

THE POWER OF PRAYER

“If you abide in Me, and My Words abides in you, you may ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

John 15:7

Praying is to the spiritual life what breathing is to the physical life. Prayer is communication with God. God speaks to us through His Word, The Bible. We must respond to God in worship, adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

We are commanded to pray: *“Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore!”* 1 Chronicles 16:11

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1

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

“Pray without ceasing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

We are commanded to be watchful and to be faithful in prayer. God acts in answer to prayer. The only foundation for spiritual work is earnest believing prayer. All spiritual failure, dryness and defeat can be traced back to a lack of prayerful contact with, and dependence upon, the Lord. Prayer is the source of spiritual growth. Prayer is the price of spiritual success.

“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16

It is an enormous privilege to be able to communicate with our Creator: *“Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”* Jeremiah 33:3

Our ability to withstand temptation is directly related to our prayer life. *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* Matthew 26:41. It is after the disciples had failed to stay awake and watch and pray with the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, that their courage failed them and they fled.

Prayer is serious, spiritual warfare. Part of putting on the whole Armour of God is: *“Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”*

Ephesians 6:18

Hindrances to Prayer

The Scripture warns us about threats that can undermine our prayer life.

When we refuse to forgive another, it hinders our prayers: *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in Heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive your trespasses.”* Mark 11:25-26

Heartless, selfishness also undermines our prayers: *“Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.”* Proverbs 21:13

Sinful motives will hinder our prayers: *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* James 4:3-4

Unrepented of sin hinders prayer: *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity.”* Isaiah 59:1-3

Marital problems will also hinder our prayers: *“Husbands, likewise dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the Grace of Life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”* 1 Peter 3:7

Unbelief will undermine our prayers: ***“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*** James 1:6-8

Vain repetition will hinder our prayers: ***“And when you pray, do not use vain repetition as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.”*** Matthew 6:7

How then are we to pray?

We have to pray according to God’s Word and Will: ***“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.”*** 1 John 5:14-15

We must pray in Jesus Name: ***“And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it.”*** John 14:13-14. Of course, this is not a magic formula. Merely adding the words ***“In Jesus Name”*** does not make it a Biblical prayer. To pray in Jesus Name, means to pray according to His Will, as revealed in His Word. ***“If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you may ask what you desire and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so will you be My disciples.”*** John 15:7-8

When we diligently study God’s Word and respond to it in faith and obedience, then our minds are renewed and our hearts are transformed by His Spirit. It is then that we truly pray in Jesus Name and according to His Will. As the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit is seen in our lives and through our prayers, the Father is glorified.

We need to be earnest and persistent in prayer. Our Lord Jesus told a parable of a persistent friend seeking help from his neighbour to provide adequate hospitality for a visitor. ***“I say to you, that he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*** Luke 11:8-13

The Bible speaks of a variety of postures for prayer. We read of some lifting up their hands in prayer (Jeremiah 8:6), standing (Mark 11:25), kneeling (Acts 20:36), bowing down (Jeremiah 8:6), lying down (Matthew 26:39), and praying with ones eyes open (John 17:1). While it can be very helpful to fold our hands, close our eyes and bow our heads when we pray, to avoid being distracted, the primary issue isn’t the position of our body, but the condition of our heart. Frequently the practice of kneeling in prayer helps humble our hearts before God. Most importantly, our prayers must come from a pure heart. ***“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”*** James 5:16

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18. A sinning man will stop praying. A praying man will stop sinning. Men would live better if they prayed more. Men would pray more if they lived better. A prayerful life is always a powerful life. A prayerless life is always a powerless life.

If you are too busy to pray, then you are busier than God wants you to be. No Christian is greater than his prayer life.

“For I know the thoughts that I have towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:11-13

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

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