

Prevailing Prayer – God Always Triumphs

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prevailing prayer, highlighting the need to persevere in prayer regardless of circumstances, to know intimately the God we pray to, and to humble ourselves before Him. The psalmist in Psalms 10 transitions from questioning God's presence in tragedy to acknowledging His faithfulness, encouraging believers to express their doubts and fears to God. The sermon underscores the power of humility in prayer, urging listeners to cry out to God with a repentant heart and to seek His mercy.

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Scripture: Psalms 10:1, Proverbs 28:9, Psalms 66:18, 2 Chronicles 7:14, James 4:10, Philippians 2:8, 1 Peter 5:6, Luke 18:13

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Description

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Transcript

Three keys to prevailing prayer. Three keys to prevailing prayer. But at the end of that, I put God always triumphs.

In other words, God always wins. And on Wednesday nights, for a while, we were in the Psalms, the book of Psalms. So we're trying to get through that again.

Of course, it's gonna take a while. And we find ourselves in Psalm 10. So you can read Psalm 10 tonight.

And here's an interesting fact about Psalm 10. And it begins by the psalmist saying, God, where are you? God, where are you? And they cry out, where are you during this tragedy? Where are you during this wickedness? And where is the Lord at during this season of difficulty? And the psalmist is crying out. And I know many of us can relate.

But then towards the end, it switches. And he says, oh, there you are. There you are, God.

Now I've heard you. I've vented. And I just wanna encourage you this evening that it's okay to vent.

It's okay to say, God, where are you in these difficult times? Because I've noticed that God often breaks us down in order to build us back up. So we go through these difficulties and these seasons where we say, Lord, where are you? Why is the wicked prospering? Why is this happening? Lord, where are these difficulties? And then we begin to strengthen ourself in the Lord and what was used to break us down now begins to build us up. So the psalmist, all the writers of the Bible struggle with the same things that we struggle with.

Lord, where are you? And then later, oh, there you are, Lord. Thank you for seeing me through. And it's kind of having this double-mindedness, but really what happens is doubt creeps in.

And it's okay to doubt. I'm not talking about unbelief and denying God, but doubting comes in. And I'm not excusing it.

I'm not excusing fear, but there's something sometimes that comes in and we doubt. We say, Lord, where are you? And that's okay to feel that way, but what you do with that is what tilts the scale in the right direction or the wrong direction. We're not supposed to feed doubt and become bitter and angry and upset and fearful.

We're supposed to take that doubt to the Lord and say, Lord, where are you? Why is this happening? And God hears the prayers of His people. So it opens in Psalm 10. Why do you stand afar, O Lord? Why do you stand afar off? Where are you? Why do you hide in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor.

Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. And we see that happening right now for sure. We look and we say, Lord, where are you? You're standing far off.

Are you hiding in this time of trouble? Why are the wicked prospering? It looks like the wicked in his pride, he's actually persecuting the poor. And we see a lot of that taking place, especially with what's going on with COVID-19 and throughout our communities. So he's saying here, let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

So keep this in mind. It's not uncommon for God to feel distant and for us to feel like wickedness is prevailing. Okay, it's not uncommon.

Join the club. Welcome to the Christian faith. Sometimes God does not feel near.

Sometimes the heavens feel like they're brass and our prayers are not getting above the ceiling. Sometimes it feels like it's useless, but it's what we do with those feelings that really matters. And that pressure, that pressure can draw you closer to God and back to God.

And I've noticed in my own life, when things are going great, sometimes you begin to forget about prayer and forget about God as much and things are going great. But when God begins to bring that pressure cooker and those difficulties, these are the times, and I preached on this. I don't know if I can find the message this quickly and post it later, but I believe the title was something like wasted time.

I'm sorry, waiting time is not wasted time. You should check that out if you can search that on our website, westsidechristianfellowship.org, westsidechristianfellowship.org, that wasted time, I'm sorry, wasted is ringing a bell in my ear. Waiting time is not wasted time.

