

A Quiet Talk on Prayer

by William MacDonald

Prayer is the key to omnipotence and the cutting edge in any work for God, and it's a joy for us, not a duty or a burden.

Duration: 33:41

Scripture: James 4:2, James 5:16, Revelation 8:1

Topics: "Prayer Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a conversation he had with a young person who expressed the difficulty of living a life of faith in the United States. The speaker emphasizes the need to trust God completely and put oneself in a position where failure is only possible if God fails. He believes that by doing so, one will experience a powerful presence in their life and be able to impact others for God. The sermon then transitions to a discussion on prayer, highlighting the confidence believers can have in approaching God and the assurance that He hears and answers their prayers according to His will. The speaker also shares a personal anecdote about a situation where God provided food for him and his companion through the kindness of a stranger.

Transcript

The series of our little talk is Back to Basics, and the subject today is just a quiet talk on prayer, and the golden text is in 1 John chapter 5. So if you'd turn to that please, 1 John chapter 5, verses 14 and 15. Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

I almost feel like beginning this message with an apology. If you want to really humble me, ask me, how is your prayer life? What can I say? I have to say I don't spend as much time in prayer as I should. And maybe that will strike a responsive chord in someone else's heart here today.

Somebody said, preach into your own heart, and you'll be surprised how many hearts you hit. And today I'm preaching into my own heart, and I just want to share with you some simple thoughts on the subject of prayer that have been helpful to me. First of all, man never comes closer to omnipotence than when he prays in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You and I will never be omnipotent. We will never have all power. But we never come closer to it than when we pray in Jesus' name.

Because when we pray in that name, it's just the same as if the Lord Jesus were making those requests of the Father. And dear friends, that's power. That really is power.

And it's a wonderful thing to be able to come into the presence of God the Father in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. An old bishop was right when he said, when I pray, things happen. When I don't pray, they don't happen.

When I pray, things happen. When I don't pray, they don't happen. I'd like to suggest to you this morning that Christians hold the balance of power in the world through prayer.

We can affect the destiny of nations through prayer. Some of us have been almost breathless in recent months as we've watched what has happened in Eastern Europe. When we saw the Berlin Wall come down and a breath of freedom blow across Eastern Europe.

Do you know why that happened? That happened because Christians have been praying. That's why it happened. I think sometimes we lose the sense of that, that these great movements in human history are the result of the prayers of God's people.

When I was over there last October, I was told that there were no, at that time, there were no Christians in prison in Russia as a result of their faith. You tell me that isn't an answer to prayer. Christians hold the balance of power in the world through prayer.

And we can affect the destiny of nations through prayer. I'm sure I've told this to you before, some of you before, and I'm sure too there are some that never heard it. On the second Friday of every month, we have a prayer meeting up there.

It's kind of a missionary prayer meeting. And young people come from various assemblies and other groups. Some years ago, we gathered on that Friday night and we did something that we had never done before.

We opened the meeting in a time of confession of sin, confessing the sins of the nation, confessing the sins of the church, confessing individual sins, but not in a lurid way. And that time of confession went on for quite a while. Then we started to pray for missionaries in various nations of the world.

And we had a letter from Dick Sanders, who at that time was in the Chad Republic. And at that time, there was a wicked ruler in the Chad. His name was Pombobai, and he was massacring the Christians.

Time Magazine reported that one Christian had been buried up to his neck in sand, and the ants finished him off. Another Christian had been put inside a drum and they beat on the drum till he starved to death. And Dick wrote us in this letter that he said, don't feel sorry for the Christians that have gone to heaven.

But he said, pray for those who are still alive. And we did. I think it was about two o'clock Saturday morning.

We're praying for the Chad Republic and for the Christians there. Just a little group of nobodies in San Leandro, California, praying for nations of the world. Sunday morning, I'm going to Bethany Chapel to minister the word, and I flick on the radio, the news station.

Newsflash. Chad Republic. Military coup.

