

Science of Prayer 1 of 6

#0389

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—October 10, 1967

“...Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples”
Luke 11:1.

I am most anxious for us to learn, dear friends, this science of prevailing prayer.

Prayer is perhaps the part of the Christian life which is the most invisible and unreasonable. By invisible, I mean that nobody sees the prayer life. Our coming to church, other people know about that. When we read the Bible, people may see us reading the Bible. When we go out and do missionary work, we're in contact with other people. But the real prayer life is an experience that the individual has alone with God. And as I say, that is largely invisible.

By unreasonable I mean this: to kneel down by your bed or by a chair or out under the trees and talk to Someone that you can't see, and to expect that to have some influence upon somebody a thousand miles away, or next door, is utterly unreasonable as far as human science is concerned.

Most people in this world if they want something done, they feel that they've got to do something about it, or enlist some other human being in doing something about it. And to actually rely on Someone that we can't see way up there in Heaven and to expect that, that will actually accomplish something in solving human problems, this, my dear friends, as I say is unreasonable, in a sense. It's contrary to human thinking.

And because of these two things, because the prayer life is invisible and unreasonable—using the explanations I have made—very little praying is done. Oh, people may say prayers. The heathen do that. But to pray effectually, to pray in a way that gets things done, to pray in a way that the one who is praying knows that his prayers are answered and that those who are acquainted with him see that things happen when he prays, this is an experience that some individuals down through the history of this world have had.

Oh, think of the prayers of Elijah, how they stopped the windows of Heaven, and then opened them. Think of the prayers of Elisha, who trained with Elijah in prayer life. Think of how people were brought back from the dead, lepers were cleansed, and other marvelous things happened.

And we think of the prayers of the early church. We think of the church gathered there to pray for Peter when he was in prison. Did anything happen? Why, yes. An angel was sent in answer to the prayers of the church there in Jerusalem, and Peter was let out of prison in the middle of the night—a wonderful experience!

The whole book of Acts, which we are studying now in our Sabbath School Lesson, is one continuous story of answered prayers. Am I correct?

Let me ask you something, friends. Is that your life experience?

Now, let me tell you the reason I want to study this with you tonight. Turn to 2 Corinthians 1. I'll let you in on the secret right at the beginning of the study. I want you to see my motive, why I want to study this with you:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"
2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

Do you know anybody that's in trouble?

Somebody might respond, "Well, Brother Frazee, do you know anyone that isn't in trouble?"

The world is full of trouble, isn't it? Well, is there anything that can be done about it? Is there any hope for people in trouble, any comfort for them, any answer to their questions, any solution to their problems? Listen: This verse teaches me that the comfort you and I give to others must be the comfort that we ourselves have received from God in similar situations.

You notice what he says here:

"Blessed be God... the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble" 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

Think of it. Paul takes on quite a bit, doesn't he? He says, "Thank God, I have something that can comfort anybody in any trouble."

"What do you have, Paul?"

"Oh, I have the comfort wherewith God has comforted me."

Had Paul been through some experiences of sorrow, bereavement, persecution, shipwreck, hunger, sickness, stoning, imprisonment? He'd been through all those things and many other troubles. And he said, "God has done something for me, so I can help people that are in this experience and this experience and this experience."

Now dear ones, let's be very practical. The people that need help are not all a thousand miles away. Some of them might be people right here in this chapel tonight. Am I right? And the time to help people isn't just after this valley is swarming with refugees. Oh, no. The time to help people is right now. This is the

place, and this is the hour. And oh, I hope that every one of you tonight will be thrilled with the thought that God has chosen you to help somebody.

Now, how will He do it? Paul says, "The way God has prepared me to help others—He's let me go through sorrows, tribulations, problems, difficulties. And He's helped me to find the answer so I can give to others this comfort that God has given me." And so it is in this light that I want to study the prayer experience with you.

