

# (The Sufficiency of the Saviour) 5. for Prayer Life

by Stephen Olford

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*Stephen Olford emphasizes the critical role of diligence and vigilance in prayer as foundational for a vibrant Christian life and revival.*

**Duration:** 1:03:20

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 24:3-5, Matthew 6:33, Mark 14:37-38, Luke 9:32, Ephesians 6:18, James 4:8

**Topics:** "Sufficiency Of The Saviour"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging in prayer. He encourages the congregation to take time to behold God and to speak often with Him. The preacher challenges the listeners to examine their prayer life and commit to a disciplined prayer ministry. He asserts that one's dedication to Christ can be measured by their discipline in prayer. The sermon concludes with a reference to Paul's request for the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel and the recognition that the natural mind is at enmity against God.

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## Transcript

Turn with me to the closing verses we shall have time to consider in this series. That's chapter four of Colossians, chapter four of Colossians, and just those two verses, two through four. Well, actually more than two, but we will start there because we are going to refer, of course, to Paul's personalized reference to that prayer life in his own language.

Devote yourself to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving, praying at the same time for us as well that God may open to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ for which I have been imprisoned. In order that I may make it clear in a way that I ought to speak. Keep your Bible open there, and we'll go even further as the message unfolds.

But in these verses we have, in my judgment, one of the greatest challenges in all apostolic writings concerning the ministry of prayer. And although the verses are very brief, they're pungent, and of course have to be balanced with what he says in Ephesians and elsewhere to get the whole picture. But it's rather interesting that Paul deals with this matter of the prayer life here before he goes right on to deal with the witness life that's to follow.

A message that I have been able to deliver on this occasion. But in the light of what I said last night concerning our work life, making it a platform for day by day witnessing to a lost world, I don't think we've lost anything of the impact. But I just point out that Paul says before you go into that world, before you open your lips to witness to that world, kneel in prayer.

Of course in the Ephesian letter he's even more dramatic, because for some reason or other, the devil seemed to attack Paul more fiercely in Ephesus than anywhere else. According to his own writing, he said, I fought with beasts at Ephesus. I fought with beasts at Ephesus.

And he writes to those Ephesians and he says, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places. And then he discusses all the defensive armory, and then finishes up with the offensive, the offensive instruments of victory. And what are they? And what are they? The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and all prayer, all prayer, all prayer.

So as I point out, it's rather significant that this is where Paul, in the sequence of thought led by the Holy Spirit, puts this pungent exhortation to the ministry of prayer. That's not to say that we don't need prayer in relation to our self-life, and our church life, and our home life, and our work life. Indeed, every area of our lives should be drenched by prayer.

But I'm just pointing out where these verses occur, and showing you the significance and the sequence of Paul's reasoning. Now there are three main things I want to leave with you tonight on this closing occasion. The first is this, Paul is calling us here to a diligence in prayer, a diligence in prayer.

Notice his wording, devote yourselves to prayer. Let's stop right there, devote yourselves to prayer. I don't know what your version reads, and of course the variations in the various translations, but I think this word, devotion, is good here.

Devote yourself, dedicate yourself to prayer. Even a superficial study of the Bible will make it evident that prayer is a necessity of every true Christian. In fact, I have a right to challenge anyone and everyone in this audience here tonight if you haven't knelt to pray already today.

Prayer is the very evidence that you're born again. You know that Paul, as a Pharisee, as a zealot of a brilliant student, prayed scores of times every day before he was ever converted. He had to.

It was part of his ritual. Every day, scores of times, he prayed. He was so disciplined.

But I want to add, he never really prayed. He only said prayers. When God broke through from heaven in the person of Jesus Christ, and he saw a face, and he heard a voice, and he made a choice, and he cried, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And his life was totally transformed.

The orders were, go to a place, I appoint. You remember where it was? In the street called Straight. And as he knelt there, blinded, praying, God touched Ananias and said, I want you to go and talk to Brother Saul.

He said, Father in heaven, I can't do that. You know that he's a persecutor. He's a persecutor of the church.

He's raising the church to ashes. He's hailing men and women to prison and causing them to blaspheme. I can't go and visit him.

And you remember what heaven's answer was? Behold, he prayed. That was the evidence of a changed life. And later, Paul writes theology in what is known as the Acropolis of the Christian Faith, the Roman Epistle.

And when he comes to chapter 8, you remember what he says? That the first evidence of a newborn child is that of God. Father, God's Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God. So I have a right to challenge anyone here who lives day after day, week after week, month after month, and you don't pray.

Or you may have a good Baptist background, fine Presbyterian upbringing, or you may be enshrined in some system of theology that you think is absolutely intact. But if you don't pray, you are a phony. Whoever you are, you're a phony.

