



is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6a).

We pray because failure to pray can be a sin against God.

When Saul was made king, Samuel warned the people of their wickedness, but then told them **“far be it from me to sin against the LORD**

in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sam. 12:23). Christians are commanded to pray for one another (Jas. 5:16). We are to pray, not only for other Christians, but **“for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”** (1 Tim. 2:1-2). If we fail to pray it is sin, and notice (as Samuel put it) **“sin against God!”** We

don’t have to understand why God commands us to do certain things, but we must be obedient to what He has commanded. Prayer is an act of obedience.



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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

What Good Does Prayer Do?

By Kyle Pope

We can all think of situations in our life or in the lives of those we know when prayers have been offered to God for a certain outcome and things turned out much different than we had hoped. What good did it do to pray? Was it just a waste of time? There is more to prayer than making and receiving the requests that we make to God.

We pray because we are commanded to pray. For Christians, prayer is not always about the outcome. As children of God, Christians are commanded to pray. Luke records that Jesus told the Parable of the Persistent widow to teach, **“that men always ought to pray and not lose heart”** (Luke 18:1). James taught, **“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray”** (Jas. 5:13). Paul taught the Philippians, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”** (Phil. 4:6). He told those in Thessalonica, quite directly, **“pray without ceasing”** (1 Thess. 5:17). If nothing else was involved in prayer Christians must do it because it is commanded.

We pray because it can influence Deity.

The Bible makes it clear that God knows what we need before we ask (Matt. 6:8), and He knows all things that He will do in the future—**“known to God from eternity are all His works”** (Acts 15:18). Even so, it is equally clear that the Bible teaches that prayer is capable of influencing the involvement of Deity with His creation. The Holy Spirit promises through James that, **“the prayer of faith will save the sick”** (Jas. 5:15). When Jonah warned Nineveh, **“Yet forty days, and Nineveh**

shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4), the people repented and began to **“cry mightily to God”** (Jonah 3:8). Seeing this, Scripture tells us, **“God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it”** (Jonah 3:10). God told Hezekiah that he was about to die (2 Kings 20:1), but when he prayed to God in humility his life was extended fifteen years (2 Kings 20:2-6). These examples make it clear that prayer can move God to act in ways He would not have without prayer.

We pray because communication is part of a healthy relationship.

A remarkable element of the record of Jesus’s life on earth is the fact that Jesus regularly set aside time to pray (e.g. Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; 9:28). As God in the flesh, if any soul in human flesh ever didn’t need to pray, it would have been Jesus. He knew all things (John 18:4); He had power over all things (Mark 4:41)—even death (John 10:18), and yet took comfort in declaring to God the Father—**“You always hear Me”** (John 11:42). Christians have a personal relationship with God. We are His children—**“a son honors His Father”** (Mal. 1:6). Can a son *honor* a Father, and yet refuse to talk to Him? Because of Christ’s sacrifice and intercession on

our behalf, Christians have the privilege of being able to approach the Creator of all things in the assurance, **“if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us”** (1 John 5:14). All relationships require communication. God speaks to us through His word, and we speak to Him in prayer. Regardless of the outcome of our requests, Christians pray to nurture and sustain the relationship we have with God.

We pray because prayer “avails” much.

As James commanded prayer for the sick (Jas. 5:14), he went on to teach that we should pray for the sins we confess to one another (Jas. 5:15-16a). Within this context, he reveals the powerful declaration, **“the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”** (Jas. 5:16b)—that is, lit. **“it is very strong”**—**“it can accomplish much”** (NASB) or **“is full of power in its working”** (*Bible in Basic English*). The child in school as he studies math, science, history, or English may ask—*“What good will this ever do me?”* At that time in his life he can’t yet see how these elementary principles help him. When he is an adult those things that seemed unnecessary may help him get a job, manage his finances, communicate clearly, and make informed decisions. If the Holy Spirit tells us that prayer accomplishes something, we must trust that it does, even at those times when we may not be able to pinpoint what it has accomplished.

We pray because prayer demonstrates trust in God. Salvation requires placing trust in God. Our spiritual relationship to God is unseen, yet

we must trust that—**“He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”** (Heb. 11:6b). The intercession of Christ on our behalf is unseen, yet we must trust that—**“He always lives to make intercession for”** us (Heb. 7:25). Even the atonement itself—we can’t pay for our own sin, but we trust that Christ—**“is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”** (1 John 2:2). Prayer is an act that demonstrates trust. We make requests because we trust that God has the power to deliver our requests. We express our cares to Him in prayer, in the trust that **“He cares for”** us (1 Pet. 5:7). We confess our sins to Him trusting that He alone holds the power to forgive sins through Christ (1 John 1:9). Prayer demonstrates trust, just as the failure to pray demonstrates a lack of trust—**“without faith it**