What do you use prayer for? Is prayer a ritual, like saying grace before meals? There are many that wouldn't think of eating without first bowing their heads and saying grace. And most people that know anything about religion, they wouldn't dare go to sleep without first kneeling down and asking God to forgive their sins of the day and to keep them through the night. And that's right; all that is correct.

But dear friends, I read something here in the book *Desire of Ages* that I want to share with you. This is something wonderful:

"...in every difficulty we are to see a call to prayer" *The Desire of Ages*, page 667.

Now when we say grace at meals, that isn't because we are in difficulty. We want to thank God for the food and ask Him to bless it. We should. But here is a certain kind of prayer and a certain kind of invitation to that kind of prayer. What is it?

"...in every difficulty we are to see a call to prayer" *Ibid.*

Is that what difficulty means to you—a call to prayer? Now you stop to think about it, and friends, doesn't that throw a rosy light on difficulties and problems? Think of it! There is God on His throne, and here is Harry Jones down here in this world. And God says (if you'll allow me to put it in this human way), "There's Harry. I'd like to get Harry closer to me. He loves me, but he's busy with this and that. I'd like to get his ear. I'd like to get his attention. How can I do it? Oh, I know. I'll let him have a difficulty."

Can you remember when you were children you might be playing contentedly and not be thinking a thing about father or mother. Did you ever stub your toe? Then what? "Mamma, Mamma!" You run for the house, pour some salve, and a rag around the toe." The little children know what to do when they get into trouble. They cry and come running, right?

Now turn to Psalm 50, and you'll find the Bible statement of this principle that I've just read from *Desire of Ages*. I want you to see it right here. This is wonderful. Psalm 50:15. What's the second word? Call. What's the fourth word? Me.

"...call upon me [when] in the day of trouble..." Psalm 50:15.

"God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble" Psalm 46:1.

So trouble is a time, especially, to call on God. And really that's the purpose of it, friends. It isn't to throw us into depression, discouragement. Oh, no, that isn't the purpose of it at all. Now, it may do that if we don't carry out the instructions. It can do that very easily. It can frustrate us. But if we carry out the directions, in every difficulty, we're to see what? A call to prayer. Isn't that wonderful?

Then, if I have 10 difficulties, I have 10 what? Ten calls to prayer. But suppose I have 20 difficulties? Then I have 20 calls to prayer. How many do you think it ought to take to get me into the prayer experience? Just one ought to be enough, shouldn't it?

But do you know, the human thing—and we're all human, more or less—is that as the difficulties increase, we feel that we have little time or no time to pray. We've got to run and solve the difficulties. And after that, then we're going to find time to say our prayers, carry out our religious duties, you understand.

So, this evening, let us think for a little of how we can learn more about this science of prayer in solving problems. For I envision that the great future of this institution is that of being a place where people come to learn how to solve their problems. And friends, this is the core, the center of the whole science of problem-solving. Take this out, and I would not give a nickel for what's left.

That's what the world is trying to do today. They have all sorts of men trained in all branches of science trying to solve the problems of human beings. But they're leaving God out of it, in most cases. They're leaving prayer out of it. Oh, I know there's a type of something called prayer. And men who know nothing of the Creator God that you and I worship write books on how to get answers to prayer. And what they mean is how to have your own selfish way. That's paganism. I'm not interested in that kind of prayer.

In the *Review and Herald* of this week, on page 18, there is a most wonderful experience of answered prayer. I hope you'll all read it. A dear brother in Port of Spain, Trinidad—that's an island down near the coast of South America, you know—had leprosy. So he had to go to the government leper colony to live until he recovered or until he died.

Well, while he was there, he gave himself to prayer and to soul-winning activity. As the result of his work several of his fellow lepers gave their hearts to Jesus and accepted this message. You know that made him happy. And finally, his disease was arrested, and he was allowed to go home.

Well, you say, "That's a wonderful story." It is, but it doesn't end there. The most wonderful part is ahead. It's not going to end like you think it does at all. This is truly a wonderful experience in prayer.

