

Wrestling in Prayer

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[0 : 0 0] Once again, good morning. We continue in the series on prayer with a topic today, wrestling in prayer. That's prevailing and persistent prayer. So from the Bible, we're to pray without season based on the verse 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 17. In Romans 12 verse 12, we're also again commanded to persevere in prayer. The text of the verse says, rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Now one will ask, does this refer to the continual acts of prayer itself? Does that mean we're praying from minute to minute, or does it refer to the spirit of prayerfulness? Now from Colossians 3 verse 2, we're to set our affections on things above and not on things on earth. So linking these two together, I believe they're intertwined. So we're supposed to have this spirit of prayerfulness and also pray always.

Now, what's the subject of our prayers? Are we to pray for ourselves, our families, or are we to intercede for others? From Scripture, clearly we're supposed to pray for others. Turn into Ephesians 1 verse 15 and 17. This is taken from the, I believe, the modern English version. It says, therefore, I also, after hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, mention you in my prayers, so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. And then again, there's a similar prayer in Colossians 1 verse 9 to 11, where Paul says, for this reason, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you may walk, that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, enduring everything with perseverance and patience joyfully. This is a certainly a beautiful and lovely prayer to pray for all, for all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Prayer builds us up into the body of Christ. Through prayer, we're able to know the mind of Christ, and also, we're also able to walk in his will. From 1 Timothy 2 verse 1, we're also commanded to pray, to lift up our hands, to pray for everyone, including authorities, kings, rulers, with supplications and thanksgiving. And this is acceptable and good and pleasing in the sight of God. Clearly, we can see that we're called not only to pray for our families or ourselves, but we're supposed to broaden the horizon to pray for our brethren in church, our church, the universal church, and our nations. So we'll go to the next portion of the session today.

[4 : 0 0] What's Jesus teaching on persistent and prevailing prayer? So we'll take our text for this portion is Luke 18, 1 to 8.

Okay, and I'll take this from the New King James Version. So this is the parable of the persistent widow.

Luke 18, verse 1. Then he spake a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying, There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city, and she came to him, saying, Get justice for me from my adversary. And he would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself, Though I do not fear God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said, And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry out day and night to him, though he bears long with them?

[5 : 2 8] I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he really find faith on the earth? Though answers to prayer may seem to be delayed, Jesus highlighted the need to pray always and not to lose heart.

It's easy to lose heart, to become discouraged, when answers to prayer appear to be taken several years, or appear to be delayed. Believe me, I've personally been in this place often.

However, from the text of the scripture, we can see that the widow's prayer was persistent. Her request was, Avenge me against my adversary.

And let's see the promise from God from verse 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto them, though he bear long with them?

From this verse, we can see clearly that the struggle in prayer may be long and very hard. And in verse 8, there's an interesting question that Jesus poses to his listeners.

[6 : 38] He says, nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Now, Andrew Murray, the 19th century preacher from South Africa, wrote in his book titled, The Ministry of Intercession, that there can be no true prayer without faith.

From the definition of faith given in the Bible, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. So clearly, when we come to God in prayer, we must exercise faith. For without faith, the Bible says that if we come to the Lord Jesus in prayer without faith, and we don't believe, we're like one who's tossed on the waves of the sea.

We do not expect to receive anything from God. So, like the widow in the parable, we must be persistent in prayer. We must exercise faith.

No delay in prayer must shake our faith. We can clearly see that unbelief is a barrier to prayer, to answered prayer. Another barrier to answered prayer, which I like to talk about, is unforgiveness, bearing grudges, holding things against people.

[7 : 59] Now, let's see another promise from the word concerning prayer. From 1 John 5, verse 14 and 15. And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the positions that we have desired of him. So, clearly, once again, we can see that ultimately we must believe and exercise faith in God and his word.

Now, another of Jesus' teachings on prayer can be found in Luke chapter 11, verse 5 to 11.

Now, for want of time, I will not read the entire text. Clearly, from verse 8, we can see that because of the persistence of the individual in question, he got what he wanted.

