



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

MARCH 16, 2011

Jason Palermo / (501) 366-2557 / www.capitolcom.org / jason.palermo@capitolcom.org

We can always find reasons for not praying, but like like committing to living within a budget it may be challenging in the beginning, but once you have established a time and place to maintain it, the benefits seem to only increase with time.

While all of us can easily fall into the rut of thinking that we are too busy to pray, some may only reserve prayer as a last resort, some may think it is only for those who cannot pull themselves up by the boot straps (a spiritual crutch or wheel chair for the weak), some believe God is too busy to be bothered with my prayers, or the other extreme is that God is so sovereign that he is going to do what he wants anyway, so why bother praying? There are many other reasons that could be added; but all such reasons fall miserably short of the fact that God delights in the prayer of His children, and He often waits until we ask before He answers, and the fact that he loves us and enjoys communing with us, and calls us to pray continually. So normal is prayer in the New Testament that Bible describes believers as people of prayer, or people who pray as their habit of practice. My desire in writing this lesson is to provide a few compelling motivations from Scripture for why believers are a prayerful people. More than that, if prayer is something that is little to nil in your life, I would like to encourage you to make progress in this area, because quite simply put, people whom God uses to accomplish His great work, pray. Put another way, godly men and women pray.

WHY PRAY?

PRAYER IN CHRIST'S NAME GLORIFIES GOD

Prayer is one of the best ways believers can glorify God. Prayer humbly recognizes that man is not autonomous from God, but dependent upon God for every good thing. Therefore prayer in Christ's Name exalts God as the

source of our joy and sustenance. Prayer proves that Christ to be our ultimate treasure and is our greatest satisfaction. Prayer glorifies God in God is understood rightly to be the believers spiritual fountain. Prayer displays wisdom as it runs to the source of our every need, and to the provider of our deepest satisfaction. Therefore prayer in Christ glorifies God, as it thinks God's thoughts after Him, and follows in the way of Christ. Prayer glorifies God, by calling upon God for more help in glorifying God to the fullest. I believe it was Augustine who declared, "Our soul finds no rest, until it finds it's rest in thee." Prayer recognizes that our life is but a vapor, it will soon be spent, and that only what is done in Christ's name will last (a rough paraphrase of I believe C. H. Spurgeon). If only what is done in Christ's name will last into eternity, and Scripture tells us that all we have, we have received from God, and on our own we do not even know how to pray, then the cry of the believer's heart must be "Lord, help me to pray, Lord teach me your ways, Holy Spirit show me wonderful things in your word, lead me, guide me, purify my sinful heart, keep me from evil, lead me not into trespasses, keep me from myself, and aid me in glorifying you, help me to find my satisfaction in Christ and His will for me."

What does it mean to pray in Christ's name? It is far more than tacking the words, "in Jesus name, Amen" at the end of every prayer. To pray in Christ's name means to pray according to Christ's complete character, reputation, and revealed will for the believer based upon all that Christ promises to be and do for those who trust in Him.

Matthew 6:9-10 ⁹ "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. ¹⁰ 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

BIBLE STUDIES

WED. @ 7:00 - 7:30 A.M., ROOM 19 IN THE STATE CAPITOL
(TAKE EITHER ELEVATOR TO THE LOWER LOBBY, EXIT LEFT)

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

John 14:12-13 ¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. ¹³ "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

PRAYER IS COMMANDED BY GOD

Isaiah 55:6 ⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

Matthew 7:7 ⁷ "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.

Philippians 4:6 ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

The thing to always keep in mind is that God always commands what is best for his people. Like a parent commanding their child not to run out in the street, all of God's commands glorify Him as a good God, and express genuine love and sincere interest in the well-being of His children.

PRAYER OFFERED BY GOD'S CHILDREN IS THE FATHER'S DELIGHT

Isaiah 30:18 ¹⁸ Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

Matthew 7:7-11 ⁷ "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. ⁸ "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. ⁹ "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? ¹⁰ "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Proverbs 15:8 ⁸ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Who are the upright? Those who place their faith in God through Christ, are declared righteous by God (Romans 5:1), they are transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1-2), and no longer live to please their sinful desires but now live to please God. Scripture tells us only Christ lived this perfectly, but reminds us that believers are in a process of becoming like Christ, and though believers sin—true believers have a different orientation (1 John 3:1-10). The problem is old patterns may take a while to shed and new patterns take time to develop. But these truths remain—believers are free to not sin, and they do not remain in a pattern of unbroken sin. What makes believer upright before God? Let us realize that Christ alone is the believer's righteousness before God (Romans 5, especially verse 19).