After Brother Rainy returned home these new converts that he had gotten to accept Christ and the message in the leper colony, some of them began to slip. Backslide, we call it. And Brother Rainy was concerned about it, naturally. He heard that they were slipping. So he was praying earnestly for these men that he had

helped to win to Christ and this message. And he kept praying for them. He realized that something must be done to help them in the backsliding.

After much prayer, this answer came to him. He had worked with these men. He knew their problems and their weaknesses. He would be the best person to help win them back. And so he prayed that his leprosy might return so that he might have an opportunity to be sent by the government back into that leper colony.

And, my dear friends, his prayer was answered. And he went to the medical examiners, and they found the evidence which he had begun to notice after his prayer that the disease was returning. And they sent him back to the leper colony, and he not only was instrumental in winning back all these backsliders but with their help, Brother Rainy won some more. And today he's there in that leper colony witnessing for Jesus and winning more souls.

That's answered prayer, my dear friends. And that's a million, million miles away from all this power of positive thinking that this man in New York City thinks is prayer to God. That's spiritualism and selfishness. This is unselfish, true prayer. The purpose of Christian prayer, true prayer is not to get God to give us what we want. It's to bring us to the place where God can give us what He wants.

The supreme example of this is in the Garden of Gethsemane as we see Jesus there under the olive trees. What does he say there? Each time as the climax of the prayer struggle comes, what does He say?

“...nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”
Matthew 26:39.

“...not my will, but thine, be done” Luke 22:42.

Now, let's put this together. In every difficulty, we're to see what? A call to prayer. But what is the purpose of God calling us to prayer? Is it so that we can put a nickel in the slot and out will come a candy bar? Is that it? Is that what prayer is? We pray for this and presto, there it is? Sort of an Aladdin's lamp, you understand, you just rub it and make a wish, and there it is. My dear friends, if that were the way prayer operated the most selfish people in the world would be doing the most praying. Am I correct? And prayer instead of leading people close to God would separate them further and further from Him.

“Well,” somebody says, “What good is prayer if I can't get what I want?”

Turn to 1 John, and let's see what prayer is for. It isn't to give us what we want. That isn't the purpose of it at all. And oh, I hope that every one of you in the days to come will have the privilege of kneeling down with some refugee and I use that word in its large meaning, somebody who is fleeing for refuge, and helping him to find out the meaning of his problem and the meaning of prayer—not to give him what he wants. Now let's read this verse and see what the purpose of prayer is:

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if we

know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" 1 John 5:14–15.

Ah, what is it that we are to have confidence in?

"...that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" 1 John 5:14.

And if we know He hears us, we know we have what we are asking for.

Then, that which we may ask for is not unlimited. Oh, there's nothing to keep us, of course, from asking for anything, but that is not the purpose of prayer.

Let me illustrate it: Uncle Arthur, in one of his bedtime stories, tells of a little boy whose mother heard him one night there by his bed as he was praying. He asked God to give him an elephant. I don't know whether he had been to a Circus, or a parade, or the zoo, or something and had seen one that attracted his attention, but at any rate some way or another in that little head, the thought had been formed, "Oh, I wish I had an elephant."

And so he had learned that the way to get things was to ask. And so he asked God for an elephant. And his mother heard him.

She said, "Why, darling, why do you ask for an elephant. You won't get an elephant."

"Well, didn't you say that we could pray and get things?"

"Yes. But where would we put the elephant?"

"Well," he said, "Daddy could build a corral back here in the back yard."

"Well, what would we feed him?"

"Oh, Daddy could get some hay."

Daddies can do lots of things, you know.

Mother said, "No sonny, I don't think God's going to send you an elephant."

Well, what do you say? Do you think God is going to send him an elephant? No, my dear friends, God isn't going to send him an elephant. And you know there're a lot of people praying for elephants, white elephants we call them. If they got them, they wouldn't know what to do with them.

That little fellow if he had gotten an elephant, about the third day he'd have been good and tired of it, wouldn't he? Especially if he had had to draw water for it and carry the hay.