Because of his persistence, he will rise and give him as much as he needs. So, taking this into our context, we can see that from persistence, God will eventually give us what we need.

[9 : 25] The key phrase here is, yet, because of his persistence, importunity. So, clearly, once we are praying and we see that answers may be denied, that doesn't mean we should give up.

We are mandated to continue praying. Now, there is the place of fasting in prayer.

Fasting is very important, and this has been touched upon during one of the earlier sessions. Jesus' life on earth demonstrated the importance of fasting with prayer.

Now, there was a situation where Jesus' disciples could not cast out a demon. They could not heal one of the individuals with epilepsy.

What did Jesus say here? So, going to Mark chapter 9, verse 19 and 29, you can see what Jesus, how Jesus highlighted the importance of fasting.

[10 : 34] I'll just read the text briefly. So, in Mark chapter 9, verse 19, Jesus said, So, this is the context.

The disciples had come to Jesus and asked him, why couldn't we drive out this spirit? And this was Jesus' answer to them. He answered and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. You can see also from this text that he also spoke about faith. He perceived the faithlessness of his disciples.

So, skipping to verse 29, this is Jesus' answer to them after he had driven the demon out. So, he said to them, This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

So, the words of Jesus on this matter, This kind cannot come out except by prayer and fasting.

Clearly, clearly speaks to us in the sense that there are some times when we pray, when we are called to exercise faith and fasting in order to obtain our answers.

[11 : 56] From Scripture, the Old Testament saints fasted. In the lives of Daniel, David, Nehemiah, Esther, clearly we can see that they fasted at some point.

Even when we don't see clear answers to problems or situations that have persisted over years and generations, we must pray and never give up.

So, we'll go to the third and final portion of the session today. That's intercessory prayer. So, we're called to stand in the gap to intercede on behalf of brethren as outlined.

And I'll take the text for, the opening text from Isaiah 59, verse 16. Okay.

He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore, his own arm brought salvation and his own righteousness.

[13:24] It sustained him. So, the previous verses in this chapter had highlighted the abundance of evil in Isaiah's day. There was no justice.

Further verses show a description of God clothed in his wrath with the armor of God. The Lord was astonished that there was no intercessor. There was no one ready to plead on behalf of the nation. Again, the prophet Ezekiel also spoke about intercession. In Ezekiel 22, verse 30, this is what the Lord said.

I sought for a man among them who would build up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land so that I would not destroy it. But I found none.

Now, from Job 1, verse 10, we can clearly see that the hedge that Ezekiel refers to refers to spiritual, divine spiritual protection, where the devil, when he went before the Lord, said, have you not put a hedge around him?

[14:45] So, clearly, Satan could see the divine spiritual protection around Job and his family.

Again, Ezekiel talks about the hedge in Ezekiel 13, verse 4 and 5.

It says, O Israel, you prophets are like foxes in the ruins. You have not gone up into the gaps, nor did you build up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the law.

So, what does intercessory prayer do? It builds up the hedge and it fills the gaps in the war. It's necessary for parents, for siblings, to stand in the gap for their families and for our communities and our nation to build the hedge and to stand in the gap.

We must wrestle in prayer for our families, for our children, for we are involved in a daily, ongoing spiritual battle and we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

Spiritual warfare is an extensive area and it's probably beyond the scope of our session, but I'll just touch on some highlights from spiritual warfare. Now, what does Paul say we wrestle against?

[16:10] He says we wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. this conflict. This conflict involves every believer bought by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

There are sometimes some problems and challenges that are purely not physical and to seek a physical solution to these problems will not lead to any success.

we may have tried many several approaches and looked for various solutions. However, from scripture, we're exhorted to take up the armor of God with prayer.

From Ephesians 6, verse 18, we must pray in the spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication. and we're commanded also to be alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

So, we're supposed to pray for ourselves, our families, but then we're also called to pray for each other. Practically, how do we do this? We're supposed to pray for the brother and sister sitting next to us at all times.

