

WHY PRAY?
Prayer 101

INTRO: Why is prayer necessary? Now, read the prayer books, and they will tell you how very important to the Christian life prayer is, and rightly so. This is evidenced by the fact that the devil will fight you on this matter and keep you from it if at all possible. But I ask you, what is so important about prayer? Why should we pray? Why does God tell us to pray? I have numerous books specifically written on prayer and I searched what they said about this question, "Why pray?" Some of them answer this question from the side of results. For example, John R. Rice has a section called, "Why Pray?" And his answers are: (1) Because God insistently commands it in the Bible. (2) Because prayer is God's appointed way for Christians to get things. (3) Because prayer is God's way for Christians to have fullness of joy, and in this manner he gives seven reasons why Christians should pray.

But that is not my question, when I ask, "Why pray?" I am asking, why does God require prayer? I am talking specifically about that aspect of prayer in which we ask God for things. Why is it necessary to ask God for things? And you may say, "Well, that is a silly question. It is like John R. Rice said, we should pray because the Bible tells us to and, that is the way we get things from God." But my question is: If God is omniscient, and we have no question that He is; and He knows what we need before we ask, and the Bible says He does; why does He then yet ask us to pray? I have, I think, over a dozen books specifically written on prayer. They deal with many subjects on prayer, but not this particular aspect of our question. Yet it seems to me to be a subject so basic as to qualify for being Prayer 101.

And when I read from others how important prayer is, inwardly, my spirit agrees. It seems the Holy Spirit too says, "That is true." But in life, even after hearing messages on prayer, I continue afterwards without my prayer life much improved.

I have numerous prayer files that I seek to pray through every week when I am in my office. I pray for you. I pray for my family. I pray for our government. And some time ago I put this verse on the top of each prayer file and it says this: "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it

with thanksgiving..." (Col. 4:2). Now let me confess from my own personal experience, I do not think there is any other Christian practice the devil will fight you harder on than this one. If he can keep us from praying, or learning the importance of prayer, he will. Wesley Duewel, in his book, 'Mighty Prevailing Prayer' says, "There is nothing on earth that Satan so fears as prayer." And it seems to me that the devil will put more effort into trying to keep us from praying than trying to keep us from Bible reading. He will even put more effort into that than keeping us from diligently studying the Bible, and you know how hard that is. Now, he will certainly keep us from those if he can, but if he can't; the one thing he will keep us from above all others is prayer. I mean real prayer. Not 4 or 5 minute 'prayerettes'.

Again I ask, why do we need to pray to get things from God? This morning we are going to view this question from God's perspective. Next Sunday, Lord willing, we will view it from man's perspective, and the devil's perspective. So we begin with God's perspective on our question. But before we do that, let me read a very profound verse. Listen to what it says about the Lord Jesus, the Creator of the universe: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (Mark 1:35).

I. VIEWED FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

A. Because of God's glory

So, our question is, why is prayer necessary? We might put our question, "Why pray?" like this: Why does not God just do what He knows is best regardless of whether we pray or not? Why is it that prayer necessary? And I want to give you several negative proposals first. First, it is not because He is short of knowledge, or is so busy He cannot keep up with what everybody needs unless they pray. God has no shortage of knowledge. We have no need, but He already knows what it is before we ask (Matt. 6:8, 32). God is omniscient. He knows everything. So, He is not short on knowledge, so that He needs to be informed of our needs.

Second, it is not because He does not have the power or ability to do whatever we need done unless we

pray. Paul says in Ephesians 3:20 that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. Third, it is not because He does not want to do many of the things for us that we want done. Psalm 84:11 says, "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; no good *thing* will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Positively then, I propose that if God did not require us to ask for things before we receive them, and just gave us all those things that we need that we cannot do ourselves, that His glory would be at stake; and that is the central purpose of all creation. Let me explain. When God created beings with a free will, beings that could choose for themselves, He created the most dangerous being He could possibly create. He created first the angels for His glory. But by their own free will many of them left Him to seek their own glory, and God had to let a vast group of angels go their own chosen way. When He created man, man too chose to seek his own glory. And we might ask, "So, just why did He create angels and man?" You might listen to the series on the doctrine of God where I seek to answer that question. Knowing that many angels would fall and man as well, God still went ahead and created them as free moral agents. You see, when He created them as free moral agents, He created the only kind of being that can truly bring glory to Him! God cannot cause anyone to truly glorify Him by force. That is not glory. It has to come from a free will; personal choice. And there, we have, I think, one major reason why we must pray.

