

Do You Believe God Works Through Prayer?

Annual Consecration

Week 3

When Job described wicked men, one of his most scathing criticisms of them was their attitude toward God. "Leave us alone!" they would say. "We have no desire to know your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?" (Job 21:14-15)

Perhaps nothing so indicates a man's heart as the health of his prayer life. Does he pray? Does he believe God answers prayer? Or does he ask with the skeptics, "What would we gain by praying to him?"

Of all the disciplines in the Christian life, prayer and bible reading are the most neglected. A major reason for the failure to pray is the lack of understanding the place prayer holds in God's plan. When this insight comes, most believers willingly enter into prayer and will "[strive] to lay hold of [God]" (Isa. 64:7).

The penetrating question found in Job 21:14 causes us to face the question, "Is prayer profitable? Does it really make any difference if I pray?"

It does make a difference.

Prayer occasions God's action. God acts when His people pray. Think of 2 Chron. 7:14, often called the revival text of the bible, " ...if my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Notice these two words: "if... then."

God is sovereign because He alone has the final say in every matter. The sovereign God has ordained prayer as the undergirding, primary tool of all His work. God's will is revealed in the scriptures. "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3). Prayer is not an option: it is commanded by God.

In the New Testament, James reminds us, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:2b). "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (Jas. 5:16b).

One of the tricks of Satan is leading us to believe prayer is simply a desirable exercise. Not so! It is an essential exercise, though terribly neglected by believers. In fact, it is more than an area of neglect; prayerlessness is sin. Thus Samuel assured the people of Israel, “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you” (1 Sam. 12:23).

I’m not a military strategist, but I know that you will never win the war if you don’t know where the battle is being fought—and we are in a spiritual battle from the moment we’re saved. This week we will sacrifice all red meat. Please continue to be faithful in prayer and fasting. I need you to be praying with me that God will bring a greater level of sensitivity in our worship experience both corporately and personally, and pray that souls be saved and added to the Body of Christ.

From the scripture that we were teaching from on Friday night, Luke 11, the enemy will use all of his power to lead the Christian to neglect prayer. He knows that however admirable the sermons may be; however attractive the service may be; however faithful church attendance may be, none of these things can damage him or his kingdom if prayer is neglected. When the church shuts herself up in the power of the inner chamber, and the soldiers of the Lord have received on their knees power from on high then the powers of darkness will be shaken and the souls will be delivered.

In Eph. 6:10-18, Paul plainly describes the battle and how to put on the whole armor of God. We have been so involved in figuring out the armor that we’ve neglected to see where the battle is being fought. Therefore, we don’t engage in the battle, but spend our time on the fringes doing things that are perhaps good, but are inconsequential as far as eternity and souls are concerned. The first activity mentioned after the armor is described is clearly prayer (Eph. 5:18).

Satan does not want you to understand this because you’ll never be a threat to him and his cause apart from prayer. Do anything you want to do, and he’ll not bother you; begin to pray and he’ll put you on his hit list. Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees.

Do you understand the place of prayer? God moves in response to the prayers of His people. Although our finite minds cannot understand “why” at this time, isn’t it time that we simply obeyed Him and became involved in the battle? Every believer, including you, can begin today to make a tremendous difference in lives and circumstances through prayer.

In God’s plan the practice of searching the Scriptures was never intended to be divorced from the practice of prayer. Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you,”—here is

the place of Bible study—“ask whatever you wish,”—and here is the place of prayer—“and it will be given you”—here is God’s promise (Jn. 15:7).