

Prayer-02

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the transformative power of prayer and its essential role in the life of a believer.

Duration: 37:03

Scripture: Matthew 18:19-20, John 14:13-14, John 15:7, John 16:23, James 1:5-8

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher talks about the invisible world that exists alongside the physical world. He shares the story of Elisha and his servant, where Elisha prayed for the servant's eyes to be opened and he saw the armies of the Lord surrounding them. The preacher emphasizes the power of prayer and how believers can tap into the supernatural through their prayers. He shares testimonies of people who experienced miraculous interventions through prayer, including a man who was saved from suicide after praying for God to reveal Himself. The sermon encourages listeners to pray earnestly and expectantly, knowing that God is present and active in the invisible realm.

Transcript

This morning to a few verses of Scripture. All of these verses have to do with the subject of prayer, because that's what I'd like to speak to you about today. Matthew chapter 18, verses 19 and 20.

Matthew chapter 18, verses 19 and 20, first of all, says, I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. John chapter 14, verses 13 and 14.

John chapter 14, verses 13 and 14. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

John chapter 15, verse 7. John chapter 15, verse 7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. And one more verse, chapter 16, and verse 23. John chapter 16, and verse 23.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing, verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

So with the lady who used to go into the London airport, I guess she still does, to witness for the Lord Jesus. She was a Christian personal soul winner. She would go into the airport and engage people in conversation and seek to point them to the Savior of sinners.

One day she went in and she talked to a young lady who was a flight attendant on an international airline, and as they sat together there in the terminal, she presented the gospel to this stewardess, and wonderfully enough, the stewardess trusted Christ as her Savior right there in the London airport. And so the Christian lady, the worker, started to teach her the word of God in what little time was available to her, and then all of a sudden the stewardess said, well I'm sorry, I have to leave. My flight is leaving and I have to go.

And so the Christian worker had a little bag of literature, and she reached to the bag and she said, well now here's a book by Francis Schaeffer. She said, maybe you'll have a chance to read it on the flight after you get the meal all served and get the passengers all comfortable. Maybe you'll have a chance to read this book.

And so the stewardess took off with the book, and the Christian worker sat there in the airport and lifted up her heart to God in prayer for that young lady. She said, Lord, I may never see that girl again, and I can't follow her up, but you can, and I just pray that you'll do it. So the stewardess got on her, I guess you call them flight attendants now, not stewardesses, but she got on the plane and they flew and they served the meal and did all the other things, and then she had some free time on the flight.

And so she sat down in one of the seats at the back of the plane and she started to read the book, and as she was reading it, she was conscious of the fact that a man passing down the aisle was looking down. And finally he said to her, do you understand what you're reading? And she said, well, frankly, I've only been saved a few hours, he said, and it is a bit tough going. And he said, well, just move over and let me sit down and explain it to you.

He said, my name is Francis Schaeffer. He was the author of the book, and he just, quote, happened to be on that flight. Do you think that a woman praying in the London airport can affect the destiny of a girl flying on an international flight, and move the checkers on the checkerboard so that the author of the book comes and sits down beside her? Well, that's just exactly what happened.

How? Through the power of prayer. Dear friends, prayer introduces us into a realm, the realm of the spiritual, a realm that the average person knows absolutely nothing about. I had a lovely illustration of it just a week ago.

I was down on a trip to Monterey, and the car was working beautifully. I drove back and stopped at a Safeway, free advertisement for Avery Wilson, and stopped at a Safeway, and the car was still working safely, but when I got out of the Safeway, I'll tell you, it sounded like a machine shop. I couldn't believe it.

It was screeching under the hood. It was absolutely unbelievable. And there was a young fellow with me, and he got out and looked under the hood, and he thought it had to do with the smog pump or something.

I don't know the smog pump from the water pump, but we crept back to my carport and put the car there, and the next day I went to the prayer meeting at Bethany, the men's prayer meeting, and I really cried to the Lord because I needed that car for Sunday. I had a heavy schedule of meetings in Walnut Creek and in Napa on Sunday, and I needed the car. I mean, the Saturday before New Year's is really a bad time to

get parts for a car, isn't it? Everything is against you, but I prayed.