The ultimate purpose for all of creation is the glory of God. Satan recognized this. He also recognized that when man serves God for what he, man, can get out of God, that is not truly genuine worship nor is God truly glorified. One day God brought Job to Satan's attention and said, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" And the devil said, "Bah! What is this? Does Job fear You for nothing? No, he serves You for what he gets out of it!" What the devil is saying is, "Would Job fear You if he didn't greatly benefit by it? Bah. You hedge him around and bless

him and give him whatever he wants. That is why he is such a goody, goody. But, I will tell you something. Let him get a few bad things, and You will be out the window with Job. He serves You simply for what he can get out of it, and You see to it that he gets plenty!"

The point, I believe, that is at stake here is God's glory. Let me ask you a question: why do you love God? Why do you seek His face? Is it because of what you get out of it? There is our present day seeker friendly approach. Come to Christ, he will fix your marriage or He will fix your finances. Such is the modern Gospel. On the other hand, maybe you serve God because no matter what God does, you love him for Who He is. Like Job you say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." That is true love for God. When God allowed Satan to test Job, Satan learned that Job trusted God, not for what he could get out of it, but for God Himself. Well, God knew that before the devil learned it.

When we pray we are making a personal choice. We are exercising our free will. God never forces us to pray. It is a choice we must make. And when we make that choice and pray and ask God for things, we acknowledge who He is. We acknowledge that He is God. We acknowledge that there is something we cannot do or obtain and we need Him for it. By prayer, we put God in His rightful place and ourselves in our rightful place. We acknowledge our dependence on Him and this glorifies Him.

Now let me tell you that there are many things in life we cannot do. We have on our Wednesday night prayer list many things we know we cannot do. They are so big that we have trouble sometimes believing that even God, Himself can do them.

Why am I giving this message now? Soon we will be meeting again for our regular Wednesday night prayer meeting. We do not pressure, but invite you to join us for these times of prayer. It is not fun. It is work. It is fight. It is battle. It is warfare. We are 'learning' to pray. We are learning how little we know about prayer. With some years of experience I think we all feel like we are more the beginners than

when we started. I also gave this message to encourage each of us in our individual prayer life. Every Christian's individual prayer life is very important and I am encouraging you to continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving. But when we gather and pray corporately, it is very powerful. The kingdom of Satan finds a force much stronger to oppose when we meet together to pray, and many times he loses big battles, and God wins, all because of prayer.

Let me tell you something about prayer. We have a prayer request list on our Wednesday prayer meetings. Some of those requests, like cream, rise to the top and receive no answer. Week after week, month after month, year after year; no answer. Now let me tell you what happens when one of those difficult prayers is answered: God gets the glory! Nobody thinks, "Boy, we really did something!" Everybody knows God was at work. There is an inner rejoicing born of a knowledge that God worked through prayer.

In preparing for this message, which I had planned to be one, and now plan as two; I have two more very important topics on prayer I hope the Lord will give me opportunity to preach. The one will be called, "The Enigma of Unanswered Prayer". Some prayers are not answered. The other message will be, "The Relationship of Prayer to God's Providence."

So, the first reason I believe we need to pray is because of the glory of God. We choose of our own free will to do that which glorifies Him. And if I am correct in this, then failure to pray is a sin, because by this failure we come short of His glory. Listen to the words of Samuel in 1 Samuel 12:23, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you..."

John R. Rice says in his book on prayer that the drunkard reveals there is sin in his heart, the murderer reveals sin in his heart, "But," and I quote, "they do not reveal as much wickedness as the sin of prayerlessness, for the sin of prayerlessness reveals some shocking things about the state of the heart of all of us who do not pray constantly, who do not live in an attitude of unceasing prayer." Then he

gives four things prayerlessness reveal about us. Let me quote these four points, "First, prayerlessness shows a lack of real enjoyment of God. Second, prayerlessness proves our unbelief. Third, our prayerlessness proves our laziness. Fourth, our prayerlessness proves that God is not first in our love and interest and that other things come first." Those points are worth pondering. Let me add one more, prayerlessness proves we do not have a heart grip on the needs around us.

B. Because of God's Righteousness

There is another reason we need to pray. I believe there are many things God CANNOT do for us without our coming before Him to ask, because if He did, He would cease to be righteousness. There are many things we MUST ask for before God can do them for us because it is not right for Him to do them for us without our asking Him. His righteousness is at stake.

Now, let me illustrate why it is not right for God to give us all the things we need without prayer. Let me do so by posing this question: Why did God not stop Adam and Eve from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil when the serpent tempted them? Is it because He did not know what was going on? Was He asleep for a moment? Is it because He did not have the ability or power to do so? No, he had the power to zap them on the spot. Is it because He did not care if they sinned or not, or worse yet; He wanted them to sin? God forbid such a thought! No doubt He was deeply, deeply grieved by their choice of actions in choosing to do what He had told Adam they were not to do. So, why did He not step in and stop them?

