

Prayer 2022 Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, August 21 & 28, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

OPENING REMARKS

NOTE 1 – We have addressed the theme of prayer in recent weeks, spending the first half of August examining the Lord’s Prayer (cf. Matt. 6:9–13). I pray these teachings were both informative and impacting! Please review previous sermons online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

FYI – I would like to maintain this emphasis upon prayer for the remainder of August.

NOTE 2 – As of late, I have been blessed by the writings of F. E. Marsh on the topic of prayer. Marsh (c. 1858–1931) was a prolific Christian speaker, author and commentator of centuries past whose writings continue to educate and inspire. It would be my pleasure to share the overflow of my studies with you this morning...

NOTE 3 – The writings of Marsh assess prayer from a multiplicity of angles. Of particular import for today, Marsh spent a great deal of time addressing the nature of our prayer(s). In response to the question, “How are we to pray?” Marsh outlined the following scriptural insights (i.e., six in total)...

#1 – PRAY SECRETLY

Firstly, Marsh calls us to “pray SECRETLY in the closet of communion.”

FYI – Scripture teaches us to pray in such a manner...

Matthew 6:6 (NIV, Christ Speaking in His Sermon on the Mount)

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 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.”

NOTE 1 – Of course, this is not a universal prohibition against public prayer (cf. Matt. 6:9 – “OUR Father”)! Rather, this teaching of Christ serves as both a warning and an invitation: a) a warning against the motivations behind the practice of our religion; and b) an invitation to seek God privately with evident spillover!

Q1. When was the last time you sought the Lord in such a manner?

Q2. When was the last time you entered your “prayer closet” to pray?

Q3. Is your life founded upon what happens in that sacred secret place?

NOTE 2 – I posit that a great many live far below their calling in Christ because they fail to take the time to seek Him in this way. It is in the quiet place that we are heard, renewed, transformed, and given the guidance we so desperately need for life and living...

ILL – In a letter to his friends, hymn writer Wendell P. Loveless relates this story: “One evening a speaker who was visiting the United States wanted to make a telephone call. He entered a phone booth, but found it to be different from those in his own country. It was beginning to get dark, so he had difficulty finding the number in the directory. He noticed that there was a light in the ceiling, but he didn't know how to turn it on. As he tried again to find the number in the fading twilight, a passerby noted his plight and said, ‘Sir, if you want to turn the light on, you have to shut the door.’ To the visitor's amazement and satisfaction, when he closed the door, the booth was filled with light. He soon located the number and completed the call.”

In a similar way, when we draw aside in a quiet place to pray, we must block out our busy world and open our hearts to the Father. Our darkened world of disappointments and trials will then be illuminated. We will enter into communion with God, we will sense His presence, and we will be assured of His provision for us.

NOTE 3 – I feel I must share the following story re: William Wilberforce. Wilberforce was a Christian statesman of Great Britain in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries who was instrumental in the abolition of slavery in that nation. He is recorded as having made the following statements...

QUOTE(S) – "I must secure more time for private devotions. I have been living far too public for me. The shortening of private devotions starves the soul. It grows lean and faint." Following a failure in Parliament, he remarked that his problems may have been due to the fact that he spent “less and less time in his private devotions in which he could earnestly seek the will of God.” He concluded, "God allowed me to stumble."

Q. Could it be God allows us to face affliction as a means to drive us to Him and the place of prayer?

#2 – PRAY BELIEVINGLY

Secondly, Marsh calls us to “pray BELIEVINGLY in the simplicity of faith.”

Matthew 21:21a, 22 (Emphasis Mine)

21 Jesus replied . . . “22 If you **believe**, you will **receive** whatever you ask for in prayer.”

NOTE 1 – This passage speaks to the relationship between faith and prayer. If you desire to secure the blessing or favor of the Lord, you must first practice a degree of faith! Without it, your prayers will by no means avail. This principle is expressed in that most famous of passages...

Hebrews 11:6b (Emphasis Mine)

6 . . . without faith it is **impossible** to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he **rewards** those who earnestly **seek** him.

Q. What is causing you to question the promise of God? (cf. Matt. 21)

1) It is NOT the Spirit of God

The Spirit who empowered Christ (Luke 4:18) and inspired the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16) would not work in your life to inspire doubt concerning promises divine. Rather, He is continually seeking to cultivate a simple and child-like faith!

2) It is NOT the Word of God

The Word of God continually calls us to trust the Lord, to revel in His goodness, and to seek Him, anticipating divine result(s). The Bible does not introduce doubt as it relates to God or His ability to keep His promises! Quite the contrary...

