

Devoted to Prayer

Part #1

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.” Colossians 4:2 NKJV

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Colossians 4:2 NIV

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” Colossians 4:2 NASB

“Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.” Romans 12:12 NASB

“Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.” Romans 12:12 NKJV

Introduction:

The subject of this two-part message is prayer: (Devoted to prayer)

—**THE STRUGGLE** we have in prayer is two-fold

- ✓ It is spiritually confusing (two ends of the spectrum—if I have enough faith and pray enough, I will have what I ask for. OR—since God is sovereign, why pray anyway. He is going to do what He wants to do.
- ✓ It is also personally difficult—prayer is hard, it is effort, work, and discipline and most of us are poor at it.
- ✓ Paul said in Romans 15:30 “*strive together with me in prayer*”—hard work and we often fail
- ✓ Sermons on prayer make us feel guilty and we do better for two weeks but fall back into prayerless-ness.
- ✓ Prayer is always one of my greatest difficulties and one of my greatest blessings.
- ✓ We are starting 21 days of prayer and fasting and we have some amazing opportunities to seize in 2019
- ✓ Prayer requires DEVOTION—this is what Paul called for.

- Sadly it is not like eating and breathing for most Christians, or walking and talking
- More like the little glass box on the wall that says, “Break in in case of emergency.”
- Most associate prayer with the crisis in their lives

(ILL)

Man who encountered trouble flying little airplane called the control tower-“Pilot to tower, I’m 300 miles from the airport, 600 feet above ground, and I am out of fuel. I am descending rapidly, Please advise. Over.”

“Tower to Pilot” the dispatcher said. “Please repeat after me...Our Father, who art in heaven.”

— **The VALUE OF PRAYER:** Prayer is, for the most part, like an untapped resource and unexplored continent where great treasure remains to be unearthed.

- ✓ We talk about it more and practice it less than any spiritual discipline
- ✓ Yet, outside of salvation, the greatest gift God has given to us

— **THE DEFINITION OF PRAYER**—(The Westminster Catechism)-“prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ” (asking God for stuff)

- ✓ By the help of His Spirit
- ✓ With confession of sins
- ✓ And with thankful acknowledgement of His mercies

— **THE MISCONCEPTION ABOUT PRAYER**-it pesters or bothers God (on the contrary)

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.” Proverbs 15:8 NKJV

“It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.” Isaiah 65:24 NKJV

“I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Isaiah 62:6-7 NKJV

- ✓ Not only are we not bothering Him, He appoints people to pray, giving Him no rest until His will is completed
- ✓ Don’t stop begging until Jerusalem is accomplished

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” Revelation 5:8 NKJV

Sweet smell to Him

THE CONTEXT OF THIS MESSAGE— is Paul's imprisonment. He writes to the church at Colossae, asking them to pray for him.

The Message Translation

"Pray diligently. Stay alert, with your eyes wide open in gratitude. Don't forget to pray for us, that God will open doors for telling the mystery of Christ, even while I'm locked up in this jail. Pray that every time I open my mouth I'll be able to make Christ plain as day to them."
Colossians 4:2-4 MSG

The underlying message of the text and this two part series...Be DEVOTED to prayer

Bible speaks of prayer being appropriate at all times

The Morning

In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. — **Psalm 5:3**

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. — **Mark 1:35**

In the afternoon:

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. — **Acts 3:1**

Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me." — **Acts 10:30**

Three times a day:

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. — **Daniel 6:10**

But I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. — **Psalm 55:16-17**

In the evening:

And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. — **Luke 1:10**

After [Jesus] had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. — Matthew 14:23

Before meals:

If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. — 1 Corinthians 10:30-31

[Jesus] told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. — Mark 8:6

Pray without Ceasing—1 Thessalonians 5:17

(ILL)

1952 Albert Einstein delivering a lecture at Princeton University and asked by a doctoral student, “what is there left in the world for original dissertation research?” He thought carefully and replied, “Find out about prayer. Someone must find out about prayer.”

Paul knew a lot about prayer. He knew its power and capability.

- He assumed every believer would pray
- You can't be a good Christian and not pray (good husband and not talk to your wife)
- Luther—“to be a Christian and not pray is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”
- You can be a husband and be a Christian without but miserable and ineffective
- Prayer is a necessity if you are going to excel as a Christ-follower

Be Devoted to Prayer—Are you devoted to prayer?