Now let me tell you why I believe He did not stop them. He could not do so and remain righteous. You see, if He had stopped them from doing what they wanted to do, He would have violated their free will. The subtle serpent knew that to take man away from God in such a way that God could not stop him, all he had to do was to get Adam and Eve to 'want' to do what he, the devil, wanted them to do. Once they wanted what he wanted, their wills would be aligned with his. And once their wills were lined up with

what he wanted, it was only a matter of time until they did it; and to stop man from doing that, God would have had to violate man's free will. If Adam and Eve wanted to do what he, the devil, wanted them to do; God did not have the right to stop them. It was He that created them free moral agents. They would have stopped being free moral agents if He had stopped them. He would have violated their free will and God would no longer be good or God. His character would have changed. He could not use force to stop them. We all know that when we decide we want to do something that is wrong, God does not stop us. He will not violate our free will. And if God violated man's free will, man's actions could no longer glorify Him

Let me tell you something here. If you want to disobey God, He will not stop you either. It is amazing how He lets us choose sin and does not stop us. Maybe even now, you desire something God does not want you to do. I see young people walking along and they have these little ear phones, and I wonder, what are they choosing to listen to? Do you want to listen to that which you question and feel maybe God would not approve? Isn't it amazing how God does not stop us? Why does God not stop that doctor who is about to take the life of an unborn child? It is because of His glory and His justice. He could get us to beg for mercy in one moment, but He lets us choose. He will not violate our free will. This is a profound truth!

And now I want to propose to you that there is one way in which God could have stopped Adam and Eve from eating from that tree, and in which He could have sent Satan away from them and He could have done it without violating their free will and remaining just at the same time. But Adam and Eve would have had to give Him the permission to do this of their own free will. The right for God to interfere in their desires lay, not in God's hands, but in Adam and Eve's. Here is how that could have happened: If Adam and Eve had come before God and said, "Lord God, we are terribly tempted to eat from the tree You told us not to. We want to please You and not disobey You. Please help us overcome this temptation and obey you. We trust You, and You told us not to eat from this tree.

Please help us overcome this temptation and please remove this tempter from us."

Now, you see, that is simply prayer, and if they had prayed, now I believe God could have helped them overcome and He could have justly sent the devil away from them. Their wills would be lined up with His, against the devil. By such a request they would have given God the right to help them overcome the temptation, and it would have given Him the right to remove the tempter from them. They would have freed Him to do what He already greatly desired to do. By their volition, their free will, they would have authorized God to exercise His power. By the way, the exercise of that power on man's behalf, I believe, is what the Bible calls 'grace' (Heb. 4).

Let us go back even a little farther and ask: Why did God allow the devil to become proud? Did He not know what was going on? Of course He did. Did He not have the power or ability to stop him? Yes He did. But He allowed it because to stop him he would have had to violate the free will of a being He Himself created. If He had exercised His power or ability to overcome the devil's desire to be God, He would have violated the free will of the devil. Why did God not stop Adam and Eve from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Because He could not do so without violating their free will. Why did God not stop the devil from becoming proud? Because He would have had to violate the devil's free will.

Let me illustrate our point from a NT story which was told by Jesus. There was a man who had two sons. And the older son was faithful in his work and content, though when you study him he may have been worse off than his rebellious younger brother. But the second son grew this rebellious notion to leave home and enjoy life with its lusts and pleasures. So, when he came of age he said, "Dad, please hand over the inheritance that falls to me. I'm moving out." You see, he is a big boy now and he is in charge and calling the shots. Now, here is my question for you: why did that dad not lock his son up and try to talk some sense into him, or even beat some sense into him? I want to tell every parent with young children something very important. Spend much time into

training your children when they are very young. There comes a time in the life of a young man or woman, as a free moral agent, when the wisest mom and dad must let him or her go. This young person has chosen the way of transgressors and the way of transgressors is hard. Having failed the schooling of their parents advice, they must now enter the school of experience. And at this point the greatest chance to truly have them back is to turn them loose. Their will must come into line with what is right and they must choose to come back. Even if a parent can force them back or buy them back, they do not truly have them back. And, any wise parent will not take a child like that back once they have rebelled until they repent. So it is with God.

