

Call to Prayer

Wednesday Night Bible Study – 28 December 2022 – Pastor Daniel Corey

Bishop J C Ryle writes, “**I have a question to offer you.** It is contained in three words, DO YOU PRAY? The question is one that **only you** can answer. Whether you attend public worship, your pastor knows. Whether you have family worship or not, your family knows. But whether you pray in private or not, is a matter between yourself and God. I beseech you with all affection...Do not say that my question is too personal. If your heart is right before God, there is nothing in it to make you afraid. Do not turn off my question by replying that you say your prayers. It is one thing to say your prayers and another to pray;...

Luther: to pray is to simply call upon God’s holy name.

Isa 64 Diff words for Prayer: a **Cry** (v1), seen as **Waiting** (v4), it is a **Remembering** (v5), a **calling**, a **stirring up**, and **laying hold** of God (v7), it is a **plea** and **petition** (v9, 11) Simplest understanding: **Prayer is speaking to God**

Prayer is a Duty: We are Commanded to Pray

1 Tim 2:8 men in every place should pray, lifting holy hands,

1 Thess. 5:17 pray without ceasing

Puritans and **Reformers** took it back further than that, to the **3rd commandment** not to take the Lord’s name in vain.

Each command has **Pos & Neg** aspects, (Murder, love)

Don’t take in vain (**neg**), take the name rightly (**pos**) **pray!**

Luther: God has commanded it. We were told in the commandment, “You shall not take God’s name in vain.” Thereby we are required to praise the holy name and pray or call upon it in every need. For to call upon it is nothing else than to pray. Prayer, therefore, is as strictly and solemnly commanded as all other commandments, such as having no other God, not killing, not stealing, etc.”

Knox: The sin of prayerlessness is no less sinful than the sin of theft. They incur the same guilt, for they both violate God’s Law.

Prayer is Communion, Fellowship with God.

Prayer is communing of a living soul with the Living God;

***Ps 34:8** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! (**communion/fellowship**)

Context: v6 This poor man cried, & the LORD heard him & saved him out of all his troubles. **7** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.

***Anthony Burgess:** the ultimate goal of prayer is communion with the altogether lovely triune God.

True Prayer Requires HEART

Isaiah 64:7 There is no one who calls upon Your name, **who rouses himself** to take hold of You;

James 5:16-17 The **prayer** of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he **prayed fervently** that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

Lit: He prayed in his prayers...

Burgess: prayer is lifting the whole mind and soul to God. Often we are guilty of what the puritans **prayerless praying.**

What Jesus warned against in **Matthew 6:7** “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do...

Matthew 15:8-9 This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me.

Christopher Love: He who prays coldly, does, as it were, invite God to give him a denial. God promises to be found if we seek Him with a whole heart. But if we are careless and regardless, how can we expect that God should regard us?

Austin Phelps “Prayer is **enchanted from a distance...**

#2. What are the Difficulties of Prayer?

Prayer is Difficult: It is the hardest of all work

Luther: it is the hardest work of all...a labor above all labors, since he who prays must wage a mighty warfare against doubt and murmuring excited by faintheartedness and unworthiness we feel within us...There is no greater work than praying... prayer is a difficult matter and hard work. It is far more difficult than preaching the Word or performing other official duties in the church.

Bunyan: May I but speak of my own experience, and from that tell you the difficulty of praying to God as I ought; it is enough to make your poor, blind, carnal men, to entertain strange thoughts of me. For, As for my heart, when I go to pray, I find it so loath to go to God, and when it is with him, so loath to stay with Him, that many times I am forced in my prayers; First to beg God that He would take my heart, and

set it on Himself in Christ, and then when it is there, that He would keep it there. Nay, many times I know not what to pray for, I am so blind, nor how to pray, I am so ignorant; only (blessed be grace) the Spirit helps our infirmities.

Oh the starting-holes that the heart has in time of prayer! None knows how many byways the heart has, and back lanes, to slip away from the presence of God. How much pride also, if enabled with expressions, how much hypocrisy, if before others? And how little conscience is there made of prayer between God and the Soul in secret, unless the Spirit of Supplication be there to help.