You're a phony. You're not real. That's why Paul calls here for diligence in prayer, and for two reasons.

Notice them? Number one, the Word of God commands it. The Word of God commands it. When Paul says, devote yourselves to prayer, he is echoing the words of our Lord Jesus when he said, men ought always to pray, always to pray, and not to faint.

And notice, notice there are no conditions there. There are no conditions there. There are no loopholes.

There's no way out. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. What Jesus is saying is either power or paralysis.

Either you are praying or you're fainting. Either it's prayerfulness and powerfulness, or you are absolutely useless to God, to yourself, and to everybody else, so far as the Christian work is concerned, and so far as your Christian witness is concerned. So he says, devote yourself to pray.

Notice, notice Paul constantly on this. Pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5, 17. That is to say, let your life be a total attitude of prayer.

Not only those moments when you actually get to grips in a wrestling match in prayer, or you are worshipping in prayer, or you are receiving in prayer, but your whole attitude should be one of praying. Pray without ceasing. He says again, pray at all times in the Spirit.

He says again, praying in the Holy Spirit, Jude 20, and so on and so on. I can only add, failure to pray is disobedience, and disobedience is s-i-n, sin. Sin.

Some of us may need to confess sin tonight. It follows, therefore, that quite apart from our need to pray, there's a moral obligation. And we do not please God if we don't pray.

The Reverend Eric Alexander is one of the great preachers of Britain today. He is the pastor of St. George's Throne. He was telling our son David some while ago that he had been giving a series of expositions on the doctrine of prayer, week after week, week after week, and then the church moved right into a time of prayer.

And there's a dear lady right in front who took all the notes and nodded with assent. But when it came to actually praying, as we are hearing in that opening prayer just now, not only learning, but doing. When it came to actual praying, she never opened her mouth.

Alexander is a Scotsman. He came up to the lady and he said, my dear sister, he said, have you understood my messages on prayer? Yes, pastor. I've been greatly enriched.

Well, why don't you pray? Why don't you pray? She said, well, I don't feel like it. You know what his reply was? My dear sister, prayer isn't a glandular reaction to some emotional stimulant. It's a matter of obedience.

You don't pray because you feel like it. You pray because you must. You must.

As I was sharing with the theological students only yesterday afternoon, I thank God for the professor who looked into my face when I made a remark just like that woman. And the professor said to me, Olford, pray when you feel like it. Pray when you don't feel like it.

Pray until you do feel like it. It isn't how you feel when you go down on your knees. It's how you feel when you come off your knees.

The word of God commands it. And the eternal word said, men ought always to pray and not to faint. But look again, the work of God demands it.

The work of God demands it. Devote yourself to prayer, and right here in the context of, listen, the self-life, the church life, the home life, and presently, if we had time, the world and witness life, Paul says, pray. Pray.

Pray. For reasons that we cannot explain and never will until we get to glory. God has made prayer the means by which we resist the devil and all his forces.

Prayer is the means by which we release all the blessings of God upon our own lives and upon the church. By prayer, he opens and closes doors. By prayer, he effects miracles of the lives of men and women.

The church of Jesus Christ, as I pointed out before, marches on its knees. And concerning the early disciples, we read that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. The article V enforces those means of grace until the end of this age and the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was when they prayed on the day of Pentecost, notwithstanding the fact that in the sovereignty of God all that was time, when they prayed, the Holy Spirit fell upon them in Pentecostal effusion. Chapter 4, when they were fearful and their mouths were being closed, they prayed again, and the buildings shook, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they went out to pray with boldness, with boldness. I don't know how many of you brethren here who are in the ministry have read the works of Dr. Paul Bilheimer.

I've been profoundly, profoundly affected by his various books. But in his little book, *Destined for the Throne*, which in my judgment is the work I have seen in recent years on prayer and the church, Dr. Bilheimer quotes John Wesley, I think, three times in that little book, three times, and this is what he says, God does nothing except through prayer. God does nothing except through prayer.

Now, when I read that, I first questioned the accuracy of that statement, even though Wesley said it. I also questioned the theological connotations. But the more I reflected and researched my own heart and the scriptures, the more I've come to the same conclusion.

Even though God is almighty, He has chosen in His sovereignty to work on behalf of His church, on behalf of His people, on behalf of national matters, on behalf of the world, through prayer. So the work of God demands it. And I want to say here, and I want to say it very, very sincerely, but unless I be misinformed, I don't know that Australia has ever known a nationwide revival.

You've had some wonderful crusades. Billy Graham's been in this very city, so has Layton Ford. A crusade's about to start in Sydney very shortly, and thousands, I'm sure, are going to come to Christ.

