
The Battle over Prayer

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Matthew 4:1-11; Romans 7:14-25; Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14-18

Prayer is not just about what our own needs are. It is about putting our lives and experiences in Him, sharing our days and lives, both in times of urgency and times of happiness, and bringing others to our thoughts and into our prayers. Continual and effective prayer will build our relationship with God. We will realize that He is in charge of all that happens in our lives, and that we are in His Hands. How we interact with Christ as Lord and respond to others is rooted in how we communicate. Our spiritual growth and how we can connect to God with an effectual relationship is determined by how effective our prayer life is. It can be put this way: all we do in life is based on our ability to communicate—and our principle communication is to our loving Lord!

Do the things above seem ominous, too hard to do—perhaps impossible? We need to ask ourselves, *why is it so hard for me to pray?* If you do pray, what keeps you from praying more? Why is it hard to pray when most Christians have experienced its benefits? After all, prayer is so satisfying it soothes us. Even secularists, who do not acknowledge God either personally or redemptively, see its power and relevance in such areas as medicine, personal improvement, and one's attitude about life. Is it a paradox or a battle? The battle over prayer is the battle over the will—ours versus the world's, God's direction versus our desires. Do we follow God's way or our way? The battle will march on; both the casualty and the chief armament are prayer!

The first casualty is that we forget! We forget what prayer is all about even after we experience it first hand. The devil desires this; what is it that you desire? Prayer clears and occupies the field for the planting and harvest, and prepares us for action and service. Yes, we struggle in prayer against the ways of Satan and his antagonism to Christ and His rule (Matt. 4:1-11; John 8:44, 14:30; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 2:1-2; 6:10-20 1 John 5:19), but this is not always where the prime battles take place. The fact is, the power and authority Satan has over the Christian was broken at the cross and his doom was sealed (Matt. 25: 41; John 12:31; 16: 9-10; Col. 2: 15; 1 John 3:8). Christ has given us power in His name over all the power of the Enemy. Yes, he still can persuade and manipulate, but we can resist his influences (John 4:7; 1 Pet. 5: 8-9). More significantly, our prayer life protects us from his assaults (Matt. 6: 13; Eph. 6:14-20).

From my personal experiences and studies, it seems that Christians are engaged in an escalating personal, moral, and spiritual battle. We quickly think this is all about spiritual warfare, and a lot of it is; but, that is not all of it. We are in a fight with our very selves over prayer and the growth of our soul. Those things with which we fill our life and that take over our mind and time are the munitions of this battle! We wage war between our idea of what is important, what we desire, versus what God says is important, and what we should desire. Thus, prayer is pushed aside even when we

know we need it. We are literally struggling in prayer against ourselves (Rom. 7:14-25, Gal. 5:16-24, Eph. 2:3)! Prayer is at the forefront of most, if not all conflict we will face. Prayer is the conflict because, although we need it, we either forget it or do not desire it!

This is something left over from our sinful nature even though we are in Christ. We also struggle in prayer against the ways of the world. We struggle with our will that is in conflict to God's as well as the worlds. Which side of the fight will we take? Are we seeking the objectives and approval of the world or the love and approval of God? Will we fight against God or against our sinful selves (John 16:33; 1 John 2:15-17, 5:4-6; Phil. 1:27-30)?

The decisive battles from the conflict with our desires, the ways of Satan, and the world are usually hidden from our mindset. We see what we want to see, but God wants us made aware of our inner conflicts so we can fight, and so we can seek Him. He has given us the tools of prayer and spiritual growth so we can win the war within us. This is nothing new; read any biography of great Christian leaders and saints who are real prayer warriors. They, too, have struggled on the inner battlefield, fighting out these issues of righteousness and redemption. The key to winning is to know that God is our ally (Luke 10: 17-20; Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 1: 13; Heb. 2: 14-15; Rev. 12: 11)!

Our battles from the conflict with our desires will even help us grow. The key is to lean what God has for us and trust Him! Grow means to be steadfast in faith and in Christ. We do this by pursuing holy living through deepening our relationship and experiences with Christ. Prayer is our key in this. We are called to learn as much as we can about our Lord and His teaching and then apply it wholeheartedly into our lives. This is in contrast to the arrogance and pretentious knowledge and *pseudo*-growth when we do not prayer, when we do not have the time or the right attitude. When we Christians refuse to prayer we give the battle over to Satan and we become hypocrites who know little and apply none. Growing through our prayer times is an ongoing experience that should never stop until we are called home to heaven. It is not enough to know; we are also called to do. In conjunction, our persistence to know Him and His Word prevents our fears and setbacks from getting a hold on us or our church (2 Pet. 1:2-3)!

Questions to Ponder

Read Romans 7:14-25

1. How are you called to pray?
2. How do you struggle with prayer? How much is it Satan? How much is it you?
3. Will you fight against God or against your sinful self?

4. What do you do when you are facing hardships? How is prayer a part of these experiences?
5. What is prayer to you? How much of your prayers involve listening to God? How can you do this in a better way?
6. Why do some Christians feel that prayer is all about getting what we want? How do you feel about that?
7. Are you seeking the objectives and approval of the world or the love and approval of God?
8. What can be done to show people in your life and church the primary purpose of prayer?
9. How does prayer become the means to line us up with God?
10. What can you do to make sure your motives are right with prayer?
11. Do you believe that prayer can meet all the things and needs that you will ever face?
12. Do you have the confidence that your prayers are heard and are answered? How can you have more confidence in prayer?
13. How does trusting in God and being faithful help you in being effective towards your intercessory duty to others?
14. How does harboring resentment and unforgiveness deteriorate your ability to pray effectively? Can you give an example? What can you do about it?
15. What can you do to make your prayer life more time invested, more exciting, more powerful, and more fulfilling?
16. Do the things above seem ominous, too hard to do—perhaps impossible? What can you do?
17. Why is it so hard for you to pray at times? How can you win the war within you? Which side of the fight will we take?
18. We all struggle with our will that is in conflict to God's as well as the worlds. How does this affect your prayer times?
19. Do we follow God's way or our way? What does the devil desire that you do?

20. What can you do to make sure that prayer does not become a casualty or what is forgotten in your battles in life or with Satan?

Remember you have the power and love of Christ to see you through your tough times and struggles with prayer!

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