

Women & More

Too Busy to Pray

Lesson 22: **April 9, 2015**—*prayer*

Spiritual battles are always harder to fight and more exhausting than physical battles, because there is more at stake. Case in point: in Exodus 17:8-12, when the Amalekites came to attack Israel at Rephidim, Joshua and his army physically fought this enemy of Israel, while Moses, with the help of Aaron and Hur, fought the spiritual battle of upraised hands to God. Verse 12 says that Moses' hands grew tired and that Aaron and Hur held up his hands, because verse 11 had already said, *"As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning."*

What was so spiritual about this battle? When we are connected to the God of the universe and beyond through prayer, He has promised to hear and respond—and for those who'll take Him at His promised word, every battle is spiritual! Charles Spurgeon said, "We do not know what prayer cannot do." And Samuel Chadwick said, "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying...he trembles when we pray." E. M. Bounds said, "The men who have done the most for God in these days have been early on their knees...."

When our enemies want to get something on us, that will take us down, and they have to dig through our qualities to find anything against us, and what they do find is exceptional—then wow! Daniel 6:3 says of this man of God: *"Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom."* When we practice godliness, we will be put in positions of trust, and that will bring on enemies. Scripture says they could find no fault in Daniel, because he was **trustworthy** and neither corrupt nor negligent, and verse 5 sums: *"Finally these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'" Would that that could be said of every believer!*

It's been said that Daniel possessed no less than 13 exceptional qualities. **"When Darius suspended the practice of prayer** for a month on pain of death," explained J. I. Packer, "Daniel not merely went on praying three times a day, but did so in front of an open window so that everyone might see what he was doing."

King Saul was the exact opposite of Daniel! He was disobedient to God's commands and therefore was rejected. 1 Samuel 13:13-14 *"'You acted foolishly,' Samuel said, 'You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. 14But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people because you have not kept the LORD's commands.'"*

In introducing his book, *Prayer, the Great Adventure*, Dr. David Jeremiah said, “To know how to speak to God is more important than knowing how to speak to man.” The Gospels record only 52 days of Jesus’ life: His busiest day is outlined in Mark 1, and verses 32-33 tell us that the whole city was at His door. Mark 1:35 records the morning after: “*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*” Someone has said that the greatest blessing of prayer is not in receiving an answer, but rather in **being the kind of person God can trust with the answer**. Certainly Jesus fit that bill!

Prayer is...for us: It is obedience to God and not to pray is to disobey—it is sin! And prayer is very personal: Notice this truth in Matthew 6:6—“*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*” And our public prayer will evolve from our private life of prayer!

Colossians 4:2-6 **“Devote yourselves to prayer,**
being watchful and thankful.

³And pray for us, too, that

1) God may open a door for our message, so

2) that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray

3) that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

And then Paul has more instruction and encouragement for the Colossians:

*⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders;
 make the most of every opportunity.*

*⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace seasoned with salt,
so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

Persist in prayer: Don’t look for a way to be offended—look for a way to keep the door open to the last second. Remember that Jesus called Judas Iscariot ‘friend’ when he came with the soldiers to arrest Him. Luke 18:1—we are to pray and not lose heart. Scripture calls us to regular, realistic and reverent prayer—exercising the following:

Content over form

Sincerity over style

Strength over sentiment!

When Sanballat and Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the men of Ashdod heard that repairs to Jerusalem’s walls were moving forward and gaps were being closed, they were very angry, and plotted to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble. Nehemiah 4:9 says, “*But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.*” The first thing they did was pray!

What did Ezra's prayer sound like? Listen to his imprecatory prayer in Nehemiah 4:4-5—*"Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders."* An imprecatory prayer is calling on God to defeat the threats and taunts of an enemy—David prayed like this many times in the Psalms. Should believers in the United States pray like this against the terrorists who hate God and His people—ISIS in Iraq and Hamas in Gaza? Yes. If we don't, who will?

What had prompted this kind of prayer? Scripture records the hatred of these oppressors of Israel and begins with Sanballat's taunts in Nehemiah 4:1-2 *"When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. **He ridiculed the Jews,** and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said,*

- *'What are those feeble Jews doing?*

- *'Will they restore their wall?*

- *'Will they offer sacrifices?*

- *'Will they finish in a day?*

- *'Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?'*

Tobiah added his two-cent-taunt in verse 3—*"Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, 'What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!'"*

And Ezra encouraged the Jews in verse 14: *"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."* Verse 20 ends: *"Our God will fight for us!"* If God was done with our nation, we wouldn't be here; His supply precedes our need, and we'll never be in a position where we will not need God! But we must pray, and time is running out on us and on America.