Pombobai killed. And really the result was that a military general was elevated to power who was favorable to the evangelical cause. Now, do you believe that a group of young people praying in a prayer meeting at two o'clock on a Saturday morning could affect the destiny of the Chad Republic? Well, I want to tell you something.

All the young people that were there that night believe it. They believe that didn't happen by chance. That marvelous converging of circumstances and the timing and sequence of events could only be of God.

Really, when you think of that, you say, why don't we pray more? And I ask myself that. I rebuke myself. Why don't I pray more? Next, the best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity.

You know this. You know this from experience. The best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity.

First of all, when a person is unsaved and he's casual about it all and he doesn't think very much about it. But I tell you, when the Spirit of God comes upon him and his life is brought to a crisis point, he knows how to cry to God for salvation. But even in the Christian life, too, the best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity.

It makes you wonder why we don't live more in dependence on the Lord. Why we have to surround ourselves with all the security systems, all the pillows, all the crutches, all the support, all the superstructure, so we really don't need God. I'll never forget a young fellow saying to me, young O. Emmer, Greg Livingston.

He said, it's very hard to live a life of faith in the United States. He said, you have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God. Where if God fails you, you're sunk.

And when you do that, there'll be a power in your life. And when you touch other lives, something will happen for God. Wow.

Can I say that again to you? Hard to live a life of faith in the United States. He said, you have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God. Where if God fails you, you're sunk.

And he said, if you do that, there'll be a power in your life. And when you touch other lives, something will happen for God. Remember, Lord Jesus said to the disciples, launch out into the deep.

And I think that's what he's saying to us too today. We try to hug the shore as far as a life of faith is concerned. We feel more secure there close to the edge.

And the Lord Jesus is saying to us all the time, launch out into the deep. Next, I'd like to suggest to you that God seldom, if ever, does anything except in answer to prayer. It's going to be a shocker to some of you.

God seldom, if ever, does anything except in answer to prayer. I got to put that statement to the test right now. I'm going to ask you who are saved by the grace of God.

Okay, raise your hand if you can think of someone who prayed for you before you were saved. Would you raise your hand? I've proved my point. God seldom, if ever, does anything except in answer to prayer.

Spurgeon said, prayer is the forerunner of mercy. Turn to sacred history and you'll find that seldom ever did a great mercy come to this world unheralded by supplication. Prayer is always the preface of blessing.

When I meet somebody, maybe a young fellow, and he's just come to the Lord, and I like to say to him, who prayed for you? And he thinks, you know, I had a grandmother who knew the Lord. Something like that. Something like that always comes out.

What a great incentive for us to pray. God has limited certain of his activities to responding to the prayers of his people. Unless they pray, he will not act.

Heaven may will something to happen, but heaven waits and encourages Earth's initiative to desire that will, and then to will and pray that it happens. The will of God is not done on Earth by an inexorable juggernaut omnipotence or ignoring the will of man on Earth. R.B. Matthews says this, On the contrary, God has will that his hand be held back while he seeks for a man, an intercessor to plead, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

In other words, he bids his own work wait on man's prayers. Something to think about, isn't it? God bids his own work to wait on man's prayers. Next, I'd like to suggest to you this morning that prayer moves God to do things that he wouldn't otherwise have done.

Really does. Prayer moves God to do things that he wouldn't otherwise have done. I know a lot of people have the idea that all prayer does is bring us into cooperation with what God is going to do anyway.

It isn't true. Turn in your Bibles, please, to James chapter 4 and verse 2. James chapter 4 and verse 2. And there it says it very, very clearly. You lust and do not have.

You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you do not have because you do not ask. That's it.

You do not have because you do not ask. Chapter 5, verse 16. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. So what a wonderful thing it is to be able to touch the throne of God in prayer and see God doing things that otherwise he wouldn't. Let me tell you something this morning.

The warehouses of heaven are filled with crates containing blessings that no one ever asked for. It's true. The warehouses of heaven are filled with unopened crates containing unimaginable blessings that nobody has ever asked for.