Well, you will remember the story of this young man. He squandered his inheritance with wild, or prodigal living and finally ran out of money. And lo and behold he learned something in the school of experience, something he might have learned in a grade one reader in mom and dad's home. Money does not grow on trees. Now we should all know that simple truth, but some of us have to learn such simple lessons in the school of experience. And then God had a way of seeing to it that a little famine arose over the land. And God just had a way of making a job available for this all-knowing young man, a job feeding pigs. In this school of experience he has to learn humility first. In the land where this young man was, you could not get lower than feeding pigs. And there, in the pig pen he began to learn. Something happened to him and I want you to read it in Luke 15 (16-19). Notice first that 'he came to himself'. He got some insight in this school of experience that he could not accept in the school of his parent's admonitions. Now look at verses 18-19 and note the words "I will, I will..." (read). His will is changing.

Now look at what has happened to his view of himself. He said, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." When he left home, he was a big young man. He had better places than his Dad's farm. He probably swaggered as he entered town with his inheritance jingling in his pockets. But now we have a humble young man. His Dad's farm is starting to look better

all the time. By his own free will he landed in the pig pen, and by his own free will he left the pig pen, but he left a deeply humbled young man. He probably came out under the lowest wire. Notice that when he left his dad, he told his dad what to do: "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." He is big. He is calling the shots. But look at what he has learned in the pig pen of experience in verse 18, "I will say to my father, make me like one of your hired servants." Here is a request of humility. And now, finally, it is safe and right for the father to throw a party for his son.

You see, man's free will limits parents and it limits God. There are some things you cannot do to or for a free moral agent without violating their free will, or ruining him. There are many points in this little story that illustrate prayer. Let me give you one. He had to learn to ask. There is prayer for us. When he repented and decided to eat humble pie, he said to himself, "I will go back and ask my Dad if he will make me like one of his hired servants." Here is asking. Here is prayer for us. We have to learn to ask. God knows we have to come to this point of asking before He can give. It would not be right for Him to give us the things we need without asking. Without prayer, God's justice is at stake.

I think this principle we can learn from life's experience. We know what happens when parents supply their children with everything they need or want, without their asking for anything. From those results we learn that it is not right, it is not just, to give them everything they need or want without their asking. It is not even right to give them everything they ask for but that is a topic for a later message. There is much more to prayer than simply asking, but asking is the first step.

Many, many parents ruin their children by giving them everything without meeting some conditions, and that is not right. Many parents, after having done everything in their power to do for them; have found that instead of thankful children, they have brought about unthankful children as the result, and a spoiled or rebellious or even ruined child.

I propose to you that if God provided for all our needs, and sometimes our wants without prayer, God's glory would be at stake. But, not only that, His righteousness would be at stake as well. As a matter of fact, I believe all of salvation would be at stake. We would be ruined in a very short time if we got all we need without asking. I have no doubt that if God gave us all we need or want without asking, none of us would bring glory to Him. We would not even get saved and we would die very selfish people. Asking is prayer 101.

CONCL: Why pray? Why does God require prayer? We have sought to put forth an answer viewing this question from God's perspective. In the next message I want to try to answer this question further from man's perspective and then from the devil's perspective. Lord willing, next year I will deal with the question, "Why must I believe in order to have my prayers answered? Why is believing necessary?"

Why does God require prayer? Why is prayer necessary? Because, for Him to have the right work on our behalf, He needs our prayers. I believe God dearly wants to do many things for us but He cannot because we ask not. We have tied His hands by our failure to pray. For Him to truly be glorified and do things for us that are right to do, we must first ask. Asking is not the only thing required, but it is prayer 101. It is the first step. It must be.

You see, when we pray, or maybe even pray a lot, we are not getting an unwilling God to grudgingly do what we want Him to do. When we pray, we have finally become willing to do what God must have in order for Him to do what He already dearly wanted to do all along. We have finally granted Him permission to work. He wanted to do this already, but He could not.

That is why we have verses such as, "Be diligent in prayer". And again, "Praying always with all prayer..." And again, "You have not because you ask not." I believe that if He did not require us to ask, His glory and His righteousness would be at stake.

WHY PRAY?
Message 2

INTRO: Why pray? What a simple question! What a difficult subject! Who of us would dare say prayer is not very important? Who of us can say, "My life shows it is important?" It seems almost sacrilegious to keep track of how much time we spend praying. At one point the church asked me to keep track of my time and I was to keep track of the time I spent praying as well. That was a hard time for me. But maybe it would be OK, just for our own personal benefit sometime to keep track of the time we spend in prayer and just keep it to ourselves. And then say, "Here is a very important practice. Now let me see how important it is in my life."

