

Prayer Life of a Christian

by John R. Rice

John R. Rice emphasizes the necessity of persistent and heartfelt prayer in the life of a Christian to foster a strong relationship with God and to seek His guidance and support.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, Luke 18:1, John 14:13, John 15:7, John 16:24, Acts 2:41, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Topics: "Christian Prayer", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John R. Rice preaches on the importance of growing as a strong Christian, using the example of the early Christians at Pentecost who continued steadfastly in prayer, fellowship, and the apostles' doctrine. He emphasizes the need for young Christians to be persistent and steadfast in prayer, drawing from various Bible verses that encourage continuous prayer and seeking God's help in all aspects of life. Rice highlights the power of prayer in overcoming worry, seeking God's provision, and experiencing His peace, urging believers to pray without ceasing and to bring all their needs and requests to God.

Transcript

I am speaking this month on how to grow to be a strong Christian, taking as an example the Christians at Pentecost, those three thousand people who were saved and baptized then. And in Acts, chapter 2, verses 41 and 42, I read again, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Now, watch what these young converts did: " And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Steadfastly in prayers. So young Christians are going to have to not only just pray but to be steadfast in prayer. That is persistently praying. That is continually praying. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. and in breaking of bread. and in prayers."

Steadfast, Persistent Praying, All the Time!

A Christian, then, ought to learn to pray all the time, ought to learn to pray about everything. That comes up often in the Bible. Luke 18:1 says about Jesus, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," He said. "To this end, that men ought always to pray." You mean pray all the time? Yes. That would evidently mean a Christian ought to get to where he prays again and again consciously a hundred times or more a day, get

to where there is something going on in his prayer life in his heart all the time, crying to God. "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

He said it in Romans 12:12 also: "... patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." "Continuing instant in prayer." That is, always on the alert in prayer. Just keep on praying? Yes, continuing instant in prayer,

He said again in Colossians 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." "Continue in prayer." Now, we believe we should pray regularly. That is good, but that isn't all they did and that is not enough for us. We ought to keep on praying.

A song says:

Just keep on praying till light breaks through;

The Lord will answer, will answer you;

God keeps His promise, His word is true.

Just keep on praying till light breaks through.

A Christian ought to pray all the time.

Colossians 4:2: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." "Continue in prayer." There are two words that go along with prayer in the Bible and in Christian literature: "fast" and "pray." That means doing without food. Sometimes I ought to miss a meal because I am burdened and I want to keep hold on the face of God, I want to keep on pleading with God. I don't want to let my mind wander about ordinary things; I want to give myself wholly to prayer. So sometimes one ought to "fast and pray," because he is so concerned and so anxious that his heart centers on that.

When I played college football we did not eat a big meal before a game. After the game, after one has lost several pounds in sweat, and after one has a good bath, then the player can have a good steak and enjoy it.

If you would give up food for a time in order to play football, why wouldn't you give up food sometimes to pray? That is what the Lord is saying here: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Regular Times for Prayer Are Good, but Not Enough

The word "watch" means keep the night watches, stay awake at night. That is another way of praying. We are sometimes too much concerned to go to sleep. Or we deliberately stay awake in order to pray because we want to pray through and get things settled. Well, that is a virtue. So the Scripture says, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Just keep on praying.

Now there ought to be certain times set aside to pray. Maybe you ought to have a regular place of prayer. My wife and I have our four chapters in the Bible, then we have a season of prayer. We pray for our children, for our workers, for the Sword of the Lord. I have about ninety people I pray for by name. Every day we have that regular season of prayer. Then we have at the Sword office every morning a devotional time and some prayer. And at 12:00 and at 4:00 on Thursday we have a prayer meeting at the office. And we have prayer meeting Wednesday night at the church.

But there ought to be, besides these, times when you don't do anything but pray. We ought to pray all the rest of the time, too, whatever we do.

I have sometimes illustrated it this way: I used to have a girl friend. I used to go see her up on a big, black land farm in Cooke County, Texas. She is the same girl friend now, by the way, only my wife now. Sometimes we would sit on the front porch and talk, sometimes we would sit in the parlor by the fireplace and talk. Sometimes she had to wash the dishes, so I would dry them and we would talk.

So you ought to sometimes set aside everything else to pray. Then whatever else you do, you ought to take God with you and keep your heart crying to God and pleading with God and rejoicing in the Lord whatever else you do. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

In Ephesians 6, verse 18. "Put on the whole armour of God ... Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Oh, people ought to keep on praying. Pray about everything.

And I Thessalonians 5:17 says. "Pray without ceasing." Oh, we ought to have God so close to us! You don't have to get down on your knees, you don't have to go through a nice, formal preliminary when you talk to your Heavenly Father. You ought to be able to just say, "Lord Jesus. help me." You ought to be able to say "Thank You, Lord Jesus." You ought to say, "Lord Jesus, give me wisdom now." and, "Lord Jesus, help me." Like Peter, walking on the water. When he began to sink, he said. "Lord, save me!" That is not much of a prayer, but it was to the point and he got himself saved from drowning. Why not set out to pray all the time?

Prayer in the Bible Is Asking

We are not talking about pretty little clichés and "Lord, we know this," and, "Lord, we know that," and quote the Westminster Catechism and the Apostles' Creed. I am not talking about that. I am not talking about meditation. I am talking about asking God. A Christian ought to set out to ask God for things every day.

James 4:2 says. "Ye have not, because ye ask not." "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." So Christians ought to set out to ask God for some things. It would not be a bad idea to write out your requests No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4. If you are going to the store to buy groceries, you make a list. Well, why not when you pray? Be honest. Rewrite the list every day or two to make sure it doesn't get to be just a little set form. Take things to God and ask for certain things when you pray.

