

Call to Obedience #288
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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ON THE IMPORTANCE AND BASIS OF PRAYER

By Pastor Reimar Schultze

On the Importance and Basis of Prayer

“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” —Luke 18:1

As I grow older, I become more and more fascinated with prayer. May it also be so for you.

If prayer were an invention, it would be one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest of all time. Prayer is the mightiest force in the universe. Prayer is of more worth than tens of trillions of dollars in our bank accounts. You cannot buy everything with money, but you can get everything with prayer, if it only be for the glory of God.

Oh, if men would but realize the importance and power of prayer. If men would only know that when Jesus asked men to always pray, he did not ask a dreadful duty, but he asked them to plug into his infinite oceans of mercy to receive all that they need and much of what the rest of the world is in dire need of.

When a person gets converted, although he may come into the kingdom as a pauper—peniless, homeless, sick, lonely, discouraged—he immediately can begin to drink of that ocean of divine mercy that never runs dry. He is headed for, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* He is headed for, *“My God shall supply all my need according to his riches...”* He is headed for, *“No weapon that is formed against me shall prosper...”* He is headed for the Holy of Holies to intercede for lost family members, neighbors, wives and husbands, and nations, to the breaking down of strongholds.

By prayer, a single layman could make the sun to stand still. By it, a prophet could spare the wrath of God that was bent to destroy a nation (Deut. 9:7ff). By it a Prime Minister could have sweet fellowship with hungry lions in a den (Dan. 6). By it, old widows have changed the tides of battles. By it, children have changed the force of nature—the weather. By it, teen-agers have made the most wicked town sinner fall on his knees to surrender to our Eternal King. By it, housewives have prayed their drinking, cursing husbands into amazing grace. By it, lost tools have been found; broken bones have been put together; the blind have received their sight; the deaf have begun to hear again; the crooked places have been made straight; the poor have been made rich; and men and women have found the spouses God has destined for them to have. I shall stop here, for there is no end to what prayer can accomplish.

Now, you see why I believe that prayer is the greatest invention of all time. Once you know that, you will not want to miss it anymore as you meet alone with God or with your brothers and sisters in corporate prayer. You will not be a great man or woman of God until you know the power of prayer and use it at every occasion of life. Prayer is life, and life is prayer! I’d rather have a little rat hole in the ground or a prison cell in which to live and pray than a palace on the most beautiful South Sea island without prayer. So, prayer is the greatest invention known to man.

The patriarchs were men of prayer. I am convinced that behind those words, “*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him,*” (Gen. 5:24) was a life of prayer. Noah must have been a mighty man of prayer. Had it not been so, he would not have become just and perfect in his generation (Gen. 6:9). “*And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there upon the name of the LORD, the everlasting God*” (Gen. 21:33). So many get excited about prayer for a little while, but then they neglect it again. When Abraham planted a grove to let it be his place of prayer, he made a life-long commitment to such a life. Designate a place in your home, a corner of your bedroom, a place in the attic or the basement, or a shack in the yard as your holy grove for prayer and frequent there daily to call upon the name of the Lord.

The prophet Elijah did nothing but by prayer. As a seasoned man of regular prayer, he had the faith to increase the oil of a widow at Zeraphath, to raise a dead child back to life again, to cause fire to fall on the soldiers of Ahaziah, to bring fire down from heaven on a sacrifice drenched in water, to stop the rain and then cause it to rain again three and a half years later.

Moses could never have become the meekest man on the earth, nor could he have been able to talk to God face to face but by much prayer (Ex. 33:11). There was no wall of division between Moses and God. There was no fence there for him to jump over to meet God. There was no door to knock on and plead for entrance. There was no fog or mist between him and his Creator. “*And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face...*”

So it can be for you, once you become seasoned in prayer. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, signifying that you, too, can enter into the Holy of Holies by the precious blood of the Lamb to fellowship with him, even beyond the intimacy of Moses with God. Such is the inheritance of the saints.

What are you accomplishing by prayer, my friend? What are you doing with this mighty power lying at your doorstep ready to be used? Do you pray frequently? Do you pray with faith? Do you pray in humility? Do you pray in holiness? Do you pray fervently? If not so, you are under par, inefficient at everything you are doing. And when bad things happen to you, you are likely to ask, “Why did God let this happen to me?” On the day of judgment, part of our sentence will be on “What have you done with the mighty power of prayer?”

