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Let Us Pray!

#1339-B

Series: Prayer: God's "Secret" Weapon

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Let Us Pray!

Praise God! We worship You, we adore You. We come into Your presence with thanksgiving and into Your courts with praise. We acknowledge that apart from You we can do nothing.

We come this morning, Father, praying that Your Spirit would overtake us and overwhelm us with Your presence. It's our prayer, Father, that somehow, beyond information, we would gain understanding, that we could go and apply unto wisdom beginning today.

Our prayer, Father, is that we might become a praying people, men and women who understand when You say, "Pray without ceasing". But more than that, Father, that we will be men and women who do it.

We ask You, Father, this morning, to place a level of conviction in our spirits. Many of us spoke even last week of making a commitment, of nailing down to a time and a place and making a promise to You that we would become prayer warriors indeed. Some have done it, some have not. By Your grace this morning continue to impress upon our hearts, Father, the need to drive a stake in the ground and make a commitment that we will, by Your grace, faithfully, regularly meet with You and pray.

And now, Father, as we end this time of study on prayer, may it be only the beginning in many of our lives.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

By now the dust has settled on the outskirts of Gethsemane. The disciples have left that awesome seminar on the side of the mountain, and the memories of those moments seem to have faded into the recesses of our hearts like pages in a book we have already read.

We can barely see them there. The three falling asleep while the Master agonized in prayer. Remember? The Eternal God in

Let Us Pray!

human form turning to these faithful men and asking, “Could you not watch with me one hour?” I mean, “Is sixty minutes too long to stay awake when eternity is in the balance?” That is what He asked. We marveled at their response. They drifted off and fell asleep again. And we said to ourselves in our pious tone of voice, “How could they? How could they not see how valuable it was to the Father and to the Son that they remain on their knees, alert and involved, while the enemy flooded the skies with his desperate attempt to thwart the plan of God?” Those were dark days, weren’t they?

These who had so followed the Lord through thick and thin, through the miracles, through the rejection by the religious leaders, through the parables they did not understand, through the cleansing of the temple. They had seen it all. And now, somewhat excluded for the moment they remained, some at the garden gate, others just a few feet away from the sorrowing body of our Lord Jesus Christ, wondering just what was going on.

If Jesus was God, as He claimed to be, and the miracles seemed to prove that, then why did He have to agonize so? Why didn’t He just call down ten thousand angels from the courts of heaven and declare war on Satan who was trampling underfoot the heart of God? Why would Jesus be falling down before the Father pleading for His will to be done? Those were the questions going through the minds of the disciples, Beloved, and those are questions men and women are asking today as they attempt to define this seemingly difficult subject called prayer.

And that is just what we have been asking God to do for us in these last 24 lessons as we reached into the Holy of Holies in Scripture and asked, “Dear, Lord, teach us how to pray”. The Bible says God loves for us to do that. He loves for us to enter into the same quality of intimacy that He had with Jesus.

To assist us in reaching that goal, God has given to us portraits of prayer in Scripture, lessons on prayer in Scripture, examples of prayer in Scripture, and admonitions to pray. Each one of them seems to be almost the same but different. It’s like a diamond with the reflection from different facets. It’s the same diamond but the different facets glow in a different manner. God wants us to know His heart, to do His will, and to give Him glory. So He designed this thing called prayer to bring that to pass. And that’s what we have to understand.

Let Us Pray!

Man has tried to redesign the purpose of prayer. Man has said that prayer is an exercise in which we determine what God needs to do and tell Him to do it; or in the name of faith, we dare Him not to. That is the exact opposite of what God intended prayer to be. Prayer is God's way of getting man to behold His glory, surrender to His plan, and be filled with His nature. Often that means allowing and even desiring the exact opposite of what we would prescribe if we were God.

So this whole issue of prayer involves much more than learning how to petition God for what we want, that is not really prayer. It's just a tiny facet of it. Here is what prayer is. *Prayer is coming to understand the mind of God by spending time in the presence of God until we are so enamored with the nature of God that all we want is the will of God. That's prayer.*

Watching Jesus pray and hearing Jesus pray and finally watching Paul pray gave us a somewhat different idea than what man thinks prayer to be. As we end our journey, this morning, our prayer is that the real journey is only beginning, that the journey will take us each individually into the deeper recesses of God's heart by applying our hearts unto wisdom until we become men and women of prayer.