Now I know you cannot judge the effectiveness of a person's prayer life by the time they spend in it. Some count beads doing it and they have wasted time, if not actually sinned. But you do know you cannot do much in prayer in five minutes, nor even ten. How important is prayer in my life?

But our subject is, why pray at all? Why does God require prayer? We viewed this from God's perspective in the last message, now we want to view this question from man's perspective.

II. VIEWED FROM MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

A. To Keep us Humble

It is a requirement in the kingdom of God, that in order to receive, we need to learn to ask. That is receiving things by prayer. Listen to James 4:2, "You lust (or desire or want things) and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask." Here are people who want things. They desire things. But rather than pray they use every human means to bring them about, even so far as fighting and warring. And yet they do not have; they do not possess that which they desire. They covet and they get rid of those who are in their way, and yet they cannot obtain. They fight for what they want. They war, or cause a big ruckus for what they want, yet they do not have. Do you know whom he is describing? Christians! But God says, "You do not have because

you do not ask." Now I have said that asking is 101. There is more to prayer than asking, but asking is foundational.

Now let me recommend to you that for many of us, to learn to 'ask' in prayer God's way, we have to learn by experience like the prodigal son. We have to learn to be humble. Then, we have to learn to ask. Then will have to learn what to believe and we will have to learn to know God's will. We will have to learn to empty ourselves of our own desires, and we will have to learn to fall in line with the will of God. We will have to go to God's school of prayer!

But then, some of these Christians James was writing to, like many a Christian today, had learned to ask. But God was not pleased with their asking. You see, there is more to prayer than just asking. But they asked and they still did not receive. Why? Because they asked amiss! And what was wrong with their asking? James 4:3 tells us. What was on their hearts was not on God's heart. How many times is what is on our heart that which WE want, not that which God is so concerned about?

So, I propose to you that the first reason we need to pray, from man's perspective, is it requires humility; true humility. If God is to be glorified, our prayers will need to be His will, not ours that needs to be done. And for this to become a reality in our lives, we must be humbled. So humility always comes before prayer or the prayer may as well not be uttered. We, and our desires must be downsized, and minimized; and God's will and His desires must be exalted. God must be lifted up and deified before prayer can truly be effective. For this reason, prayer is required. True prayer requires true humility.

So, to learn to ask such things as God would answer we must become concerned about the things He is concerned about. So much of our praying is simply selfishness and God does not share His glory with us and so we must learn to ask according to His will. This means getting to know God!

Now turn with me to Matthew 9 (read 27-29). Now there are four mighty principles of prayer here. The very first principle is to ask. That is prayer. These blind men said, "Son of David, have mercy on us." They did not say, "Son of David, heal our eyes." You see, it did not take a rocket scientist to figure out what these men wanted. Now my question is, why did they need to ask? Did Jesus not know they wanted their sight without their asking? Yet, before they could see, they had to ask.

And if you read this text carefully, it will give a second principle regarding asking. It is perseverance. Many times we must keep on praying until the answer comes. So we sing the song, "Till the answer comes, keep on praying." You see, when these blind men asked for mercy, Jesus did not respond to them but kept right on going. And they kept right on going. They never quit because He did not answer. And so verse 28 says, "And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him." It did not take a rocket scientist to figure out why they were still there. You see, they persevered. Sometimes we need to ask, and ask and ask. Luke 18:1-5 clearly tells us that we need to learn to persevere. In Matthew 7:7 Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Now the verbs, 'ask' and 'seek' and 'knock' are all in the present tense and I think with this reason. It could read, "Ask, ask, ask and keep asking; seek, seek, seek and keep on seeking; knock, knock, knock, and keep on knocking and it will be opened to you."

Now I ask you, why did He not heal them when they asked the first time? You see, they asked, but the Lord did not heal them. We do not know how much later it was when Jesus got into the house where He was going but when He got there these blind men are still with Him (28a). They have asked, and though He does not answer, they keep right on following Him. The fact that He did not immediately heal them did not deter their determination. Now I ask, why didn't He heal them when they asked? They needed to show some perseverance. And why was that necessary? Well, we will see some of this later.

Now look at 28b for another principle in prayer. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Here is the third principle; the principle of faith. The one who prays must believe. And when I consider my own prayer life, I say with the father with the demon possessed son in the NT who said, "Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief!"

Oh, here is an important principle. And before we know what we ought to believe, we must learn to know the Bible and our God. You see, when we pray, we are asking for a miracle. When I checked to see what the theology books had to say on the question, "Why pray?" the only question they dealt with of any relevance to my question was the relationship of prayer to God's providence. You see, in His providence He provides those things that He has set in place in the laws of nature.