Something else that has helped me in a life of prayer, such as it is, is this. God always answers prayer. And he always answers it in the way that you would answer it if you had his wisdom, love, and power.

If you knew what God knows, and if you loved as God loves, and if you had the power that God has, you would answer prayer in just exactly the same way God answers. I have a friend who was wrapping some books the other night, and his little girl came out of the bedroom. She's five, came out of the bedroom.

And in her nightie, she had gone to bed, but she was wide awake. And she said to him, Daddy, I'm going home to heaven. He said, What do you mean? Well, she said, I'm going to go home to heaven at midnight tonight.

And he said, What do you ever say that for? Well, she said, I don't want to live here any longer. Five years old. I don't want to stay here.

He said, What about Daddy and Mommy? But she said, You can come and visit me. Well, he said, What makes you think you're going home to heaven? She said, Well, I asked God and he answers prayer, doesn't he? And the father said, Yes, he does answer prayer, dear. But supposing you said to me, Daddy, I don't want to eat anything but candy the rest of my life.

Would you give it to me? She said, He said, Would I give it to you? And she said, No. And he said, Why wouldn't I give it to you? She said, Because it wouldn't be good for me. And she went and had a good night's rest.

So that's right. God answers prayer in the same way you would answer it if you had his wisdom, love and power. I tell you, that gives us great confidence in prayer, doesn't it? Because sometimes we don't know what to ask for.

And sometimes we make very crazy requests if you want to know the truth. I've done that. But I thank God for his wisdom in answering prayer.

God nothing does nor suffers to be done but what you would yourself if you could see the end of all he does as well as he. Which says God answers your prayers. He knows what the end is, what the purpose is, and he answers it.

When you say I have a problem, what about when I pray for my unsaved relative? Can I be sure when I pray for my unsaved relatives that they'll get saved? Well, let me tell you how I've resolved that in my own mind. I believe that when I pray for the unsaved, God brings influences to bear on their lives. Maybe they flick on the radio and hear a gospel program or the TV or maybe somebody hands them a crack or maybe they see Jesus saved, saved painted on the side of a rock.

I believe with all my heart that when I pray for an unsaved person, God brings some influence to bear on that person's life. I might not know about it at all. But God doesn't drag people to heaven against their will.

And the human will is involved in salvation, isn't it? So I pray God acts and then he leaves it to the individual to make the choice. He doesn't force the will. Next, the work of God is done more in prayer than in any other way.

But I'd like to read another quote to you in that regard. Prayer is the cutting edge in any work for God. It's not a supplemental spiritual rocket to get some well-meaning effort off the ground.

Prayer is the work and the working power in any spiritual ministry. It should be the central thrust. The spiritual history of a mission or a church is written in its prayer life.

The expression of corporate life is not measured in statistics, but in prayer depth. I like that. Let me read that again.

The expression of corporate life is not measured in statistics, but in prayer depth. Men today judge the success of a church by the number of people in it. God doesn't.

The program of preaching, teaching, and serving, the goal setting, the adoption of new 20th century techniques, seminars on time management and administrative procedures are all good, but effective and

productive in God's economy only as they're subject to prayer. Next, I'd like to say this. There are mysteries in connection with prayer.

I'm sure you face those in your own mind. Questions arise in regard to prayer. I'd just like to leave this with you.

It's better to pray than to solve all the mysteries in prayer. Just leave the mysteries with God and just pray and learn. As Hudson Taylor said, learn to move men through God by prayer.

Prayer should be a joy for us. Not a duty, not a burden, but a joy. Paul says that in Philippians 1, making my request with joy.

I think many times we think of prayer as a duty, as a discipline, as a routine, as a ritual. Paul says, pardon me, I just happen to enjoy it. And we sing that.

Sometimes I think our hymnology is better than our practice. We sing, oh, the pure delight of a single hour that before thy throne I spend. A wonderful, wonderful thing.

Prayer often deals in the realm of the impossible and accomplishes it. It's true. Prayer and faith lead us to heights that make reason dizzy.

