

## **The Necessity of Prayer for the Man and His Message**

### **2 Thessalonians 3:1–2 (NKJV)**

**3** Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, <sup>2</sup> and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

#### **Introduction:**

When you spend a lot of time reading the Bible you get the sense that everything in this world and universe has a purpose and that it is all part of a large plan that God has set in motion. You begin to learn that nothing is here by chance and that God has the end of all things already worked out.

He's not sitting in heaven hoping that things will get better or that evil will be finally vanquished or that maybe some will be saved.

No, that is not the way the Bible says it will happen.

God's Word is very clear that God has pre-ordained everything. Every single star that shines and every planet in a far away galaxy. Every bird in the air and every deer in the woods. Every flower in the forrest and and every fish in the sea. From largest animal to the smallest of molecules, every thing is planned and purposed by God.

Every baby that is conceived and every death of man. All the occupants of heaven and every soul in Hell do not escape the plan of God.

Nothing takes God by surprise and nothing is outside His Sovereign purpose.

So sure is this that God can say things like this

**Matthew 16:18** (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup>.....I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

**Ephesians 1:11** (NKJV)

He.... works all things according to the counsel of His will,

**Romans 8:28** (NKJV)

...all things work together for good .... to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

**Romans 8:30** (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined,....., these He also glorified.

**Isa. 9:6–7**

For unto us a Child is born,

Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of *His* government and peace  
*There will be* no end,  
 Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
 To order it and establish it with judgment and  
 justice  
 From that time forward, even forever.  
 The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

### **Isaiah 14:24** (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying,  
 “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to  
 pass,  
 And as I have purposed, *so* it shall stand:

### **Isaiah 14:27** (NKJV)

<sup>27</sup> For the Lord of hosts has purposed,  
 And who will annul *it*?  
 His hand *is* stretched out,  
 And who will turn it back?”

### **Isaiah 46:10** (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning,  
 And from ancient times *things* that are not *yet*  
 done,  
 Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,  
 And I will do all My pleasure,’

**Psalm 33:10–11 (NKJV)**

- <sup>10</sup> The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;  
He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.
- <sup>11</sup> The counsel of the Lord stands forever,  
The plans of His heart to all generations.

**Proverbs 19:21 (NKJV)**

- <sup>21</sup> There are many plans in a man's heart,  
Nevertheless the Lord's counsel—that will stand.

**Lamentations 3:37 (NASB95)**

- 37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass,  
Unless the Lord has commanded *it*?

**Acts 4:27–28 (NKJV)**

- <sup>27</sup> “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

There are hundreds of verses that either implicitly or explicitly affirm that God is in complete control of His plan and that He will accomplish His plan and nothing that man will do or not do will stop it.

There is nothing more clear in the Bible than this fact

But there is also another teaching of the Bible that is just as clear.

That is the necessity and commandment to pray.

But some would argue, that if God has so ordered the universe and preplanned and predestined everything, then why do we need to pray?

If God has already determined the end from the beginning and there is no changing the plan, then why would I want to offer my feeble prayer. It seems useless and meaningless?

If God has already predetermined when someone will die, then why pray for their healing?

If every accident and every tragedy is part of God's preordained purpose, then why pray for safety?

If God has already predetermined the ones that will be saved and those that won't then why waste the time praying for the lost?

If God has already predetermined the rise and fall of nations the boundary of their habitation, then why even consider praying for the election of a leader or the revival of a nation?

These are very important questions and have troubled believers for centuries.

But the answer is not as difficult as it seems at first.

Prayer is not an afterthought of God, or a meaningless and useless activity that God commands us to do.

Prayer is not a contradiction to the predetermined plan of God, rather it is a compliment to the plan.

Prayer is not contradiction of the will of God...it is the fulfillment of the will of God.

What many people do not understand, it that just as much as God has preplanned and preordained all the events of your life, including your birth and death and all that is in between, He has also preplanned and preordained your prayers and the answer to them.

Here is another way of looking at it.

When your are born...you are fulfilling the preordained plan of God.

When you are saved at the specific moment in time, you are fulfilling the preordained plan of God.