I always end these series the same way. It's kind of like the series on the Word. You feel as if you've spent a lot time searching Scripture and admonishing one another and encouraging your own heart. And you think, "Well, that subject is over; let's go on to something else." And you sort of feel like, "Wow, I've learned some new stuff, hallelujah." May I remind you, Beloved, that the new stuff you learned only makes you more accountable. We are not to become hearers of the Word, but doers. (Anyway, that little sermon was just thrown in.)

This morning we are going to retrace our steps just to be sure that we've caught a glimpse of the totality of what this series is all about. And my prayer is that this will be more than just a review. I would pray that it would be a test for each one of us to see how much we have retained and applied. (So I know you won't mind the roving microphone and the questions we will...never mind.) Please test yourself, though, as we go.

First, we need to understand how to pray in a crisis. Isn't that the way most of us think about prayer? We talked about it last week, that whenever there's a crisis on television and the news

Let Us Pray!

commentators stick a microphone in front of somebody, the first thing they say is always, “We’re really praying about this.” And we know that a lot of times they are not praying people. In a crisis we think about prayer, don’t we?

If you really want to learn how to pray in a crisis, remember you have to go back to the greatest crisis that ever faced mankind. That crisis had to do with the Lord Jesus Christ and a place called Gethsemane. Jesus Himself stood before the Father as the very gates of hell were about to explode on planet earth, the greatest expression of spiritual warfare that man would ever experience was about to be unleashed, and it was aimed at God Himself. This was the crossroads of history. If this one act of sacrifice were to fail, mankind was destined for an eternity in darkness, and God’s plan would have been thwarted. Of course, it wasn’t.

That great victory, the greatest victory ever won, wasn’t won at Calvary. It was demonstrated at Calvary, Beloved, but it was won in Gethsemane. There, Jesus taught us how to find and do the will of God when the enemy is bombarding the very sanctuary of our souls with his heaviest artillery. When the sky is black and there are no stars in the sky, when the sunrise seems destined to be hidden behind clouds of adversity forever, *what do we do?*

Jesus said, “I’m going to show you what to do. It was in that garden so many years ago, that Jesus took the brush strokes of eternity, used on the canvas of the Word of God, and painted a portrait for us of how to pray when the thermostat of life seems stuck and the heat escalates beyond comprehension. Check your own prayer life against it. Remember, we came up with five things Jesus taught us about prayer at Gethsemane:

- Seek to involve others you trust in the process of intercession. Don’t try to go it alone. When the sky is falling, Beloved, trust others to pray.
- Pray with all of the intensity in your soul.
- Tell it like it is to God.
- Don’t be afraid to ask more than once.
- As you ask, surrender.

Now let’s take those five principles very quickly one more time because this was the real meat of the beginning of why we began to study the issue of prayer.

PORTRAIT OF HOW TO PRAY

1- Jesus took His inner circle into the prayer chamber with Him. He gave them a very simple command. He said to watch and to pray. They didn't. But let me remind you, Beloved, when someone asks you to pray for them, and you say you will but you fall asleep, you are the loser. Why? Because you lost an opportunity to enter into the very frontlines of spiritual conflict and invoke the strength of God on behalf of someone else. You missed the spiritual blessing of being a participant in the victory. Now I want to ask you a question. Do you ask for people to pray for you when the battle rages? Jesus did. Think about it. Do you try to go it alone? You're missing a blessing and they are missing a blessing.

2- Jesus took His team apart to pray. He didn't just toss up a prayer to the Father while He was on His way to the chariot races, presuming that God understood how busy He was. Jesus, who had only three years to minister, to build His church, took His team, went apart, fell down before the Father and began to pray with all of the intensity of His soul. Sweat drops of blood. Have you ever prayed like that? That's how He agonized. To stay before God, if need be for hours, pleading before His throne for His will to be accomplished—that's prayer. We're more likely to toss up sentence prayers as a substitute for the intimacy God desires that we have. Jesus paid a price, Beloved, not only on Calvary, but in Gethsemane for us. He wanted us to see how to pray.

