

THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCE OF NOT PRAYING

INTRODUCTION

When we lead someone to Jesus, the first thing we tell them after they have prayed the salvation prayer is that there are four things we need to do. In our discipleship course, we covered these four things in lesson two, "A diet for Christian Growth". In acts chapter 2, we see that the new believers in the first church did the same thing: **Acts 2:42** (NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. **Acts 2:47** (NKJV) praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The 4 things are these:

- Read or study God's Word.
- Fellowship with other believers.
- Prayer.
- Witnessing.

This morning I want to focus on the third one in the list which is prayer. More specifically, I want to point out the call for us to pray corporately, and the tragic consequence of not praying.

MESSAGE

1 Timothy 2:8 (NKJV) I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

What is prayer? I found this excellent article about it on the "Got Questions" website:

"The most basic definition of prayer is "talking to God." Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is direct address to God. Prayer is the primary way for the believer in Jesus Christ to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to fellowship with God.

*Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal. All prayer must be offered in faith (James 1:6), in the name of the Lord Jesus (John 16:23), and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26). As the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia puts it, "Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit". The wicked have no desire to pray (**Psalm 10:4** (NKJV) The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.), but the children of God have a natural desire to pray, (**Luke 11:1** (NKJV) Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one*

of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.").

Prayer is described in the Bible as seeking God's favour (Exodus 32:11), pouring out one's soul to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15), crying out to heaven (2 Chronicles 32:20), drawing near to God (Psalm 73:28, KJV), and kneeling before the Father (Ephesians 3:14).

Paul wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7). Worry about nothing; pray about everything.

How often should we pray? The biblical answer is "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We should keep a running conversation going with God all day long. We can pray under any and all circumstances. Prayer develops our relationship with God and demonstrates our trust and utter dependence upon Him.

In our prayers, we must admit that God is greater than we are and ultimately knows what is best in any given situation (Romans 11:33–36). In prayer, we say, essentially, "Not my will, but your will be done." The key to answered prayer is praying according to the will of God and in accordance with His Word. Prayer is not seeking our own will but seeking to align ourselves with the will of God more fully (1 John 5:14–15; James 4:3).

God's house is to be a house of prayer (Mark 11:17), and God's people are to be people of prayer: "Dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love" (Jude 1:20–21)."

SIMPLE, UNCOMPLICATED PRAYER

Prayer is not complicated, Jesus gave us a model prayer. It's simple, uncomplicated and easy to understand. It's a great way to start praying. Don't repeat it mindlessly but pray it from a heart of faith. It has the potential to change your life. It goes like this:

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV) "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

The words we use in prayer aren't as important as the attitude of our hearts. We can speak with God at any time and any place. His ears are open to the cries of His children.

Have you developed a Christian lifestyle of prayer? Do you pray to the Lord at all times on all occasions? Do you have a dedicated daily prayer time in addition to the short prayers you pray during the day?

TYPES OF PRAYER (per our discipleship manual)

1. **Worship.** This is a prayer of adoration, recognising God as Creator and Master and the One who loves us.
2. **Thanksgiving.** This prayer expresses gratitude to God for His acts on our behalf.
3. **Petition.** This is simply making our needs known to God and asking for His help.
4. **Confession.** This is a prayer of repentance in which we seek God's help when we fail.
5. **Intercession.** This is prayer on behalf of the needs of others.

Have you tried praying in those 5 different ways? Try it, it will bring a whole new side to your Christian walk.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE PRAYER

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) 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 I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

God is calling us, His people, to humble ourselves and pray together.

Examples of Corporate prayer in the New Testament:

The early church that we read of in the book of Acts was a church of prayer:

- The 120 were gathered in an upper room praying in one accord when Pentecost came (Acts 1:13; 2:1).
- The disciples prayed for wisdom in knowing who Judas' replacement should be (Acts 1:24).
- When Peter and John reported the Sanhedrin's threats, those gathered cried out to God in one accord for boldness, and the place was shaken where they prayed (Acts 4:24, 31).
- The church prayed over the seven men appointed to serve the widows (Acts 6:6).
- After James was martyred and Peter imprisoned by Herod, the church was fervently praying, and God miraculously delivered Peter from his cell (Acts 12:1-11).

Examples of Corporate prayer in the Old Testament:

2 Chronicles 20:4 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord – Jehoshaphat and his people sought help from the Lord when facing a great army.

Nehemiah 9:1-38 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sack cloths, and earth upon them - The people gathered before the Lord and repented.

Joel 1:14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders [and] all the inhabitants of the land [into] the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD – This was at a time of God’s impending judgement.

Judges 20:26 “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.” – The people of Israel sought God’s guidance when they had to go up in battle against the tribe of Benjamin.

If corporate prayer is mentioned this much in the Bible, then surely we must follow this example. Could it be that there is an aspect of Christian life that we miss out on when we don’t participate in corporate prayer?

THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES OF NOT PRAYING

In Judges 20, the tribes of Israel went to war against one of their own tribes, Benjamin, because the perverted men had raped and killed a Levite’s concubine. They almost wiped out the tribe of Benjamin, and when they were done we read this in **Judges 21:8-10** “And they said, “What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the Lord?” And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. 9 For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. 10 So the congregation sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children”

What a tragic consequence for not taking part in the war!

We have a nation fraught with problems. There is not one that the Lord can’t sort out, and the answer is prayer, which includes corporate prayer. There are dire warnings for us when we choose not to pray:

Hosea 7:13-14 (NKJV) “Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, Because they have transgressed against Me! Though I

redeemed them, Yet they have spoken lies against Me. 14 They did not cry out to Me with their heart When they wailed upon their beds. "They assemble together for grain and new wine, They rebel against Me.

- Woe to those who are willing to assemble together for grain and new wine (meals and entertainment) but who refuse to cry out to the Lord.

Isaiah 43:22 & 28 (NKJV) "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. 28Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, And Israel to reproaches.

- Priests fall, and the nation is subject to curses and reproach. Is this not what's happening right now in our country? Ministries all over being embarrassed by false and wrong teaching. It seems that the whole country is against Christians. Court judgments are being made against what we believe.
- At a time like this we are too busy, or simply disinterested in attending corporate prayer meetings. This is a great tragedy!
- It's time to stand up and be counted. Don't think sitting in your cozy home and possibly praying on your own will keep you from calamity if it strikes in this nation!

God's word never tells us that we're exempt from corporate prayer. Is it that we are once again serving God according to our own terms? Do we not expect that there will be consequences of our lack of calling on the Lord as pray of the corporate body?

CONCLUSION

We are called to pray in many ways, both in private and as a corporate body. The Lord promises to hear and move on our behalf. But the challenge is that many of us only want to perform part, and not all our praying responsibilities.

We need to become watchmen that are alert. Our nation, our church, our family, and we ourselves need prayer.

Let us review our commitment to prayer. Let us choose to attend prayer meetings, let us refuse to allow the enemy to have way in our land, and let us through our corporate prayer usher in revival.

In conclusion, I challenge you with these words from **Joshua 24:15** And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.