

## Prayers of the Saints: Praying Without Ceasing – Corporately

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### SCRIPTURE

Ex 30:7-8: And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it [*the altar of incense*]. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations.

Mal 1:11: For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

Rev 5:8: And when He [*the Lamb*] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, reach holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.



### PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING – CORPORATELY

#### I. Introduction: the power of corporate prayer, not to mention “corporate faith”: Mark 2:1-12

#### II. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (Note: in the Greek text, **bold faced words** are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural):

<sup>16</sup> **Rejoice** always, <sup>17</sup> **pray** without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> **give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for **you**.\*

A. What does it mean for us, as a corporate church, to “pray without ceasing”?

B. How do rejoice corporately? How do we give thanks corporately?

C. How can we pray corporately when we don’t feel like praying (what should be our motivation)?

We’ve not invited a feel-good Jesus into our community; we’ve submitted ourselves to the rule of a battle-hardened warrior-king, the Lion-Lamb who’s come to deal with evil. He’s not here to make our plans work. He’s here to draw us into his Father’s mission. A praying community continuously invites his disruptive rule. He still calms storms, rebukes demons, and flips tables!

—Paul Miller, *A Praying Church*

At the heart of Israel’s experience of mercy stands her own helplessness and utter lack of resources; prayer is her only recourse. I think Israel’s plight more than touches that of the church and of individual believers. The church (denomination or individual congregation) can often be blind to her true state. ...The church is so used to developing new strategies, originating effective gimmicks, or promoting proven programs that she can dupe herself into thinking that she lives by her own evangelical cleverness. Yet there is a form of spiritual warfare that is not really touched by more and better administration or by brighter and more creative ideas. But we may not see this except in those times when God takes our props away and forces us to rely only on his naked hand for support. This can frequently occur in the believer’s personal life as well. Sometimes the Father may box us in, place us in a situation in which, one by one, all our secondary helps and supports are taken from us, in order that, defenseless, we may lean on his mercy alone. More and more God’s people must walk the way of desperation—prayer. Once we see this, we will no longer regard prayer as a pious cop-out but as our only rational activity.

I think it proper to add that in Samuel’s intercession on Israel’s behalf... we see a picture of the office of Christ as our high priest (see Luke 22:31-32; Rom. 8:34). Here is the true secret of our stead-fastness: we rely on the prayers of Another whose prayers are always effectual. Nothing is quite so moving as knowing that I am a subject of Jesus’ intercessory prayer.

—Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* (exposition of 1 Samuel 7)

\* Various regional translations:

**Philly, PA translation:** <sup>16</sup> Hey yous guys, rejoice always. <sup>17</sup> Yous guys need to pray widout ceasing. <sup>18</sup> In all tings give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for yous guys.

**Southern translation:** <sup>16</sup> Ya’ll rejoice always. <sup>17</sup> Ya’ll all gots to pray without ceasing. <sup>18</sup> In all things, ya’ll, give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for ya’ll.

### III. Goal of Corporate Prayer

- A. What do we pray for?
- B. What do we need?
- C. What do we desire (or what should we desire)?

### IV. Methods of Praying Corporately

- A. Prayer list (in our bulletin)
- B. Church bookmark (more are available)
- C. Times when the church is gathered
  - 1. Sunday morning: prayer time before the service. What should be prayed for?
  - 2. Sunday worship
    - a. Prayer of Adoration
    - b. Confession of sin prayer
    - c. Prayers for missions partners
    - d. Prayers for illumination (before and after message)
  - 3. How do we enter into a prayer being offered by one person in a service?
  - 4. Are there other times when we should be praying but we don't?

### V. Corporate Prayer

#### Exodus 20:1-17 (10 Commandments)

Our Father, *You have spoken to us, reminding us that,*

<sup>2</sup> *You are the Lord our God, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You have saved us from the slavery of sin and satan by Your blood shed on the cross.*

<sup>3</sup> *Please don't let us have any other gods before You.*

<sup>4</sup> *Help us not to make for ourselves a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> We don't want to bow down to them or serve them, because You, Lord God are a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the*

One of the most striking things John Calvin says about prayer is that it is the main way we receive everything there is for us in Christ: "It remains for us to seek in him, and in prayers to ask of him, what we have learned to be in him." Think about it. We cannot receive Christ and believe on his name (John 1:12-13) except through prayer. Martin Luther wrote that "all of life is repentance" and that is how we grow in grace. But that again is prayer. Our "chief end," says the Westminster Shorter Catechism, is "to glorify God and enjoy him forever." All these things are, at their essence, prayer.

