

# "Only" a Prayer Meeting

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Amen. If you would, turn with me to the book of 1 John. You know, the title, it's kind of like one of those jokes that if you explain it, it loses the humor of it.

But I think this title of the prayer meeting tonight, you know, bears explaining. This comes from a quote from Charles Spurgeon when he was talking about churches holding prayer meetings.

And he said these words, What a company we have here tonight. It fills my heart with gladness and my eyes with tears of joy. To see so many hundreds of persons gathered together at what is sometimes wickedly described as only a prayer meeting.

You know, isn't that true that we can say, hey, we're going to have a prayer meeting. And we don't think about exactly what that means. That as Pastor Trent mentioned, we gather together as a church to come before God, to bring our request to Him.

To pray in accordance with His will. That He would show Himself strong and powerful in this world and in this generation. Charles Spurgeon continued this way.

[ 1 : 02 ]     He said, It is good for us to draw an eye unto God in prayer. Especially good to make up a great congregation for such a purpose. We have attended little prayer meetings of four or five and have been glad to be there.

For we had the promise of our Lord's presence. But our minds are grieved to see so little attention given to united prayer by many of our churches. Now, you know, I think we can take that a little bit personally.

How many times in our own lives has prayer kind of slipped off to the side? It's become a back burner activity. Something that's extracurricular, supplemental. It's not part of the main thing.

But one of the things we find in the scripture is that prayer is put right alongside so many very important features of our faith. The word and prayer.

Prayer and fasting. Watching and praying. All of those things are married together. And prayer must be a vital part of everything that we do. Now, tonight I'd like to challenge you with this thought.

[ 2 : 03 ]     That you and I, we can pray confidently. And I want to encourage you that you can pray fully trusting that God hears, He answers, and He works through our prayers.

Now, this is an exercise in faith because sometimes we might say that, yes, we believe God answers prayer. But how many times do we pray like God answers prayer?

And pray like God hears our prayers. You know, sometimes I've thought about prayer as almost like we're just trying to get God to hear us. We're trying to get His attention.

If we pray hard enough, if we pray more often, if we pray for longer periods of time, if we pray with greater emotional intensity, then God will hear us. But the idea in the scripture is far simpler than that.

That our God is loving. He is all-knowing. He's all-powerful. And when His children come to Him and offer requests that are aligned with His will, He hears and He answers.

[ 3 : 08 ] Now, that's a hard thing for a few reasons, I believe. One, because it just seems too simple. Does it not? It seems too simple. That there's nothing extra special that we have to do for our God to hear us.

But that He just wants to hear us. And He does hear us. It's pretty simple. But it also requires some faith, right? Because that's also a bold claim that the one who made the universe, that spoke everything into existence, hears what you say and acts according to our requests.

Consider that for a second. It's like saying, yeah, I've got, you know, the president or some king or some ruler on speed dial. Or I got Jeff Bezos on speed dial. And if I call him up, he's going to do whatever I ask.

You'd be like, okay, come on, show me. Right? Do it. And that's where sometimes I think we might even be a little ashamed of that. Like, can we really truly claim that God hears and we have our petitions from Him?

Can we truly say that? George Mueller said this, and this helped me so much as I was thinking about this passage. He said, prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of God's willingness.

[ 4 : 28 ] See, God wants to work. God wants to change lives. He is long-suffering. He's not willing that any would perish. His spirit is convicting and calling men to Himself.

See, God desires to work. And I think God wants to do more than we want Him to do. And so for us to come to Him, it's not a matter of us trying to overcome God's hesitations with what we're asking.

If we're asking in accordance with His will, that's exactly what He intends to do. Would you look with me at 1 John? We're going to turn to chapter number 5 and just read three verses.

And then we'll break out to our group prayer times. But 1 John 5.13 says this, Now, by show of hands, who's familiar with this verse?

I would imagine that many are. There's quite a few in this room that are familiar with this verse. And we quote this verse or study this verse in relation to eternal security. The fact that we can know that we have salvation.

[ 5 : 34 ] And praise God for that. But you might be saying, well, that does not sound like a prayer verse. This is a prayer meeting. So why are we reading this salvation verse? Well, would you continue reading verse 14 with me? And this is the confidence that we have in Him.

If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

What was the word that was repeated time and time again across these three verses? No. No. Also here. Thank you. No, you're right. But no.

Think about that. We know that we have eternal life. We know that He hears us. We know that we have our petitions. And the thing that kind of blew my mind this week was that if we believe that we can know that we have eternal life, should we also not know with the same level of certainty that He hears, that we have the petitions that we desired of Him?

That was to say, we have the petitions that we desired of Him. That blew my mind a little bit. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. And so I think the real question for us is, do you know?

[ 6 : 51 ] Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Do you ask that way? Do you pray that way? Here's a couple things I think we should take away from this. Here's the first thing. We must align our requests with God's will.

We must align our requests with God's will. If there's one caveat in these verses, it's that. That sometimes we might ask things that are not in God's will. But He says in verse number 14, this is the confidence that we have in Him.

You see, here's the if statement. If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. He heareth us. And so what does that take? That takes a knowledge of His will, an understanding of the Word of God, an understanding of what God desires, what His will is, so that we could come not with selfish requests or with foolish requests, but that we could come with requests that are according to His will.

