all night. That wouldn't be bad, would it? I bet you there's not one of us that prayed five minutes without your mind wandering. Did you ever try it? You clocked yourself sometime.

I bet you, darling, I had to count it carefully. You can't pray five minutes. That's hard to do.

But old Balaam kept before the Lord the same proposition all night long. My Lord sometimes prayed all night. At one time, you know, his best disciples went to sleep on him.

They couldn't cut the mustard, brother. Balaam made it a habit to pray. That's good.

Balaam prayed in secret. That's good. Balaam prayed all night sometimes.

That's good. But he didn't get anywhere. Why? He prayed selfishly.

He'd get God to do what he's asked him to do. He'd get a lot of money. He prayed selfishly.

Brother, I'm telling you what's the fact. If you do like I tried to do, that's the shame of self-request. Some of the old-time folks used to talk about having a prayer sheet.

Put it on your request. And the date when you made them. Then on the other sheet, leave it open to put down the date when you get the answer.

Say it right now. Your average will sure go down like mine does. And then if you make a sheet of the request that kept going in all sincerity, I doubt not to God Almighty, you can save room to take out all of the selfishness in your request.

There won't be much left. Let's listen to this and pray, O Lord, bless our church. Well, how can you? Unconfessed sin.

Most of the members are lazy. They ain't worth killing. Most of them just going through the motions.

Never open their mouth to war and sinners. Don't know what it is to weep over lost men. Don't know anything about this? You want God to bless that outfit? No, no.

Oh, God, bless America. Well, how could God be God and bless America? This tearing up God's law, done away with God's Sabbath, done away with all morality, done away with all respect for anything that's decent, gone in the whirlwind of its madness and thumbing its nose against the Holy God. We ask God to bless that.

No. Oh, God bless our preacher. He don't need blessing.

He needs the heavy hand of God's judgment on him to whip the stuffing out of him so he can preach. Amen? Bless, bless, bless, bless, bless, bless, bless, bless. Well, God ain't doing it, brother.

It must be he's found out that we want something for ourselves, not that the gospel would prosper, but the church would be honored and that the glory of God's Son might be made manifest. Now, I don't know nothing about what I'm going to say now. My granddaddy knew a little something about what the Bible talked about when it talked about that God should get glory in the church world without end.

Amen. But who should get glory? God should get glory. We don't know nothing about that, I don't.

All I've ever heard, Lord, bless our church, bless our barn, bless our department, bless the fun crew, bless the deacon, bless America, bless, bless, bless. I guess God found out we're more interested in feeding our own religious flesh than there are the glory of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Examine our praying.

Take out that which we ask of this that we may consume it on the strong desires we have ourselves. There won't be much left of our praying, brother, sinful praying. In the second place, prayer, according to the Bible, is sinful when it's a matter of duty.

Boy, I got you now. You turn your leisure to 13th chapter, 1 Samuel. Read about old Saul that Philistine gathered several thousand soldiers, picked and come down and licked the living daylights out of Saul and his little company of men.

And so Saul, he's expecting old Samuel to come and get him out, as they always did, and Samuel didn't show up, and when Samuel, God's prophet came, didn't come, old Saul, he said, I forced myself to offer a burnt offering. I've been going up and down the country now a long time, and wherever I go they invite me to come and have what we call a revival meeting. We don't even know how to spell the word.

And so the pastor gets up, dear brother, and he says, Now, folks, we're going to have a revival, we've got to pray. And so a few of the Saints come out, and they didn't much want to, but they're better, and so as a matter of duty they forced themselves to go through the motions. Samuel, Saul said, I forced myself, didn't want to, just a matter of being religious, and so I forced myself, see? I forced myself to offer a burnt offering.

Well, pray, folks. Come on now, let's pray. And we forced ourselves to do what is the very breath of being a Christian.

And God kept us in this kind of prayer. We don't expect anything to happen, and we're not much disappointed when it don't. We didn't expect God to pay much attention to us anyhow.

And we don't miss a night's sleep after we've prayed, and God don't listen. We're just going through the motions. Years ago, I went down to old Mexico, spoke a month over one of those outlaw stations being to the United States, and I spoke at six o'clock every morning.

I stayed on the American side across the Rio Grande every morning early and get over there for live broadcast at six and then again at nine at night. I had a communist as governor of Mexico at that time, and every church in Mexico, even Catholic, was closed. And I drive in my little car through the city on the Mexican side on the way to the radio station about five-thirty in the morning, dark in the wintertime.

There'd be thousands of those poor Mexican Catholics standing on the outside of their closed churches counting their beads, saying their prayers, forcing themselves to be religious. And they tell me the Hindus over in India got a speech, you know, they got the little prayer wheels and they just set them to spinning. They can pray more prayer than the minute we can all day long just going through the motions.

Oh, God. I read of a time that's coming on this earth. I'll let you have a little taste of it.

When God Almighty says, I will pour out a spirit of grace and supplication, and we wouldn't go like driven slaves to the place of prayer to force ourselves to go through the motions, thus insult God. Like little children who are hungry asking mama for bread, with the spontaneity of that, without going through the motions and without not expecting anything to take, we go to our Heavenly Father, not as a matter of religious duty and form, but like little children going to the source of all blessing. And bless God, encouraging ourselves in the Lord, building up one another's faith until we had an expectancy that if a boy goes to his Earthly Father and asks for bread, his daddy won't give him a stone.

