

Pray with Purpose

Prayer

Good Morning, This morning, I want to talk about prayer...

Prayer is a beautiful thing. It is communication and fellowship between the creator and the created. God wants to have fellowship with us. It has always been his desire.

Have you ever seen anyone praying sincerely and asking God for help? Perhaps you have seen people thanking him? It is a beautiful thing. When we see these people, how do we feel?

Now let me ask you another question, have you ever seen prayer where it has been made into nothing more than a ritual? Have you seen prayer where man has placed his constraints, rules and structure around the practice of prayer?

Can you identify the difference? You see one comes from an inner passion, a burning desire that is obviously heart-felt. The other is man made ritual and comes from a memorized sequence and comes out of a head-knowledge of the ritual.

You have heard me say many times that Christianity is Relationship based on Religion based. You see religion can be defined as: "a belief in a deity expressed through conduct and ritual." Now many might argue that we see many ritual practices in the Old Testament. I state here and now that with two exceptions the ordinances of the Mosaic Law were never intended to be Permanent. It was fulfilled in Christ in Matthew 5:17 NKJV:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill"

Do you know what two ordinances we do keep? There are two

- Water Baptism
- Communion

Both of which draw you closer to Christ!

Now turn with me to Hebrews 9:6-10 NIV:

"When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by

this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings —external regulations applying until the time of the new order”

Ritual had its place as a teacher, The Mosaic Law has been fulfilled the Moral Law of God still stands yet, what God wants is not ritualistic prayer but rather a relationship with the one praying...

How many of us have heard “For what we are about to receive, make us truly grateful” or “Now I lay me down to sleep”? There is nothing wrong with these prayers as they teach a principle... But what I have observed is that in repetition and ritual of prayer the intensity, the passion, the relationship, in fact, any real meaning disappears. Are we truly thankful? Are we really focusing on that when we say ritualistic grace? Are we really asking God to keep our souls safe?

Consider Matthew 6:7 NKJV where Jesus says:

And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Eliminate Ritual go for Relationship! Rituals themselves are not wrong, but when they detract, reduce, hide compromise sincerity or otherwise take away from your relationship with God, they need to go...

Now let's examine Psalms 5:1-12 NIV

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. Listen to my words, Lord, consider my lament. Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong; you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, Lord, detest. But I, by your great love, can come into your house; in reverence I bow down toward your holy temple. Lead me, Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies—make your way straight before me. Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with malice. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they tell lies. Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you. But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

You see David here - clearly illustrating for us some key principles of prayer...

When we read the Psalms we see that he prays early, he gives God his first fruits of the day. He prays aloud. Although not required shows his passion for communicating and proclaiming before the Father. He prays with expectation, you can see he expects God to answer. He knows God knows what he needs so he prays earnestly. He knows whom he is praying to, so he prays reverently.

When we examine Psalms 5:1-12 reading the emotion that he is releasing, we see that he opens up with narrative thoughts of how he feels for the Lord, he then starts to plea for the lord to hear him. He relates to the Lord his frustrations, his troubles and his cares. From this point, he cries out to the Lord for justice and finally an appeal to God's grace and love, illustrating his expectation of God's goodness.

When we look at the Psalms we see clarity. The lines are clearly drawn between the righteous and the wicked or those who obey God and those who choose to willfully sin.

I would assert that today, what we can glean from this simple contrast is the difference between those who walk the walk as Christians and those who simply talk the talk.

Yet in Romans 3:23 we read:

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

and in 1 John 1:8 we see:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

So what is the difference?

My friends, it is the intents of your heart...

Hebrew 4:12

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Can you agree with me that soul searching prayer and conversation with God are always effective when we are going through trials and tribulations in our lives?

Why as humans do we say a ritualistic prayer and then try to figure out our problems on our own? Why do we have to hit rock bottom, before we will sincerely seek his face? Why do we only turn to God when we have exhausted all our own ability?

Today, I am going to share something huge with you... Stop losing battles and get God into the picture sooner rather than later, you are going to live a much more abundant and happy life, with a lot fewer battle scars; if you start facing your problems on your knees first instead of charging headlong into combat and then pray for help when you start losing the battle.

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.”

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. So my friends we see that intention matters. Now the next principle we need to see and it is clearly illustrated here in Psalms 5 is that David’s request is personal... *“my King and my God”* He says “my” over and over here to indicate that personal relationship with his creator. Can we see here that he is passionate about what he is asking? Clearly... and he is earnest in his request.

Ritual seldom is embodied with passion and earnestness. Rather it seems comprised of duty and obligation.

Do we really desire what we are asking the almighty creator of the universe for or are we going through the motions, with the hope that if everything else we try fails maybe God will come up to the plate?

We can see that David expected an answer. We can see he came boldly with “Parrhesia”

Friends, we must be passionate, and earnest if we expect God to pay attention to our prayer.

How about listening and being obedient to the answer? Clearly David is exemplifying this here in Psalms 5. Did you notice in verse 8 he says: “Lead Me” David is bold but he is saying that he will be obedient to what God tells him. He wants Gods direction. He is saying here that he trusts God.

Turn with me to Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

So we have intentional, passionate, earnest prayer made boldly in relationship with God; in an attitude of obedience.

Friends, in looking at Psalm 5 today we saw that what began as a request to God in frustration and resignation turns into a cry unto the one who can make a difference. This then culminates in praise and singing to God because of the great expectation we have of the Lord.

When we pray with purpose, we show that we trust God. We show him our faith and our belief in him. We show him we are ready to listen and obey. It is in this place in which prayers are answered.

If you want to be an empowered Christian and take it to the next level... Pray with purpose!

John 14:12-14

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it”

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