- It may look different in people's life
- But it will be much different than NOT being devoted to prayer
- More than meals, crisis, whisper in the car when you need a parking space

Commemoration

I. **We must be both focused and persistent in our prayer**

A. Devote (continue earnestly or steadfastly in prayer)-proskarterero

1. Used 10x in NT and 4x has to do with a devotion to prayer
2. Acts 2:42 the NT Believers “devoted themselves to apostle’s teaching, fellowship, and to breaking of the bread, and to prayer.”
3. Apostles needed deacons in Acts 6 so they could “devote themselves to prayer”
4. In Mark 3:9 Jesus asked his disciples to have a boat ready (proskartere-devoted for them) because of the crowd-set apart for a purpose
5. In Colossians it is an imperative...a command...devote yourself to prayer

B. Jesus gave two parables about persistent prayer

1. Luke 18:1 “Now he was telling them a parable to show them that at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart.” (Persistent widow who kept bugging the judge for protection against her opponent. He was unwilling and not a good man but got tired of being bugged. Persist like her.
2. Luke 11 (friend at midnight asking for 3 loaves of bread, its too late, door is shut leave me alone, but finally gets up) “Ask, Seek, Knock)

C. Persistent prayer is not long prayer; it is prayer that won’t give up just because circumstances don’t change immediately.

D. Persistent prayer is not praying when I feel like it, or have great joy, or FEEL in the Spirit.

(ILL) George Mueller-“It is a common temptation of Satan to make us give up the reading of the Word and prayer when our enjoyment is gone; as if it were of no use to read the Scriptures when we do not enjoy them, and as if it were no use to pray when we have no spirit of prayer. The truth is that in order to enjoy the Word, we ought to continue to read it, and the way to obtain a spirit of prayer is to continue praying. The less we read the Word of God, the less we desire to read it, and the less we pray, the less we desire to pray.”

E. Practical tips to pray persistently

1. **Pray simply**—doesn’t have to be Kings James English. He responds to the simple prayers. Jesus I love you! Give me strength for the day. Help me to feel you near all day long. Give me the wisdom to deal with this situation.
2. **Read the Word**—we all hate one way conversations. Someone talks our ear off. Read the Word as God speaks to you you speak back.

Example:

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16 NASB

- Thank you Jesus that after you resurrected you passed through the heavens
- Help me to not waver in my confession but to remain bold
- I know you know how I feel right now, we feel what I feel, you went through it all
- So, I come with confidence that you will help me, grace and mercy

3. **Write down your prayer** (journal) what do you feel like God is teaching you in your time in prayer
4. **Make prayer an integral part of your day** (when you get up and when you go to bed)
5. **Pray with expectation** (when prayers get answered record them and write them down)

II. **We must possess a passion in our prayer**

- A. If you are persistent about prayer it stands to reason that you will also be passionate
 1. Colossians 4:2, Paul says to be vigilant and watchful
 2. The opposite of slothfulness
 3. Passionate prayer, with energy
- B. Jesus was passionate about his prayer life, it was something he was always doing.

S.D. Gordon (Quiet Talks on Prayer)

How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only his regular habit, but his resort in every emergency, however slight or serious. When perplexed he prayed. When hard pressed by work he prayed. When hungry for fellowship he found it in prayer. He chose his associates and received his messages upon his knees. If tempted, he prayed. If criticized, he prayed. If fatigued in body or wearied in spirit, he had recourse to his one unshaking habit of prayer. Prayer brought him unmeasured power at the beginning, and kept the flow unbroken and undiminished. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation that would not yield to prayer.

1. When Jesus prayed at His baptism the heaven was opened (Luke 3:1)—**Passionate prayer opens heaven**
2. In Luke 6:12 he spent the whole night praying before he chose his disciples—**Passionate prayer gives direction**
3. In Luke 9:29 Jesus was transfigured while he prayed so **passionate prayer brings transformation**
4. In Matthew 26:39 (Gethsemane) **-passionate prayer pours out our heart to God**
5. He prayed hanging on the cross (Luke 23:24)—**passionate prayer enables us to maintain that spirit, even in the most difficult circumstances**

C. Jesus prayed with passion because He understood who He was praying to—the Father—and THAT was a powerful opportunity (Don't HAVE to pray you GET to pray)

1. Should not be taken lightly or glibly
2. Not from the head but the heart

D. Passionate prayer was modeled by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer

“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.” Matthew 6:7-8 NKJV

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Matthew 6:9-13 NKJV

1. Many turn this into a vain repetition
2. It includes worship with reverence (Hallowed by they name)
3. It includes submission (thy will be done)
4. It includes humility (give us this day daily bread...know I am dependent and I don't need a lot, just provision)
5. It includes repentance and forgiveness (forgive us as we forgive)
6. It includes full surrender to His sovereign power (yours is the Kingdom and glory and power)
- 7.

