

**WESLEY L. DUEWEL WROTE . . . (In 'Mighty Prevailing Prayer')**

THERE IS NO easier sin to commit than the sin of prayerlessness. It is a sin against man and a sin against God. Are you guilty of that sin today? On some occasions the Bible specifically addresses the sin of failing to pray for others. Samuel said to Israel, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you" (1Sam.12:23). It would have been a sin against them and against God who loved them so much. You can sin not only by doing what is wrong but by not doing what is right, by not doing your duty. "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (James 4:17). Jesus said, "That servant who knows his master's will and . . . does not do what his master wants" commits such a sin (Luke 12:47). Such sins of omission do not separate you from God, but they certainly grieve His heart. They show disrespect to the Word of God, to the love of Christ, and to the tender Holy Spirit, who seeks to remind you of what you should do. Sins of omission weaken your spiritual life, make you comparatively useless to God, and rob you of the rewards God longs to give you.

**A SIN OF NEGLECT**

O. Hallesby has written, "A child of God can grieve Jesus in no worse way than to neglect prayer . . . . Many neglect prayer to such an extent that their spiritual life gradually dies out." Those who are careless about prayer show that they are careless about other spiritual things. They are rarely ready to be used by God. Prayerlessness means unavailability to God – a sin against God's love. Prayerlessness proves that the person has very little real love for God. It is not difficult to make time to speak to those we love. "Brethren, the crying need of the church is her laziness after God," says Samuel Chadwick. Andrew Murray adds, "The sin of prayerlessness is a proof . . . that the life of God in the soul is in deadly sickness and weakness." The prayerless person is more carnal than spiritual. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer (Zech. 12:10, margin). He prompts us to pray, guides us in prayer, and helps our weakness in prayer (Rom 8:26). Prayerless Christians are not filled and controlled by the Spirit, no matter what they may profess. One's neglect to pray can be a sin against God.

**A SIN OF DISOBEDIENCE**

Not only is prayerlessness neglect, it is disobedience. This disobedience can take many forms. We are responsible to pray for all leaders, specially the leaders of our government and of other nations. Do you? "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and for all those in authority" (1 Tim 2:1-2). Not to include these topics in your private or public praying is a sin of disobedience.

On two separate occasions Jesus commanded, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt 9:38; Luke 10:2). If you do not pray for evangelism and missions, you are directly disobeying Jesus' command. This is a sin of disobedience. Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount that we should pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). The Christian has no option. He or she must pray regularly for the advance of Christ's cause, for the hallowing and glorifying of Christ's name, for God's blessing on the church.

Not to do so is a direct sin of disobedience to Christ. Examine your prayer life and see if you have been grieving God frequently by such disobedience. Jesus gave us a model prayer to teach us: "This, then, is how you should pray" (Matt. 6:9). In fact, we should often use these exact words, because Jesus commanded us, "When you pray, say . . ." (Luke 11:2). In this model prayer, Jesus taught that normally we should first pray for God's name, kingdom, and will to be done before we begin to pray for our personal needs (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4).

Therefore, regularly to centre most of your praying on yourself, your family, and your immediate circle of friends, rather than on Christ's kingdom, His church, world needs, and world evangelization is contrary to Christ's example when He said, "This, then, is how you should pray" (Matt 6:9). To pray for oneself is petition, not intercession. Intercession is prayer for others. Prevailing prayer is usually prayer for others.

For Christians day after day to pray primarily for themselves, their own family, and their immediate circle of friends and not to pray primarily first for others, as Jesus taught, is a form of sin. For Christians to be so self-centered that they never weep like David as they pray for their enemies' welfare or salvation; for Christian never to weep over their own city or area, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem; for Christians never to pray with a broken heart for the poor and the homeless ones who are starving, those in prison, orphans, widows, the bereaved, those enslaved by drink, drug addicts, and abused children and wives is to sin against Paul's injunction to "mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15). Job asked, "Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? (Job 30:25). For Christians to know that Christ has taught – and commanded – them to pray and is waiting for their prayer partnership and still fail to pray is direct disobedience.

For a Christians to know that Christ desires that the world be given a chance to be saved, that Christ has commanded us to pray for workers in His harvest, and that lasting spiritual results from evangelism come only when the evangelism is covered with prevailing prayer – for a Christian to know all this and still fail to pray is direct disobedience of a most serious kind. It raises a doubt as to how much we love people and how much we really love Jesus. Not to pray regularly and faithfully for others is to prove that our love is very selfish, that our vision is very limited, and that we have not yet learned the heartbeat of Jesus, who loves and longs for the welfare and salvation of the whole world.

### **A SIN AGAINST YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE**

Prayerlessness is also a sin against your own spiritual life. You cannot grow in grace when you neglect prayer. You cannot develop a close walk with Jesus if you do not frequently commune with Him. You cannot share His heartbeat if you seldom intercede with Him. Prayerlessness robs you of the consciousness of the near presence of Jesus. It robs you of the awareness of the smile on His face, of the blessedness of listening to His voice. It robs you of the touch of His hand



upon you and of much of His guidance. It robs you of His power. Prayerlessness is all the more serious sin against yourself, since prayer is so blessedly simple. All you need to do to learn to pray is to pray. It is so spiritually natural that the new Christians almost begin to pray without being taught. Even little children can easily learn a very real, personal and satisfying prayer life as they talk to Jesus.