When you are married, that person was preordained for you to meet and to marry and you are fulfilling the pre-ordained plan of God for your life.

When you fill out that application and get that job, you are fulfilling the preordained plan of God in your life.

And also, when you pray for that lost loved one, or you are burdened for your spouse who has cancer, and you pray earnestly for them to be saved or healed....This also is part of the preordained plan of God for your life.

Prayer is not outside the plan of God for your life, it is the plan of God for your life!!!

God has not only planned the end but all the details to get to the end.

God has not only commanded and preordained that you come to church on the Lord's day, but He has also preordained all the details to get you here.

The car, the gas, the traffic, the spilling of the coffee, the crying baby, the sleepless night, the people you meet, the songs we sing, the sermon you hear, the prayers we pray, the burdens we carry, the meal you eat.....

The issue is not how prayer works with the sovereign plan of God. The more important issue is are you willing to Trust God and obey His commandment to pray and see God work out His preordained plan of God in and thru your prayer.

You can sit back and say, I don't believe that prayer does anything and it can't change anything because it is already preplanned and preordained.

And then you will be disobedient to God and living in sin, which means you are risking the discipline of God or you get no discipline, which means you're not his anyway.

And you will divorce yourself from being a vessel used by God to accomplish his will thru prayer.

Or you can submit to the plan of God for persistent prayer and be used of God to accomplish his purpose in this world.

Prayer is no different than all the other means God has chose to use to accomplish his plan and purpose.

### **Like Preaching**

Romans 10:13–14 (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup> For “*whoever calls* on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

<sup>14</sup> How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

### **Like Suffering**

2 Timothy 2:9–10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> ...I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.



<sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

## **Ministry in General**

Romans 15:18 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not **accomplished through me**, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—

The point is, just as God raises up men like Moses, Elijah, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul to do the Work of the Ministry, and thru the means of preaching and prayer, change the world for God. It is clear that God is the one enabling and empowering and accomplishing His will thru them by giving them the passion for prayer and His word.

So you can participate in the pre ordained plan of God in prayer or you can be passive and disobedience and not pray and not be a willing participant in the plan of God to save sinners and change the world.

Like what C.S Lewis once wrote.

“You will certainly carry out God’s purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John” (*The Problem of Pain*, 111).

Some have argued, that if you believe in the Sovereignty of God and the pre-ordained plan of God, then you really don’t believe that prayer changes things.

No, that is not true.

I certainly believe that prayer changes things....Absolutely.

Prayer can be used by God change a lost man to saved. It can be used to change a sick man to health. It can change a dead church to a living church. It can change a godless culture to a God honoring, saved people.

Prayer does change things.

But the distinction needs to be made that although prayer does change things, it does not change the plan and purpose of God.

It does not change the mind or perfect will of God.

The things that changed by prayer are in the plan of God to be changed. The answers that God gives to our prayers to change a situation are already included in the plan of God

### A couple of illustrations

Acts 12:1–16 (NKJV)

**12** Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. <sup>2</sup> Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

<sup>3</sup> And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

<sup>5</sup> Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

***ektenēs, ektenésteron.*** This term means “tense,” “resolute,” “eager.” It occurs in the NT only in Acts 12:5; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8; Lk. 22:44

term expresses resolute concentration

another form of it indicates

***ekténeia.*** This word, meaning “endurance,” occurs in the NT only in Acts 26:7. The twelve tribes hope to attain the promise by persistent service;

Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). In [\*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume\*](#) (p. 220). W.B. Eerdmans.

adverb *ektenōs* (**fervently** is related to *ektenēs*, a medical term describing the stretching of a muscle to its limits. *Ektenōs* is used in Luke 22:44 to describe our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane, when “being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.” The church poured the maximum effort they were capable of into their prayers for Peter.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 323). Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. <sup>7</sup> Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by *him*, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, “Arise quickly!” And his chains fell off *his* hands. <sup>8</sup> Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.”

<sup>9</sup> So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

<sup>11</sup> And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people.”