[17:23] Now, I'll talk about two examples briefly in want of time highlighting the conflict. In Daniel chapter 10, we can see where Daniel was fasting and praying to learn more about God's plan for Israel.

Now, let's see what the angel told him in chapter 3 that your words were heard from the first day you started to pray. However, Daniel did not receive the answer until after 21 days.

Why didn't Daniel receive the answer? The angel prince of the Persian kingdom resisted the angel who was sent with the message to Daniel for 21 days.

So, this clearly demonstrates that there was spiritual warfare ongoing. however, Daniel persisted in prayer and fasted for 21 days and eventually received a revelation concerning God's people.

This shows the need for persistence in prayer. And again, in 2nd Kings chapter 6, the king of Syria was hunting down Elisha and eventually surrounded him around the city of Dothan.

[18:48] Now, Elijah's servants, all Elijah's servants could see was the Syrian troops that were surrounding the city. However, Elisha was, Elisha's eyes were opened to the spiritual conflict ongoing around him.

and he prayed that his servants' eyes would be opened and God opened the servants' eyes to see the chariots of fires and angelic warriors that were surrounding Elisha.

I'll also mention two Old Testament heroes whose lives demonstrated powerful prevailing prayer. There are numerous examples in Scripture. However, I'll delve into the lives of Elijah and Nehemiah.

One of the key verses in the life of Elijah is James 5 16-18 where it demonstrates Elijah's persistence prayer.

This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. The text reads, The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

[20 : 16] And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. However, note that in 1 Kings chapter 18, it required one prayer from Elijah for fire to consume the sacrifice.

However, he sent his servant to look towards the sea a total of seven times. During this time, the Bible tells us that he cast himself down on the ground and put his face between his knees.

This is certainly the push of prayer before the living God. Now, let's see that it was only after the seventh time that his servant came to him and said, Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.

This later developed into black storm clouds and wind leading to rain. We see that Elijah was persistent and fervent in prayer. He simply did not give up after the third or fourth time.

Nehemiah was also a man of prayer and action. On hearing of the sad and desperate state of the remnant and the state of Jerusalem, he wept, mourned, and fasted for several days and interceded for the people of Israel in Nehemiah chapter 1.

[21 : 39] At the end of the chapter, he asked for favor in the sight of the king. In chapter 2, we see him standing before the king, the king noticing his sad appearance and realizing that there was something going on in the heart of Nehemiah.

what do we see Nehemiah doing? We see him praying to God whilst in the presence of the king, when he was asked about his personal request.

We then see the mighty hand of God immediately at work. For think about it, which cup bearer would stand before a king and be elevated to a governorship if not for the mighty power of God which accompanied his prayer?

In later chapters, you see that Nehemiah encountered intense opposition from his enemies when building the wall. In chapter 4, verses 1 to 5, we see the fiery darts of the enemy which were held by Sanbalat and Tobias.

What was Nehemiah's response? Was it to engage in a verbal slanging match or physical conflict? No. He prayed to God in verse 4 and was heard.

[23 : 01] In chapter 15, verse 15, we can see that God brought their counsel to naught. We can see that he prayed to God for strength for the work in chapters 6 verse 9.

Jesus commands us on several occasions to watch and to pray always. Paul also exhorts us in Colossians 4 verse 2 to continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Thus, we must be persistent and prevail in prayer. Again, we must intercede for our families, our brethren, the church, our nation, and the world.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word to us this morning.

We pray that whatever was planted in our hearts will be watered and spring forth. I pray that you cause us to be persistent and to prevail in prayer.

[24 : 19] I pray that you grant us the grace and the strength not to lose heart, but to pray continually. I also pray that you also help us to be continually aware of the spiritual battle that we face that will appropriate the armor of God always and to be strong in you and in the power of your might.

We thank you and bless you Father for answered prayer and for the opportunity to share your word this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thanks, Precious. Thanks, Precious. Thank you. That's cool. Yep.
Okay. Pshh!