And if we have time, we'll try to mention some of them. Somebody has said that prayer has divided seas, rolled up flowing rivers, made flinty rocks gush into fountains, quenched flames of fire, muzzled lions, disarmed vipers and poisons, marshaled the stars against the wicked, stopped the course of the moon, arrested the rapid sun in its great race, burst open the gates, iron gates, recalled souls from eternity, conquered the strongest devils, commanded legions of angels down from heaven. What has prayer not done? Prayer makes the darkest clouds withdraw.

Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw, gives exercise to faith and love, brings every blessing from above. Restraining prayer, we cease to fight. Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright.

And Satan trembles when he sees the feeblest Christian on his knees. Tremendous. It's fervent prayer that reached the throne of God.

We already read that, didn't we? In James chapter 5, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Cold prayers are like arrows without heads, like swords without edges, like birds without wings. They don't pierce.

And cold prayers don't reach the throne. Somebody has said this and I ask you to consider it. I consider my effectiveness by the number of people who pray for me and the number I pray for.

I measure my effectiveness by the number of people who pray for me and the number I pray for. I tell you, one of the greatest joys to me and one of the greatest encouragements in the Christian life is when somebody comes to me and says, I pray for you every day. And if anything is accomplished in a ministry like mine, it's certainly not through me, but through the prayers of God's people.

I think it's good for us to remember that prayers, our prayers go to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. I'd like you to turn to Revelation chapter 8, and especially this might be encouraging to young fellows and girls. It has been to me, I'll tell you.

Prayer goes to the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. Revelation chapter 8, verses 1 through 4. I'm going to read them. When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

And I saw the seven angels who stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Here it is. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar, and he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the angels' hands. Now, what I'd like to emphasize here, and especially to our young friends here in the audience, is this. Sometimes we're hesitant and timid about praying in public.

I say, don't be. And this is why. When I pray, my prayers go to the Lord Jesus.

Incidentally, most Bible students and commentators acknowledge that the angel in this passage is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayers go to him, the prayers of all the saints.

And do you know what he does? He removes all the impurities from them, and he adds incense to them. Incense. What is the incense? I think the incense is the fragrance of his own person and work.

And that's the way my prayers get to the Father. Let me give you an illustration. Here's a young fellow, and he might get up at the breaking of bread and thank the Father for dying on the cross of Calvary.

Well, the Father didn't die on the cross of Calvary. The Son died on the cross of Calvary. That's all right.

When it gets to the Father, it's got to be all straightened out, that prayer. It is. It really is.

That's been a tremendous... You might get up and just murder the King's English, you know, and you... Don't worry about it. The Lord Jesus picks out all the weeds out of the bouquet, and when it's presented to the Father, it's absolutely perfect. It's better than when it left you, and it has the incense there, the fragrance of his own person and work.

Now, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't grow in our knowledge of the Word of God. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't improve and stop asking the Father for thanking him for dying on the cross. But I don't think older brethren should jump a young brother and make him ashamed of his testimony for Christ and quench the spirit in him because he makes some theological impropriety like that.

I say, praise the Lord, when it gets to the Father, it's all going to be absolutely perfect. Prayer is more important to the Lord than service. This is a rebuke to me.

I tend to be more of a Martha than I do a Mary. But prayer is more important to the Lord than service. Somebody said, God sets more value on prayer and communion than on labor.

The heavenly bridegroom is wooing a wife, not hiring a servant. The heavenly bridegroom is wooing a wife, not hiring a servant. Next, we honor God by the greatness of our prayers.

We honor God by the greatness of our prayers. You know, Alexander the Great used to hold open court where any of his people could come and talk to him. And one day, a beggar came to make a request.

And Alexander said to him, what do you want? He said, well, I'd like a farm for myself. And he said, I'd like a dowry for my daughter. And he said, I'd like an education for my son.

And Alexander said, the requests are granted. And his aides reproached him. Here's a saucy beggar coming and making requests like that.

And do you know what Alexander said? He said, I get tired of these people who come and ask me for a gold coin. That saucy beggar treated me like a king. He asked big.

