

## THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

This morning I would like to start a 3 part series on prayer

This week: The mystery of prayer  
Two weeks from today: "Praying the Scriptures"  
Aug 4<sup>th</sup>: Effective prayer

The minute we raise the subject of prayer many people get squeamish  
most people immediately begin to feel guilty....

While, we know, prayer is one of the most vital aspects of the Christian life, most of us struggle mightily with it ---- We simply don't know how to pray

Prayer is contested territory...

The Devil knows that if God's people ever get it together and discover what this is all about, his work is in serious jeopardy.

The standard for prayer is pretty high

Ephesians 6:18

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Phil 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see that prayer is the antidote for anxiety

One man said: "I don't have time to pray

The truth is: We don't have time because we don't pray

God does really want His people to pray?

But Why does He want them to pray?

And How should we pray?

And What's it going to take to make it happen?

Everything depends on prayer...

Signs, wonders, miracles, healing, revival, deliverances our own personal growth

And The reason we have seen so little of these things, is because there is so little prayer in the church ....

**God wants to move**

**In the world And he wants to move in your life and my life**

You msy say, "well He's got my permission,"

“If God wants to move, then why doesn’t He just move...”

“If God wants to move, who’s gonna stop Him?”

**The answer is: We are!**

**Here’s the way it works:**

God works in conjunction with His Church and with His people

When He wants to do something in the world, He first reveals it to some of His people. When they perceive what God is wanting to do, they go to prayer to pray it into reality.

THIS IS CALLED: THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

THE CLASSIC ILLUSTRATION:

Daniel 9:1-4

- 1 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—
  - 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.
  - 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.
  - 4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:  
“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments
- I perceived from the Scriptures that the time was now for God to set his people free
  - But he also perceived that certain conditions had to be met in order for this to happen: Alas Prayer and repentance on the part of God’s people
  - So! I went to serious prayer to see this happen

Effective prayer begins at the point when the will of God is perceived

**Let’s go to: Ezekial 22:29-31**

- 29 The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice.**
- 30 “I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.**
- 31 “Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,” declares the Lord God.**

Notice anything strange about this passage?

Here was a land that rightly deserved the judgment of God – Because oppression, robbery and injustice had become a way of life

But God did not want to destroy it. He longed to save it

So He looked around for a someone who would work together with him on the project...But He couldn't find anyone! So He had no choice. He was helpless!

Isn't God all powerful? Isn't He all sufficient?

Couldn't He have spared this land anyway? THE ANSWER IS NO

Here is the Mystery of Intercession

The all powerful God has exalted His word above His Name

He has not only set boundaries for man  
He has set boundaries for Himself  
There are lines that He will not cross

In the book of Genesis: God entrusted man as the caretaker of this planet

Through His word He has entered into a contract with man to accomplish His will on the earth.

God has a will and a plan for the earth, but He has chosen to accomplish that will in partnership with His people

This is clearly illustrated in a number of places in scripture

## **2 Chronicles 7:12-16**

- 12** Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.
- 13** "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people,
- 14** and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.
- 15** "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer *offered* in this place.
- 16** For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

[If I Stop the Rain?](#)

If I Command the Locust?

If I Send pestilence?

IF MY PEOPLE.....

God does this? This is judgment

All of God's judgments are redemptive  
They are designed to turn people to himself  
But notice the partnership that God has with His people for bringing revival and restoration to the land.

If bad things happen  
As a result of the bad behavior of people  
And If My people pray -- Then I will Hear and Heal

Verse 15 “so now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place.

This is always amazing to Me  
That God would partner with his people in this way

This was the reason that Jesus was so upset when He entered the temple in Jerusalem to find everything going on there but prayer

#### **Mt 21:12-13**

**12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.**

**13 And He \*said to them, “It is written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you are making it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”**

Because God has chosen to move through His people He  
Commands His people to make prayer the primary ministry of the church and the primary ministry of their personal lives.

#### **Matthew 9:36-38**

**36 Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.**

**37 Then He \*said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.**

**38 “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”**

Notice anything strange about this passage??

Hey! He is the Lord of the Harvest -- The harvest is His -- The laborers are His  
And He is still telling us to pray earnestly that this will happen

Couldn't He just do it without our prayers?

**No! GOD HAS A JOINT ACCOUNT WITH US  
Each check requires 2 signatures for payment**

Jack Hayford says: When God wants to work, He wakes up one of His servants in the middle of the night, or speaks to someone in the prayer room to pray His will into existence.

WHEN YOU PRAY, PRAY THIS WAY

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

When you pray:

You pray the Kingdom down to earth -- You pray my will down to earth

God could have designed it another way, but if God moved without the prayer people of the world would say, “That was just random chance, happenstance, an interesting scientific anomaly, but not an answer to prayer.

God gives us something to pray, We pray, And God moves in direct response to our prayer

### 1 John 5:14-15

- 14 **This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**
- 15 **And if we know that He hears us *in whatever we ask*, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.**

The famous Chinese Church leader, Watchman Nee said:

We should not open our mouths too hastily upon approaching God. On the contrary, we first must ask God to show us what and how to pray before we make our request known to Him. Have we not consumed a great deal of time in the past asking for what we wanted? Why not now ask for what God wants?

Nowadays Christians appear to treat prayer as a means to accomplish their aims and ideas. If they possessed just a little deeper understanding, they would recognize that prayer is but man uttering to God what is God's will.

### Other Notable Quotes:

John Wesley:

“God will do nothing, but in answer to prayer”

D.S. Gordon:

“The greatest thing anyone can do for God and for man is pray. You can do more than pray, but you cannot do more than pray until you've prayed”

E.M. Bounds:

“God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better off the world will be. God conditions the very life and prosperity of His cause on prayer. If these things are true then prayer should be the main business of our day.”

Paul Billheimer, in his book, *Destined for the Throne*, says,

“Through the plan of prayer, God is actually inviting man into full partnership with Him.”

We have got to understand this serious truth:

There are a great many things in the heart of God for this world that will never come to pass until we pray.

There are also a number of things that will happen (that ought not to happen) unless we pray

The promises of God concerning prayer are amazing  
God is looking for people who will take Him at His word

### John 14:14-15

- 12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father.
- 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
- 14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

Can you see the connection between “Greater Works and Prayer” in this passage?

We ask and God does

And Do you see the “If” here? Who will take Jesus up on His promise?

John 15:7

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

ABIDING COMES BEFORE ASKING

Here is a principle that we all need to understand

Years ago one of our bible teachers brought a message called “OUR PLACE IN PRAYER”

He spoke about a prayer group of pastors that he was a part of

These pastors used to come together for prayer

And they would ask questions of each other:

How can we pray for you?

What would you like us to pray for?

Then they would dive into prayer

But During a certain prayer time a word came from the Lord from Ecclesiastes 5:1-2

- 1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.
- 2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

And the gist of this word was this:

Let God speak to you, before you speak to him

Let him lead you in your prayers

Wait on the Lord

If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, Ask what you wish

Let me give you this challenge this week:

TRY THIS:

Wait on the Lord

Quiet you mind and your heart

Ask God to speak to you before you pray

“Teach us to pray Lord”

The greatest works of the Christian are to be found in prayer

When you pray, Go into your prayer closet, Into your secret place

And listen to God

The speak to God

Listen, Then ask, And God will move