We've Lost Sight of the Promises/Realities

Psalm 50:15 Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

Beeke: It is against God's nature not to hear an answer the prayers of his people.

We have a Heavenly Father's Ear, Christ as High priest, interceding, and the Holy Spirit helping and aiding...

We've Lost Sight of the Power of Prayer

J.C. Ryle “Depend upon it, Prayer is Power.

Calvin: “While **prayer never coerces God** to act other than His infinite wisdom has willed, it nevertheless is one important and necessary condition which must be present for certain aspects of God's work to be carried out. **Prayer, then, is not contrary to divine sovereignty** but is a **divinely ordained instrument functioning** with the sphere of God's sovereign wisdom and power in carrying out his will.”

#3. How Can we grow in prayer? How Do we Change?

7 Helpful Applications

1) Pray that God by His Spirit would work Prayer in you

- a. Hebart: Luther always bases prayer on God's command to pray and on His promise to hear prayer. **Lk 11:11**
- b. Command and Promise always go together: Pray, I Hear!
- c. Pray that God would fill you with need/desire to pray.

2) Plan to Limit Distractions/Stay Focused

- a. **If we don't plan it, it won't happen**
 - i. Aim at nothing and you will hit it every time
 - ii. **Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail...**
- b. **A Time:** Select a Time where distractions are minimum
- c. **A Place:** away from distractions:
 - i. Away from Phone, computer, beeps, chirps, TV, Kids

d. Pray out Loud, if needed

- i. Helps Keep focus, (Maybe no greater help)
- ii. help delineate our thought life from prayer

e. Prayer Journal

f. Find Posture of Prayer that works

- i. **Kneeling is great**, find a mat or pad,
- ii. Go for walks (But don't get distracted)
- iii. **Key** to finding a posture is to NOT FALL ASLEEP.

3) READ Good Books! (One of the greatest benefits)

- a. Books **of** Prayers
 - i. The Valley of Vision, by Arthur Bennett
 - ii. Into His Presence, by Tim Chester (New this Year)
 - iii. a good hymnal)
- b. Books **on** Prayer: Read good books that will stir you.
 - i. -Praying the Bible, **by** Don Whitney
 - ii. -A Call to Prayer **by** J. C. Ryle
 - iii. -Taking Hold of God, **ed. by** Joel Beeke
 - iv. The Secret Key to Heaven **by** Thomas Brooks
 - v. Collected Words **of** E. M. Bound
 - vi. Read John Bunyan, Jonathon Edwards, John Calvin

4) Pray with Others

- a. We provide many opportunities throughout the week:
- b. Sunday Service (men lead), Sunday Night, Wednesday prayer meeting, small group setting,
- c. Find a prayer partner and commit to praying with them

5) Don't Pray through the Same old things/Give order

- a. Pray through the Sermons you hear (they change)
 - i. It will change how you listen: Write down a few things each time, and pray it through the week.
- b. **Make a Prayer List**
- c. Ministries, Missions, pastors
- d. Salvation for loved ones,
- e. Governments, etc.
- f. Requests emailed out, or Wednesday Nights

6) Set Reasonable Goals

- a. If you struggle to pray consistently, don't aim for an hour, pray for 5-10 minutes (aim at quality)
- b. **Beeke's (5, 5, 5) or 10-10-10**
- c. **Don't Fail to Plan**
- d. **Pray whenever you feel the Urge to Pray (Key)**
- e. **Don't put off prayer until you "feel" like it.**

7) Actually Pray

Conclusion: Let's pray together that God would makes us zealous in our prayer closets and zealous as a church.

Is. 62:6 On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent.

You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest,

7 and give Him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. **42** And they **devoted themselves** to the **apostles' teaching** and the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and the **prayers**.

Is. 43:20 ...I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people, **21** the people whom I formed for Myself that they might declare My praise. **22** "Yet you did not call upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel!

Isaiah 64:7 There is no one who calls upon Your name, who rouses himself to take hold of You;

Matt. 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. **And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

Psa. 116:1 I love YHWH, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. **2** Because He inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.

James 5:16-17 The **prayer** of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he **prayed fervently** that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.