

Sermon on Just Pray to win the battle

Kwabena D. Akufo

Date: 3/17/2002, 1/23/2008-Radio 91.3FM

Text:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 Be joyful always; pray continually

1 Introduction

Moslems, Budhists, and other non-Christian religions are disciplined and rigid about prayer. The Moslem will pray at the prescribed times several times a day without fail no matter where he is. But Christians are not disciplined about prayer! Many will only pray when they feel threatened or need something. This attitude led E.M. Bounds to say that, "Prayer works so well in a crisis, one wonders why we don't implement it on a regular basis."

It may very well be that Christian prayer threatens Satan so he gives you excuses and distractions to prevent you from praying in a disciplined way and praying as a habit. The cell phone has become the number one agent of Satan against praying. People will check who is calling and even answer certain calls in the middle of their prayer! That is Satanic cleverness and Christian stupidity.

If you dramatize Paul's letter to the Thessalonians and the Philippians and James letter to the twelve tribes they address this issue plainly. They tell you: Just Pray! Pray for anything and everything. Pray continually. Pray without ceasing. Pray without interruption. Pray always.

2 We have departed from the emphasis on prayer.

R.A. Torrey writing in the 19th century which applies to us in the 21st century said, "We do not live in a praying age. We live in an age of hustle and bustle, of man's efforts and man's determination, of man's confidence in himself and in his own power to achieve things, an age of human organization, and human machinery, and human push, and human scheming, and human achievement; in the things of God this means no real achievement at all." (Torrey R.A., The power of prayer) Then he continued and said, "What we need is not much some new organization, some new wheel, but 'the Spirit of the living creature in the wheels' whom we already possess." (Torrey R.A., The power of prayer)

A fetus relies on the umbilical cord for its survival. It is through the umbilical cord that it gets its air, water, and food. The fetus will die if the umbilical cord gets damaged. In the same way prayer is our umbilical cord to God. When we pray we are connected to God and receive spiritual air, spiritual water and spiritual nourishment from God. Prayer is therefore our lifeline. Apart from prayer we die spiritually. That is why someone has said “seven prayerless days makes one weak.” We can also say that a prayerless Christian is a defeated Christian. Oswald Sanders said, “If prayer could have been dispensed with in any life, surely it would have been in that of the sinless Son of Man.” But any believer worth his salt knows that Jesus led a strong habitual personal prayer life that should serve as an example for us. I call upon you to just pray! Pray for anything and everything. Pray continually. Pray as if your life depends on it. In fact, just pray because your life does depend on it.

3 Prayer is our weapon of Spiritual Warfare

As soon as you accept the Lord as your personal savior you are automatically at war with Satan. You don't have a choice. Becoming a Christian automatically enrolls you in God's army. In the 1980's planes were hijacked by terrorists whose intention was to kill any American citizens. Just being an American citizen puts you at odds with the terrorists. It doesn't matter whether you agree with American policy or not. You don't have a choice. In the same way when you become a Christian you become the devil's enemy and his purpose is to steal from you, kill you, and destroy you.

You cannot win a war passively. You must fight it actively and that requires prayer. Prayer is our military weapon. Within this weapon we use the Word of God, we use faith, and we use our holiness to engage in the battle.

Colin Powell had a principle of engagement that said essentially, “don't engage in a conflict unless you are willing to put all your might and resources to it.” He learned this principle from America's defeat at Somalia at the hands of war lord Aidid who had primitive weapons compared to America. This principle led to the great success in the first Iraqi war and the Afgan war. In the same way we should employ all our spiritual might and resources to the battle against Satan. When we pray we are invoking the forces of heaven to engage Satan on our behalf. The more we pray and the more consistent and continually we pray as our passage says the larger our assault on the Satanic kingdom.

Consider that a soldier who is wearing an American soldier's uniform in the warfront is an automatic target for the enemy. If he does not fire his guns he will be killed because the enemy will be firing at him. Many people in churches today want to wear the Christian uniform but don't want to fire their guns. Since they are automatically in the warfront for wearing that label, they become casualties. They are Christians who have been severely injured to the point of hopelessness and sometimes useless to the cause of the Kingdom and often times an obstruction to the cause of the Kingdom.

On Friday, 3/15/2002 there was prophecy in the Boston Assembly of The Apostolic Church in which God said that when we come together as a church and pray we light a big fire so the devil can't approach us. But when we go home, we don't pray so the enemy attacks us. This is a warning to believers to pray continually and not relegate prayer to a church activity. Prayer is a defensive weapon and an offensive weapon. Prayer is a lifeline for living. Prayer is the conqueror's equipment. Prayer is the victor's tool. I call upon you to just pray! Pray for anything and everything. Pray continually. Pray as if your life depends on it. In fact, just pray because your life does depend on it.

4 Develop a personal prayer habit

If we are to pray continually as our passage tells us then we need to develop a habit of personal prayer rather than relying only on corporate (church) prayer alone. Romans 12:12 says, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Also, Colossians 4:2 tells us, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." All these verses call on us to make prayer a habit. A habit is something we do without even thinking of it. Something we do that comes easy and does not feel like work. Something we do that does not feel painful. Something we do that does not require effort. And Peter exhorts us to develop this habit when he says in 1 Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray." You must have a clear mind about the need for prayer. It is either you pray or you die as a Christian. You must have self-control being observant in prayer as the Moslems are. In order to do this you must develop a prayer plan and follow it till it becomes second nature for you. I suggest the following to help you:

- Select a time daily that will not easily conflict with other duties.
- Select a duration – at least 30 minutes
- Select a place where there'll be little distraction

- Develop a fixed agenda for your prayers such as thanksgiving, intercession (church, extended family, nuclear family, special requests), self, thanksgiving
- Treat the prayer as your spiritual breath that you require to take at regular intervals.

5 Develop an attitude of prayerfulness

To help in developing the prayer habit, we need to develop an attitude of prayer. Consider the following passages:

- James 5:13-14 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

These passages together describe what your attitude should be about prayer. They say in essence:

- Something worries you, you pray about it
- Someone gives you trouble on the job, you pray about it
- Someone insults you, you pray about it
- Someone gossips about you, you pray about it
- You have a fight with your spouse, pray about it
- You feel slighted by someone, pray about it
- You achieve a major milestone or success, pray
- Anything that you contemplate, you pray about it

I call upon you to just pray! Pray for anything and everything. Pray continually. Pray as if your life depends on it. In fact, just pray because your life does depend on it.

6 Conclusion

Beloved in Christ, as I bring my message to end I repeat my observation that many Christians don't pray after they leave the church building. We have departed from the emphasis

on prayer. But prayer is our weapon of Spiritual Warfare that we automatically are engaged in when we become Christians. To be effective in engaging in the spiritual warfare we need to develop a personal prayer habit and an attitude of prayerfulness. R.A. Torrey has said “Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God’s infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer. But we must use the key. Prayer can do anything that God can do, and as God can do anything, prayer is omnipotent.” (Torrey R.A., The power of prayer.)