Numbers 23:19

19 God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

A. I posit our doubts have a two-fold source. Firstly, in the voice of the enemy. What was the first question of Satan to our earthly forebears (cf. Gen. 3:1)? "Did God really say?" Secondly, in the depraved nature of our flesh. We possess a carnal nature that resists the call of God to trust, as it remains at enmity with the working of the Spirit within us (cf. Gal. 5:17).

NOTE 2 – We must rise above such elements and pursue Him "believingly and in the simplicity of faith" . . .

...MUCH LIKE THE WOMAN IN THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT...

Mark 5:24b–34 (Emphasis Mine)

24 . . . A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, "**If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.**" 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" 32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your **faith** has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

#3 – PRAY WATCHFULLY

Thirdly, Marsh calls us to “pray WATCHFULLY in the alertness of wakefulness.”

FYI – Scripture often combines the themes of watchfulness and prayer...

Matthew 26:41 (Garden of Gethsemane, Emphasis Mine)

41 “**Watch** and **pray** so that you will not fall into temptation.”

Colossians 4:2 (Emphasis Mine)

2 Devote yourselves to **prayer**, **being watchful** and thankful.

Ephesians 6:18 (Emphasis Mine)

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, **be alert** and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

Q. In what way(s) are we to be watchful? Watchful after and/or against what?

A1. We are to watch against spiritual negligence and lethargy (Benson), being attentive and alert versus weary and distracted (Meyer). This is the clear meaning of Christ in Gethsemane, wherein the disciples were to resist the inclinations of their flesh in order to pray. Please note that...

KEY – Prayer does not often come naturally and more often than not we want to do everything but pray! We must learn to rouse ourselves to the place of watchfulness, alertness, attentiveness, and prayer. Consider that the word *disciple* is intimately connected to word *discipline*.

A2. We are also to be watchful of the sinister spiritual forces arrayed against us. Satan and his minions are relentless in their machinations. They work tirelessly to deceive and destroy by playing upon our carnal instincts which are overcome only by the Word, the Spirit and the place of prayer! Scripture continually calls us to mind our enemy, remaining vigilant and attentive...

1 Peter 5:8 (Emphasis Mine)

8 Be **alert** [i.e., “watchful” – same underlying Greek as Matt. 26:41 and Col. 4:2] and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Q1. Why do so many believers live under the heel of the enemy when they are called to be victorious?

A. Because too many believers live unaware of and inattentive to the operation of the enemy in their midst.

Q2. What is the solution to all that ails us in these regards?

A. We are to pray “watchfully in the alertness of wakefulness.”

#4 – PRAY UNCEASINGLY

Fourthly, Marsh challenges us to “pray UNCEASINGLY in the continuance of well-doing.”

FYI – This sentiment has clear biblical support...

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (Emphasis Mine)

16 Rejoice always, 17 **pray continually**, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

People ask of me, “Pastor, what is the will of God for my life?” Though you must discern that for yourself in Christ (at the micro-level), I can tell you the will of God at the macro level quite easily! Be a person of constant praise, habitual thanksgiving, and unceasing prayer! Such a person is far more inclined to discover the will of God at the personal level than the one who grumbles, complains and remains prayerless!

Q. What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

QUOTE – John MacArthur noted “Perhaps the best way to illustrate the idea of ceaseless prayer is to compare it to breathing. Inhaling and exhaling is so natural for us that it often seems totally involuntary; it’s actually harder to hold your breath than to breathe. The same should be true of prayer for the Christian. Prayer is like breathing for us. The natural thing for us to do is commune with God. When we don’t pray, we’re holding our breath spiritually fighting against the very existence and presence of God in our lives. Prayer should flow naturally and continually from our hearts. When Paul commands us to pray without ceasing he doesn’t expect us to walk around with closed eyes all the time, nor does he mean every prayer should last an hour or more. What he does mean, however, is that we should be in constant communion with God.”

1) We are to Pray Unceasingly for We are Never Apart from His Presence

Acts 17:28b

28 . . . in him we live and move and have our being.

2) We are to Pray Unceasingly for We are Never Without the Need of His Power and Provision

Colossians 1:15–17 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things **hold together**.

John 15:1–2, 4–5 (Emphasis Mine)

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. . . . 4 Remain [i.e., “abide”] in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do **nothing**.

SPEAKING OF ABIDING IN THE VINE...