3- Jesus didn't mince words with the Father. Sometimes I think that in an effort to be spiritual, quote, unquote, or in an effort to keep from having to face reality we talk to God as though He didn't really want to know what was wrong and we don't really want to tell Him. Jesus said, Father, My soul is troubled, I'm in agony." He told it like it was. Do you do that? He said, "Not only that, but if it be possible, Father, let's don't do this, but Thy will be done." Just an honest expression followed by an honest request. Have you learned to be that honest with God? Is your conversation with God real? That's the question.

4- Jesus prayed the same prayer three times. You say, "That was a waste". Not to God. Do you think that the Father was hard of hearing? Absolutely not. What Jesus wanted was that the Father experience the agony of His soul and understand the

Let Us Pray!

intensity of His pleas. If someone asks you to pray for them, what do you do? If you are like me, you mention their name when you are rattling off a list of names that you're praying for and you say, "Whew! I've kept my promise." That's not prayer. Seldom do we go back before the Lord over and over and over and lift up that person again and again and again the way He asked. Jesus asked the Father the same thing three times.

5- Jesus never told the Father what to do. He didn't give any instructions, He didn't give any ultimatums. Not even for one moment, did He doubt that the Father would do what was best for the kingdom, not what was best for Him. He surrendered without a whimper. You say, "Why was He agonizing?" "God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). Jesus opened His heart and His soul to the Father in a way few of us ever experience. He grieved. He prayed until perspiration flowed from His brow like a fountain pouring forth from His heart. Then He prayed the more. His sweat turned to blood, the grief turned to sorrow, the words turned into more than words; they became the uniting of two souls, the merging of His soul with the Father's. His prayer was not that God invoke His great power to remove this awful thing on the horizon of His life; that's the way we pray. We pray, "Lord, if You're God, take this away." His heart was so in tune with the Father's that the only thing He cared about was that the Father's will be done. He was not agonizing because the Father didn't see it His way. He agonized because He wanted to be certain He prayed it the Father's way. And, of course, He did.

So if we never learned anything more about prayer than what we learned watching Jesus at Gethsemane, we could spend the rest of our lives propagating those truths into our lives. But Jesus didn't stop there, He didn't stop with that one incident. He led us into the confines of His ministry in Matthew, Chapter 6, where He taught us how not to pray and then how to pray.

You remember this familiar scene where Jesus was seated on a rock, and gathered around Him were those whose hearts were longing now to enter into a kind of relationship with God they had never had before. They wanted to learn things that God knew that they never knew before. One thing they needed to know about was how to pray. They had never had a good lesson on prayer. The only frame of reference they had was watching their religious leaders piously parade about, quoting memorized prayers on

Let Us Pray!

street corners or in the synagogues. According to other passages, these same men had no consciousness of the love of God, and no obvious expression of His nature came forth from their lives. So Jesus said, “Let Me start where you are. I will use them as an example, not of how to pray, but of how *not* to pray. When you pray, don’t be like them.” That caused a few brows to go up. He said, “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites. They like to pray in public so that everybody can know that they’re praying” (Matthew 6:5 paraphrase). “When you pray,” He said, “go into your closet, and once you’re there, shut the door” (Matthew 6:6 paraphrase).

So the first admonition Jesus gave us about prayer is about abusing this priceless privilege. He said, “Don’t use vain repetitions as the heathen do and don’t pray as the hypocrites pray.” He said, “The hypocrites love to stand on street corners to be seen of men. They already have their reward (see Matthew 6). Jesus said that prayer never calls attention to itself. It’s meant to be an invisible discipline. It is something meant to be very private between you and your God.

There will be times when you pray aloud—maybe, maybe not. There will be times when you pray as a group—maybe, maybe not. But these will never be substitutes for the prayer closet where you and God together and alone, speak heart to heart, with no consciousness of what others might think, with no desire that others know. If people know we are praying Christians, it must not be because they always see us praying, Beloved. It must be because they see in us the imprint of the nature of Christ and assume that there is no other way that we could be so transformed.

Anyway, Jesus had now made clear what prayer was not and He told us what it was. He knew we would need more than vague, general concepts. We would need a pattern. You ladies know what a pattern is. A pattern is something you lay over something else to give you guidelines. You don’t make the pattern; you use the pattern to make the product. And that’s the way it was. Jesus said that this is a pattern for you to follow. And before you get to that I want to remind you that Your heavenly Father already knows what you need (Matthew 6:8). “Oh,” you say, “that saves me a lot of time if I don’t have to tell Him.” No, Jesus said that you have missed the point.