PRAYER EXPRESSES GENUINE ADORATION TO THE ONLY ONE WORTHY OF WORSHIP

Psalms 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for Thee, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms 19:14 ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

Psalms 21:1-7 *A Psalm of David.* O Lord, in Thy strength the king will be glad, And in Thy salvation how greatly he will rejoice! ² Thou hast given him his heart's desire, And Thou hast not withheld the request of his lips. Selah. ³ For Thou dost meet him with the blessings of good things; Thou dost set a crown of fine gold on his head. ⁴ He asked life of Thee, Thou didst give it to him, Length of days forever and ever. ⁵ His glory is great through Thy salvation, Splendor and majesty Thou dost place upon

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

him. ⁶ For Thou dost make him most blessed forever; Thou dost make him joyful with gladness in Thy presence. ⁷ For the king trusts in the LORD, And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.

Psalms 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Psalms 32:1-5 *A Psalm of David. A Maskil.* How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! ² How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! ³ When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away *as with the fever heat of summer.* Selah. ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah.

One can adore the Lord in any circumstance, because the Lord is always good, and greater than our circumstances! The Lord blesses all who seek him, and all who call upon His Name in truth. Those who know God, love God, and prayerful adoration of God is right and fitting in God's sight, and satisfies the heart's desire to express that which is truly awesome and beyond comparison. Who is like the Lord? The clear answer is no one, therefore adore Him. A prayer of adoration toward God is indeed a healthy and worshipful response to experiencing unsurpassed goodness, love, and mercy from One who is supremely beautiful and wonderful. There is an incomparable beauty found only in the character of God. It is my experience of Christ's love which compels me to love others. It is only right for me to then adore one so good and kind and loving. If we get excited only at what God has created, and fail to recognize how much greater the Creator is than His creation we might be tempted to serve the creation rather than worship and serve our all glorious and benevolent Creator.

PRAYER EXPRESSES GENUINE CONFESSIONS TO GOD

Confession is more than the telling God that we have sinned. Confession may include that but it is also much more than that. Confession is an expression of agreement with God in the Greek it literally means "to say the same thing as." So "to say the same thing as God," would be to agree with whatever God has revealed to be true. To say that God is good, or that God is great is to confess the truth about God's character, to say that God is the Creator and that he has created everything for himself is to confess the truth revealed in Scripture about some of God's activities and purposes. Also to confess that our hearts and tongues have gone astray from God's revealed will is true about what God has revealed about the fallenness of man in general and about us specifically. Confession accurately describes the truth about many things including God, our nature, our attitudes and our speech and the source of our sinful actions, and God's amazing response to rescue us from our fallenness.

HERE IS SOME GOOD NEWS:

1 John 1:8-10 ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Where is the good news? Believers have confidence in God's faithfulness and forgiveness, and in his promise to cleanse us from our unrighteousness.

PRAYER OFFERS GENUINE THANKSGIVING TO GOD

Psalms 103:1-22 *A Psalm of David.* Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name. ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; ³ Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; ⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; ⁵ Who satisfies your years with good things, *So that* your youth is renewed like the eagle. ⁶ The LORD performs

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

righteous deeds, And judgments for all who are oppressed. ⁷ He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. ⁹ He will not always strive *with us*; Nor will He keep *His anger* forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. ¹² As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more; And its place acknowledges it no longer. ¹⁷ But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸ To those who keep His covenant, And who remember His precepts to do them. ¹⁹ The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; And His sovereignty rules over all. ²⁰ Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word! ²¹ Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will. ²² Bless the LORD, all you works of His, In all places of His dominion; Bless the LORD, O my soul!

