

Date: May 21, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 6:5–15

Sermon: *God Is At Work When We Pray*

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God's children often need reminders that God is at work in their midst. Without those reminders, we can too easily drift spiritually or become demoralized. Jesus reminds us that God is at work when we pray, and His "Lord's Prayer" teaches us how we should approach this all-important spiritual discipline.

The goal of prayer is the ear of God.

Charles Spurgeon

The little estimate we put on prayer is evident from the little time we give to it.

Edward McKendree Bounds

Prayer works, because your prayers invite God to be at work.

Matthew 6:5–15 ESV

5 “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

When is God *not* at work through our prayers?

1.) When prayer is a SHOW.

Matthew 6:5 ESV

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

The real secret of prayer is secret prayer.

John Blanchard

2.) When prayer is EMPTY.

Matthew 6:7 ESV

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Prayer is not some battering ram by which we gain entrance to God’s treasury. It is a receptacle by which we receive that which He already longs to give to us.

Herschel Hobbs

3.) When prayer is FAITHLESS.

James 1:6–8 ESV

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

4.) When prayer is HINDERED.

Prayer will make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off praying.

Charles Spurgeon

Psalms 66:18–19 ESV

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

1.) When we pray, God is at work IN us.

Prayer changes our hearts.

Matthew 6:9–10 ESV

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Scripture invites us to approach the throne with boldness, yet we must also remind ourselves of the awesome privilege of approaching the God of the universe.

Psalms 37:4 ESV

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Every true prayer is a variation on the theme 'Thy will be done.'

John Stott

A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is listening.

Soren Kierkegaard

2.) When we pray, God is at work FOR us.

Prayer changes our circumstances.

Though we cannot by our prayers give God any information, yet we must by our prayers give him honour.

Matthew Henry

Matthew 6:8 ESV

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matthew 6:11–13 ESV

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Romans 8:28 ESV

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

3.) When we pray, God is at work THROUGH us.

Prayer makes us change agents.

When we recognize ourselves as debtors, then we see ourselves as we truly are, beggars at the throne of grace.

Albert Mohler

God in His grace offers forgiveness through Jesus of an eternal debt owed Him if we would but ask.

Matthew 6:14–15 ESV

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Most of the prayers to God are answered through the people of God.