#5 – PRAY ABIDINGLY

Marsh (fifthly) challenges us to “pray ABIDINGLY in the will of God and in Christ.”

ONCE AGAIN AND WITH A BIT OF EXPANSION...

John 15:5, 7

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. . . . 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

NOTE 1 – In this passage, answered prayer is the result and/or overflow of communion with Christ. Marsh identifies prayer as the “sap of fruitfulness evidencing union with Christ.” Why is it that so many believers fail to receive the bounty that heaven genuinely has in store for them? They simply fail to abide in Christ (cf. John 15:7)...

NOTE 2 – Thus, in many ways the key to the promise of Christ re: prayer in v. 7 is the term “IF” . . .

John 15:7 (Emphasis Mine)

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Q. What if you do not remain and/or abide in Christ?

A. Do not expect God to undertake re: your prayer needs.

KEY 1 – This really is not rocket science! Those who would have the desires of the heart fulfilled must learn to delight first and foremost in Him (Ps. 37:4): “Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” When the Lord becomes your delight it becomes His delight to bless you in kind!

KEY 2 – As Marsh posits, let us “pray abidingly in the will of God and in Christ.”

#6 – PRAY EFFECTUALLY

Lastly, Marsh calls us to “pray EFFECTUALLY in the power of the Spirit.”

NOTE 1 – Scripture often affirms the futility of our efforts apart from the work of the Spirit...

Zechariah 4:6 (Emphasis Mine)

6 . . . “Not by might nor by power, **but by my Spirit,**” says the Lord Almighty.

NOTE 2 – Scripture often connects the power and operation of the Spirit with prayer...

Jude 20–21 (Emphasis Mine)

20 But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and **praying in the Holy Spirit,** 21 keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Ephesians 6:18a (Emphasis Mine)

18 And **pray in the Spirit** on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Romans 8:26–27 (Emphasis Mine)

26 . . . the **Spirit helps** us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the **Spirit himself intercedes** for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the **Spirit intercedes for God's people** in accordance with the will of God.

Q1. What does it mean the Spirit “helps us in our weakness” (v. 26a)?

A. The underlying Greek term “expresses the action of one who assists another to bear a burden, by taking hold of it on the opposite side, and bearing it with him, as persons do who assist one another in carrying heavy loads.” Thus said...

Q2. Why are we so ineffectual in prayer apart from the working of the Spirit (v. 26b)?

A1. We do not know what is really best for us in life and living. The Spirit gives us necessary insight.

A2. We do not comprehend what God may be willing to grant us in prayer. The Spirit brings illumination.

A3. We are often ignorant re: the character of God, along with His will and purpose. The HS brings perception.

A4. We are often encompassed with trials and temptations or left feeble by disease of calamity. The HS aids.

Q3. What does Paul mean that the Spirit “intercedes for us through wordless groans” (v. 26c)?

A. Our Father knows our frame and that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14). He knows our weaknesses, limitations, and how the circumstances of life press upon us, so He has allowed for His Holy Spirit to make intercession for us! Thus said...

KEY – Allow me to note the following re: the intercession of the Spirit of God...

1) His Intercession May Manifest in Prayers that Transcend Words

QUOTE – “When the Christian’s prayers are too deep and too intense for words, when they are rather a sigh heaved from the heart than any formal utterance, then we may know that they are prompted by the Spirit Himself. It is He who is praying to God for us.” –Charles Ellicott

2) His Intercession Manifests via Secret and Supernatural Means

The Spirit intercedes with groans that operate separate and apart from all forms of earthly communication. Hence, Paul gives insight into the ongoing fellowship of the Godhead itself. Thus, it appears that both Christ, as our High Priest (cf. Heb. 4:14–16), and the Holy Spirit, as our Comforter, Helper and Advocate (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), make heavenly intercession for us in words we neither hear nor participate in. Incredible!

KEY – Let us not be surprised that something as supernatural as prayer possesses a supernatural component!

SUMMATION

Q. How are we to pray?

- A1. SECRETLY in the closet of communion.
- A2. WATCHFULLY in the alertness of wakefulness.
- A3. BELIEVINGLY in the simplicity of faith
- A4. UNCEASINGLY in the continuance of well-doing.
- A5. ABIDINGLY in the will of God and in Christ.
- A6. EFFECTUALLY in the power of the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Please join us for our weekly Sunday School (9:15am) or Mid-Week Study (6:30pm).

NOTE 3 – August ministry sabbatical for Children’s Church, Women’s Ministry and our Men’s Ministry.

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.