And if we're coming with requests that are according to His will, He hears us. All right? That's the first thing. So we align our requests with God's will. He will hear you. And then the second thing is this.

You have your request. You have your request. Because God has heard you. Would you read the next verse with me there? We're kind of working through these a number of times. But verse 15, and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

[ 8 : 11 ] It really is kind of simple and a little bit stunning even. Here's kind of a little, it's like a chain. I see like this chain that kind of works together. Our confidence. If we ask according to His will, what does He do?

He, say with me, He hears. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, then we know that we have our petitions.

You see how that chain goes right through those verses? If He hears us, we have our petitions. So would you pray that way? Would you pray that way tonight?

I think there's a good illustration of a man who, he wasn't exactly praying in the same terms we would think of, but he was requesting something from Jesus. Would you turn with me to Luke chapter number 7?

And I want to read to you the story of the centurion and the centurion's servant. See, there's a man in Jesus' day that had a need. He had something that he desired.

[ 9 : 07 ] And he asked it of Jesus, not even in person. He had sent messengers to go ask something from Jesus. And the way that he asked was amazing.

And I think it was very much in line with what 1 John says. Luke 7 verse 1. Did you see the request there?

He says, My servant, I love my servant. I don't want him to die, but he's very sick. And so Jesus, would you come and heal my servant? Now, there's something that's a little bit interesting here. I don't think this was exactly the request.

It had gone through a messenger, as you're going to see in a second. I think they'd kind of twist it. Let's continue reading. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this, for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

Did you notice who the messengers were? So you have the centurion. The centurion speaks to the elders of the Jews, and they're the ones who come to Jesus. And did you notice what they said?

[ 10 : 26 ] They said, Hey, would you come and heal this man? And then they kind of add on his credits, if you will, or his, what do you call that? Like his credentials or resume.

There you go. All those things. They add on and say, Listen, this guy, he's a really good guy. He loves the Jewish nation. He even built us a synagogue. Jesus, you should definitely come to heal this man.

But what's interesting is as Jesus gets a little bit closer, there's a second set of messengers. Look at this. And these are the ones that really impress Jesus. Then Jesus went with them.

And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself. For I am not worthy that thou shalt enter under my roof.

Did you notice the discrepancy there? The elders of the Jews said, This man is worthy. But when his friends come, I think they're really maybe delivering the true message where he's saying, I'm not worthy that you would come.

[ 11 : 27 ] Maybe he heard that Jesus was coming. You know how sometimes that happens? Somebody runs ahead and they're like, Hey, Jesus is coming. He's coming to the house. And so he had to send another set of messengers to say, Hold up a second.

I'm not worthy that you would come to my house. And look at the rest of the message. Verse number seven. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

There's the real request. There's what he was really asking of Jesus. Jesus, my servant is sick, and I'm just asking you to speak the word, and my servant will be healed.

And look at how Jesus responds in verse number eight. Excuse me, it continues on. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh.

And to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. Verse nine is Jesus' response. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith.

[ 12 : 32 ] No, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick. So the centurion, two messengers, the elders of the Jews, this man's worthy.

He's great. He built a synagogue. His friends, I think they deliver the true message, where he says, I'm not worthy that you, Jesus, would come to my house. I'm just asking that you would speak the word, and I'm believing that you can heal my servant from a distance.

You don't even have to come here. I'm not worthy that you would come here. Just say the word. And that's the faith that gets Jesus' attention. Is that not, does that not sound a little bit like what 1 John says?

That if we ask, according to his will, he hears, and if he hears, we have the petitions. I think that centurion was saying, listen, I'm just asking you to say the word, and it will be done.

He says, I'm a man under authority. I know how authority works, and I think he was recognizing Jesus' authority, that Jesus had authority to heal, to cast out devils. He had trusted in Jesus.

[ 13 : 36 ] And so tonight, as we come to a time of prayer, how are you going to ask? Are you going to ask trying to overcome God's reluctance? Like God doesn't really want to answer your prayers, and you have to show that you are worthy of God answering your prayers.

Or are you going to come humbly, trusting his authority, that he is the one who is all-powerful, who does hear your prayers, and that when we simply ask, he hears.

And when he hears, we have our petitions. We come with faith. We come with boldness. We pray with confidence. This is the confidence that we have. And so tonight, the challenge is, when we go into our groups, as we go to pray, just ask, ask, ask, trusting that he is God, he does hear, and he does answer.

Would you bow with me? Father, we come to you this evening, and Lord, we ask you to help us. God, we are so fickle and feeble, and we try to make up all kinds of things when it's so simple.

Lord, you've told us to ask, to seek, to knock, that the doors would be opened, and that the requests would be given, that we would have our petitions of you.

[ 14 : 46 ] And God, I pray if there's one tonight, that perhaps they're looking at you as one with your arms crossed, trying to get us to prove ourselves.

Lord, we have nothing to bring, but we just claim the cross of Jesus Christ and his shed blood. We come with the righteousness of Christ as your children, just asking you, our Father, to work according to your will.

Lord, I pray that you give us the faith and the confidence and the boldness to come before your throne of grace, and to seek mercy, to seek grace from you. Lord, we love you, and we thank you for your goodness to us.

Praise things in Christ's name. Amen.