Now it can be unless you do the wrong thing with it, but this waiting time, I don't know about you, but I'm getting antsy. It's gonna be hard to go the whole month of April just sitting in your house and not much to do. So I'm actually gonna try to maybe work on another book.

I'm gonna try to study some theology. I'm gonna go on a fast for a season. I'm gonna seek God more fervently.

I'm gonna spend more time with my kids and hold them tighter and talk to them and listen to them and not be in a hurry. We're gonna turn off our phones more often. Myself and my spouse are going to talk more and draw closer together.

And so this waiting time is not going to be wasted if you use it for the right priority. Now, I just read somewhere and I looked at the statistics on pornography is increasing. Marijuana and alcohol abuse are skyrocketing.

I went to the store the other day and every cart around me had tons of alcohol in it. Gambling, online gaming is increasing. So a lot of people are not doing the right things with this time.

And that's where you can really get in trouble. But if you turn that around and if you are addicted to something, this would be a great time to get off that addiction and begin weaning yourself off of unhealthy things. And this waiting time can be a wonderful time of renewal and revitalization if we look to God and the things of God.

So again, that pressure, the pressure you're feeling, the pressure I'm feeling can draw us all closer to God if we become, now this is a trite saying, but I'll just say it. You can become bitter or you can become better. And that's helped me a lot over the last 20 years or so, realizing that what we do with these choices, becoming bitter or becoming better is ultimately up to us.

So the first key I want to talk to you about in prevailing prayer that you're gonna see this psalmist do throughout chapter 10 is you must persevere in prayer regardless of what you see. Persevere in prayer regardless of what you see. In other words, we persevere.

God, please open the churches up shortly even though we don't see it. I actually hear, I hear a lot of negative things, like it could be a while and I'm not gonna take those thoughts captive. Or Lord, I don't see that I'm going to get a job.

I don't see the end of this. But you persevere in prayer regardless of what you see with your physical eyes. Why is that? Because your physical eyes are much different than the spiritual insight by the Holy Spirit.

Rarely will I see things correctly with my physical eyes that line up with what's going on with the Holy Spirit, what God is doing. Often, I just have to trust and say, God, I don't see this, but I'm gonna follow you regardless. Knowing that God is working things in the background.

God is doing things that we're not even aware of. I think God is going to use this pandemic to draw millions of people back to Him. And I shared last week, I think on Sunday, or I don't know if I have, maybe on email, that the sermon on Sunday has reached thousands and thousands of people that normally would not be reached because they are hungry for the truth.

They want to hear from God. Now, it's interesting because you would think that your faith lines up with what you see. But often, faith, according to the Bible, faith is the evidence of things not seen.

So, I can have faith in God that you're gonna see us through. You're gonna bring this to an end. You're gonna open up tremendous doors.

Even though I don't see it, God, I believe and I trust in You. That's genuine faith. If you have a million dollars in front of you, and you say, okay, Lord, I do have faith that You're going to provide my needs.

Well, obviously, that's not faith. That's confirmation. I see it, so I believe it.

But faith says, I don't see a way out, but Lord, I'm trusting You. And so, that's one key you have to remember as you prevail in prayer. What do I mean by prevailing prayer? Prevailing prayer is where I'm going to keep praying regardless.

I'm gonna keep praying for loved ones who need to know the Lord. I'm gonna keep praying for those who are sick. I'm gonna keep praying for this pandemic to come to an end, even though I don't feel like it.

I'm going to prevail, and I'm going to persevere. I'm going to contend. I'm going to fight.

I'm going to struggle. The old saints, 100 years ago, used to say, I'm gonna lay hold of God until He answers. In other words, it could take an hour, or two hours, or three hours.

They would call it prevailing in prayer. Now, we have our nice, little, quick prayers. Oh, Lord, bless this meal.

Let that job opportunity open up and help my kids do well at school. Thank You, Lord, and on to our day. That real heart-wrenching, soul-searching prayer does business with God.