### **A SIN AGAINST GOD**

We may call prayerlessness a weakness, being so busy and preoccupied that we neglect what we know we should do. We may make many excuses, but God calls it disobedience. That is sin against God. Prayerlessness is not only a direct sin against others, it is a direct sin against God Himself (1 Sam 12:23). Jesus told us that we “should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). Forsyth has said that for the Christian, “the worst sin is prayerlessness.” Why? Because it shows our indifference and disobedience to God.

Prayerlessness is an evidence of what our attitude is to God. It is a kind of unfaithfulness and lovelessness. Our relation with God is not what it should be if we do not love Him enough to find time to get alone and listen and talk to Him. Prayerlessness proclaims to God and to Satan that our relation to Jesus is not very loving and close. An adequate relation to Jesus always includes prayer – both the desire and the actual practice.

### **YOU WILL REGRET PRAYERLESSNESS**

The regret of prayerlessness begins in this life when we suddenly need to prevail in prayer and then realize how far we have drifted, how casual our relation to him is, and how weak our prayerlessness has left us. When we suddenly need strong faith, our faith proves feeble and wavering because we have exercised it so little. God in his mercy may still hear us, but our hearts feel guilty for so neglecting Him and disobeying Him in our prayer life. We need to ask His forgiveness instantly. Remember, forgiveness can be received in a moment if we truly repent and take steps now to do God’s will. But **power in prayer** is not restored in a moment. Normally, it **is the result of faithfulness in a life of prayer**. God keeps a record not only of our thoughts and words but also of our prayers. Ravenhill writes, “I believe most of us will need the tears wiped from our eyes when the books are opened at the judgment bar of God, and our personal record is read.”

When you and I stand with Christ in eternity, perhaps the most amazing feature of our lives as we look back will be our prayerlessness. “If there are any regrets in heaven, the greatest will be that we spent so little time in real intercession.” If, as Andrew Murray taught, Christ intended prayer to be the great power by which His Church would do its work, then certainly the neglect of prayer by the church is the greatest reason for its powerlessness. He added, “Satan will bring forth all his power to prevent us from becoming men of prayer.” How disappointed God is with the spiritual life of pastor and people when they are weak in prevailing prayer and the prayer of faith. God has given us no greater means of bringing down His blessing and power upon our lives and work.

There is probably no single sin that you and I ought to acknowledge with deeper shame than the sin of prayerlessness. Perhaps never in the history of the church have we church leaders and our congregations been busier and more organized in church activity. But where is the power that attracts the unsaved, that causes them to tremble in the presence of God, that brings them to real repentance and transformed lives, and that then make them a part of an actively witnessing community? *Being busy is not enough. We must be blessed and empowered, used mightily of God.*

Never has the cause of God needed more visible illustration of the possibilities and power of prayer than does the church in our age. It is prayer power that makes saints and that produces holy character, ethical living, and fruitful witnessing. God forgives our prayerlessness and calls us all again to a life of prevailing prayer.

### **WE CAN BE SAVED FROM PRAYERLESSNESS**

Chadwick has written, "It would seem as if the biggest thing in God's universe is a man who prays. There is only one thing more amazing, that is, that man, knowing this, should not pray." Lord, make us giants in prayer! *Prayerlessness is the sin of the casual Christian. The absence of truly prevailing prayer is the sin of many praying Christians.* Thank God, there is a way to a life of prayer and empowerment through prayer. We must have an entirely new relationship to Jesus. Says Andrew Murray, "It is vain for us, with our defective spiritual life, to endeavor to pray more or better. It is an impossibility."

We must see Jesus as the Lord who waits to save us from prayerlessness. We must believe Him for a new life of closer fellowship with Him, a life in His love and communion beyond anything that we have known thus far. Jesus longs to save you from a defective spiritual life and a defective prayer life. He must become more personally real to you. You must value His infinite love more than ever before. You must reciprocate His longing for communion with you. Be willing to take time to share His prayer burden with Him as He intercedes at the right hand of the Father.

The resurrected, enthroned Lord Jesus, your great intercessor, through His Holy Spirit, will teach you the life and power of prayer. May the Spirit fill you with the spirit of intercession. *Learning to prevail in pray demands willpower.* It demands recognizing your spiritual priorities. Ravenhill has said, "Prayer is a battle for full-grown men, fully armed and fully awake to the possibilities of grace." God teach us the role and priority of prayer! God give us a thirst and relish for prayer, for meeting face-to-face with the Lord Jesus! God give us the determination to prepare ourselves to pray, to set apart time and follow the example of Christ in prayer! God teach us to meet the conditions of prayer, to cultivate the hunger for prayer, to experience the joy of prevailing intercession and the power of God that comes upon our life and others as we pray!