Now, we smile at the little boy. But looking back over your life, did you ever ask God for something, friends, and if you'd gotten it, it would have been like an elephant? Or maybe you did get it? Maybe God, in His wise purpose, let you have the thing you thought you wanted until you found out it wasn't what you wanted at all.

Oh friends, I pray that tonight we shall lay hold of this wonderful text here in 1 John 5:14. Confidence means: that we come asking Him for what He wants instead of what we want.

"Ah," you say, "But I don't see how that's going to help me in my problem."

The reason it will help you with your problem is that God loves you better than you love yourself. And He knows better than you do what is for your best good.

Now, look at those two things. Doesn't God love you better than you love yourself? Think about what He's invested in you. He has already done a million times more for you than you've ever been able or willing to do for yourself. As we studied last Friday night, it's all, what were those two words? For us.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" Romans 8:32.

And so my dear friends, I can kneel down by the side of the man that's in the greatest trouble in this world, and I can assure him from the depths of my heart, "My brother, God loves you better than you love yourself. God is more interested in you than you are interested in yourself."

But on top of that, notice the next factor. "God knows better than you do what will really solve your problem." Isn't God wiser than man? Oh friends, from all eternity, all wisdom has been in Him. If we could devote a million years to nothing but the solution of one man's problem, we couldn't come up with as good an answer as God already has. Is that right? Oh, let our hearts be filled and thrilled with the infinite wisdom of God.

But then on top of that, besides His great love and His wisdom, He has all power. He is all power. Many times we think of solutions to human problems, but we have no way to implement the thing we think up. But God not only is wise, He has all power, and it's all harnessed to the one task of helping human beings. And that's why He makes all things work together for good to those that love Him, and let Him work out His wise purpose.

Friends, isn't prayer a wonderful thing? What is prayer for in these difficulties? It is to lead us to look away from the problem to the One who solves problems. In prayer we're to bring our troubles, our perplexities, our difficulties to Jesus, and then so surrender ourselves fully to Him that we are glad and anxious to accept any answer that He gives.

You remember Paul was endowed with wonderful power to work miracles. He healed the sick. He even raised the dead. But Paul had a problem of his own. That

day when he met Jesus on the Damascus road, his eyes were blinded. Do you remember? And while he had a partial recovery at the time he was baptized, his eyes were never as good as they were before. And several times, he sought the Lord about it.

You know people have what I think is a strange idea, and yet it's a very human idea in this matter of faith and prayer. They suppose that if you have enough faith, you can be healed of anything. Paul had so much faith he could heal hundreds and thousands of people. Well, why didn't he get healed himself? Read the story as he tells it there in 2 Corinthians 12. He besought the Lord more than once. Finally, the answer came:

“...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Oh friends, let's be practical. Men and women are going to come to this place to be helped with a thousand different problems. And in some cases, in answer to prayer, God is going to remove the difficulty. He's going to heal the sickness, or He's going to take away the desire for tobacco, like that. I've seen Him do it for people instantly, or the desire for alcohol or the wicked temper or any one of these other problems. God's going to do it in answer to prayer, as they pray and as we pray for and with them.

But I want to tell you something, friends. Some of the most wonderful answers to prayer that God wants to give you and me are not of that character. What do I mean? I mean that one of the greatest things that God can enable a child of His to do is to live with a problem—not by the removal of the problem, but as Jesus did with Paul:

“...My grace is sufficient for thee...” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Look at Ellen White. Again and again, in her experience she was healed, marvelously, miraculously. But again and again, God led her into experiences where instead of relief coming, she simply had to go ahead through the sickness, through the pain, through the difficulties that would discourage many a soul. She just had to take hold, by faith, of the hand of Jesus and go right ahead.