Let Us Pray!

Your heavenly Father knows before you ask, but you must ask if you want to receive. Why? We can pass the roving microphone again and ask how many of you can give us seven reasons why we're asking? All of you can, so no need to raise your hand. I will review them for you just in case you may have forgotten one of them. Jesus reminds us that:

1- Asking glorifies God (John 14:13,14)

Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

But you are supposed to ask.

2- Asking makes us dependent (John 15:7)

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, [then] ask what you will, and it will be done for you.

3- Asking produces wisdom (James 1:5)

4- Asking produces faith (James 1:6)

5- Asking produces joy (John 16:24)

... Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

6- Asking produces holiness (I John 3:21,22)

7- Asking motivates us to know His will (I John 5:14,15)

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

So asking generates the nature of God in you, but you have the need to tell Him what is on your heart. It is not your ability to communicate that will make the difference. It is your willingness to communicate that will make the difference. It's not how great your words are; it's how pure and honest your heart is.

Then Jesus began teaching us how to pray. He began, "Our Father, who art in heaven." And we thought, "Why does He have to tell us that the Father is in heaven? We know that the Father is in heaven. Jesus said I want you to remember that every time you pray. We asked you that and we gave you 10 reasons why:

1- It reminds us of the creative power of God every time we say, "Our Father who art in heaven." It doesn't say that in the beginning God created earth from heaven. No, it says that in the beginning God created the heavens and then the earth. (Genesis 1)

Let Us Pray!

2- It reminds us of the elements (Exodus 9,10; Psalm 77:18)

3- It reminds us of His ownership of all things
(Deuteronomy 10:14; I Chronicles 29:11)

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's
thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

4- It reminds us of His omnipotence
(Joshua 10:13; I Samuel 2:10; Psalm 19:1)

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament
shows His handiwork.

5- It reminds us of His omnipresence
(I Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:8)

6- It reminds us of the mercy of God
(Psalm 103:11)

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

So every time you say, "Our Father," you are reminded
that God's mercy is higher than the heavens.

7- It reminds us of His sovereignty
(Psalm 135:6)

Whatever the Lord pleases He does, In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.

8- It reminds us of His immutability
(Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no
means pass away.

9- It reminds us of His coming in clouds of glory, that He is
coming back for us to take us with Him.

(I Thessalonians 4:16,17)

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout,
with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.
And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up
together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

That ought to flood your mind every time we say, "Our Father
who art in heaven".

10- It reminds us of the place He is preparing for us.
(Revelation 21:3)

Let Us Pray!

So we are always to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven.” You are not praying it because God likes those words. We’re saying it because it ought to remind us that all of God’s attributes emanate from His heavenly throne. His Word reminds us that He lives in heaven. He has a home in heaven, and one day, if we trust in Christ, that home will be ours, as well. How real is that to you? How real is it in your prayer life? We just don’t talk about heaven nearly enough. Beloved, this place is not our home. We’re passing through. We’re nomads. This is a motel. (Motel 6½ or something.) But Motel 7, our home in glory is waiting for us. And, Beloved, that’s what it is all about. We don’t preach about it much anymore. We don’t sing about it much anymore. We don’t talk about it anymore. Jesus said every time you pray, remember heaven. It’s real and that’s where we’re going.

Then we learned how to address His Father. We are to say, “Hallowed be thy name”. And it does not just mean that, but that every quality that makes God God is a part of His name. God’s name is Holy, God’s name is Truth, His name is Grace. He told us that in Exodus. Then He told us His name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Think about those titles. Every one of them demonstrates some aspect of the nature of God. So when you say our Father, Wonderful, what you’re saying is our Father who is Supreme. When you say our Father, Counselor, you’re saying our Father who is the comforter. And on and on and on...

Every name of God illustrates one quality of God that we worship Him for. Then Jesus said to pray, “Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Now we don’t have time to go through all of that this morning but you do remember the key, don’t you? The key is that whenever you pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” you are asking God’s kingdom to come on earth, and you are asking Him to do whatever it takes for Jesus to take first place in your life. “Well, I just thought they were neat words.” They are neat words but what is behind the words is the intent of your heart for God to do to bring into your life choices—choices that will force you to decide which kingdom we are living for—the one you live in or the one you are going to. That’s what you’re praying for when you say that. And it is important that you understand you’re asking God to so order your life that you will increasingly lose your appetite for those things here and gain an appetite for the things that will bring you

Let Us Pray!

into His kingdom. That's what you're praying for.