But if I remember my discussion with Edward Orr, who will be with you very shortly, and you can ask him all about it, I don't recall that a major revival has ever taken place in Australia. But whether that's so or not, I want to make a statement, and I'm quoting now a man of tremendous prayer. Dr. Lewis King, who is the president of the Christian Mystery Alliance, says this, there has never been a prayerless revival.

There has never been a prayerless revival. Never. Never.

When he arrives here with Glenn Shepard, you're going to hear the stories of the second evangelical awakening, for I've seen the very dates on which he's going to lecture. One of those revivals started in New York when a layman, a layman, not even a preacher, was so concerned at the empty churches all across the land in 1857-58 that he went to a place called Fulton Street and put up a little card saying, anyone interested in praying for revival, join me here. I think the first night he prayed alone, then about six joined him, then there was a dropout and only a few remained, and then they began to return, and more, and more, and more, until a thousand men at noon were praying for revival in New York City.

Two thousand in Philadelphia, another two thousand in Chicago, and then city after city after city after city, and the greatest awakening that the United States of America has ever known before or since came through that prayer chain. Just about the same time, because of the echoes of what was happening in America, four young school teachers in County Antrim, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, got on their knees and said, oh God, things are grim. The church is powerless.

Souls are not being saved. Sin is rampant. Lord, Lord, do something, do something, and those four young school teachers got down on their knees, and the greatest revival Ireland has ever known came out of that prayer meeting.

I told the assembly people, and I remind you now, I met Evan Roberts myself, now a recluse, now quietly spending time alone in prayer, no longer speaking in public, but Evan Roberts, just a simple minor that God took up, equipped in a mighty, mighty way, was the instrument used in the 1904 revival all across Wales, where 300 prayer meetings were organized, until almost the whole nation became a prayer meeting, except for some cities that were totally bypassed. God sent such a revival from heaven, that I want to tell you something, miners came out from the pits and sat on the hills all day and all night with filthy coal dust on their faces, except for those currents of tears that fell to their dirty clothes, and they sang, and they sang, and they sang throughout the night, throughout the night. All the prisons were opened, prisoners were left.

The judges, it was called the revival of the white gloves, for the judges sat at their benches with white gloves because they could pronounce no guilty person. God had swept through the land. The donkeys, the donkeys in the mines wouldn't work because they were unused to kindness.

They only understood brutal, crude swearing. And people said that was just a provincial revival, that was just a provincial revival. It was no such thing.

You listen to Dr. Orr when he arrived, that revival affected Ireland and Scotland and England. That revival jumped across the Atlantic and affected the whole state of Kentucky and parts of America. That revival affected India.

That revival affected South America. In fact, no real mystery work had ever been done by Protestant churches in South America until after the 1904 revival, when God began to move throughout South America, and that movement is still going on. It affected Korea, and that's not stopped yet.

Is it any wonder Paul says, devote yourselves to pray? You sang just now, hallelujah. Amen. Revive us again.

I wonder how many really meant it. There's a price to pay for revival. If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from the wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land.

It was 1956, and I was at Duke Street Baptist Church when the mighty revival in the Hebrides took place. Two sisters, two sisters, burdened for the Hebrides, again looking at empty churches and kids on the streets as thugs, and they were burdened, and God gave them both a vision of what would happen if revival came. They shared it with their pastor, and he with seven other elders went into a barn, and every Tuesday and Friday they met.

They met from ten o'clock at night until about four o'clock in the morning for nearly, nearly three months. And then one night, one night in that barn, one night in that barn, one of those young elders got up, and he began to read Psalm 24, where it says, Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, and who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, he, he shall receive the blessing from the Lord. He said, Lord, we're a lot of humbugs here.

We're hypocrites here. We haven't clean hands. We haven't pure hearts.

We haven't broken spirits. Lord, deal with us. And almost like a bolt of lightning, every one of them was stricken to the ground, prostrate before God.

The glory filled that barn, and the revival of the Hebrides started. Next day, fishermen way out at sea dropped everything they were doing and came to kneel on the beaches, forgot all about their nets. Men who were farmers just knelt in the fields, crying to God for mercy.

Churches filled up without any preacher, just to pray. And that dear man, that dear man, Duncan, preached himself almost to death, almost to burnout. He was actually at 53 O'Deer Park Garden there, with us, whispering that story in my ear to get attention for his throat.

But what a revival. What a revival. What a revival.

You want to see a revival here? What are you prepared to pay for it? What are you prepared to pay for it? Paul talks about diligence in prayer. Why? Because the word of God commands it. And secondly, because the work of God demands it.

