

Stop Going to Church – Prayer

3/5/23

Philippians 4:4-9

Sunday AM

Good AM. As you can likely tell, things are going to be a little different today as we continue our time in God's Word discussing the (5) essential ingredients of the church found in the early church.

If you're just joining us, for (3) weeks, we've been looking at the elements the early church was devoted to that afforded them the ability to thrive internally and make a difference externally. And it is to these (5) I believe must be present still, if the church is to be relevant in our post-Christian, post-truth culture.

Remember – *Jesus started the church the way He wanted it, and now He wants it the way He started it.*

The early church was marked by (5) qualities: (1) they were devoted to the Apostle's teachings; (2) to true koinonia; (3) to the breaking of bread (worship); (4) to prayer; and (5) to what God was going to do next.

Today, I want us to spend some time devoted to prayer.

What is prayer? Prayer is talking/listening to God for the purpose of tuning/aligning your life w/ His will. Prayer is not seeking to get God to do your bidding or fulfilling your daily wish list – prayer is one of the ways we commune w/ God to get on the same page w/ Him. After all, He's God and we're not.

Today, I want to lead us in a time of corporate prayer using the acrostic P.R.A.Y. from on Philippians 4:4-9.

Rejoice in the Lord always, I say again, rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all the Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, w/ thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ. Finally, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy – think on such things. And the things you have learned, received, heard, and saw in me, do these things, and the God of peace will be w/ you.

Let's begin w/ the letter – **P** for praise. I've asked Dr. Rob Peters to lead this segment.

The letter – **R** is for Repent. One of the necessary steps in the Christian life is to walk clean before the Lord.

I'm mindful of when Jesus was washing the feet of Peter in the upper room. Peter said, "Lord, not just my feet but my whole body." But Jesus, knowing Peter had already received Him as Savior said, "You're already clean (spiritually), but just need your feet washed" – referring to living in a dirty, dusty world.

In the same way, as believers, when we pray, we don't need to be saved again, but we do need to deal w/ the dirt/dust we collect living in a fallen world in our flesh that is tempted/tried – and often falls to the schemes of the enemy, the flesh, and the world.

This is why in the **Lord's Prayer**, Jesus told us to ask God to *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who've trespassed against us.*

This means, when we pray, we are to confess our failing to align w/ God and we begin by asking God to forgive us of when we commit sins of **commission** (things we do but shouldn't do) and sins of **omission** (things we don't do but should do).

BUT also, we're to honestly deal w/ the sins of others that infect/effect our lives so that we don't become embittered against them or entangled w/ them.

This is the heart behind what the Apostle John wrote in **1 John 1:9**: *If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

W/ this in mind, I want to offer you a few min. to return to the source of your joy by dealing w/ the dirt/dust you may've been collecting in your life due to not confessing and dealing w/ the sin in this world. So, spend a few min. confessing, repenting, and if needed, releasing others so that you'll be able to forgive too.

Now I want to turn our attention to the **A** – for Ask!

To ask involves (2) items – **petitioning/intercession**. *Petitioning* is praying to yourself and the issue/needs in your life so that God's will is done in your life, while *intercession* is praying for God's will to take place in someone else's life.

In Philippians 4, Paul says, instead of being worried and anxious about the experiences of your life, turn them over to God.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus told us to pray for God's will to be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven – and then He asked us to pray about our daily physical and spiritual needs.

The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us *to cast all of cares the Lord b/c He cares for us.*

Here is the point – God cares about the details of our lives and invites us to talk w/ Him about them. He doesn't expect us to handle them on our own, but He does expect us to trust/depend on Him in life. So, He invites us to turn everything over to Him as we seek and desire His will to be accomplished in/thru our lives. But this will require that we truly desire His will over our will. And let me assure you, His will/way will always be better than your way. And that's a promise!

It all depends on how we value the things of life...

A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19. A basketball in LeBron's James's hands is worth about \$45 mil. – it all depends on whose hands it's in. A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6. A baseball in Aaron Judge's hands is worth about \$44 mil. – it all depends on whose hands it's in. A tennis racket is useless in my hands, yet a tennis racket in Serena Williams' hands is a Championship trophy – it all depends on whose hands it's in. A rod in my hands might keep away a wild animal. A rod in Moses' hands parted a mighty sea – it all depends on whose hands it's in. A slingshot in my hands is a kid's toy – but a slingshot in David's hand slayed a mighty giant – it all depends on whose hands it's in. (2) fish and (5) loaves of bread in my hands are a couple of fish sandwiches – but in God's hands fed 1000's – it all depends on whose hands it's in. Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse, but nails in Jesus' hands has provided grace, mercy, for anyone who'll believe – it all depends on whose hands it's in. As you can see – it all depends on whose hands it's in. So, let me invite you to put your concerns/worries, your hopes/dreams, your families/relationships in God's hands b/c... it depends on whose hands it's in. And He cares for you.

WTM – let's petition the Lord and intercede for one another by casting our cares upon Him as we seek to align w/ His will for our lives.

Cedric will close out talking on *yielding* to the Lord.