

Persistent Prayer

2 of 2 | Well, the Audacity of It All!

SLIDE 1 Introduction

Today is our last teaching on prayer for now. However, we will work to keep it in the forefront of our minds, because this year needs to be a year of prayer for all of us.

SLIDE 2 Matthew 26:41 (NIV) *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

The temptation many will face this year is to be discouraged, to fall into fear, and to give up on the things they hope for. However, if we will stay faithful to pray, we will experience a greater depth in our relationship with the Lord and it will carry us through the year ahead. Things are about to get rough, but the Lord is faithful.

SLIDE 3 Series Review

We covered several aspects of prayer in these two short series in January and February, but I hope they will instill in us a greater determination to "pray through." That means pray until you get the answer, pray until victory is won!

In my first amended series in January, I spoke of how to develop a fervency in prayer. It is based around praying for the things that you care the most about, like your family and friends. Hence, our prayerbooks. We also touched on praying the promises of God to ensure that our prayers are heard and that his will is done in the lives of those we pray for.

I alluded to the fact that there is some prayers God will not hear. There are tremendous theological discussions as to what constitutes prayer that God hears and prayer that he does not hear.

I liken it to the Supreme Court. You can appeal your case to them, but they decide whether it's a case they will hear or not. It all is based on your motives. God doesn't judge our feeble prayers, he's looking on our hearts. That's why he knows what we have need of even before we ask. (Matthew 6:8) That's why he judges our hearts.

But regarding not hearing our prayers, some of you scowled. Look at this verse:

SLIDE 4 Psalm 66:18 (KJV) *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear me."*

Like I said, God does not change. He is never manipulated. A pure heart is required for our prayers to be effective, even heard for that matter. Like our theme verse says:

SLIDE 5 James 5:16 (KJV) *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."*

Prayer has to be righteous. Prayer has to come from a purified heart.

SLIDE 6 Prevailing to Availing

In this final two-part series we looked at how prevailing leads to availing. You have to continue to stand in the gap and make up the hedge. "Gap" and "hedge" are both used as military terms here, meaning to protect the territory you are fighting for. You can't be praying on the one hand and leaving yourself open to attack on the other.

Example: You can't be asking God one thing in prayer and telling others the exact opposite. Your words mean nothing if you are double-minded and speaking one thing to God and another to the people around you.

SLIDE 7 James 3:10 (KJV) *"Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."*

Divided speech reveals a divided heart. Now on the the conclusion, while I still have time:

SLIDE 8 The Lord's Prayer and MORE!

In the 11th chapter of Luke the disciples observed Jesus praying and asked him to teach them to pray.

Jesus first answers their question, but then he goes on to say something more. Since we derive *The Lord's Prayer* from verses 2 and 3, we tend to stop there and not hear his entire discourse on prayer in response to their query. He answers them, then he teaches. We'll first look at his answer, then dig more deeply into his teaching on prayer.

SLIDE 9 Luke 11:1-13 (NIV) *"1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he*

finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.""

Then we have what is called The Lord's Prayer, minus the ending of later version of the Word:

SLIDE 10 *"² He said to them, "When you pray, say: " 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.' "*

That's the model prayer he gave us, but then he teaches the disciples the emphasis of prayer in the next few verses. The model prayer encompasses four things: 1.) the performance of the will of God, 2.) the provision of the believer, 3.) our forgiveness and freedom from sin, and 4.) our protection from the enemy.

Then Jesus moves on to emphasize how we are to ask:

SLIDE 11 *"⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' "*

SLIDE 12 *"⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' "*

SLIDE 13 *"⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your **shameless audacity** he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.""*

The context of verse 7 is that it's simply too late to ask, you've missed your window of opportunity, it's over, done, nothing is going to change now. However, persistence is a must if you are going to transition the impossible, to possible, to probable, to likely, to reality.

"Audacity" means a bold daring without any sense of shame or remorse. The KJV uses the word "importunity" in verse 8, which literally means *shameless persistence*.

Then Jesus gives those words we all know and cling to:

SLIDE 14 *"9 "So I say to you: **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.** 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."*

But like always, we stop short of all of what Jesus is saying. This is not the end of his teaching on prayer. In the next three verses we read his conclusion to his teaching, and we would do well to include it.

SLIDE 15 *"11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

God is not a devious genie in a bottle. He's not granting wishes anyway, he's enforcing his *"will on earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10) through our prayers. God is not going to trick you into thinking your prayer was answered when it was not.

This is a spiritual battle. God's not playing games with our faith. The devil never wants you to experience any prayer that is answered by more than coincidence. It takes too much of a toll on his kingdom of darkness. Once you have seen the light, you can't unsee it. The reality of answered prayer is what drives more prayer. That's why the Bible tells us:

SLIDE 16 **1st Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV)** *"Pray without ceasing."*

That's it, that's the whole, entire verse. It's a direct command of Scripture. Never cease to pray, never give up, never quit until the answer comes and you have the victory you have asked for.

SLIDE 17 Altar Time

When we ask in faith it means not faith in our prayers, not faith in the power of the Word spoken through us. No, it's all about faith in who God is. Fervent, effective prayer that avails much is prayer that knows and understands who God is, that he is good to us, and he is faithful to perform his Word revealed to us.

God wants us to pray some audacious prayers this year!