Jesus gave himself to prayer. Oh, my friend, nothing that counts for eternity can be accomplished but by prayer. Pray without ceasing. Jesus said, “*men ought always to pray, and not to faint*” (Luke 18:1). And Jesus did not just ask this of us, but he became the supreme example of praying always. The fact that he was the sinless Son of God did not exempt him from prayer. Jesus did nothing but by prayer so that everything he did was for the everlasting glory of God—everything! He said he could do nothing of himself (John 5:19). Whatever he did was of the Father and with the Father—24 hours a day. The blind man who was healed not only received physical sight but spiritual sight, which is proven by his testimony of Jesus, “*If this man were not of God, he could do nothing*” (John 9:33). Ponder this insight for awhile. Can you say that of yourself? Do you know this of yourself that without prayer, you can do nothing to please the Father?

Jesus prayed without ceasing, often sacrificing sleep to pray. “*And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed*” (Mark 1:35).

I believe we can say: show me a man great in the kingdom of God, and you will show me a man of prayer. There is no great man unless he is great in prayer also.

The early church learned to pray before she learned to worship, witness, evangelize and preach. So, is it not praying that is the first thing we need to learn once we get saved? Is it not true that a baby, once born, must in the first minutes open his lungs and take a breath of air or it will die? Likewise, the new convert's life depends on whether he begins to pray. If he does not pray, he will die and end up with a form of godliness that denies the power of true godliness. Prayerless Christians are dead Christians. Prayerless Christians don't breathe; therefore, they cannot walk with God. Note, then, that we shall never get anywhere in the Christian life without prayer.

The apostle Paul began his life with God in prayer. Three days after Paul's conversion, Ananias was told in a vision from the Lord that he would find blind Saul of Tarsus (Paul) in prayer (Acts 9:11). Seventeen years later, we find him writing to the Thessalonian church, "*Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith*" (1 Thess. 3:10).

How is your record on prayer, on engaging the mightiest force in the universe, for your benefit and for the benefit of a sick and dying world? Have you prayed down the riches of God's glory? Have you prayed souls into the kingdom, money into the church's treasury, the persecuted out of prisons, the sick into healing, the discouraged into hope, or for the moral standards to be raised in your nation? Oh, what a call of Jesus "*that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*"

God wants everyone to pray, for that is where the power is—the power we need. This is why Paul echoes the words of Jesus in 1 Timothy 2:8: "*I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*"

The Basis of All Prayer

Having grasped the importance and the power of prayer, let us look at the principle upon which all prayer rests:

God's mercy is greater than God's righteousness! Were it not so, God's righteousness would consume us, and there would be no basis for prayer. God's righteousness cannot tolerate a single sin without calling for the wrath of God to consume it. We can see that from the beginning of the Bible. When Adam and Eve sinned by just taking one bite of the forbidden fruit, God's righteousness was violated, and the wrath of God drove them out of the garden of his fellowship. But, immediately before this first couple was thrust out of paradise, God gave them a prophecy of hope and mercy in the future coming of a seed, a Savior who would bruise the head of Satan (Gen. 3:15). Thus, from the very beginning, God linked judgment and righteousness with mercy through the blood. Consequently, we find blood already on Abel's altar in the next chapter of the Bible.

This is the whole basis of prayer, that, on this side of eternity, God's mercy is greater than God's righteousness. Through faith in the atoning blood, we can appeal to the mercy of God to spare us from the judgment that righteousness demands. Faith in God's mercy is the basis of "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (Matt. 7:7). Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus said 4000 years later that the weightier matters of the law are judgment, mercy and faith (Matt. 23:23).

Let me give you two more examples that mercy is greater than righteousness. First, God planned to destroy Israel when she had made the golden calf. His wrath was great. God's righteousness demanded the annihilation of his covenant people, but Moses knew that deeply buried

within the righteousness of God is God's mercy. Moses appealed to that mercy by prayer, and Israel was spared.

Second, Martin Luther, the father of Protestantism, found only the righteousness of God in the Roman Catholic Church doctrines. He knew he was doomed as a sinner. But reading the Psalmist's words "*deliver me in thy righteousness*" in Psalm 31:1, he saw that there was mercy to be found in the righteousness of God and that deliverance from the judgment of God was available.

Yet, let it be known that the great ocean of mercy is only **unlimited** to those who fear God. "*Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever*" (Ps. 118:4). The fear of the Lord prevents us from abusing the mercy of God. For the saint, the fear of the Lord always draws mercy out of the heavens, pulling righteousness, i.e. restoration, behind it through genuine repentance.

But the day will come—that great Judgment Day—when mercy will vanish in that big blue yonder, and righteousness will reign supreme as the full measure of the wrath of God will come upon all those who have not obeyed him. Putting it all together, the basis of all prayer is that *God's mercy is greater than God's righteousness!*

So, dear friend, God's mercy bids you come and pray.

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