Jesus then told us what to ask for and how. He told us to ask God to "give us this day our daily bread." You remember what the crux of that was, that it's not that we're to give Him a long list of what we think we need. What we're to do is to say to God, "Listen, I've got 24 hours in front of me. Lord, that's all that I can handle. You knew in eternity past that's all I could handle, and You told me that's all I can handle. Wow! You handle it, will You? Now, Lord, I want You to give me two kinds of bread today. Not rye or whole wheat—I want You to give me the kind that is eternal, the bread come down from heaven. And I want you to give me the kind that comes in a loaf, just enough to take care of my everyday needs. But, Lord, I'm only going to ask You for 24 hours. That is all I need. And tomorrow I'm going to come back and get some fresh manna, okay? I'm not going to try to keep this stuff and let it rot; I'm going to come to You tomorrow. Give us this one day, 'sufficient unto the day is the evil there of.'"

How many of you have really let that truth take hold of your life? How many of you really pray like that? How many take your worries and put them in a box and seal the box and put on top, "Not for today"? How many of you just take to God the needs you have for just that one day? You say, "Well, that takes all the fun out of it. I love worrying." But you are in total disobedience. I need to remind you of that. You are to take no thought for tomorrow, sufficient unto the day is the evil there of.

Then Jesus told us, by the way, to ask the Father to forgive us our sins, but He put in a small disclaimer. When we look at the disclaimer it wasn't a little disclaimer, it was a mountain. Jesus said, "Oh, I meant to tell you to ask God to forgive you of your sins, but He's not going to do it if you are holding a grudge against somebody else. We scratch through that verse and we kind of paste over it and say, "The Lord understands. I just can't stand that person. You don't understand what that person did to me. I have kind of forgiven them. When their name comes up, my teeth start grinding. Is that okay, Lord?" No, that's not okay.

What Jesus was saying was that you have an obligation to be certain that if you ask God to forgive you, you are not holding a grudge against anyone else. If you forgive not others' trespasses then what? Neither will He forgive you your trespasses. It says that. He must mean that. Well, Jesus taught us a lot about how

Let Us Pray!

to pray on that hillside.

And then we have one more section of our prayer study and that was when we looked at Jesus in John 17. We heard that incredibly intimate conversation between God, the Father, and God, the Son. And it was like the Father pulled back the veil from the Holy of Holies and He actually let us experience the two of them talking to each other. Wasn't it incredible? There is so much there that you could easily spend at least the next 150 years on it should the Lord tarry. We spent about four weeks instead.

There were four subjects, you remember, that He spoke of over and over and over. And I want to remind you of those four subjects as we move along. The first one was glory, the second was unity, the third was security, and the fourth was separation. All of them ought to change the way we pray.

GOD GETS THE GLORY

First, Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify the Son so that the Son could glorify the Father. Then He prayed that the glory the Father gave to the Son would be passed on to us. He pointed to you, he pointed to me. He said, "Give them My glory." And we had to ask ourselves, "What does it mean?"

The Bible says that all glory belongs to God. It begins with the Father who gives His glory or reveals His nature to the Son or through the Son. The Son reveals that glory through the Holy Spirit to the Christian. The Spirit never accepts the glory, He returns it to the Son (you remember, according to Scripture), who always gives it back to the Father. Then the cycle is complete.

So we learned then in that period of time that as we minister and as we pray and in everything we do, the glory must go to Jesus. There is no place for self-glorification in the Christian life. Three great truths came out of that and I will remind you of those three. I'm sure you remember them but I will remind you anyway.

1- We are to spend time, like Moses did, at the feet of God asking Him to show us His glory or to reveal His nature. He will but we are supposed to ask. How many of you have remembered to do that? How many of you have remembered to pray over a regular basis, "Lord, show me Your glory?" Guess what? He's waiting for you to.

2- Jesus taught us that when the crosses of life, the difficulties

Let Us Pray!

of life loom on the horizon, we have two choices,

...what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

Father, glorify thy name...

(John 12:27,28a)

And we have those same two choices every time something comes into our lives that we wish hadn't come. We can say, "Lord save me from this hour," or we can say, "This is why I'm here, not for You to take me out of it but for me to glorify Your name." In other words don't pray for the Father to be glorified in you if you are not willing to walk up Golgotha with the Master. Those deep, deep trials are showcases for the glory of God.