They cry out to God, and they say, Oh, God, shape my heart. Shape my soul. Work inside of me and begin to just cleanse me and change me, and God, I need to hear from You.

God, I need You to work in the lives of my children. God, if You don't move in this different environment, we will not make it. We need You to answer, and You begin to go to war.

You begin to go to battle for Your family. You begin to go to battle for Your nation. Intercessory prayer, rising up the prayers of Elisha, the prayers of Moses, the prayers of Nehemiah, the prayers of Esther, the prayers of Ezra.

I can keep going on and on again about how there was prevailing prayer that often prevailed in spite of what they were going through. In other words, they continued. They continued that fight in prayer.

And you have to do that to prevail in prayer. There has to be perseverance. And then verse four, he says, the wicked, check this out, the wicked in his proud countenance.

In other words, the wicked in his arrogance, in his uppity-ness, he does not seek God. God is in none of his thoughts. And our thought life provides great insight as to who and what we trust in.

So I want to ask you a question. Where have your thoughts been lately? Have they been on God? Or have they been on the things of the world? And that's why I want to introduce point number two right now. Now many of you aren't going to be able to relate to this, but we're reaching people we normally don't.

And I want to just make sure that I get this point across. In order for God to hear your prayers, do you want to be heard from on high? Do you want God to answer your prayers? Really answer your prayers. This is important.

Number two, know who you're praying to. Know who you're praying to. Now that word know, I'm not talking about knowing intellectually.

I'm talking about knowing intimately in that you have a relationship with God the Father. Because, well, let's just be honest. Millions pray to God.

They bow to God. They fast. They're baptized.

They pray homage to holy sites. They align themselves with certain religions, but they will fail. Every prayer will fail unless it is preceded by this.

Oh God, have mercy on me a sinner. All of us, no matter what nationality, no matter what religion, no matter what background, no matter what age, you must enter the prayer room with these words. Oh God, have mercy on me a sinner.

You have to know Him before those prayers will be answered. That's the prayer He hears. So if a person comes in and prays flippantly and they don't know God, God is not bound to answer that prayer.

Let me give you some verses. Proverbs 28. One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

So you can be this person and you can pray to God, God, do this, but if you're turning your head, your ear away from God's law, he will not hear that prayer. In other words, God, I want you to do this, but I'm not going to obey your word. I'm not going to humble myself.

I'm not going to repent. I'm not going to do anything you ask me to do. I'm turning my ear away from what your law says and I'm going to pray to you.

God says, I will not hear that prayer. As a matter of fact, it is an abomination to me. Well, Shane, what do I need to do? I just told you five minutes ago.

Oh God, have mercy on me a sinner. Cry out to God. Many of you listening, you need to know the one true and living God.

You need to humble yourself. You need to repent. You need to call out and cry out to God and not just know Him intellectually.

My goodness, even the Tiger King knows God intellectually. Don't watch it. I've seen clips and it's just out there.

It's just alarming what people believe. They say, well, I'll pray to God, but they live in sin. Well, God will see me through, but yet they live in sin.

God is not obligated to hear a prayer from a person who holds pride and sin in their heart. You have another verse. Yes, I do.

Psalms 66. It says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. I need to repeat that one.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. In other words, if I hold sin into my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So all of you listening, if there's an addiction that has taken place, if you're addicted to the alcohol or the pornography I mentioned earlier, and you're holding that into your heart, and yet you're going to pray and expect God to hear that prayer, but you're holding on to that sin, God has no obligation.

As a matter of fact, in the New Testament, it says, husbands, if you don't treat your wives right, God will not hear your prayers. This is huge, people. This is why I believe millions of prayers are not being heard, because millions of people are holding iniquity into their hearts.

And I love to see government officials in Washington praying to God, we need that more. But you can't pray to God and then slaughter innocent children. It doesn't work that way.

We need to come clean as a nation, say, oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner, and remove the iniquity of pride and arrogance from our hearts. You must crush arrogance. You must crush arrogance.