You know asking is prayer. In Matthew 7:7,8 the Lord said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Prayer is asking you are not praying if you don't ask. So be sure to make your requests known to God.

Oh, a Christian ought to pray. A Christian ought to enjoy praying. You ought to feel that God is near. You ought to feel you can turn everything over to Him. My, what it will do for you! That is the way to have things.

God's Cure for Worry Is to Pray Through

And that is also the way to cure worry, fret and trouble. You can have God's peace all the time, for Philippians 4:6,7 says, "Be careful for nothing (don't be full of care about anything); but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanks giving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." A Christian ought to pray all the time. We are plainly commanded to pray without ceasing.

A new convert ought not to feel he is going to some formal Being. He doesn't have to bow, like he is being introduced to Queen Elizabeth in England. Then you would dress up as nice as you could. You might be introduced one at a time. You go forward and bow down very low before the Queen, then back out. But our Heavenly Father, our own Heavenly Father, loves us and we can "come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:16).

As Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., used to say, "I am not a stranger. I am at home in my heavenly family. I just pull my chair up to the table and say, 'Pappy, please pass the biscuits.'"

A Christian has a right to go to his own Heavenly Father and tell his needs to Him and have His heart lifted, his joy restored, his sins forgiven, get light on dark places, get wisdom as to what to do. A Christian ought to take everything to God in prayer.

So these Christians at Pentecost, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They just kept on praying. If you don't pray, you are sure to sin. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." You don't have to yield to temptations. You don't have to have the Devil come out victorious in your life. You can have strength every day. Oh, you say there are lots of temptations! Yes, but if you pray like you ought, you can have help. Always there is victory. Christians can have help. If a Christian begins to pray in time and takes time with the Lord and His Word, the Lord will help him. That is the way to victory. That is the way to have help every day.

How Many Promises Encourage Prayer!

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek. and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

How many great promises there are about prayer!

There is Matthew 21:22, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." What about Mark 11:22 where the Lord said, "Have faith in God."

Then verse 24, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

What about John 14:13,14, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Isn't that a promise! Here it is again: John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

And in John 16:24, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Oh, learn to get your prayers answered day by day and have God's leading and God's strength and God's provision. A happy life it is. You can call on the Lord daily and have His help. A Christian ought to learn to pray.

Mrs. Rice and I have had great joy out of an incident that happened here. I often get my prayers answered and that is good. For instance, I prayed for rain and got rain more than once. And some time ago, last summer or fall, after we had had our morning Bible reading, I prayed, "Lord, the grass is getting a little dry in the pasture for the horses and cattle. Will you give us rain that the grass may be green? Other people need rain." I expected it to come that day. The truth is, later we found the weather report was that probably we would have rain that day. But in our community a little boy wanted to go, that closing Saturday, to the State Fair, and he said, "Oh, Mother we must go."

She said, "Honey, it is going to rain. The weather forecast says it will rain. See, it is clouding up now."

"No, it won't rain, Mother."

"Oh, yes it will," she said.

And they saw him go into his bedroom - a little fellow six or seven years old and kneel down by his bed. After awhile he came back and said, "Mother, it is not going to rain. We can go to the Fair."

Well, when they tried to outtalk him, he said, "No, there won't be any rain. We ought to go." Well, to humor him everybody took their umbrellas and raincoats and went to the Fair. they carried their weather togs around all day and it was a fair day, and it didn't rain a drop. Then that night, after they got back home, the Lord answered my prayer and gave rain, too. And Mrs. Rice thinks that is a great joke that the Lord answered that little fellow's prayer and postponed mine until he could have his day at the State Fair! Do you believe God did that? I do.

Years ago at Wheaton, Illinois, a heavy snow had fallen and it was bitter cold. We got in the car to take the youngsters to school and I stepped on the starter. R-r-r, r-r-r - awfully cold! It didn't start. I tried again: R-r-r-r, r-r-r-r, r-r-r - it didn't start. I was getting vexed and discouraged, I tried again and again. So Joy, who was then about eight years old, said, "Daddy, I know what we could do."

I said, "Yes, I know, too. I can go get a taxicab or I can have a wrecker come and start this car and you children will be late to school."

Joy said, "Daddy that wasn't what I meant."

I said, "What did you mean, dear?"

"We could pray."

I said, "We sure could."

We stopped and prayed and I stepped on the starter and the engine started with a roar, and we went on our way!

The way to live is to pray day by day and take all your burdens to the Lord and ask whatever you want. God is not old and tired. Ask whatever you want. He loves you. Remember He said in Romans 8:32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Oh, then, take your burden to the Lord.

Young convert, set out to pray about everything. Pray for money when you need money. Pray for food when you need food. Let your requests be made known to God - whatever you need. Oh, you have not because you ask not!

I prayed and saw God raise up my father when the doctor said he wouldn't live through the night. I prayed when my little girl had a fever of 105, with diphtheria, and saw God answer. That afternoon my wife and I prayed by the bedside and that afternoon the fever all disappeared and the next morning not a sign of diphtheria. And the county health department tore down the quarantine sign they had put on my house. I prayed and God raised up a woman who was dying with TB, back in the days when there was no antibiotic drugs like we have now. I saw her three months from then and she was well, and had gained fifty pounds. She told me, though the doctors had not expected her to live a week and one more hemorrhage and she was gone, "Brother Rice, after you prayed it was two weeks before I was strong enough to do all my housework and the washing for the family!"

Listen! You have not because you ask not. God wants you to learn to pray and ask Him and have His blessing.

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