III. We must have hearts of gratitude when we pray

NOTE: This is a common thread of Paul's teaching

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; Philippians 4:6 NKJV"

"Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." I Thessalonians 5:17-18 NKJV

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." I Timothy 4:4-5 NKJV

- A. Expressing gratitude reveals our dependence upon God
- B. Expressing gratitude demonstrates our relationship to God
- C. Expressing gratitude generates a sincere humility

Thankful for the Fleas

The barracks where Corrie ten Boom and her sister, Betsy, were kept in the Nazi concentration camp, Ravensbruck, were terribly overcrowded and flea-infested. They had been able to miraculously smuggle a Bible into the camp, and in that Bible they had read that in all things they were to give thanks and that God can use anything for good.

Betsy decided that this meant thanking God for the fleas. This was too much for Corrie, who said she could do no such thing. Betsy insisted, so Corrie gave in and prayed to God, thanking him even for the fleas.

Over the next several months a wonderful, but curious, thing happened: They found that the guards never entered their barracks.

This meant that the women were not assaulted. It also meant that they were able to do the unthinkable, which was to hold open Bible studies and prayer meetings in the heart of a Nazi concentration camp. Through this, countless numbers of women came to faith in Christ.

Only at the end did they discover why the guards had left them alone and would not enter into their barracks: It was because of the fleas.

This material is copyrighted. Its use in the local church or in any other setting as a teaching tool or ministry presentation requires written permission from the author.

This Thanksgiving, give thanks to God for every good and perfect gift (Jam. 1:17), but also thank him for how he will use all things for good in the lives of those who trust him (Rom. 8:28).

IV. We must intercede for others when we pray

A. The life of Jesus was marked by intercession

1. He bore our sins and interceded for the transgressors (Is. 53:12)
2. Told Peter He was praying for Him (Luke 22:34)
3. Prayed for his executors on the cross
4. Prayed for his followers in John 15
5. Seated at the right hand of Father's hand making intercession (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34)

B. Paul asks others to intercede for him

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." Colossians 4:2-4 NKJV

1. Not asking for release
2. Not praying for legal favor
3. He is praying for the opportunity to point someone to Christ

C. Intercessory prayer effects us powerfully

1. We share in and own the burden (a way to bear one another's burden)
2. Teaches us the value of patient waiting
3. It opens our eyes to see the working of God that may be invisible in the natural realm (2 Kings 6-Elijah's servant)
4. It melds our hearts with God's heart
5. It enables us to advance (without me you can do nothing but when we have prayed it enables us to do anything with Him!)

Conclusion: Prayer is so crucial to the life of the believer and to the work of the Kingdom

— Andrew Murray (little book-*The Prayer Life* talks about the **Sin of Prayerlessness**)

It is a sin because:

— **A reproach to God** (Holy God who create us in His image and Redeemed us invites us to come and talk to Him and make our requests known to Him.

This material is copyrighted. Its use in the local church or in any other setting as a teaching tool or ministry presentation requires written permission from the author.

- **The Cause of a Deficient Spiritual Life** (“It is the pulse of life of life; by it the doctor can tell what the condition of the heart.” This means we do not accomplish for God.)
- **The loss the Church suffers** (if we are not a house of prayer we are failing)
- **The failure for the Gospel to reach the lost world** (Tarry in Jerusalem until ensued with power from on High and you will be my witnesses—Acts 1:8).

F.B. Meyer-“The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but un-offered prayer.”

How important is prayer? —AW Tozer

“When Tennyson wrote ‘More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of,’ he probably uttered a truth of vaster significance than even he understood. While it is not always possible to trace an act of God to its prayer-cause, it is yet safe to say that prayer is back of everything that God does for the sons of men here upon earth.”

—Is your life Devoted to Prayer?