Verse six, he has said in his heart, he has said in his heart, I shall not be moved. I shall never be in adversity. So this arrogant man in chapter 10, he says in his heart, I shall not be moved.

You shall not move me. Nothing will come against me. Nothing will hurt me.

And this is why pride, let me speak directly to men real quick. Hit the share button, women, if you want, and get it to some guy that needs to hear this. But men, we are more inclined to be very arrogant and very prideful.

We think it's manly not to worship God. We think it's manly. We'd rather be seen leaving a bar than leaving a church.

We don't want to read our Bible, but we'll load up our 12-gauge shotgun. We want a full gun safe, but our prayer closets are empty. And this idea that a macho man is verbally abusive and drinks and does whatever he wants and he can even be into sexual sin, it doesn't matter because I'm the captain of my own ship.

I have said in my heart, I shall not be moved. Nothing is going to break me down. Nothing is going to stop my course.

And God says you better humble yourself. Humble yourself and be heard on high. And that's the third point I wanted to, if you want to prevail in prayer, number one, remember this, you have to persevere in prayer regardless of what you see.

And then you have to know who you're praying to. So I want to ask you, I don't know why this is so strong in my heart. Is there a religion that you're identifying with? Are you saying, well, I've always been a Baptist.

I've always been a Methodist or an Episcopalian or an Anglican or a Presbyterian. Some people say, well, I run into people and they say, well, Shane, I'm a Catholic. Well, what does that have to do with anything? We're not going to get to heaven and say, here's my denomination or here's my religion.

The only way we can stand before God is because we have a relationship with Jesus Christ. So many people listening, they know intellectually, they know there's a God, but they don't humble themselves and repent of their sin. So persevering in prayer, but then actually know who you're praying to should have been number one.

But then the third point, humble yourself to be heard. Humble yourself to be heard. So we have this picture of a person who's persevering, persevering.

They know the one true and living God. They're crying out to God and they're humbling themselves. By the way, even our vice president quoted this verse before.

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven. All of those conditions fall under humility. Humble yourself.

If my people who are called by my name, they humble themselves and they begin to seek my face and they begin to pray, I mean, really pray. And then as a result, they turn from your sin. God is obligated, obligated by his word to perform what his principles lay out for us.

The truth of God's word. And we just read in chapter nine, he does not forget the cry of the humble. All throughout chapter nine, he does not forget the cry of the humble.

The humble cries out and then we get into chapter 10. Do not forget the humble. Lord, look to the humble.

You have heard the desires of the humble. It's all about humility. And let me just give you this example.

Humility is not this passive, weak person who is like a doormat. And Jesus was the most humblest man that ever walked the planet, but he was also the strongest man who ever walked the face of the earth. He was not weak, he was meek.

He was not weak at all. He stood before his executioner. We're celebrating resurrection day coming up.

He stood before his executioner. And his executioner, the man, can you imagine standing before the man who holds your life in his hands? And Pilate said, why don't you answer me? I can let you go. And Jesus said, you would have no power over me at all unless it was given to you from above.

He had tremendous strength, tremendous strength, called down a legion of angels. He could command armies to come down and wipe out all of humanity if he so desired. But he allowed himself to, actually Philippians says that he humbled himself and came down in the appearance of a, can you imagine God coming down as a man? That is humility, and in that humility, he began to give us an example.

And what humility, why it's so important. Humility is an attitude of the heart that affects how you live and how you act. So as a person humbles themselves, what they're doing, they are positioning themselves to receive from God.

So a humble person humbles themselves, and they say, God, I'm not worthy. I'm lost without you, would you pour into me? But a prideful, arrogant man looks like this. They're stiff, they're rigid, they're hard-hearted, they're arrogant, nobody can tell them what to do.

They control their own destiny, and they are hard-hearted. See, they're not positioned to hear from God. They can't hear anything from God because they think, and so what does a pride man do? He'll pray in his heart.

Oh, I'm so glad I'm not like other sinners. I'm so glad I'm not like that person. And they're proud and arrogant, it's disgusting.