Do you know anything about that kind of answered prayer? I know that some of you do. And do not think my dear brother or sister, that that is a lack of faith. Do not picture that if you could only somehow get to where you ought to be that all those problems and difficulties would fly away. That'll be when we enter the celestial abode. But here in this world, the saints of God live with problems—their own and the problems of others. And don't forget our opening text. The comfort that we offer to others is the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

And oh, friends, if the only hope we could offer to men is—“Look, Brother, we're going to kneel down and pray for you. And perhaps God will take away that desire for liquor or take away that desire for tobacco or take away that angry temper or take away your sickness whether in the stomach or the heart or the lungs or

wherever”—I say if the only hope we have to offer is that we’ll pray and maybe God will do that, suppose that doesn’t happen. Then where are we?

Oh, friends why not at the beginning, instead of at the bitter end, learn that the purpose of prayer is not to get God to do what we’ve decided ought to be done, but it’s to lead us into an experience where, with joy and submission we drop into His hands and say, "Lord, Thy will be done," and to believe that in the difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief.

After all, friends, if here’s a lion in the way, there’s more than one way that God can help me. He may drive the lion away, and I may clap my hands and say, "Oh Lord, I’m so glad that you drove that lion away. Now I can go ahead."

But suppose God says to me, "Now, listen. I’m not going to drive that lion away. But, you go right ahead. And when he gets in your way, you just grapple with him."

"Oh, but I’m afraid of what he might do."

"Never mind; I was with David. He took care of the lion and the bear, and then the giant. Go right ahead."

Do you see what I mean, friends? Let us not be afraid of difficulties. Let us not be afraid of problems. Let us talk courage to people. And let us believe that in God and with God, we can do all things, but not without prayer. The purpose of prayer is to give us the help we need. So in every difficulty, we’re to see a call to prayer; prayer, what for? To find out what God’s will is and get the strength to do it.

We know it’s God’s will to deliver us from liquor and tobacco, don’t we? We know it’s God’s will to deliver us from worry and fear, don’t we? We know it’s God’s will to deliver us from anger, evil temper. But in every one of those things—alcohol, tobacco, anger, evil temper, worry—God may answer us in more than one way. He may drive the lion away, or He may strengthen us to grapple with it.

And listen friends, when you have prayed and prayed earnestly, and then you get up from your knees, and you want to smoke as bad as you ever did, don’t think God hasn’t answered your prayer. Say, "Lord, I know you have heard and answered me. And God helping me, I’ll not touch the cigarette."

Or if your problem is worry, you may pray for a minute, ten minutes, an hour, and you may feel just as worried as ever. You may pray for sleep, and you may lie there—can’t go to sleep. You say, "God doesn’t hear me." Oh, yes He does:

"This is the confidence that we have in him that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" 1 John 5:14.

My prayer is not, "Lord, take away the pain. Lord, take away the problem." My prayer is, "Lord, give me the grace to relate myself to the problem in a way that’ll bring glory to Your name"; if it means to lie there in the sleepless hours, then I can

repeat the Psalms of David, can't I? I don't have to say, "God hasn't heard my prayer." I say, "Yes, He has, and He's communing with me."

Or if it's pain, I think of the servant of God over there in Australia, dear Sister White. She'd gone there to attend camp meetings and minister to the people. She hadn't been there very long when she was stricken with pain in nearly all the nerves of her body. And there she lay propped up on pillows. She couldn't go out and attend the meetings.

But oh, she found that one part of her anatomy had been spared, her right arm. What did she do? She wrote and wrote and wrote. Friends, this wonderful book, that I read you that gem from tonight—*The Desire of Ages*—was largely written in that experience. Yes. Think of it, friends.

Don't you think that in eternity she will be eternally glad that God used that problem, that pain to keep her in bed instead of out just preaching to some people? She could have preached to a few hundred. But here in this marvelous volume, *The Desire of Ages*, she has preached literally to millions, and the end is not yet.

But that isn't all. It is out of the depth of pain and problems that an experience develops that we have something to share with people. So let us not ask for tasks equal to our powers. Let us pray for powers equal to our tasks. Let us not pray for problems as little as we are, friends. Let us pray for the grace of God to enable us, like David, to tackle the greatest problems and to accept the means that He employs.

Oh, how wonderful our God is!