<sup>12</sup> So, when he had considered *this*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. <sup>13</sup> And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup> When she recognized Peter’s voice, because of *her* gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. <sup>15</sup> But they said to her, “You are beside yourself!” Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, “It is his angel.”

<sup>16</sup> Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished.

Did the prayer change anything in this situation?

Absolutely it did

1. Peter was freed from prison
2. An Angel was sent from Heaven
3. The Churches faith what encouraged and grew.
4. Herod, became angry.
5. Possible between 4 to 16 soldiers were executed.

Did this change the mind and plan of God?

Was it really Gods plan to keep Peter in prison and the churches prayers changed the mind of God and the plan of God.....NO

It was always the plan of God To have Peter in Prison....And it was always the plan of God to have the church to pray for Peter to be released, and it was Always the plan of God to answer the prayer of the church by sending the angel free Peter.

And it was always the plan of God that those soldiers would die that day by the hand of Herod because the church had prayed and the Angel was sent and Peter was released.

It was God's plan all along to use the pray of his people to change the situation for Peter.

James 5:13–18 (NKJV)

**13** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.  
 ... **14** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. **15** And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up..... **16** ..... and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. **17** Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. **18** And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

This is clearly an affirmation that Prayer can change things.

1. Prayer can change the sick to being healed
2. It can change Atmospheric conditions to stop the rain or produce the Rain.

Did the Prayer change the mind and plan of God

NO

It was always the Perfect plan of God for that person to be healed.

But it was also the Perfect plan of God to use the love and concern, desire and prayers of another person to bring the healing

It also was always the perfect plan of God to stop the rain for 3 1/2 years,

And

It was also Always part of the perfect plan of God to raise up Elijah who would be passionate about praying and would ask God to stop the rain and to start it again.

No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few pray-ers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few



wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere.

Leonard Ravenhill

It is a human act that God has ordained and which he delights in because it reflects the dependence of his creatures upon him. He has promised to respond to prayer, and his response is just as contingent upon our prayer as our prayer is in accordance with his will. “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything *according to his will* he hears us” (1 John 5:14). When we don’t know how to pray according to God’s will but desire it earnestly, “the Spirit intercedes for the saints *according to the will of God*” (Romans 8:27).

## **Lesson**

### **I. The Necessity of Prayer for the Selected for the Ministry**

**3** Finally, brethren, pray for us

Finally- like most preachers, He says finally or in conclusion and then goes on for another 18 verses...

pray for us— this is a Pres. Imperative,

Someone gave this definition of prayer

It is a human act that God has ordained and which he delights in because it reflects the dependence of his creatures upon him. He has promised to respond to prayer, and his response is just as contingent upon our prayer as our prayer is in accordance with his will.

I know it may seem very basic to say this, but leaders in the church need your prayers. All of us need to pray for one another, but there is a special need to lift up those in leadership because of the the tremendous responsibility and influence they have on the vast majority the church.

It has always been a strategy of war to take our the leader of your enemy. Doing so will cause the soldiers confusion and put them in a state of disarray. Nothing can so debilitate an army than to destroy its leadership.

The Devil knows this and will do all he can to discourage, disappoint and disqualify the leadership of the church.

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, .....

2 Corinthians 10:3–4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God .....

Jesus knew this,

Luke 22:31–32

<sup>31</sup> And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.”

Ministry and Pastoral Leadership is often misrepresented as an easy paycheck for lazy men who don't won't to work a real job. And that the one day he works is Saturday when he has to download his sermon from the internet and get ready to preach Sunday.

Now to be honest, I have met men like that in ministry. It can and has produced many lazy men.

But there are those who work hard in the Word and Doctrine and work hard in shepherding the people that God has given them. They are the men who understand that this is not just a job but a passion and a spiritual discipline that requires all of their attention, all the time.

They also know that this is not a physical responsibility alone, but a spiritual one as well and that the demons incircle the camp often to destroy it and them. And any man in ministry who understands the biblical mandates and battles he must face also understands the absolute necessity of prayer.

Paul knew this.

He understood his absolute dependence on God to accomplish anything for Him and that vital link between him and God was prayer.