God hates a proud look. So humility is key, folks. I wanna really just encourage you with that.

Humility is about positioning your heart. In 2 Chronicles, I was reading actually this morning, Egypt is attacking Judah. Judah and Israel are broken up in northern and southern kingdoms, and Egypt is coming against Judah.

Why? Because God allowed Judah's enemies and Israel's enemies, God allowed their enemies to come in and judge them. It was a form of judgment. So God's people would disobey, and God would cause it, whether a pestilence, whether a judgment of armies, some type of, God would use some type of judgment, possibly not unlike today, waking up the entire world.

And when the Lord saw, it says this, when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, He relented, which means some translations say He repented, but He doesn't repent the way we think of it. He changes His mind. He says, okay, here comes the judgment, but look, they're humbling themselves.

They're crying out to Me. And just like any good father, who is going to leave their child in destruction and misery when that child is crying out to God, but when they say, I don't want anything to do with you, God says, you want it, you got it. There's nothing I can do with that type of person because they have to humble their hearts.

So God heard the cries of His people. He heard those cries. And often, God often waits.

This is a key, this is a key takeaway. Make sure you get this. Write it down later.

God often waits for His people to move and respond in humility before He acts. See, often, I think we're waiting for heaven, but I think heaven is waiting for us more often than not. I'm gonna say that again.

We're waiting for heaven, but heaven is waiting for us. In other words, we're waiting, God, would you move? God, would you do this? But God says, no, you seek Me. See, you move, you seek Me, then I will respond.

You will find Me. You humble yourself and I will lift you up. But if you come in proud and arrogant, I will abase you.

I will humble you. If you repent, then I will relent. If you ask, then you will receive.

If you pray, then you'll call down heaven. See, a lot of these conditions we forget, God is waiting on His people to move. Is it, could it be, could it be that God is waiting on you to humble yourself and repent instead of sitting there mad at God? Why doesn't God do this? Well, what's going on? I don't deserve this.

And God says, no, I'm waiting on you, waiting on you to humble yourself and repent and to seek Me with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength and to cry out to God. And God says, now I will hear your prayers because you have humbled yourself. So never forget that God often waits for His people to move first.

And I see so many people, well, if God would just move, if God would just fix this, if God would just bring back our economy, if God would just do this, God's saying, no, I'm waiting on you to move, then I'll move. That's why if you've been listening the last couple weeks, a consistent theme on my heart has been, I don't see America broken yet. She's getting there.

She's getting there, but I don't see America broken yet. I don't see people crying out to God and I see them hoarding and I see them arguing and I see contentions and I see anger. But we gotta get to that spot of brokenness.

Then God says, my people are broken. I will heal their land. My people are humble.

I will heal their land. And I'm not worried about the whole nation. I'm not worried about Hollywood.

I'm worried about God's people, God's people calling out and crying out to Him. And then I love verse 12 as we go through this. Cry out, cry out.

Men, I'm giving you permission to cry out. You might not wanna do it. You might not feel comfortable at home.

That's fine. Go into take a walk or do something. Sometimes I'll take a long walk out in the desert and I'll cry out.

I'll say like the psalmist here. Oh, rise, oh Lord God, lift up your hand. Do not forget the humble.

He says it here in verse 12. And I do that. God, where are you? Where are you, Lord? We need you.

Your people are calling out for you. We need to hear from you. God, I know you're not on vacation.

I know you're not asleep. Would you arise and, oh God, awake again. Awake and renew us.

So he said the same thing here. Arise, oh Lord, oh God. Lift up your hand.

Lift up your hand. And the Bible often talks about the arm of the Lord or lifting up his hand or just, you have this impression of the, and of course God is a spirit. And those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

You have to have both of those. You can't just say, oh, whatever, and my inner self and this. No, you have to have, that's not worship.

That's yoga or that's new age philosophy or that's chanting or that's whatever. You have to have worship and truth married. That's just a side note.