This great Psalm reminds us that God is more awesome than we often remember, **notice verse 2—we are to forget none of his benefits toward us!** This is a call to remember the greatness of God's character and works, this is an invitation to reverence and worship God giving Him the thanks for every good thing we have in Him. Scripture reminds us that there is nothing we have that we have not received from God. So how can we boast of anything good in us when everything worthy of boasting has come from Him? The result of all this remembering and all of this boasting is to give God the thanks that He is

worthy of, and the best way to remember these things is to remain regularly in God's Word and in prayer and fellowship with other believers, and to share Christ with others. If you are doing all of the above then I can guarantee that God is keeping your cup of thanksgiving full. The truth is that that believers who are fixed upon Christ, also transcend circumstances. God has given them his joy, and in spite of rough circumstances believers throughout history have still offered praise and thanksgiving and worship to God.

PRAYER IS ONE WAY TO EXPRESS LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

We refer to this sort of prayer as interceding on the behalf of others. Believers are commanded to pray for others and God considers it a sin to neglect such prayer.

1 Samuel 12:23 ²³ far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you

1 Timothy 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority

James 5:16 ⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR:
Kings (1 Timothy 2:2)

All in authority (1 Timothy 2:2)

Ministers (2 Corinthians 1:11; Phil. 1:19)

The church (Ps. 122:6; Is. 62:6-7)

All believers/saints (Eph. 6:18)

All people (1 Timothy 2:1)

Children (Genesis 17:18; Matthew 15:22)

Friends (Job 42:8)

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

Fellow countrymen (Romans 10:1)

The Sick (James 5:14)

Persecutors (Matthew 5:44)

Enemies (Jeremiah 29:7)

Those who envy us (Numbers 12:13)

Those who forsake us (2 Timothy 4:16)

Those who murmur against God (Numbers 11:1, 2; 14:13,19)

They are also to be offered up by ministers for their people (Eph. 1:16; 3:14-19; Phil. 1:4)

Lastly, intercessory prayers are beneficial to the offerer (Job 42:10).

The remainder of this study is loosely adapted from a book written by R. A. Torrey entitled *How to Pray*.

PRAYER GAINS MOMENT BY MOMENT VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL

Ephesians 6:12-13 ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

While believers are not to become overly occupied or concerned with the devil or his activities neither is the believer to be unaware of his existence or schemes. The truth is that God's Word describes the devil as a real being, and also mentions many demons who cause much trouble and harm in the world.

While there is no biblical evidence that demons can possess a believer there is evidence that they can cause a believer to be distracted with the world, tempted

to sin, and rendered ineffective as an ambassador of Christ and His kingdom. The enemy uses many tactics to oppose God's work (Zech. 3:1; 1 Thess. 2:18), and hinder the Gospel (Matthew 13:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4) and block believers from living whole-heartedly for Jesus Christ, and bringing complete glory to God in everything. What does the bible reveal to be the believer's main way to counteract the potential devastation of the devil? The main way is simply to resist him, and draw near to God.

James 4:7-8 ⁷ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

1 Peter 5:8-11 ⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. ¹¹ To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

If believers were preoccupied with daily drawing near to God and being filled with His Spirit, being alert and watchful, and willing to resist the enemy of their souls, they would find much more joy in their life with God, and others.

Romans 8:38-39 ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer is god's appointed means for receiving what he intends his children to have (Matthew 7:7-11)

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

The book of James also reminds us that we do not have because we do not ask (James 4:2). How many opportunities have we missed as a result of not asking God in prayer? **God always answers prayer**, sometimes he answers, yes, sometimes he answers no, other times he answers not yet. While it is true God is sovereign, it is also true that God waits for us to ask. God has not told us how to figure out how this works, but He has called us to faithfully pray, while trusting completely in Him.

PRAYER FOLLOWS THE PATTERN GIVEN US BY THE APOSTLES (ACTS 6:2-4; ROM. 1:9; EPH. 1:15, 16; COL. 1:9; 1 THESS. 3:10; 2 TIM. 1:3).

Those men whom God set forth as a pattern of what He expected Christians to be—the apostles—regarded prayer as the most important business of their lives

R. A. Torrey

PRAYER OCCUPIED A PROMINENT PLACE IN CHRIST'S DAILY LIFE.