For example, on day He created the firmament. One of the things I believe He did that day was mix the gasses of the air we breath. There are the constant gasses and the changing gasses. If the constant gasses changed we would die from the air we breath. But in God's providence He mixed them right and they stay right. So, we never pray first thing in the morning and say, "Dear Lord God, please mix all the gasses right in the air I breath today, so that I can manage to stay alive this day. Please keep the nitrogen at 78.084%, and the oxygen at 20.946%; and please make sure nothing goes wrong with the argon and neon, helium, methane, krypton, hydrogen, nitrous oxide." Why do we not pray like that? Well, because God, in His providence, will provide that. That is why I am not concerned about the o-zone, like some of our so-called scientists are. I understand them. They do not know about God's providence.

But when we pray, we move out of the realm of natural law to supernatural law. You see, a miracle is when the laws of nature are set aside and something above the laws of nature takes place. When Jesus turned water into grape juice, that was a miracle. When we pray, we are asking for a miracle, something beyond the laws of nature.

Let me show you this. Turn to Mark 11. On one occasion Jesus cursed a fig tree. And the next day they went by the same place again. So let us read verses 20-24 (read). Most of us do not have enough faith to throw mountains around, but there is another principle to prayer that keeps us from doing that and we will look at that briefly later.

So, another reason why prayer is required is our humility. If God gave man everything man wanted without prayer, man would immediately become proud. And if proud man got what he wanted, he would never become saved. Never! All of salvation is at stake here. As a matter of fact, I would dare to say that the way many of us as Christians view prayer, if God gave us many of those things we pray for we would become proud in a very short time. I propose to you that it is for our good that He DOES not answer many of our prayers.

I think that many times we have to persevere in prayer for a long time, not only because the devil is resisting, but because we are not ready to receive without the danger of pride. I am sure God wants to do many of the things we pray for, and no matter how mature we may think we are, if He did those things it would lead to our ultimate destruction.

We have to pray to receive things from God because if we received them without prayer, we would be ruined by pride. I want you to turn to a very enlightening passage, a passage that will be very familiar to you, and that is 2 Chronicles 7:14 (read). You see, before we pray we must humble ourselves. When we pray, we are asking, not demanding. God is supreme and we are subservient to Him. I recommend that the most sincere prayer is the most humble. There is a full recognition of man's helplessness and God's ability.

There is a way the father of the prodigal son could have kept him from learning life's lessons in the school of experience, but this key lay in the power of the young man, not the father. If the young man had said to his dad, "Dad, I have this urge to go abroad. I would like more excitement. I really find it quite boring here. Dad, please advise me and help me overcome this desire." Why did Adam and Eve not

make such a request? Why did this young man not make such a request? They did not 'want' it. They 'wanted' what the devil offered.

B. To Prepare Us To Receive

I mentioned in the first message that if God gave us all we need in life without our asking, or even gave us all we ask for, He might well ruin us. I first read about this in Wesley Duewel's book on prayer and have thought much about it since. I now think that that many times when we pray, it is only God's wisdom that keeps us from getting what we ask for. It may well be what we are asking for is good and even for God's glory, but God may know that in the long run we will become proud or some other such thing and we might in the end be ruined. So in His love and wisdom, He does not answer our godly request! We are not prepared yet to receive. As a matter of fact, the more I think about this, this may be one of the reasons we must persevere. And in our perseverance, we become ready to receive without becoming proud.

Now go with me to Mark 11 (read 20-24). There are many principles of prayer in this passage. The first is that we must ask. That requires humility. The second is to believe, and that requires a knowledge of God. Maybe next year I will speak about that under this question: Why does God require us to believe?

But let me make one point here. Answers to prayer are miracles. A miracle is when the laws of nature are set aside, and something happens that defies these laws. When Jesus healed a blind man, that was a miracle. It is beyond the laws of nature. Removing mountains is beyond the laws of nature.

But let me ask this question: Who of us could exercise such power with God without becoming proud and abusing it? What am I saying? I am saying that God cannot do many great things through us because we are not ready to have it happen without it going to our heads. Man has to be reduced to the deepest of humility before God can entrust such a gift to him.

Let me just briefly mention one other matter here. In prayer, our wills must line up with God's will. I

mentioned earlier that there was one more principle on prayer in Matthew 9 we would observe later. Verse 27 said, "When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!'" There is asking. The first part of the next verse says, "And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him." There is perseverance. The last half of that verse says, "And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?'" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord.'" There is the principle of faith. But there is still one more thing necessary and that is for Jesus' will to be in agreement with theirs. He must agree that this will be a good thing. And so verse 29 says, "Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.'"