At the end of time, history will culminate in a great banquet (Rev 19:9), but, as we have seen, we can eat with Jesus now. How? Through prayer. Commentators understand that Jesus' invitation to "hear his voice" and "open the door" so he can "come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Rev 3:20) is an invitation to fellowship and communion with him through prayer. Prayer—though it is often draining, even an agony—is in the long term the greatest source of power that is possible.

—Timothy Keller, *Prayer*

#### *The Touchstones of Prayer*

### PRAYER

#### *What It Is*

Work	Prayer is a duty and a discipline.
Word	Prayer is conversing with God.
Balance	Prayer is adoration, confession, thanks, and supplication.

#### *What It Requires*

Grace	Prayer is "In Jesus' name," based on the gospel.
Fear	Prayer is the heart engaged in loving awe.
Helplessness	Prayer is accepting one's weakness and dependence.

#### *What It Gives*

Perspective	Prayer reorients your view toward God.
Strength	Prayer is spiritual union with God.
Spiritual Reality	Prayer seeks a heart sense of the presence of God.

#### *Where It Takes Us*

Self-Knowledge	Prayer requires and creates honesty and self-knowledge.
Trust	Prayer requires and creates both restful trust and confident hope.
Surrender	Prayer requires and creates surrender of the whole life in love to God.

fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate *You*,<sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love *You* and keep Your commandments.

<sup>7</sup> *Guard us from taking Your name O God, in vain, for You will not hold anyone guiltless who takes Your name in vain.*

<sup>8</sup> *Cause us to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*<sup>9</sup> Six days *we labor, and we do all our work,*<sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to *You, our Lord God.* On it *You have commanded* that we shall not do any work: *we, or our son, or our daughter, our employees, or our livestock, or the sojourner who is within our gates.*<sup>11</sup> For in six days *You, Lord, made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and You rested on the seventh day.* Therefore *You blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

<sup>12</sup> *Teach us how to honor our fathers and our mothers, that our days may be long in the land that You are giving us.*

<sup>13</sup> *Guard us from murder, and guard us from harboring any anger and hatred in our hearts toward anyone else.*

<sup>14</sup> *Guard us from adultery, both literal and spiritual in thought, word, or deed.*

<sup>15</sup> *Guard us from stealing, and cause us to be content with what we have.*

<sup>16</sup> *Help us to love our neighbors and never bear false witness against any of them.*

<sup>17</sup> *Knowing that all sin and wrongdoing begins in the heart, empower us to not covet anything in our neighbor's household: his wife, his possessions, whatever belongs to him.*

*Thank you, Father, that our righteousness is not based on our obedience to this list because Your Son, Jesus Christ, fully obeyed this list of commandments, and by faith I live in His righteousness. Now please let His Spirit live more fully in us that these laws would be our delight.*

*[What prayers can we add to these to these above in our corporate desire to live in the will of our Father?]*

### **Matthew 22:37-40 (Greatest Commandments)**

*Our Father, while Your Son was on earth, He taught us the summary of all Your commandments by saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Therefore, we ask that You would transform our hearts so that we would love You, our God, with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds. And also cause us to love our neighbors as we do ourselves.

*[What prayers can we add to these to these in our love (or lack of love) for the Lord and for others?]*

### **Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission)**

<sup>18</sup> *Dear Lord Jesus, You came and said to Your original disciples and also to us that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to You by the Father. You have commanded us to*<sup>19</sup> "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that *You have commanded us.*"

*Therefore, as we go through life, make it to be our passion to make disciples. Let us rejoice to see more and more people baptized into Your Name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Help us to teach them to observe all that You have commanded us in what it means to live in covenant with You. And we thank you for the assurance that You are with us always, to the end of the age.*

*[What prayers can we add to these to these in our call to make disciples?]*