So, in the morning, this young fellow came, and he took the pump off the car. While he was taking the pump off the car, the building manager where I lived came out and started to talk to us. He had been out drinking the night before, but he was very friendly.

When we got the pump off, we said, well, we're going to leave. And he said, where are you going? And we said, Grand Auto. You know, where else? And he said, how are you going to get there? And we said, we're going to walk.

And he said, well, I'll drive you. So, we went into Grand Auto, and we showed this contraption to the man, and we said, do you have anything like this? And he said, what is it? That was really putting us on the spot. And he said, no, we wouldn't have that.

He said, you'd have to go to a dealer for that. Well, we said, dealers are all closed Saturday. Well, he said, what kind of a car is it? I said, 73 Chevy.

Well, he said, you could try an auto parts dealer. That's what we thought we were doing. So, the building manager that was driving us said, let me drive you down to Bus Auto Parts.

I never heard of Bus Auto Parts. But anyway, he took us down in the marina there, in Marina Boulevard or something in San Leandro. And here was a little hole in the wall, Bus Auto Parts.

And we went in. So, we said to the man, do you have one of these? And he shook his head. He said, I wouldn't have one of those.

He said, you'd have to go down to our downtown Oakland store for something like that. Well, time was running out on us, really, 11 o'clock Saturday morning. And he started thumbing through all of these big manuals that he had there on the counter.

He said, what kind of a car is it? And he said, 73 Chevy. And he went back in the stacks where he has all his parts. And we heard him say, hmm, with one option, with a smog air pump for a 73 Chevy.

Just one. That's all he had in the place. Did God answer prayer? It would be very hard to convince me that he doesn't.

In fact, the fellow himself was surprised. He said, hmm. And he brought it out and we installed it.

Can you answer this prayer? Prayer is really wonderful. You see, we live in a physical realm, but we also live in a spiritual realm. We live in a realm of smog air pumps, but we also live in an invisible realm where the powers of God are working.

And you can reach the physical realm with bullets and with ballots, but you can't reach the spiritual realm that way. You can only reach the spiritual realm in prayer. The only way you can invade it.

There's a lovely little story back in the Old Testament I'd like you to turn to just to illustrate this. Second Kings chapter 6. Second Kings chapter 6. And I'll give you just a little background because we're only going to read a verse or two. But this is in the days of Elisha the prophet, and the king of Syria is furious with Israel.

Still is. And he decided to send his troops against Israel, and he had the men and he had the chariots. And the servant of the Lord, the prophet of the Lord Elisha, is there in a city called Dothan, and a young servant is with him.

Verse 14 of Second Kings 6 says, Therefore sent he thither, that's the king of Syria, sent horses and chariots and a great host, that is a great army, and they came by night and compassed the city about. The Syrians came and surrounded the city of Dothan. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots.

He looked out in the morning, and here the city is ringed about with the Syrians. And he thought, Our goose is cooked and our stuffing is overdone. And the servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? The game is up, he would say.

What will we ever do? We're vastly outnumbered by the Syrian troops. And he answered, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. I suppose the young man wondered what he was talking about.

Then Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, a mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. What did he see? God drew back the curtain of the invisible world, as it were, and he saw the armies of the Lord.

That's what he saw. And the Lord gave the victory to the host of Israel. Dear friends, things haven't changed.

And I want to tell you, there's this physical, visible world that we live in, but there's the invisible world, too. And the hosts of God are still there. And man, through prayer, the believer, through prayer, can learn to move man through God.

And he can invade the realm of the invisible, and he can see things happen that would never happen according to the laws of chance or probability. It's a wonderful thing. Prayer is a wonderful thing.

In prayer, we enter into the throne room of the universe. In prayer, we enter into the very presence of God. Prayer is an act of faith.