And if there's a soul here who says, but we are all right, we don't need revival in Australia. Do you know you're halfway to hell? You're halfway to hell. For if you don't sense a parch, a barrenness, a deadness that needs a renewal of the Holy Spirit, then frankly, I question your discernment, or possibly even your regeneration.

Diligence in prayer. But you know, there's a problem about prayer, and Paul deals with it here. Not only diligence in prayer, his command is to vigilance in prayer.

Vigilance in prayer. Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert. Keeping alert.

Let's stop there for a moment. Keeping alert with an attitude of thanksgiving. Now, this exhortation to watchfulness suggests dangers that are to be avoided in our prayer life.

Those of us who don't engage in prayer won't know what I'm talking about. But those of us who attempt to wrestle with this matter of prayer, and prayer costs, and I've never found prayer easy. I've never found prayer easy.

It's a battle every day of my life, and it will be until I get to glory. For I've discovered what counts costs, and what costs counts. But those of us who know something about prayer know what Paul is talking about here in terms of vigilance.

The devil comes under many guises to discourage us in prayer. He knows full well that if we get to our knees, he is beaten. He is beaten.

He is beaten. That's one weapon he can't cope with. That's one weapon he can't cope with.

That's why Paul says, take unto you the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and all prayer, if you want to know victorious living. That's, of course, exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ did in the wilderness. He gave himself to prayer and fasting, and when the devil came, he was already with a spirit sword.

And he said, it is written, it is written, it is written, and the devil even him. Why do we need vigilance? Two reasons. Notice here, number one, we have to watch against indiscipline in prayer.

We have to watch against indiscipline in prayer. Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert, keeping alert. When Paul wrote these words, he may have been thinking of the time when the disciples slept in the ministry of our Lord.

Obviously, he'd had all these reports given him again, and again, and again. And have you ever thought of the two most significant times when the disciples slept in the ministry of our Lord? Have you ever thought of that? Jot these references down. We haven't time to expand.

I intended to expand that tonight, but you work it out. The first time was Luke 9, 32, on the Mount of Transfiguration. On the Mount of Transfiguration.

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that? Here is the Lord Jesus Christ transfigured in all glory. His garments are whiter than any fuller could ever whiten them. He is dressed in pristine glory.

There's Moses, there's Elijah. In fact, when he eventually woke up, Peter said, why don't we build three tabernacles? And many people blame him for saying that. But you know, that's not totally fair.

He was, he was thinking of the kingdom, and Jesus said, you're going to see the kingdom before you die. And here was a little preview of the kingdom. And one of the great aspects of the kingdom age is the feast of tabernacles and all its spiritual significance.

And he said, let's build tabernacles, and let's celebrate. This is the kingdom. But do you know what? In all that glory, Peter, James, and John fell asleep.

They fell asleep. Read it for yourself, I haven't time for it. Read it for yourself.

They fell asleep. They fell asleep. In that moment of ecstasy, they went to sleep.

Do you know the second time they slept? In the very midst of this agony. In the garden of Gethsemane, in the garden of Gethsemane, there is my precious Savior kneeling and wrestling with the issue of sin. Father, if it be possible, let this cut pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt, and as he perspired beads of blood that fell to the ground, that fell to the ground. You know what? Peter, James, and John were sleeping. They were sleeping.

Jesus had to come and say to them, keep watching and praying, lest you fall into temptation. It's amazing how undisciplined you and I can become in our prayer life and our prayer habits. Sometimes it's sleepiness, and we need to take care of that.

Other times, wandering thoughts, we need to take care of that. More often than not, it's just inability to discipline ourselves to pray, and we know nothing of that old hymn we often sing but never understand. Take time to be holy.

Speak oft with your Lord. And tonight there's going to be an invitation, the last invitation I shall give in this chapel for this time. I wonder how many of you are going to come forward and drop on your knees and say, Lord, no more hypocrisy, no more hypocrisy.

I'm going to sit there in smug complacency if this didn't apply to me. I am a sinner when it comes to the matter of prayer, and I'm committing myself to a prayer ministry from tonight onwards. Indiscipline, indiscipline.

And if you doubt what I have to say, I'm going to challenge you right now. Did you pray today? Did you kneel today? Did you open the word and actually pray today, or didn't you? And remember, God knows your heart. God knows your heart.

But worse than indiscipline, in my judgment, is the other danger. And I know why Paul chooses these two. He says we have to watch against indiscipline, but we also have to watch against ingratitude in our praying.

He says, pray, devote yourselves to prayer, and keep alert with an attitude of thanksgiving. With an attitude of thanksgiving. If we study the Apostle's writings carefully, we shall find that he always associates prayer with thanksgiving.

