

Title: Power In Prayer

Text: James 5:16-20

A group of ministries were on a train on the way to a convention. They talked about many things, and finally the discussion came around to the needs in a pastor's life. Many needs were spoken of and finally one old preacher who had lived a long and useful life for the Lord said, "our greatest failure is that we do not spend more time upon our knees." If you will search your own experience, I think that you will find this is true of your own life also. Not one of us prays enough. We forfeit many hours of peace and we sacrifice many needed blessings because of our lack of prayer. We carry many unnecessary burdens because we do not take them to the Lord in prayer. Let's talk about prayer and how it helps in the Christian life.

#### I. FOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER

1. PRAYER IS A PRELUDE TO SALVATION. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). All those who have come to Christ have called upon Him in some way. You may not have prayed a very eloquent prayer, you may not have known just what to say, but you did cry out to God for salvation.

~~///~~ After Paul met Christ on the Damascus road, he was carried into the city where for three days his eyes were blinded. And what was he doing all of this time? He was praying. God told Ananias to carry a message to Paul. He told him that he would find Paul praying. Surely he must have been pleading for God to forgive all of his sins.

(Luk. 18:10)

The Pharisee and the publican went to church. The Pharisee boasted to the Lord of his good character and good deeds. The publican beat upon his breast and cried out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." And Jesus tells us that the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other." No man who has ever called upon Christ for salvation has been turned down. That cry may not be audible to the human ear, but God hears that cry and God saves the sinner.

2. PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH. As the tree needs roots, so does the Christian need prayer. Prayer is the foundation of the Christian life. Paul tells Christians to "pray without ceasing." <sup>I Thess 5:17</sup> This does not mean that you will always be speaking certain words to God, but it does mean that you will live in the atmosphere of prayer. You will live so close to God that at any moment you can reach out and touch Him through your prayer.

We ought to pray in the spirit of thanksgiving. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18). Each night as you look back over the day, you can see how God's hand has been upon you. ~~//////~~ In times of blessings and in times of sorrow, the scripture says that we are to give thanks to God. Do you have a nice family? Do you have good health? Do you have a church that you love? As you think of these things, you ought to say, "God has been good to me." We take the blessings of life as a matter of fact, but there ought to be time every day when we pray in the spirit of thanksgiving.

Then we ought to pray in the spirit of penitence. We sin every day; the devil gets in his work every day. So every day we ought to ask God for forgiveness. If a man never prays, it is because he does not recognize the fact that he is a sinner. "There is not a just man upon the earth, who doeth good and sinneth not." When we were sinners we came to Christ and He forgave the sin of our lives. But since we still sin every day, we must come to Him for daily cleansing.

Dan 6:11

- Lk 11:9,10

3. WE DO NOT PRAY ENOUGH. The Bible says, "you have not because you ask not." We do not pray enough for ourselves. We go through life fretting, worrying, carrying many burdens. The song says, "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there." We take our burdens to the Lord, but we do not leave them there. We continue to labor beneath their load. This simply means that we need to pray more for ourselves.

- Jam 5:13,14,18,20  
II Thim 3:1

Then we don't pray enough for others. What a blessing it is to my own heart when I receive a letter from some great saint of God, telling me that he is praying for me. On one occasion when the people requested Samuel to pray for them, he said, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by not praying for you" (I Samuel 12:23). There are so many people around us who have so many needs that we really sin against them when we don't pray for them.

- John 14:13, 16:23,24

4. GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. I can certainly testify that God has answered my prayers. "Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

II. HOW CAN PRAYER HELP IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN?

1. PRAYER HELPS IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE. Trouble is the universal lot of us all. The sun may shine brightly for awhile, but we know that trouble will eventually come, and prayer will sustain us in the hour of trouble.

It is certainly good to have God's help in time of need. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." But why do we wait for the grim hour of trouble to come upon us before we pray? We need to live daily in the atmosphere of prayer. Then when trouble comes, we will find it easier to pray, because we have already opened up a channel between us and God.

God Answers Prayer

- ① Direct Answer =
- ② Delay Answer
- ③ Silent Answer
- ④ Denial Answer

Conditions for Prayer to be answered

- ① Dependence on Christ as the only ground for Blessings (John 14:12)
- ② Separation from Sin (Ps 66:18)
- ③ Faith in the promises of God's Word (Heb 11:6)
- ④ Ask in accordance with God's Will (James 4:3)

2. PRAYER HELPS IN THE TIME OF SORROW. What would we do in time of sorrow if we could not look up into God's face and pour out our hearts to Him? I have seen people who cried out in despair when sorrow came. I have seen others who had the peace of God written in their faces when sorrow fell upon them. They had that peace because they had been alone with God. Some years ago I knew a fine Christian man. When he was upon his deathbed he called the family around him, assured them that all was well with him, and prayed for them, commending them to God's grace. I could tell a difference at the funeral. These people had learned what to do in time of sorrow. Comfort and strength was theirs. Surely we need to pray in time of sorrow.

3. Prayer helps us to find God's will for our lives. I believe that God has a will for every life, and that will can be found through prayer and full surrender. You have heard the old joke about the preacher who was called to a new church, and how he said to his wife, "You pack up while I pray about this call." That is not true of the majority of preachers. The average preacher wants to know the will of God for his life. One such preacher told me that he had been called to a new field. He did not want to leave the church where he was serving, but he said, "It breaks my heart to go, but I am under orders from the Lord."

4. PRAYER HELPS US TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION. What do so many of us do when temptation comes? We embrace it instead of flying to God in prayer. Like David of old, we look upon the sin and soon we are indulging in it. The Bible gives us a guarantee of <sup>our</sup> "overcoming power." "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, he will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

5. PRAYER HELPS US TO GET BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH JESUS. When you have a good friend, you want to talk to him. The more you talk with him, the better you become acquainted with him. Jesus is the best Friend man ever had. You become better acquainted with him through intimate communion with him.

6. PRAYER HELPS US TO GIVE SERVICE TO CHRIST. The great men of the Bible were great because of prayer and close communion with God. Martin Luther said, "I have so much to do that I could never accomplish it if I did not spend at least two hours each day in prayer." The time spent in prayer is never wasted. You can do much more after you pray, than if you had never / prayed at all. The Sunday School teacher should pray before going to her class. Members in the choir should pray before coming to rehearsal and before a morning worship service. You should pray before a service of worship begins. Do you feel that you are a weak vessel? Do you feel that you are doing little for God? Then pray about it. Here is a verse that has meant a lot to me. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 41:31). Won't you start today and pray that God will use you as a vessel to live for Him and win others to Him? Prayer is the greatest force in any Christian's life.

The camel, at the close of day,  
Kneels down upon the sandy plain  
To have his burden lifted off  
And rest to gain.

My soul, thou, too, shouldst to thy knees  
When daylight draweth to a close,  
And let the Master lift the load  
And grant repose

Else who canst thou tomorrow meet  
With all tomorrow's work to do,  
If thou ~~thy~~ burden all the night  
Dost carry through?

The camel kneels at break of day  
To have his guide replace his load,  
Then rises up anew to take  
The desert road.

So ~~thou~~<sup>you</sup> shouldst kneel at morning's dawn  
That God may give thee daily care,  
Assured that He no load too great  
Will make ~~thee~~<sup>you</sup> bear.

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