Now, here is the point. A very strong and humble believer does not throw mountains around by faith. He or she will not even ask such a thing unless it has a valid purpose in it which will bring glory to God. And God knows all that, and He will not agree with such a request, nor likely answer it, if that is not the case. But when such is the case, He will even perform a great miracle.

In our prayer meeting evenings we prepare beforehand by reading a chapter in Wesley Duewel's book, "Mighty Prevailing Prayer." I want to read an account out of this book I would not dare to read if I did not have the greatest confidence that this writer would not give it if there was any question about it. He is retelling this account which he had from another so he writes, "Charles Blanchard, who was president of Wheaton College for forty three years, shares his testimony, which he heard in person and later verified."

And here is the story: "Friends, about two and a half years ago I was in the hospital in Philadelphia. I was an engineer on the Pennsylvania Lines, and although I had a praying wife, I had all my life been a sinful man. At this time I was very ill. I became greatly wasted. I weighed less than one hundred pounds.

"Finally the doctor who was attending me said to my wife that I was dead, but she said: 'No, he is not dead. He cannot be dead. I have prayed for him for twenty-seven years and God has promised me that he would be saved. Do you think God would let him die now after I have prayed twenty-seven years and God has promised, and he is not saved?' 'Well,' the doctor replied, 'I do not know anything about that, but I know that he is dead.' And the screen was drawn around the cot, which in the hospital separates between the living and the dead.

"To satisfy my wife, other physicians were brought, one after another, until seven were about the cot, and each one of them as he came up and made the examination confirmed that I was dead. Meanwhile my wife was kneeling by the side of the cot, insisting that I was not dead, -that if I were dead God would bring me back, for He had promised her that I should be saved and I was not yet saved. By and by her knees began to pain her, kneeling on the hard hospital floor. She asked the nurse for a pillow and the nurse brought her a pillow upon which she kneeled.

"One hour, two hours, three hours passed. The screen still stood by the cot. I was lying there still, apparently dead. Four hours, five hours, six hours, seven hours, thirteen hours passed and all this while my wife was kneeling by the cot side, and when people remonstrated and wished her to go away she said, 'No, he has to be saved. God will bring him back if he is dead. He is not dead. He cannot die until he is saved.

"At the end of thirteen hours I opened my eyes, and she said, 'What did you wish my dear?' And I said, 'I wish to go home,' and she said: 'You shall go home.' But when she proposed it, the doctors raised their hands in horror. They said, "Why, it will kill him. It will be suicide.' She said: 'You have had your turn. You said he was dead already. I am going to take him home.'

"I weigh now 246 pounds. I still run a fast train on the Pennsylvania Lines. I have been out to Minneapolis on a little vacation, telling men what

Jesus can do, and I am glad to tell you what Jesus can do."

None of us doubts that such answers to prayer are miracles. Could it be that God would do many more such miracles if we were but ready to receive and have God get all the glory? The longer I study this, the more I see that God's glory is an important factor in prayer. And before He gets all the glory, we must be prepared to rejoice in His getting that glory apart from any for ourselves.

III. VIEWED FROM THE DEVIL'S PERSPECTIVE

Why pray? Why is prayer so important? Well, we have viewed this question from God's perspective and from man's perspective. Now let us view it from the devil's perspective. When we look at this question, "Why pray?" from the devil's perspective, does that give us any reasons to pray?

Let me begin by quoting from Wesley L. Duewels book, "Mighty Prevailing Prayer" again. He says in a section he has titled, "Prayer the Nemesis of Satan". "There is nothing on earth that Satan so fears as prayer. He does not know how to cope with prayer, so he concentrates on keeping you from prayer or getting you to give up before you get prayer's answer. He can often manipulate persons and circumstances so as to delay prayer's answers, but he cannot stop the angels from bringing God's answers. Prayer is his nemesis. He cannot triumph over prevailing prayer. Satan is more afraid of your praying than your pure life or zealous witness. One's life may be a beautiful witness that cannot be silenced, but prayer is a militant force that has the potential of defeating Satan, destroying his works, and driving him out of places and lives he claims as his own" (233). After I read that, I looked up the word 'nemesis' and the dictionary said it was, "An unusually tenacious and fearsome opponent or antagonist."

In another place he writes, "Prevailing prayer is God's ordained means for extending His kingdom, for defeating Satan and his empire of darkness and evil, and for fulfilling God's eternal plan and bringing into effect His good will on earth" (pg. 13). Now a

weakness in Deuwel's book is that he gives little Scriptural backup for his statements, and probably the reason for that is the amount of space it would take in an already large book.