When we pray, we're right before God, having audience with the King of the universe. A wonderful thing, really. We don't realize it.

We take it too much for granted. And we don't realize the power that is at our disposal through prayer. But it is a power that's vast, and evidences of it are all about us.

So we want to think about that today, prayer. And we want to ask ourselves the question, are we, as believers, really availing ourselves? Are we seeing God work in miraculous ways in our lives? Are we seeing the marvelous convergence of circumstances in our lives, seeing God do the impossible? Somebody said, faith leads you to heights that make reason dizzy. Faith leads you to heights that make reason dizzy.

And I believe that. And I believe that if you and I have effective prayer lives, we'll see our lives crackle with the supernatural. We will be radioactive with the Holy Spirit of God.

Most of us can go through the year 1979 and never rise above flesh and blood, but it doesn't have to be that way. We can have lives of power with God through the simple, effective tool of prayer. Now, in order to have really an effective prayer life, a person has to be a believer.

He has to be a believer. Just being a believer isn't enough. There are other conditions, too, but that's where you have to begin.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that God never answers the prayer of an unbeliever. I'm not saying that, because he does.

God sometimes answers the prayers of unbelievers. My classic illustration, of course, is Eddie Rickenbacker landing with his plane during the Second World War in the Pacific. They get out of the plane and go into a rubber raft, he and his crew, and their casted drift on the Pacific for days, and their food runs out, their rations, and their water runs out, and those men, they didn't know God, but they prayed.

They cried to God, and after they prayed, a bird came and landed on the head of one of the men. They took it, and killed it, and ate it, and it kept them alive till help came. If you don't believe it, read any biography of Eddie Rickenbacker, or in any biography that's written of him, that story is included.

God sometimes answers the prayers of unsaved people, and holds them responsible for having revealed himself to them. And there is a prayer of an unbeliever that God always answers. When an unbeliever, in desperation, asks God to reveal himself, God never fails to do it.

I have made a study of this throughout life. I have heard illustration after illustration. I've never known a person who really wanted to know God who has ever refused.

That's why Augustine said, the man who seeks God has already found him. That's true. Think about that for a minute.

The man who seeks God has already found him. What does that mean? It means if you're interested enough to seek God, God's more than interested that you should find him, and he'll make it possible. Let me give you an illustration.

Years ago, down in Palm Springs, California, there was a young fellow who had been on drugs, practically burned out, living in a cave, had really reached the end of his resources, and was contemplating suicide. One day, sitting in the cave, he prayed. He said, God, if there is a God, reveal yourself to me, or I'm going to take my life.

Within 10 minutes, a young fellow passing by the cave, stuck his head in, saw this fellow sitting in there, and said, hi, mind if I speak to you about Jesus? He introduced that young fellow to the Lord Jesus Christ. That young fellow was saved. Today, he's a chaplain at Cook County Jail in Illinois.

His name is Dale Tweedy. That's a prayer that I would challenge anybody to pray. Anybody who doesn't know God, and really wants to know God, you can't pray that prayer from the depths, from the extremity, you can't pray that prayer without having something special happen.

I've never known it. Never known any day to be refused. God, if there is a God, reveal yourself to me.

God will do it. You know what? It says so in the Bible. It says, if any man will do his will, ye shall know.

This holds good in other countries where the Bible isn't well circulated, like it is in this country. It holds good any place in the world. If a man really wants to know God, God will go out of his way to reveal himself to him, sometimes within 10 minutes.

Wonderful, isn't it? So, God does reveal himself to unsaved people when they pray, especially when they pray from the ends of the earth, like the psalmist said, from the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee. When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. I tell you, that's a prayer of an unsaved person that has power with God, that really works. I think we should teach our children to pray.

They just, does God hear the prayers of unsaved children? Of course he does. Of course he does. He does.

And God often answers the prayers of little children. Don't forget what the scripture says. Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for a clutch is the kingdom of heaven.

God never said that little children had to become adults to be saved, but he did say that adults had to become like little children to be saved. Except ye be converted and become as one of these little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God. So, we should we should teach young children to pray and form that habit in their lives.