Tomorrow night at the vesper service, I want to continue this subject studying more with you the science of prevailing prayer. Shall we, as we close this little vesper service tonight, kneel together around the mercy seat, by faith seeing Jesus as He presents His wounded hands there? And let us ask Him to teach us tonight to pray.

And may I give you this closing thought. It is in the water, not on the land that men learn to swim. We might hold a class in swimming here, day after day, week after week, and yet people could go right out from it, even with a diploma, and drown. Did you know it? The place to learn to swim is where? In the water.

And dear ones, if you want to learn to pray, pray. Get down with your Bible; with *Steps to Christ*, the chapter on prayer; with this wonderful *Desire of Ages*, with the chapters in *Christ's Object Lessons*: "Asking to Give" and "Shall not God avenge His Own," those wonderful chapters on prayer. Get down there and open the Bible to the verses on prayer that you know about and to these chapters that I've mentioned. Read a little and then talk to God about it. Read a little more and then talk to God about it. If your mind wanders, bring it back to what you're reading. If you run out of something to say, don't try to just go on and on to make yourself, let God talk to you a little through His Word. That's the way you visit with people. At least I hope that's the way you visit with people. We're not tape recorders, friends. Oh no. Let us then as we commune with God in prayer, learn more about how to do it. Shall we?

All right, we're going to have a season of prayer now. And may I suggest something. I'd like to have you engage in this experiment in prayer tonight. I've seen a few experiences where this has brought great blessing. And if you all listen carefully and cooperate, we're going to have a wonderful blessing here in the next 5 minutes.

I'm going to ask Brother Forrester to open the prayer, but he's going to pray just one sentence. Then somebody else is going to supply just one more sentence in the prayer. When you come to put your part in, remember just one sentence.

You know that's a hard thing for some people to do. They've gotten into the groove of having a certain form that they always have to say whenever they pray. Forget that tonight, friends, please, and leave all that aside.

And remember when it's time for you to say your sentence, remember God has already been addressed. The prayer has already been opened. And remember also, you don't have to close the prayer. Somebody else will do that. I'll close the prayer.

So you're going to put in how many sentences? Just one sentence. And let the longing of your heart, whatever it is, find expression in that one sentence.

Shall we kneel together?

[The prayer is not recorded]

Now, as I say friends, I'd like to be very practical about this. If there's somebody that needs help here tonight, I'd like you to do one of three things. Let the Lord lead you as to which one of these three things you will do. Either go by yourself, all alone with God after this study tonight. Go out by yourself and pray through your problem with God.

Or, get somebody to pray with you. You know somebody that's here tonight or that isn't here tonight that you can get hold of tonight before you go to bed, and the two of you get down and pray together until you know that God has heard your prayer.

Or, number 3, if you're not going to do either one of those, if your mind isn't lead that way, tarry here and let me pray with you and help you, and some of the rest of us.

My dear friends, I'm anxious that everybody that goes to bed tonight goes to bed knowing that you and Jesus are hand in hand and heart in heart. I want you to know that your problem is solved. It may be like Paul, to have a problem that you're going to have to live with the rest of your life, but why not live it in joy instead of depression? Why not live it in faith instead of hopelessness?

Oh friends, God is going to bring to this place many people that may have to live in pain for the rest of their lives, but they can do it triumphantly. I know it.

There's no question about it, friends. There is something about faith and hope that enables the Christian to rise above infirmities and problems of every kind. So, let's talk courage, but let's be sensible about it. Let us learn the science of prayer and faith.

Shall we stand?

Dear Lord, help each one of us to know how to reach out and help others learn these wonderful lessons. And whatever needy soul may be here tonight, help them in one of these three ways we have suggested to get abundant help from Thee before they go to bed tonight. We want to see everybody triumphant in God, not riding on clouds of their imagination, but walking the dusty, blood-stained path that Jesus has opened up before us—walking the path triumphantly, it may be of sorrow and pain, but assured of the guiding, guarding hand of God. We thank Thee, in Jesus' name, amen.

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