3- As we grow in Christ the more grieved we ought to be when anyone or anything steals the glory from God. Always. Our prayer lives ought to reflect the kind of dependence that Jesus did. He said, "Apart from the Father, I can do nothing" (John 5:30). How many of you know what nothing is? Can I see your hands? It's a little below zero. Nothing. How can we do more than He did? What He said was that the robes of glory are designed for deity. They fit no one but God.

For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.

(Romans 11:36)

Amen, indeed.

BELIEVERS ARE UNIFIED

Then Jesus prayed for unity. That is a tough one for us to understand. He said, "Oh, yes, Father, please make all of them one the way You and I are one." What an honor. But we looked out the door and realized that is not the way it really is. And we looked through Scripture and realized that the Father and the Son are one in substance, one in purpose, and one in spirit. And that's the way the body of Christ is supposed to be.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit do different things, but they think like one, act like one, and respond as one. And that's the way the body of Christ is supposed to work. And to make sure we understood, Paul said, "Now, remember, there is one God, there is only one God, one faith, and one baptism. By the way, the way the world is going to know that we are different from them is by the way you love one another and the unity that exists in the body of Christ.

Let Us Pray!

That means we would not be quarreling with our brothers in other churches. We're not supposed to be competing with our brothers in other denominations or vying for funds by trying to "one-up" our brothers in other organizations. One body. Several parts. One purpose. Several ways to accomplish that purpose. One spirit. The same Holy Spirit living in each of us. You cannot divide the Holy Spirit. Thus, when you try to divide His body, you break His heart.

OUR ETERNAL SECURITY

Then Jesus prayed that the Father would keep us. I would remind you that the "keep" was a place in a castle, the innermost part where the enemy could never penetrate. God Himself determined to be our keep and we would be garrisoned about with all of His protection.

Now let me ask you a question. How often do you pray and thank God that you're in the keep? It's an ungrateful heart if you don't, Beloved, The enemy can flail at you, he can fight you, he can throw things at you, he can drop bombs on you, but he can't touch your soul. Satan can't snatch you out of the hand of the Father. Why not? Because you are in the keep. God put you there. And, Beloved, if we ever stop to pray and don't take the time to say, "Oh, Lord, thank You for keeping me," we're missing a blessing. Because we are praising Him and reminding ourselves that He's the one that is keeping us, not we ourselves.

IN THE WORLD, NOT OF THE WORLD

The last thing Jesus prayed about kind of blew our minds, as well. You remember that Jesus said, "Father, I want to leave them *in* the world, but I don't want them to become *of* the world."

You look at the church today and you look at our lives today and you look at the body of Christ today, and you see that it is not the way it is. He said that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood. God called us out of this world and then sent us back into it as ambassadors. But never are we to compromise to make the gospel appealing. Jesus is appealing. That is all you need. Truth is appealing. We simply make a cheap imitation and defile His holiness when we try to make the gospel into something that looks like something of the world so that they will like it. There is no way to make that cross look like the world.

Let Us Pray!

With that study, we rounded the corner and headed for “application city” and asked God to turn truth into wisdom.

Then, remember, we found in Scripture that the next thing that God said that I want you to do is to learn to pray for your enemies. Then Jesus defined them. He said your enemies are anyone who wishes us evil, doesn’t love or appreciate us, treats us with insolence or disrespect, or pursues us with animosity. Then, He told us what to do. He told us to invoke God’s blessing on them, you do things that reflect beauty and love for them, and you pray for them, you intercede for them, asking God for good on their behalf. We asked you to make a new prayer list called your enemies list. I don’t know how many of you did that and if I ask you to hold up your hand, you would be admitting that you have enemies, so I won’t. It’s not your typical prayer list, Beloved, but it is God’s typical prayer list.

Then we learned how to pray for those in authority over us: the president, the governor, the mayor, the councilmen, the county commissioners, the senators, the representatives, the judges, the pastors, the parents, the husbands. All those God placed over us. How many have actually added that to your prayer list? How many of you have made a list of them by name? I know you have. (That blank look is just from another source.)