Habit? Is it good to have a prayer habit? Yes, it's good to have a prayer habit. Sometimes you hear people today they think all habits are bad. They're not bad.

Habits ultimately determine character. Somebody has said, sow a thought and reap an act. Sow an act and reap a habit.

Sow a habit and reap a character. Sow a character and reap the destiny. It's an unbreakable chain.

Sow a thought and reap an act. Think about a thing long enough, you'll do it. Sow an act, reap a habit.

The more you do it, the more you get in the habit of doing it, either good or bad. Sow a habit and reap a character. So, the habit of getting up in the morning and having a daily quiet time with God, you reap a character.

It affects your whole character. Sow a character and reap a destiny. That character that's being molded day after day is what determines what you are going to be in life, and in a very real way, in eternity.

But, the rule still stands that, generally speaking, in order for a person to have an effective prayer life, continuously with God, he's got to be a believer, and a believer who's walking with God. We want to emphasize. Now, a second thing we want to point out is that, if I'm going to have a prayer life where, when I touch other lives, something happens for God, I must have no unconfessed sin in my life.

No unconfessed sin. Psalm 66, verse 18, the psalmist says, "...if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." There are certain things that just block prayer as far as God is concerned. There are certain things that just make the heavens brass, and the prayers don't get through, and one of those things is unconfessed sin.

God wants us to walk in the light. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, and with God there's nothing under the counter. There's nothing hidden.

Everything's out in the open with God, and that's the way he wants it to be with me. Now, that means that when I sin, I come to him, and I confess that sin, and I forsake that sin, but that's what keeps me clean before him. Nobody can really expect to have their prayers answered if there are things in their lives that are kept under the surface, that are never dragged out and called by their monstrous name, and confess in the sight of God.

It's important to remember that. And another thing is in connection, a third thing in connection with prayer is that when I pray, I must pray in faith. I said that already.

Prayer is an act of faith, and I must pray in faith. Turn to James, chapter 1, and verses 6 through 8. James, chapter 1, verses 6 through 8. Well, I should go back to verse 5. It says, But if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. Upbraideth means scoldeth not.

God won't scold you, no matter how often you come to him. He won't reprove you or reprimand you. He loves to have you come to him.

Who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. That means nothing doubting, for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord, a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. When I come to God in prayer, I have to come in faith. First of all, I have to believe that God is there.

But I not only have to believe he's there, I have to believe that he's the rewarder that diligently seeketh him. What does that mean? Well, it means that I have to believe that when I come into his presence and ask something in the name of Jesus, he'll do it. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Now, that's no great leap in the dark. That's a sensible thing to do, to believe. It's really sensible for me to believe my Creator, that he'll do what he says he will do.

The Word of God certainly is filled with promises, but that's true. I have to believe that God is able, because faith deals in the realm of the impossible. If it's possible, really there's not much glory for God in it.

But if it's impossible, and God acts, God gets all the glory. Faith, mighty faith, the promised deed, and looks to God lost at impossibilities, and cries, it shall be done. I have to believe that God is able to do the impossible.

I have to believe that there's nothing too small and nothing too big for the Lord, and I do. When I come to God, I really believe that's true. I have to believe that that God will fulfill his promises, that he will do as he has said he will do.

But let me say this, my faith must be based upon the Word of God, and this is very, very important. A lot of people think that if you just believe a thing hard enough, it'll come to pass, but that isn't true. For instance, I may have a loved one who's smitten with a disease, and I think, if I just believe strong enough, he'll be healed, or she'll be healed.

Well, that isn't true. For me to have faith that that person will be healed, I have to have some direct promise of God. Let me give you an illustration.

Some years ago, I was back at Emmaus Bible School teaching there, and one morning I picked up the phone, and the chairman of our board had been smitten with a very serious heart attack. A very serious heart attack. His own son was an intern in the hospital at the time, and the doctor had written on the chart that if his heart kept beating like that, he would expire.