As believers pray regularly, they follow the pattern Christ gave to the church (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12, 22:32, 23:34; John 17:9-24)

PRAYER BRINGS BELIEVERS INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST WHO REMAINS STEADFAST IN HIS PRESENT MINISTRY OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER

(Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)

Hebrews 7:25 He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

PRAYER IS GOD'S MEANS FOR BELIEVERS TO RECEIVE MERCY AND GRACE IN TIME OF NEED

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Sinning is unnatural, and is to be viewed as a break from God's will for His people, and yet the sad reality is that sin

is the common experience of all people. Others sin against us, we sin against others, but ultimately all our sin is against God, for even when we sin against another, we sin against one whom God created, and thus against God, and against His will for us. With this in mind it should never ultimately surprise us if another or even if we make a seriously poor judgment, or err greatly in the sight of God and men. At times these sins may even become public. If ever such a time occurs, it is comforting to know that believers can find an abundant supply of mercy and grace from Christ who is the believer's all-sufficient Savior and Lord. This does not make light of sin, because sin always remains awful, rather it manifests the greatness of the generosity of Christ's amazing grace, love and mercy.

PRAYER IS ONE OF THE WAYS WE RECEIVE THE JOY OF JESUS CHRIST

John 16:24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.

I love to be filled with joy. I thank God that He has made it possible for everyone who has faith in Christ to be truly filled with His joy.

PRAYER IS ONE OF THE WAYS BELIEVERS MAY BECOME FREE FROM ANXIETY AND EXPERIENCE GOD'S PEACE

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As believers abide in Christ—it is amazing how God addresses so many fears, and concerns, and troubles that afflict one's soul. I have seen God's transforming power move believers from a lifestyle of fear, to one of bold reliance and confidence in God. God can take weak and unstable people and transform them into honorable people according to the riches and power of His grace. God has chosen to display such people as vessels of

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

mercy for all of eternity, for the simple reason that it glorifies His Name by displaying His great love and mercy.

PRAYER IS ONE OF THE WAYS BELIEVERS MAY BECOME FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT, AND EMPOWERED FOR MINISTRY (EPH. 5:18)

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

I cannot guarantee that the ground will shake when you pray, but if you are a believer who seeks to live a life that is yielded to God's will, then I believe you can trust that God will fill you with His Spirit to reflect His holy and good character and to accomplish His will (Mat. 28:18-20; John 15; Galatians 5: 16-26).

PRAYER MAY HELP BELIEVERS AVOID BEING WEIGHED DOWN WITH BY VARIOUS KINDS OF SIN, AND REMAIN SPIRITUALLY STRONG

Luke 21:34-36 ³⁴ "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵ for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶ "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

PRAYER AIDS THE BELIEVER IN ACCOMPLISHING MUCH
Prayer along with Bible study promotes spiritual maturity and holiness in believers.

Psalm 119:9-12 ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Thy word. ¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. ¹¹ Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee. ¹² Blessed art Thou, O LORD; Teach me Thy statutes.

There is a saying that the Bible will either keep people from sin or sin will keep people from the Bible. That is overly simplified, but there is some truth to this

statement. The idea behind Bible study is that believers seek to humbly and prayerfully know God, by studying His Word which results in loving Him, and imitation of Him. When this is the believer's attitude, then Bible study will only strengthen one's ability to accomplish God's will and fan the flame in one's heart toward God.

PRAYER INVITES GOD TO BRING HIDDEN SINS TO LIGHT, SO THAT WE MAY LEAVE THEM BEHIND:

Psalm 139:23-24 ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; ²⁴ And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

PRAYER INVITES GOD TO WASH AND CLEANSE BELIEVERS FROM THEIR SIN:

Psalm 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

PRAYER INVITES GOD TO OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE WONDERFUL THINGS FROM HIS WORD:

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Thy law.

PRAYER AIDS BELIEVERS IN OBTAINING WISDOM FOR TRIALS:

James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

PRAYER ENABLES THE BELIEVER TO DRAW ON GOD'S ALL-SUFFICIENT POWER FOR ACCOMPLISHING GREAT DEEDS

(Jn. 15: 5, 7; Acts 4:24-31; Phil. 4:13, 1:9-11, 19)

John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

PRAYER ENABLES THE CHURCH TO SEE GOD'S GLORY, RECEIVE GOD'S COMFORT, AND IS SOMEHOW USED BY GOD IN THE CONVERSION OF OTHERS

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on

Why Pray? (Selected Verses)

behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

These are but a few examples of the many reasons believers pray. May God aid you with loving, worshiping, and enjoy Him forever according to the riches found in His Word and in Christ.