

December 14, 2014

Mostly Personal...

Loved Ones,

In today's sermon I will remind you that prayer is vital and that it must be kept free from corruption at all costs. Time will not permit me to go into detail about that during the message, but I want to remind you what the Scriptures teach about the need to keep our prayers full of life and integrity.

Jesus knew even very religious people could have a form of godliness that is not real (Matthew 22:29). He told one group, "You are in error, for you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." Paul thought many religious people possessed little more than meaningless form. Their praying might actually be powerless fluff (2 Timothy 3:5). So, how can something as powerful and virtuous as prayer become corrupted?

First of all, ***our basic nature is broken***. Our lives tend toward that which is evil until Jesus becomes Lord and Savior. Christians aren't perfectly good, and unbelievers are not totally bad. But each group defaults, more or less, to a certain predisposition. Titus 1:15 declares, "To the pure, all things are pure. But to the wicked, all things are corrupted." In other words, unless we have the refining Holy Spirit in our lives, we are often little more than blind leaders of the blind. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to pray with integrity (Romans 8:26, 27).

Jesus also warned that our ***motive for prayer*** could be corrupt. "They pray to be seen of men," He said in Matthew 6:5. Forgetting to please God, they concentrate on developing a spiritual reputation.

He also observed the same selfish nature could corrupt our ***method of prayer***. In the same sermon (Matthew 6:7), he warned that many think they will be heard for their *many words*. I believe we ought to pray much, but quality is more important than quantity. The greatest people of prayer understand that both are important.

The same people will also usually misdirect the ***focus of prayer***. Jesus pointed out they sought to receive their reward in public because they prayed in public. Instead Heaven seeks to reward those publicly who have, in humility, prayed in secret.

This is just a start in understanding the nature of prayer, but it's a good start. Maybe a good way to begin is to ask the Holy Spirit to guard our motives, methods, and focus of prayer. May we always allow our spiritual man to rise up when we pray!

By the way, if you are having trouble getting a grip on the concept of prayer, I'd like to recommend a good book. It's probably 25 years old by now, but Frank Peretti wrote a novel that did more than most theological volumes to help Christians see what happens when they pray. The name of the book is ***This Present Darkness***. Many criticized the book, but the bottom line was that it moved people to prayer. It was about that time I heard Dick Eastman say, "Some things happen when I pray that do not happen if I do not pray. Therefore, if I do not pray, then something important goes undone in my life or in the life of someone I love."

So pray Beloved – pray!

I love you,

Pastor Stephen