We ought to ask big. We honor God by the bigness of our prayers. I'm sure you've heard that little ditty.

If you had been living when Christ was on earth and had met the Savior time, what would you have asked him to do for you, supposing you were stone blind? The child considered and then replied, I suppose that without doubt, I'd have asked the Lord for a dog with a chain to lead me daily about. How often thus in our faithless prayers, we acknowledge with shame surprise. We've only asked for a dog with a chain when we might have had opened eyes.

May the Lord help us to ask big, to come to the Lord. You are coming to a king. Great petitions with you bring for his love and power are such we can never ask too much.

When we get to heaven, we're all going to wish we had prayed more. And if you go out from this meeting and you don't have a desire to do more praying, this meeting has been the flop of the conference. Really, I mentioned earlier some of the spectacular things that can be accomplished in prayer.

I just like to tell you, maybe as time permits a story or two. Year or two ago, I was down in Bolivia and met two seasoned missionaries. Some of you would know some of them.

One was Ned Meharg from Australia. The other is Frank Haggerty from Scotland. Years ago, these men were doing really rough pioneer work in the, well, in the boondocks of Bolivia, and their work was bathed in prayer.

It was a dangerous work. One day, they came to a village and they were hungry, and they pitched camp outside the village, but they didn't have any food. So they went into the village and they looked for a place that might have food, and there was a hotel there, and there was a restaurant in the hotel.

So they went into the restaurant, and they said to the woman, we'd like something, and she said, I have nothing. She knew they were evangelicals, and she said, I have nothing. So they left, and they went to the local police station, and they said, where could we get some food? And the policeman said, the restaurant in the hotel.

They said, we were just there, and she said she doesn't have anything. He said, come with me. He took them back to the hotel, and he said to the woman, get these men something to eat.

And she said, come back in 45 minutes. They went back in 45 minutes, and she had cooked, well, she had deep fried some potatoes cut into chunks, and she had cooked up a pan of lungs, lungs. They were very, very hungry, especially Ned, and they began to eat, and Frank, as he ate the lungs, he said, I don't like this.

Well, Ned said, you give me the meat, and I'll give you my potatoes. So they started to eat, and as Ned ate the meat, his stomach began to burn, burn, burn. She had put rat poison in the meat.

He began to drink water, and he couldn't drink enough water. He got sicker and sicker and sicker. Finally, they had to leave, and they went back to the campsite, and Ned began to lose consciousness.

Before he lost consciousness, he said to Frank, just send my Bible back to my father in Australia. And then he passed out. They had committed that day to the Lord in prayer.

After he had sunk into unconsciousness, a tall man appeared on the scene and said, your friend is sick. He said, he's not only sick, I think he's dying. He said, I'll be right back.

The tall man went, and he came back with an earthenware vessel filled with goat's milk. He said, get your friend to drink this. How can I get him to drink it? He said, force it down his throat.

So Frank began forcing the milk down Ned Meharg's throat. After a while, Ned opened his eyes. And as soon as he opened his eyes, Frank said, here, quick.

He said, drink some of this. Drink as much as you can of this. And Ned began to drink it.

And after a while, he said, the burning is gone. And he recovered. They got down on their knees.

They thanked the Lord for his wonderful interposition for them. And they went on their way. And sometime later, they were back in that area.

And they thought, oh, I should tell you, they left the earthenware pot there and put some money under it to thank the man for what he had done. They came back to that area. And they thought, we'll just look up that man and thank him.

So they said to the nationals there about this tall man. They said, there are no tall men here. Well, they said, he came to us with an earthenware vessel filled with goat's milk.

They said, there are no goats here. There was a man at that time serving the Lord there named Dr. Brown, I think from New Zealand. And he told them the name of the poison that she had put in the meat.

And he said, the best known antidote for it is goat's milk. Prayer. But the more we're cast upon the Lord, the more we see these wonderful interventions of God.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/7/SID7833.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/a-quiet-talk-on-prayer/>

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