In my daily reading that morning, in Daily Light, I came across this verse, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." The very morning when he had the heart attack, that was my reading for the day, and the Lord spoke to me through that verse, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Now, I could have read that verse any day, but it was on that very day that it came in the reading, and I laid hold of that promise, and God gave that man 13 more years of life. You see, I believe God had conveyed a promise to me, and I prayed on the basis of that promise and against all human probability that man lives. In fact, it's rather interesting how it came about one night after the evening gospel meeting.

The Christians in the assembly gathered down in the basement to pray. This man was the Sunday school superintendent, among other things, and they went before the Lord, and they presented their strong reasons why they really believed that God should raise him up, and they told me that the floor was wet with the tears of the people when they prayed. I tell you, that prayer, that's really wrestling with God in prayer.

At one o'clock in the morning, one of our nurses from the school, one of the girls, a student of the school who was a registered nurse, was specialing him in the hospital, and at one o'clock in the morning, after these Christians had prayed, Mr. Pollard went, and she hurried over to his bedside, and she thought he had died. She said, what is it, Mr. Pollard? And he said, what a relief. Stuff like that.

And in the morning, the doctor came in, and he said, how are you, Mr. Pollard? And he said, a hundred percent better. The doctor examined him. He said, sorry, I have to contradict you.

Two hundred percent better. How? Through prayer. And as I say, God gave him thirteen additional years of life, effective years of service for the Lord.

We have to believe that God is able to do it, but really our faith must be based upon some promise, some word of God. I might, for instance, have all kinds of faith that tomorrow morning, when I open my door there in the apartment, look down, there's going to be a million dollars there, right in the floor. Do you think there will be? No, there won't be.

You say, why? Because I have a promise to you there will be a million dollars there. He loves me too much for that. He knows it would probably ruin me, among other things.

God never promised me a million dollars. If he did, I could lay hold of it in faith, and know that it was going to come to pass. Sometimes God gives his promise through the word of God.

That's usually the way I get a promise from the Lord, through the word of God. When I was five, I was dying of diphtheria up in the north of Scotland. My mother turned her back so she wouldn't see me take my last breath.

An uncle of mine was praying and reading in the next village, and he put his coat on, and came over to the house, and he said to my mother, don't worry, he's not going to die, he's going to live. She thought he was beside himself. She knew very well I was going to die.

She said, whatever makes you talk like that to me in the hour of my desperation? He sat down, and he opened up the scriptures of Psalm 91. He was reading Psalm 91, and God said to him, because he has set his love upon me, I will lift him up on high. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

And he said, God's going to raise him up from this bed, and God's going to save his soul. And he did, thirteen years later. Saved my soul when I was 18.

You see, God had given him a promise through the word of God, and he claimed the promise, and prayed the promise, and God came through, as he always does. Well, we didn't get very far today, but we'll go on from here, Lord willing. Take up just a little series on prayer, and my heart's desire is that all of us here at the beginning of 1979, who know the Lord, as a result of these messages, will have a more effective prayer life.

And you know, David Holcomb shared a marvelous answer to prayer that he just had on his trip to Arizona. You know, they're happening all the time. I feel like praying, Lord, open the young man's eyes that he may see.

You know? Just draw back the curtain from the world of the invisible, so we can see what God is doing in answer to prayer throughout the world. That's how we look to him. Father, we just marvel that you will allow us, just worms of the dust, to come into your presence at any time of the day or night, to make our petitions known to you with thanksgiving.

We realize, Lord, that we don't pray enough. We realize that when we get to heaven, perhaps one of our greatest regrets will be that we spent so little time in prayer. We really believe, Lord, that the work of God is done more in prayer than in any other way, and so we would pray with the disciples, Lord, teach us to pray.

Make our lives different, Lord, through prayer. May they not just be like the lives of our unsaved neighbors, but as they come in contact with us, may they know that we have been with Jesus. We ask it to the Savior's name, and for his sake.

Amen.

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