But when you set yourself to prayer, and the battle that follows it would seem he is correct. If this is so, we can see why the devil resists prayer to the utmost. *** More here?

It is a number of years ago I desired to pull as much rug out from underneath the devil as I could in the remaining time I have here on earth. There have come into my life battles that have almost overwhelmed me. Nor are they over. I have found it very hard to stay true to this commitment, but I am committed to it. And yet, the greatest challenge I meet is prayer. I am learning more and more just how little my prayer life is. The more I learn, and the more I pray, the more I realize how little it is.

When I observe my life and observe the general life of the Church, and how little ground we are gaining, I am still surprised it is as much as it is. Listen to Luke 10:2: "Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" Now if my propositions have been correct, we know why He cannot just send our laborers. He needs us to pray for laborers.

There they are, thousands dying each day without the knowledge of the Gospel, and now spending eternity in hell. God desires above all our desires that they be saved but to be saved, they must receive His message so they can believe and be saved. And to receive this message, somebody must take it. Sometimes this means spending many years without any fruit among a certain group of people. So the sending forth of laborers must take place. Then the laborers must become willing. Then they may need to be faithful with that message for years. And then, when we have prayed, and God has sent, then Satan messes with their message or methods, and God's true message still does not penetrate hearts controlled by Satan.

But before any of this happens, much prayer is required in getting workers out, and that prayer is what is so lacking. And it seems we must conclude, that true prayer is required in order to give God the right to call workers into the field.

In our own community are many people who will be lost because those who know the need did not prevail in prayer. Are you one of those praying for some lost soul and you have prayed for a long time and nothing is happening? Are you about ready to give up? Or maybe you have already given up? Then start again, and pray until death tells you which way it will go. Are you praying for someone with some stubborn habit, and you wish them to become free? Then do not give up. Do you have a wayward son or daughter? Do you have a son or daughter into things that grieve you? Pray, and do not give up. When you pray for a short while and give up, you are not much of a threat to the devil. When you do not give up, it is then that you are a nemesis to Satan.

Let me give part of the quote I read earlier again about Satan, "He can often manipulate persons and circumstances so as to delay prayer's answers, but he cannot stop the angels from bringing God's answers. Prayer is his nemesis. He cannot triumph over prevailing prayer." Now, no doubt the writer has a Biblical account in mind given in the book of Daniel.

Turn with me to Daniel 10 (read 1-3). Daniel is burdened for his nation Israel. They are in captivity and the future of his nation has troubled him and he has requested of God an understanding of what is to happen. He fasted from pleasant food and meat and wine for three weeks as he besought God but no answer came and he continued for three weeks. There is the principle of perseverance in prayer.

Now let us read verses 4-14. Now notice what verse 12 says (read). When Daniel prayed, God immediately heard him and wanted to answer his prayer right away. So God sent a very strong angel with the message for Daniel that Daniel wanted. But a very powerful demon, called the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood this angel so that Daniel did not get the message. And in verse 13 we are told that Michael, another

very powerful angel comes to help this first angel out, and after 21 days, Daniel gets his answer. Now ponder for a moment what would have happened if Daniel had quit praying before the answer came. This is called, 'praying through'.

Now we learn some very important things about prayer in this passage, and some important principles as relates to Satan. First, Satan opposes God's answers to prayer. When it is a very important prayer, very powerful demons are sent to thwart the answers. And it seems to me in such cases, if one stops praying, the devil wins and the answer does not come. Further, if we persevere for important answers, God will exert greater and greater forces against Satan, and He will answer.

Some time ago I was listening to (radio preacher). And he said something to the effect that after reading this account he spent time, not only praying for things, but praying against Satan. We pray for many things, but do we pray against Satan?

CONCL: This is the conclusion to the first part of 'Prayer 101', 'Why pray'? Maybe next year we will take part two, 'Why believe'? Our answer to the question, why we should pray is because God's glory and His righteousness require it. Prayer is needed for those things God cannot do without us praying for them. He is limited in so much that He desires to do because we do not pray. In proper, God centered prayer, we do not talk an unwilling God into doing things for us; we give Him the right to do things He deeply desires to do. There are many things He greatly desires to do. He desires to take many souls out of the grasp of the evil one, but the lack of prayer for laborers and for those souls in darkness hinders Him from being able to do what He so much desires to do.

But as those who pray, we must go to God's school of prayer where we become to pray for things and receive them without being ruined by the devil because of pride.

Furthermore, in prayer, we must remember we are in a battle. That is one of the reasons prayer is so very difficult. The devil will keep us from praying above all other Christian practices.

