

Sunday Morning Message

September 29, 2024

Resetting Your Prayer Life

Text – James 5:13 – 18; Luke

Congregational Reading – James 5:13 - 18

Introduction

In the last couple of messages, we have been talking about “Hitting the Reset Button” on our Christian life. [Explain]

In this series of messages so far, we have talked about

- Resetting our commitment to the local church, which is the *“pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15).
- Resetting our relationship with God, generally. We read from Jesus letter through the Apostle John to the Church at Ephesus. He commended them for the many good things they were doing, but then He said:

“4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” (Revelation 2:4-5)

Another passage I thought about which goes along with this idea of getting back to doing some things, or spiritually hitting the reset button is a passage in Jeremiah 6:16:

“16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jeremiah 6:16)

In the passage in Jeremiah, God tells the people of Judah to *“ask for the old paths, where is the good way”*. God was telling these people that there was a time when things were right in their nation. There was a time when God was blessing them, when they were enjoying God’s provision and protection. God said that needed to go back to that place in time and do the things that they used to do when they first came into the land.

Jeremiah penned these words at a time when Judah was away from God. The word “backslidden” is used 13 times in this Book. It is only used 4 other times in the entire Bible. “Backslidden” means that the people once were doing right, but had gotten away from those good ways, and had veered off the path.

Another passage that supports what we are talking about regarding hitting the reset button

on your spiritual life is found in Paul's second letter to the Church at Corinth:

"Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:1-3)

When we say that we are getting back to good spiritual practices or that we are hitting the reset button spiritually, it means we are going to do the *"first works,"* and *"seek the old paths wherein is the good way,"* and we are also going to keep it very simple and uncomplicated.

Transition

This week, we will discuss another basic, foundational practice that needs to play a prominent role in our church, and in our daily lives. And it's something that we often get away from and let slip in our lives. It's something we need to get back to.

Today, we are going to discuss hitting the reset button on our prayer life.

*"13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."* (James 5:13-18)

The Bible tells us that early church in Jerusalem was a praying church.

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42)

Jesus said, *"**My house shall be called the house of prayer;** but ye have made it a den of thieves."* (Matthew 21:12-13)

A. W. Tozer said: "The church that is not jealously protected by mighty intercession and sacrificial labors will before long become the abode of every evil bird and the hiding place for unsuspected corruption. The creeping wilderness will soon take over that church that trusts in its own strength and forgets to watch and pray."

E. M. Bounds who perhaps wrote more about prayer than any other preacher said: “Prayer is of transcendent importance. Prayer is the mightiest agent to advance God's work. Praying hearts and hands only can do God's work. Prayer succeeds when all else fails.” (E. M. Bounds)

“We can do nothing without prayer. All things can be done by importunate prayer. It surmounts or removes all obstacles, overcomes every resisting force and gains its ends in the face of invincible hindrances.” (E. M. Bounds)

Charles Spurgeon said: “Shall I give you yet another reason why you should pray? I have preached my very heart out. I could not say any more than I have said. Will not your prayers accomplish that which my preaching fails to do? Is it not likely that the Church has been putting forth its preaching hand but not its praying hand? Oh dear friends! Let us agonize in prayer.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Andrew Murray said: “The coming revival must begin with a great revival of prayer. It is in the closet, with the door shut, that the sound of abundance of rain will first be heard. An increase of secret prayer with ministers will be the sure harbinger of blessing.”

“The enemy uses all his power to lead the Christian, and above all the minister, to neglect prayer. He knows that however admirable the sermon may be, however attractive the service, however faithful the pastoral visitation, none of these things can damage him or his kingdom if prayer is neglected.” (Andrew Murray)

Oswald Chambers said: “Jesus Christ carries on intercession for us in heaven; the Holy Ghost carries on intercession in us on earth; and we the saints have to carry on intercession for all men.”

Jesus taught his disciples about prayer: (Turn to Luke 11:1 – 13)

Within the model prayer that Jesus taught them, there are certain basic pattern that should be part of our prayers.

- There was Praise and Worship – “*hallowed be thy name*”
- There was Petition – “give us”
- There was Confession – “forgive us”

The Bible is loaded with admonitions to pray. It is a basic and simple thing that we need to get back to; it is a first work and an old path that has been mightily blessed of God for centuries.

Jersey Shore Baptist Church needs to hit the reset button on praying.

Illustrate – We used to have all night prayer meetings; we used to have cottage prayer meetings; we used to have a bunch of us here early on Saturday mornings for prayer. We used

to have people gathered at the altar before services and at the invitation time to pray. What happened? When did prayer become some secondary, non-essential for our church?

Illustrate – Spurgeon’s Heating Plant

Prayer Principles

1. Schedule a Time to Pray

*"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."
(Psalm 55:17)*

2. Find a secluded place to pray.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (Mark 1:35)

3. Develop a simple prayer list

"5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matthew 6:5-13)

- **Spiritual Needs**
- **People**
- **Physical or Tangible Needs of Others**
- **Personal Needs**

4. Remember to praise and thank God for all that He has already done for you.

5. Remember to confess your sins.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" (Psalm 66:18)

6. Come to Prayer Meeting and find a prayer partner that will hold you accountable.

7. Stay Consistent.

Conclusion - Illustration

Your Friend, God

As you got up this morning, I watched you, and hoped you would talk to me, even if it were just a few words, asking my opinion or thanking me for something good that happened in your life yesterday. But I noticed you were too busy, trying to find the right outfit to wear.

When you ran around the house getting ready, I knew there would be a few minutes for you to stop and say hello, but you were too busy. At one point you had to wait fifteen minutes with nothing to do except sit in a chair. Then I saw you spring to your feet. I thought you wanted to talk to me but you ran to the phone and called a friend to get the latest gossip instead. I watched patiently all day long. With all our activities I guess you were too busy to say anything to me.

I noticed that before lunch you looked around, maybe you felt embarrassed to talk to me, that is why you didn't bow your head. You glanced three or four tables over and you noticed some of your friends talking to me briefly before they ate, but you didn't. That's okay. There is still more time left, and I hope that you will talk to me yet.

You went home and it seems as if you had lots of things to do. After a few of them were done, you turned on the TV. I don't know if you like TV or not, just about anything goes there and you spend a lot of time each day in front of it not thinking about anything, just enjoying the show. I waited patiently again as you watched the TV and ate your meal, but again you didn't talk to me.

Bedtime I guess you felt too tired. After you said goodnight to your family you plopped into bed and fell asleep in no time. That's okay because you may not realize that I am always there for you.. I've got patience, more than you will ever know.... I even want to teach you how to be patient with others as well.

I love you so much that I wait everyday for a nod, prayer or thought, or a thankful part of your heart. It is hard to have a one-sided conversation.

Well, you are getting up once again. Once again I will wait, with nothing but love for you. Hoping that today you will give me some time. Have a nice day!

Your friend,

GOD