It had nothing to do with the sermon. But God says, the psalmist says, arise, oh Lord, oh God, lift up your hand. Do not forget the humble.

What he means by lift up your hand is, God, let me see your power. Let me see your strength. It's not a physical arm that's gonna cross, crisscross across the sky.

It is a sign of strength. Oh God, show us your strength. The God who created the universe, spoke the universe into existence.

The God who holds the heavens in the palm of his hands, who raises kings up. That God, he says, God, would you lift up your hand and crush my enemies and do not forget the humble. It's okay to say that.

Oh God, because see, as I'm crying out, I'm readjusting my heart and I'm repenting before God and I'm saying, oh God, I need you. We cry out as a nation, God, we humble ourselves before you. And then in

verse 16, he says, the Lord is king forever and ever.

Remember that, the Lord is king forever and ever. No nation will thwart his purposes. No nation can stop his plans.

Not China, not Russia, not all the armies on the face of the earth. If they all gathered, think about this, if they all gathered millions and millions and billions of people against God, he could blow and there would be but dust in the wind. Nothing could come against God.

He is king forever and ever. No one can dethrone him. This isn't the fight between good and evil to see who can win.

Good has already prevailed. God is already king. We have to walk in that victory.

The nations have perished. Lord, you have heard the desires of the humble. There's that word again.

I cannot get rid of that word. Lord, you have heard the desires of the humble. You will prepare their heart and you will cause your ear to hear their cries, their calling.

And that's key, I wanna leave you with this thought. You have heard the desires of the humble. So as you humble yourself, God will give you godly desires.

It's okay to pray for the economy. Money makes the world go around. We can't do things without it.

It's the love of money that's the root of all evil. So it's okay to pray for the economy. It's okay to pray for our president and our leaders.

And let me just tell you up front, I am not one of those people who will be silent on this issue. I think our administration is doing a fantastic job based on what they are up against. And we need to humble ourselves.

And it's amazing how many prideful and arrogant men and women cannot get up the courage to say yes, they are doing a great job. They still have to pull down the administration. They still have to pull down our leaders.

Why? Because they are proud and arrogant in their hearts. And he says, you will prepare their heart. You will prepare their heart, God.

You will cause your ear to hear. So again, persevere in prayer regardless. I wanna encourage you with this word, this final thought.

We cry out to God and God hears our prayer. His hand is lifted up. His strength is lifted up.

And he says, I will not forget the cries of the humble. So this evening, it begs the question, do you have to humble yourself before God Almighty tonight? Men, have you been abusive? Have you been angry? Have you been condescending? Have you been addicted to something? Women, same thing. Have you been disrespectful? Have you used these opportunities instead of building your family up to tear your family down? Young adults, singles, those listening, have you been in rebellion against God and allowing sin to come in? Listen, our only hope is what I told you 15 minutes ago.

Oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner. It's very healthy to say that. It's very humbling to say that.

Oh God, have mercy on me. What does that mean? Do not give me the justice due. God, have grace and mercy on me, a sinner.

I acknowledge my sin and I acknowledge the cross of Christ. I acknowledge this weekend that he gave himself as a ransom for me and I cry out to God. I cry out to you, a sinner.

I humble myself. And when your heart is in that position, watch out because your prayers will be on fire. God will begin to give you prayers and answer prayers before you even pray them because now he's working through a vessel that's emptied and submitted to the will of the Father.

What's God going to do with clay that is already hard? If you're on a potter's wheel and that vase, vase, wherever you're at, is already made and it's already hard, he cannot do anything with that. So often he has to allow that pottery to fall and in that brokenness, that's when he begins to rebuild and now you're pliable and he begins to form that clay on the potter's wheel and now you're humble. That's a good imagery here, humble.

See, you're teachable, you're moldable, and God begins to form you into what now he can use you. So that's my call to you tonight is humble yourself and cry out, oh God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Because there's so many people out there saying they know God intellectually, but they've never repented and believed in their heart.

They are backing on some religious system to save them.

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