The point is that if we trust God in prayer, then we should thank God in prayer. And where there is no trustfulness, obviously there is no thankfulness. And prayer is a farce.

Prayer is a farce. Of course, there is more implied in Paul's exhortation than just thanklessness. Ingratitude is what Shakespeare calls the lowest sin.

Base ingratitude is the actual phrase of Shakespeare. Base ingratitude. When we fail to count our blessings and to show our gratitude to God, we grieve him.

And when we don't say, thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord, I've asked, I'm going to receive. And before I even go out to see that answer, thank you, Lord, I know it's going to take place. Any of you know the British scene will be familiar with the name of David Watson.

David Watson was a Cambridge graduate, read theology. In my judgment, one of the greatest preachers England has seen for a long time. He's the only man who could compare with a Billy Graham or anybody else, fulfilling every single capacity hall in every great city in Britain with festivals of praise and evangelism.

True, he was charismatic at the very beginning, but he evened off until he made a complete truce with John Stott and all who didn't see quite his way. His massive book on evangelism, his massive book on the church are absolutely first class. I preached with him, knew him, and a man of tremendous, tremendous spirituality.

And although all kinds of things have happened since his death, I still want to say David Watson will be remembered as a man of God, and especially as a man of prayer. And Alan Redpath told me this, that when he went to see Lloyd-Jones and talk about this whole charismatic movement in one form or another, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, whatever excesses or whatever extravagances may be associated with what's taking place, I want to tell you this, you don't know what God is doing in our world today, and especially our country today, unless you go to York, York, and see what's happening in David Watson's church. That was Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

But I happen to know the story behind that. For David Watson and I shared a minister's meeting at Shiley, a great big conference that's held every year around about September. And Watson told the story of how the bishop sent his wife and himself to a dead Anglican church in York, a dead Anglican church in York.

It had six members, six members only. The church was about to be closed down. And David got up and ministered the word of God.

And guess what? The six left. The church was about to be closed down. And David got up and ministered the word of God.

And guess what? The six left. You know, I always get excited when I hear that. I really do.

I remember Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once saying to me, after he followed the great Dr. Campbell Morgan, who overstayed his time in that church, and then this dear fiery Welshman comes to take his place. And his style and his preaching and his prophetic thrust and penetration just didn't go down with boats coming back from Ireland one night. And we saw no less than Dr. Lloyd-Jones and his wife.

And we went up and made ourselves known. And Lloyd-Jones said, Stephen, my boy, let's go and have a cup of tea. That's par for the course with him.

We sat down and I said, Dr. Lloyd-Jones, tell me how things going in your church? He said, wonderful, wonderful. I said, what do you mean? He said, it's getting emptier every week. I said, but seriously, seriously, doctor, what do you mean? And in his characteristic ways, my dear Stephen, if you don't know this, you have to empty a church before you fill it.

And I've sat there with nearly 3,000 people, most of the men, the highest proportion of men in any English-speaking church in Europe. And he held that pulpit for all those years. But back to David Watson, the sixth left him.

What do you think they did? He and his wife went into retreat. And for the length of time, I don't know. But they went into the Word and they started to pray.

And they started to pray. And God convicted them. So what are you praying for? Anything and everything I want to do in that church, I will do.

And in my purpose has been done. Why don't you thank? Why don't you thank? Why don't you praise? What's the use of praying if you're not thanking? Those two couples, that couple, that sweet couple, David and his wife, stopped praying and started thanking God for what he was going to do in that Anglican church. And they came out of their retreat and they went to preach it and to visit it.

And within a few months, they had to change their location from the Anglican church to which the bishop put them into the cathedral, because the place was packed, absolutely packed. The choir seats packed, right up onto the pulpit packed, the chancel steps packed, the place was packed. And every single time he spoke, hundreds came to Christ.

Now, I've seen that with my own eyes. That's not back history. And that's what took place.

And I believe our problem is not just in discipline in prayer, it's in gratitude. In gratitude. In gratitude.

Have you ever looked at the example of all examples of prayer, our Lord Jesus, in this matter of thanksgiving? Study the occasions when he lifted his heart to his father, and you'll find it was always with thanks. He could give thanks to God for the revelations that were hidden from the sophisticated and the intellectual and given to babes and teachable ones. He could give thanks to God when he broke the bread to feed the five thousand.

He could give thanks to God when he stood at the grave of Lazarus in the knowledge that his prayer had already been heard. Already been heard. Already been heard.

The stirrings were already there. And someone says, it's a good job he said Lazarus, or the whole graveyard would have turned out. Paul says, thanks! He'll give thanks.