And if God's people would go to their Heavenly Father and ask for bread, he wouldn't give them a stone either. It's sinful to pray as a matter of duty, to go through the motions, and God help us. We do that so much.

But in the last place, it's sinful to pray as a substitute for obedience. It's sinful to use prayer as a substitute for obedience. And boy, here's where we're guilty as dole.

It's a whole lot easier to go off in the little room, shut the door, and go through the motions of prayer than it is to stand up on your hind legs in a human civilization like ours and press the demands and claims of God for the Son of His love on the people you have a chance to talk to. For so long, most of us have substituted some form of prayer for personal obedience to the truth that we have been made witnesses of the dying, crucified, entombed Lord of those. It is not optional that we'll decide whether we'll be witnesses.

Brother, we are his witnesses. Some way or another in our days, oh, that God will bring it to pass that our lips shall be loosened. They've been tongue-tied so long, and our witness and testimony has been so halting and so powerless.

The Church has come together in praise of God to save the lost and ignore the fact that he doesn't save the lost people apart from using the witness of his people. He don't. It's a whole lot easier to pray to the Lord and save the lost than it is to witness to him when some arm will spit in your face.

I was up in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in a so-called citywide meeting that took me down to the big factory, and I preached over the radio to the factory workers as they had their noon meal and broadcast. A young fellow came up to me, asked for service one day and said, Preacher, what do you do when you try to talk to somebody about the Lord and they spit in your face? I resigned right there. I said, I don't know, I think I'd tuck my tail and run.

But God's witness, spit or no spit, that's how it goes. I'm talking to you, men. This little tinnage stuff we call witnessing ain't getting to the first base today.

Ah, you're my witnesses. Well, we'll meet and pray and it's not witnessing. And we come and say, Oh God, save old Bill! But nobody's preached to him, nobody's called him, nobody's prayed for him, nobody's wept over him, nobody's confronted him with the claims of God for his son.

So we come and say, Lord, I ain't going to talk to nobody they don't want to be talked to, and that's the God's truth, but you save them anyhow. That's sinful prayer, isn't it? Sinful prayer. You want revival? We've got to cut out this praying for ourselves, something good happens to us.

Him get the ghost. We've got to learn how to pray, not as a matter of religious form, but the heart cry of a child of the Father. We've got to quit substituting forms of prayer for personal obedience.

I'm telling you, revival came. I remember the time revival broke out in Detroit, Michigan, and God's men had to take a Bible with them to work in the factories. The Communists would spit at them and cuss them and everything else.

In those days, the Communists would take a man who wouldn't join the Union, infiltrated with Communism way back yonder, and two men would hold a fellow who wouldn't join the Union and claim to be a Christian, and another fellow would take a piece of iron and break his heart. They did that by the thousands in that city. I know.

Honey, if God put his power on this generation of church people that are saved, all hell would break loose, brother. Somebody says, if we had revival to solve our problem, there wouldn't be no such thing. It would create a million.

We know nothing about that. It would fall. But as God's judge of this poor, ignorant preacher talking to you tonight, we are shut up to getting the attention of a living God.

This thing has gone so far, it's too big for us. And I'm here to challenge this church, get your time to pray. Sometime tomorrow, get down on your knees and let's get to praying, folks.

Take your book and dissect your prayer life. You're not too pious to do that, are you? Start dragging out that which you just want to consume on yourself, and this matter of going through the motions and no heart's desire in it and substituting a form of prayer or confronting this generation with Jesus Christ. I think when we start putting obedience in its place, prayer in its place, they go mighty well together.

I think a congregation that's going out a hundred percent of it to get the blood of sinners off its hands can come together and say, Lord, we've done what our hands found to do, what our hammering lips could say we said, what our broken heart could weep we wept, and now, Lord, we can weep and we can say and we can witness, but only you can say. I think you're right to pray that way when you lift up clean hands and we've done what we could do. Revival? Yes.

God knows we've panned for it. Maybe you don't, but a public preacher like this man, I'm telling you the God's truth. I'm desperate to see once again and sit tired and talk about what happened back yonder.

I'm so desperate, oh, I'm desperate, that things would happen in this community that only God can bring to pass. And men would say, that's the finger of God that God did that. They say, oh, well, that's just what those folks down there believe.

Every man's got to write his own opinion. I believe I'm as good as anybody else. One church is as good as another.

And don't make any difference what you believe, just so you're sincere. And when we're all hurting from the same place, I'm sick and tired of all that. I long to hear men and women say, that's God, that's a living God.

And I leave you tonight with a challenge of my heart under God. I believe it is the obligation of every generation of those who name the name of Jesus Christ to see God demonstrate his power as darker

generations pass the hill, facing men and women in a living way with the sovereign Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Examine your prayer line.

Don't get mad at me. Cut it all to pieces. Amen.

Let's go to prayer. Let us stand.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15683.mp3>  
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/rolfe-barnard/sinful-praying/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**