

Preparing God's House for Prayer

Text: Matthew 21:12-16

(1) The House of God at one time was the Old Testament Tabernacle:
Exodus 25:8, 9

(2) Then the House of God was the Temple:
II Chronicles 5:13, 14

(3) Where is the House of God in the New Testament era?
I Timothy 3:15; I Corinthians 6:19

Jesus declared, "My house shall be called the house of prayer..." (Matthew 21:13b).

God desires prayer to be a preoccupying activity for His children.
Psalm 27:8; Luke 18:1; I Thessalonians 5:17

I. PRAYER IS IMPORTANT TO JESUS

A. Christ's Early Ministry: Mark 2:34, 35

B. Christ's Mid-ministry: Matthew 14:22, 23

C. Christ's Ending Ministry: Luke 22: 39, 40

D. Christ's Dying Ministry: Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:46; Luke 22:46

E. Christ's Resurrection Ministry: Hebrews 7:25

II. PRAYER IS DESPISED BY SATAN

Zechariah 3:1; James 4:7; James 5:16

Samuel Chadwick said, "Satan dreads nothing but prayer. The Church that has lost its [presence of] Christ was full of good works. Activities are multiplied that meditation may be ousted, and organizations are increased that prayer may have no chance. Souls may be lost in good works as surely as in evil ways. The one concern of the Devil is to keep saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."

Guy H. King stated, "No one's a firmer believer in the power of prayer than the Devil; not that he practices it, but he suffers from it." Read the words of the Puritan, John Flavel: "The devil is aware that one hour of close fellowship, hearty

converse with God in prayer, is able to pull down what he hath been contriving and building many a year.” ^[17]_[SEP]

Prayer has no substitution. Too many people attempt to do the work of God without prayer. When we pray, God undertakes and undergirds us for the work of God. Notice how seriously the prophet Samuel took prayer: “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you” (I Samuel 12: 23, 24). The prophet ties together prayer and service. When prayer is incorporated in the early stages of our work, we will be able to say, “God has done great things for us!” The Psalmist said, “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me” (Psalm 57:2). I would be remiss if I failed to remind us that prayerlessness was considered a sinful matter to the prophet Samuel!

In Ephesians 6:19 and Colossians 4:3, Paul confesses that without prayer, his preaching would be ineffective!

III. PRAYER SHOULD BE IMPORTANT TO US

James 4:14

One of the dangerous temptations in life is to create a dichotomy between the spiritual life and secular life of the believer. I love what Elizabeth Barrett Browning poetically wrote: “Earth’s crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; And only he who sees takes off his shoes, The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.” Oh how sad to be consigned to a life of mere berry picking!

In E. M. Bounds’ *The Purpose of Prayer*, he commented on his contemporary across the sea in England: “It was said of the late C. H. Spurgeon, that he glided from laughter to prayer with the naturalness of one who lived in both elements. With him the habit of prayer was free and unfettered. His life was not divided into compartments, the one shut off from the other with a rigid exclusiveness that barred all intercommunication. He lived in constant fellowship with his Father in Heaven. He was ever in touch with God, and thus it was as natural for him to pray as it was for him to breathe. ‘What a fine time we have had; let us thank God for it,’ he said to a friend on one occasion, when, out under the blue sky and wrapped in glorious sunshine, they had enjoyed a holiday with the unfettered enthusiasm of schoolboys. Prayer sprang as spontaneously to his lips as did ordinary speech, and never was there the slightest incongruity in his approach to the Divine throne straight from any scene in which he might be taking part.”

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote these powerful words, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” I am the product of answered prayer. Philippians 4:6 tells us, “...in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” God is never to be compartmentalized in our life. We should just as easily shift into prayer mode as we would lift up our cell phones for spontaneous conversation. If what we are doing interrupts our constant communion with God, we should ask ourselves if

this is something we should be doing. Allow nothing to separate you from immediate and open discourse with God. It was said of Dr. John R. Rice that he would be talking to you and in the middle of any paragraph, he would shift into prayer. More than one person told me they would be caught off guard by his total candor and availability with God.

Conclusion:

One person who prays makes a difference! Ezekiel 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."

God is looking for intercessors! I Timothy 2:1, 2: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

(1) Elijah prayed and made a difference: James 5:16-18

(2) Moses prayed and made a difference: Exodus 32: 30-32; Psalm 106:23

(3) Jesus prayed and made a difference: Luke 22:31, 32; Acts 5:27-29

(4) You can pray and make a difference: I John 5:14, 15

-Pastor Pope-