Spurgeon challenges and encourages us today: "The times are perilous, and the responsibility of every individual believer is a burden which he must bear, or prove a traitor. What each man's place and course should be the Lord will make clear unto him." And he further warned: "Inspiration and speculation cannot long abide in peace. Compromise there can be none...decision is the virtue of the hour." What matters to us, matters to God. Psalm 42:8 *"By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life."*

Jesus celebrated at Cana's wedding; wept at the funeral of Lazarus, ate with the 5,000 plus, fished with Galilee's fishermen and prayed for His disciples in Gethsemane's garden. Remember the first miracle Jesus did in John 2 turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana? Mary got to petition Jesus—in the flesh—for what she knew was needed: *"They have no more wine."*

Mary *prayed-in-person* when she turned to Jesus with the problem, she talked to Him about it, and she trusted Him for the solution. James Merritt said, “Jesus will not do for you what you want Him to do, until you do for Him what He wants you to do.” Mary told the servants to “*do whatever He tells you*”. This miracle wouldn’t have happened except Jesus had been invited and petitioned.

In 2 Chronicles 6:40 Solomon prayed to God dedicating the temple. “*Now, my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.*” And 7:1 says that the “*glory of the LORD filled the temple*”. About being in God’s house, someone has said to come as you are and change inside! 2 Chronicles 7:13 is the verse right before the “if my people” verse 14 and says:

- 1) “*When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or*
- 2) *command locusts to devour the land or*
- 3) *send a plague among my people.*”

God had just accepted Solomon’s prayer of dedication of the temple and He answered His servant in verse 12: “*the LORD appeared to him at night and said: ‘I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.’*” And then we see verse 13—when I shut up the heavens; command locusts or send a plague. This was again warning Solomon, Israel and us that our faithful obedience will determine God’s hand on us for good or *not*.

Prayer is power—God’s power brought to bear on our feeble lives. We are only as powerful spiritually as we are prayerful. And prayer is refueling. There are 86,400 seconds in every day for every person. If we are wise, we should commit at least a ‘tithe’ of that to talking to and listening to God—to tanking up. We will be closer to those we keep in contact with. Someone has said **bottom Line: Texting God Regularly—we will grow closer to God!** Psalm 39:6 warns about our busyness: “*Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it.*”

Of Luke 9:10 (Jesus took His followers aside) Andrew Bonar said, “The soul in one single quiet hour of prayer will often make more progress than in days of company with others.” Acts 4 is about getting right with our prayers, and then Acts 6:1-4 described a people of power because of their practice of prayer. Prayer made them bold because they were plugged into the Source—God!

1. Prayer gets God’s ‘ear’ on us—Acts 4:24—there’s intentionality to it; plans were laid out—they needed God more than they needed each other!
2. Prayer changes us—Acts 4:28—“*They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen,*” referring to Herod and Pontius Pilate’s conspiracy against Jesus. If you don’t want to be changed, don’t pray!

3. Prayer unleashes the power of God and His presence—Acts 4:30—*“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*
4. Prayer prepares us to share our faith boldly (v 29): Someone said that it is in the field of prayer that the most critical battles are won or lost.

In Psalm 91:15-16—*“He (the believer) will call upon me,”* and then God says

- I will answer
 - I will be with him in trouble
 - I will deliver and honor
 - I will satisfy with long life
 - I will show my salvation!

God speaks to those who take time to listen, and he listens to those who take time to pray! Two things are needed: 1) a quiet place, and 2) a quiet heart. David prayed seven times a day; Daniel three, and Christ prayed whole nights through. How about us? Joyce Meyer warns: “If you’re going to complain about something, don’t bother to pray about it.”

J. I. Packer said, “Christians learn prayer from their struggles to pray.” Prayer is where commitments are made; habits formed, and battles are fought against a real opponent—Satan! *“Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you”* said Joshua in 3:5—get prepared for it. It’s so much what we do in obedience to God, how He is worshiped by us—adored—and how we treat people. **Motto:** May the absent always feel safe with us, particularly in the form of prayers and their requests. We can never speak a prayer of intercession too soon, for we never know how soon it will be too late.

We must also learn to pray through—to continue to pray until God gives the answer especially when praying for the lost and God’s perfect will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. A. B. Simpson said, “How important that we should learn to pray through!” George Mueller was a man of faith who prayed for the salvation of five friends for more than 50 years. The first friend was converted 5 years into Mueller’s prayers for him; the second was 10 years; the third 25 years; the fourth at 50 years, and the fifth friend was saved at Mueller’s funeral.

So we don’t have time to pray—too busy? Just know that God can take in a moment every one of those things and people that we are too busy with. He can place us in a position where ‘all’ we have time for is Him alone. Let’s get God’s viewpoint on our time before it’s too late! Time-saving prayer is rehearsed for us in Ephesians 5:15-17—*“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*