Quickly, a closing word on my third point, and yet the one on which I wanted to weigh most heavily possibly. Not only is it a call to diligence in prayer and vigilance in prayer, but something that I want to leave with you tonight, for I'm not talking about pie in the sky. I'm talking about grassroots theology.

Relevance in prayer. Relevance in prayer. Praying that God would open up the door for the word of God, that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I also have been imprisoned, in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

So often we think of prayer as something otherworldly, and therefore unrelated to everyday life. And I know God gives to men like Pranghaid and others, a unique ministry in prayer, and to many women, a unique ministry in prayer. But I don't believe Paul is writing about those specific gifts of prayer that are given to intercessors like that.

I believe he's talking to slaves, to slaves and masters, to husbands and wives and children and parents and to pastors and deacons and elders alike. And he's talking here about relevance in prayer. The ministry of prayer comes right down to where we live, and these verses illustrate it perfectly.

Three strokes and we're done. One, the personal relevance in prayer. The personal relevance in prayer.

Notice what Paul says. He says, pray for us. Who are the us? Pray for us.

Would you look at the context there? That's why I asked you to keep your Bible open. Paul, Paul sensed his need of prayer, sensed his need of prayer. And not only for his own life, but for his colleagues.

He names them Timothy, Epiphra, and others mentioned in this epistle, especially at the close of that chapter. In his letter to the Romans, there's a statement there that I often quote to my church when I go forth on ministry for any length of time, even short time. I get the elders to come and lay their hands on me, even for a crusade or a convention, because of what Paul says in this amazing verse in Romans 15, 30 to 33.

You know, in chapter 110, he says he's coming to Rome. But in the verse I've just located, he says, he says, I beseech you, I beseech you, through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in my prayers for deliverance from my enemies, for the acceptance of my ministry by the saints, as well as the gifts that I'm bringing, that they will not be rejected and scorned. And he calls upon God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the Triune God, as the basis of his beseeching for personal prayer.

You can study those verses without any difficulty of exegesis. They just stand out from the page, and you will be shattered by the prayerlessness of your own life for missionaries, for missionaries. I wonder how many of you have a prayer list for missionaries.

I wonder how many of you pray for the pastor of this church, his colleagues, his deacons. How many of you pray for one another? I think the greatest blessing we ever had in our church, both in London and New York, is when we had a calendar of every member of the church put in groups that covered an entire month, so that every member of the church started praying in the group in which their initials occurred. We would start, obviously, with a group that started with the old, so that, if you think clearly, every single member in that church was prayed for at least, at least one time every day.

And I tell you, you can't go on doing that honestly without finding out, who is this Mrs. Jones, or who is this Mr. Jones? You've got to find out what you're praying about. And Paul says, pray for me, and pray for my brethren. Addressing the church at Philippi, he thanks them for the prayers that brought deliverance and the supply of the Spirit to his part soul.

What a lesson to you and me, to pray for one another. But not only is there this personal relevance, notice there is a practical relevance. I don't know what the obstacle was, but notice what Paul says.

Pray, he says, that God will open to us a door for the Word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I've also been imprisoned. Quite obviously, there were obstacles in the way to the

preaching of the gospel, and Paul wanted those obstacles removed. The door was closed, and he wanted the door open.

And he's absolutely specific about it. He says, I want an open door. Nothing wooly about that, nothing nebulous about that.

I believe part of our problem in praying is that we're so indefinite in our praying. Paul wanted a door open for the gospel, and he asked the believers to pray that this would happen. Let's not hesitate to bring our requests specifically, specifically, and name them.

He who marks the fall of a sparrow, he who numbers or even names the very hairs of our head, he's interested in every detail. I was deeply blessed some while ago when I discovered the meaning of that little word, give us this day our daily bread. It's the only time that word occurs in the whole of the New Testament, or even the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

It occurs that once only in the Bible, in that particular form. And nobody knew really why that word was so special. And not so long ago, a little piece of papyrus was dug out of some of the ruins of the Holy Land.

And they brought it to the scholars, and they looked it very carefully through, and what do you think? What do you find? What do you find? This very word. This very word. And where did it occur? Where did it occur? In a woman's shopping list.

A woman's shopping list. The Lord Jesus deliberately picks up that word and says, yes, ladies, have you brought your shopping list in prayer? Do you really believe that God is interested in the little things of life? He is sovereign. He is mighty.

But he's also a father. He's a father who watches the fall of the sparrow and numbers the very hairs of our head. And however much you may say that's hyperbole, I don't believe it is myself.

But even so, what about the truth behind it? The relevance in prayer. Our God is a practical God. Our God is a practical God.