Then we learned to pray for all men. Do you remember what that meant? It meant that you’re driving down the freeway and a guy cuts in front of you. God is saying that here’s a new guy to add to your prayer list. You don’t need to know his name, just call him the guy who cut in front of me in the green Camero.

You go into the store and the clerk was rude to you; pray for them. Somebody interrupts you at dinner with one of those Mr. So-and-So and mispronouncing your name and talking as though they had known you all of your life. Your potatoes are getting cold and he wants to know if you want to win a trip to Saskatchewan. God says no, don’t just get angry and hang up. You can hang up but pray for them. God has brought somebody new into your life so that you can pray for them. If you couple that with the thing on praying for your enemies, it seems that the ruder, the nastier, the more confrontational they are, the more you are supposed to pray for them.

We then boarded Jerusalem Airlines and went backwards in time, went into a Roman prison and met a guy name Paul. He

Let Us Pray!

was being held hostage for a crime he didn't commit. This was the guy who had murdered Christians but he wasn't the same anymore. Saul had become Paul; the pursuer had become the pursued.

We heard him pray and we noticed that he didn't pray for the political climate in Rome, or for the physical safety and well being of the Jews. He didn't even pray for the prosperity of the church. He tried to teach us to lift our hearts to a heavenly plane and learn to pray for the height and the depth and the length and breadth of God's love. He taught us to pray for one another that we might actually experience all the fullness of God. He taught us how to take the attributes of God and then pray the quality of those attributes into other people's lives.

And so our journey came full circle. From a lonely garden to the stark corners of a Roman jail, from a Judean hillside to an Ephesian church. And through it all God was trying to teach us one thing: how to pray.

Some of us, I hope, made a prayer notebook. The rest of you, I hope, will consider it. Some of you made a commitment last Sunday to God so that Satan will have a hard time penetrating your life with good intentions and bad objectives. Some of us picked a time and a place and said, "Lord, from now on I will meet You there." We got a pattern, ARIAS, you remember. We would learn to pray for adoration, then restoration, then intercession, then abiding rest, and then singing praises.

But the whole purpose of all of it was for us to look at Jesus praying and at Paul praying. And then to realize that it is not only possible but it is *probable* that if we pray like they did, we will never be the same again.

The truth of the matter, Beloved, in closing, is that the choice is up to us. God will keep His end of the bargain. He always does. He will be there waiting for you when you come. He will always hear us whenever we pray according to His will; and when He hears us, we will always have the petitions we have desired of Him. That's a promise. And God always keeps His promises. The only question left, my friends, is will we?

Will we from today on, study over and over the principles of prayer in Scripture, and from this day forward become men and women of prayer.

Let Us Pray!

You say, "I'm old and I don't have a lot of energy and I can't go anywhere, and I can't do anything. Hallelujah. Perfect candidate.

And when you pray like that, Beloved, Satan hates it. The moment you descend to your knees, he bombards you. He hates it when you pray. He hates it when you spend time adoring God, worshipping God, confessing to God, surrendering to God, and singing to God. Satan hates it. And you know what that means. You must not stop until Jesus comes again.

Prayer, can you define it? I think so. Prayer is falling on you face before God, drinking in the grandeur of His majesty, appropriating the marvel of His grace, claiming the assurance of His promises, and surrendering to the marvel of His will. Prayer isn't taking our laundry list to God for Him to do our bidding so that He can prove He's God. Prayer is taking our hearts to Him, laying them at His feet, giving Him control of our lives, so that we can do His bidding and grow more perfectly into His likeness.

Prayer isn't just an activity; it's a relationship. It's a relationship that only God brings to perfection as two hearts actually become one. Until the one serving actually wants to do nothing else but to do what the Master wants. When we understand that, when we begin to pray like that, heaven will touch earth. Life will, indeed, be different, and God will be pleased.

What shall we say? I say, "Let us pray."

Our Father and our God,

The awesomeness of the privilege that You have granted to us that we of all people should be allowed to pray, to come boldly into Your presence, to be able to have an audience with the King of kings, any time, any place. To be able to tell You what is really on our hearts. To be able to weep, to demonstrate our grief, to be honest. But to know that before we even ask, before we say a single word, You already know what is on our hearts.

What You desire is the coming into Your presence and staying there until You and we become one.

Some of us in that frame of reference have never really learned to pray, but we can. By Your grace we pray,

In Jesus' name

Amen.

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