I'll never forget as a lad, nearly 17, in fact I was 17, perhaps a little over 17, when Father felt we had to go home. We had to go home from Africa. Had to go home from Africa.

And in faith he believed God would supply the need. And he hadn't the money for the boat trip. Forty-four days from Lubita Bay to Lisbon, and then from Lisbon to England.

Forty-four days on a banana boat. And he hadn't a ticket, and he hadn't a dime. We'd worked our way by one means of travel to another, right to the coast, right from the depths of Angola to Lubita Bay.

But my father, and the story is recorded in a little book published by the Brethren called He Heareth Us. And I was reading it just the other day before I came to Australia. He went and registered his name at the bank of Lubita Bay and the post office, and said, there's going to be a message coming to you.

I want you to notify me immediately. He had to be notified. He went one morning with his heart absolutely confident, and he said, there's a letter for me.

And the man in Portuguese said, si senior, you're absolutely right. And he handed me the total sum of money for every need to get mother, Stephen, Paul, John, and father from Lubita Bay to Southampton

docks. And nobody in England knew anything about it.

God is interested in the practical things of our lives. But my father had already said, thank you. You see, when you're brought up in that kind of a background, so much of what we hear today, oh, just makes me sick.

Just makes me sick. Not only sick, but sad. But the last word I want to say is the most important, possibly.

There is a powerful relevance in prayer. Paul said that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. The apostle here requests the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel.

He recognized that natural mind is at enmity against God and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. And the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for their foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they're spiritually discerned. And he knew that the communication of the gospel, this mighty event, incarnational event, relational event that creates regeneration, that creates transformation, that creates revival, this mighty communication of the word is dead without prevailing prayer.

And he says, I need prayer for that. I need prayer for that. My dear wife, who's here tonight, was saved under the ministry of Tom Reese, the evangelist Tom Reese.

Tom Reese and I had many crusades together. He was used, I would say, as no other Englishman than I know, in immediate post-war years for touching young people. He filled the Royal Albert Hall more times than anybody else has done single-handed.

But in one series of his Royal Albert Hall, there was a tremendous resistance. And with thousands of young people there, that place seated 8,000, thousands of young people there, somehow there wasn't a response. Wasn't a response.

Suddenly, one night, just like a dam bursting, practically everybody in that auditorium, port of broken, couldn't get over, couldn't get over what happened. Tom Reese just shook his head, he couldn't believe it. Something had happened.

Do you know, the very next day, he had a telegram from South America. That telegram came from a leprosarium, a leprosarium, from a lady who was almost all eaten up with disease, but knew English, followed all that was happening in England, and for some reason or other was fascinated by the publicity that she'd been sent to reach the youth of Great Britain, especially of London, with the preaching of the gospel. And that little soul decided that very night, and they worked out the time, the time, the time was identical, even, even with a difference of hours, the time was identical.

That little woman got down on her knees and began to pray for a breakthrough from heaven. And the breakthrough from heaven came. He followed up that story, has it all documented.

He's gone home to glory now. But I remember his telling it. I remember his telling it.

Just like the story of another little woman, totally tied up with arthritis in a little attic, a little attic in London City. And D.L. Moody had come for the great crusades, but there was an insistence that he came to one particular church in London. And he refused, and they insisted, and he refused, and he insisted, and he

refused, and they insisted, and eventually he came, and he spoke.

One Sunday morning, the place was jammed. His name was now so well known. He gave an invitation, and practically every single individual in the place responded.

So he stood back, and he said, you didn't understand what I said. You didn't understand what I said. Oh, be seated.

He couldn't ask anybody forward. The aisles were packed. And he again went through the way of salvation.

And he said, now then, I want those of you who understand what I've said to rise to feet. Everybody stood. And if you read Moody's story and all the recent accounts, that story is so documented that it's absolutely thrilling.

Do you know that per capita, that's the biggest response Moody ever had in any given meeting on both sides of the Atlantic. So he immediately wanted to know how and why this happened, and he began to ask the elders of the church, and they took him to a little attic. And as he went up those creaking stairs and opened the door, he thought he walked into a blaze of glory.

For there on that bed, absently crippled with arthritis, was a glorious, glorious face aglow. And Moody hadn't to say anything. She said, I know it's happened.

It's happened. They were converted today, weren't they? They were converted today. He looked to one side of the wall, and there on the wall was his face, D.L. Moody, and his campaigns in England.

The powerful relevance of prayer. Can you imagine what would happen in your church if you knew how to pray like that? There she is, shackled. Shackled in pain, but alive in a ministry of prayer.

You say to me, but Steve Lawford, your theme is the supremacy of the Savior for our prayer life. Yes, and I haven't forgot that. Because what I've been talking about tonight isn't something that you can whip up or manipulate.

And that's why I want to close with a little borrow from Romans chapter 8. For Paul tells us in one of the most powerful verses in all of the Bible on this subject, that to engage in prayer demands a sufficiency of our risen Lord. And Paul says that sufficiency is mediated to us through the Holy Spirit. And then he says, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.

But the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. In other words, he spells out for us here how we can know the sufficiency of the Savior through the Spirit for prayer.

And the three things he says are these. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, our prayer life is divinely energized. The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.

More accurately in the Greek, our infirmity. It's in the singular. And if we're honest, we shall all agree that our greatest weakness is prayerlessness.

We haven't the strength to pray. We can watch television. We can watch X-rated films.

We can read novels. We can socialize. We can do anything else.

But you kneel down and pray, and you say, I'm tired. Who is it that energizes? You see, all prayer starts in the heart of God. All prayer starts in the heart of God.

And by the indwelling Paracletos, that prayer is brought to our hearts, and then returned back to the heart of God. And when that circle is closed, when that circuit is closed, there's power. There's power.

Through the Holy Spirit, our prayer life is divinely energized. Through the Holy Spirit, our prayer life is divinely verbalized. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself prays in us and through us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

There are times when prayer reaches such a level, you actually can't verbalize what you want to say. But the wonderful thing about it is, the Holy Spirit verbalizes our prayers in the very throne room of God. And there's never a syllable out of place.

Especially the deeper levels of prayer. We're not talking about ecstatic praying, we're talking of groaning in prayer. Groaning in prayer.

And finally, will you notice, through the Holy Spirit, our prayer life is divinely authorized. Divinely authorized. All this business about doubt, is it the will of God? Should I ask for that? Listen, listen.

He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And if we're obedient to the Scriptures and totally submissive to the Spirit, we can never pray outside of the will of God. So it's possible to have what I'm deliberately going to call a successful prayer life.

A successful prayer life. The Holy Spirit guarantees this if we yield to him as we kneel before the throne of God. If our prayers are out of the Scriptures, and if our prayers are totally under the control of the Holy Spirit, we pray according to the will of God.

And as I put in this little tiny poem, it just works like this. Holy Spirit, pray through me as I yield my life to thee. Only then shall I succeed when I bring to God my need.

The supremacy of the Savior for our prayer life. The call to diligence in prayer. Why? Because the word of God commands it, and the work of God demands it.

The call to vigilance in prayer. Why? Because of our indiscipline and ingratitude. The call to relevance in prayer.

Why? Because God is interested personally, practically, and partially in doing in us and through us what he'll never do outside of prayer. And if John Wesley is right, then God does nothing except through prayer. That is to say, redemptively within the body of his church.

We're not talking about common grace, we're talking about his work in the church through his own people. Are there any recruits tonight? Do you want to see revival come to your church? Do you want to see revival come to your city? Do you want to see revival come to your nation? Do you want to see all the truths we've been listening to all these days come alive? Come alive? Then, brother, I've said the last word. Dear sister, I've given the only secret I know.

But all history and all scripture attest to the authenticity of what I've talked about tonight. Jesus said men ought always to pray and not to faint. Let us pray.

This is the last night. Once again, I open the opportunity for those whom God has touched. It may be the very first night.

It may be the night on the church life, the home life, the work life, or possibly tonight in this climactic final message. And you're coming forward and you're saying, I want all heaven to see what I'm doing. I want all hell to see what I'm doing.

I want my wife, my husband. I want my children. I want my people.

I want everybody to know that I am dedicating my life to a new ministry of prayer. And remember this was spoken to slaves and masters and parents and children and pastors and members. And every one of us, every one of us is able to engage in this ministry in a daily fashion, in a disciplined fashion.

In fact, I'm going to go as far as saying your dedication to Christ can only be measured by your discipline in prayer. If you want to come and yield as an act of dedication, do so before we finalize this great convention together and send you home on your way to see a new day, a new renewal of the spirit, a movement in the tops of the mulberry trees, a mighty breath from heaven, and a new to hasten the coming of the King. Lord, write these words upon our hearts, my heart, all afresh, all anew, and make me and make us men and women of prayer.

Teach us that we only conquer as we kneel at the throne of grace. And may this lead to unbelievable heights of glory and blessing and power in the days to come. We ask it for Jesus' sake.

And all God's people said, Amen. Let's turn to number 59 once again for the last time. Have thine own way, Lord.

We're a God has touched your heart and there is the moving of the spirit. Just quietly come and kneel in his presence as Ron leads us in this prayer of response. Have thine own way, Lord.

Thou art the partner. I am the clay. Let us rise together.

Let us rise together and sing.

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