**Acts 14:23** (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> So when they had appointed elders in every church, **and prayed** with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 16:25 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> But **at midnight Paul and Silas were praying** and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

## Colossians 1:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,  
Colossians 1:9 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> For this reason **we..... do not cease to pray for you**, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

## 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore **we also pray always for you** that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power,

## **Paul taught and commanded that we pray**

## Ephesians 6:17–18 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> **praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

## 1 Thessalonians 5:25 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> Brethren, pray for us.

**Jesus ministry was saturated with prayer and He very often taught the necessity of Prayer.**

## Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and **pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

## Matthew 6:5 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> “And **when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites.** For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

## Matthew 6:6 (NKJV)

<sup>6</sup> But you, **when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*;** and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

## Matthew 6:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> And **when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*.** For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

## Luke 11:2 (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> So He said to them, **“When you pray, say:**

**Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.**

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

Luke 22:40 (NKJV)

<sup>40</sup> When He came to the place, He said to them, **“Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”**

What is most amazing to me in all of the Bible that screams the necessity of prayer is that Jesus Prayed.

The Son of God living in a human body. The second person of the triune God. The creator and sustainer of the universe. The King of Kings and Lord of lords. The perfect lamb of God needed to pray to his Father. The All sufficient One who knew perfectly the will of God and was in constant uninterrupted communion with the Father, had the need to pray.

Mark 1:35 (NKJV)

<sup>35</sup> Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

Luke 5:16 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> So He Himself *often* withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

Luke 6:12 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luke 9:28 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.

Matthew 14:23 (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

Matthew 26:36 (NKJV)

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “**Sit here while I go and pray over there.**”

Matthew 26:42–44 (NKJV)

**42** Again, a second time, He went away and **prayed**, saying, “**O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.**” <sup>43</sup> And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

**44** So He left them, **went away again, and prayed the third time**, saying the same words.



If Jesus understood and pursued the practice of pray then, how much more should we.

John 17:9 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> **"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.**

Luke 22:31–32 (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup> And the Lord said, **"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."**

***He still prays for us.***

Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to **make intercession** for them.

**Original Word:** ἐντυγχάνω

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** entugchanó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (en-toong-khan'-o)

1793 entygxánō (from **1722** /en, "in," which intensifies **5177** /tygxánō, "to obtain by hitting the mark") – properly, "light upon (meet with),

obtain" (LS); "to go and meet a person to converse, consult," i.e. to intervene ("intersect with").

[J. Thayer documents how this meaning is consistently the same in ancient Greek writers.

The root of [5177](#) (tygxánō) means "to strike, hit the bulls-eye" ("spot on"). Accordingly, it is used in classical Greek as the antonym of harmartia ("to miss the mark, sin"), so Lucian, Xenophon, Homer, etc. (see Thayer, [5177](#) /tygxánō).]

Acts 25:24 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews **petitioned** me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer.

Romans 11:2 (NKJV)

<sup>2</sup> God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he **pleads** with God against Israel, saying,

If there is one thing that is lacking most in the churches is the dedication of its people to prayer. Both corporate and private prayer.

In most cases, the area that Christians readily admit they fail in is persistent prayer.

The evangelical church is as a whole a prayerless church.

The least attended meeting is always the prayer meeting.

We pray little because we need little and we don't pray because we don't really believe it will do anything anyway.

We have our families and our homes. We have our jobs and our health. We have no enemies banging down our doors. Our pantries are full and our needs are rare.

We see the lost and rarely if ever lift them in prayer. We come to church and rarely pray the night before or the morning of.

We are troubled more by politics than our prayerlessness.

We are more concerned about the score of ball game and when our favorite show will come on TV than whether we have spent an hour in prayer.

There is no debate about this historic fact, All great moves of God in His church whether it be Reformations, revivals, or Great Awakening have

been bathed in persistent earnest prayers of God's People.

Joel Beeke once said,

“We need to be delivered from the bondage of our Prayerless Prayers”

He noted that the Sermon of the men of the Reformation and the Puritan era were not much different in exposition than ours today, BUT what was so different was their prayer lives.

They knew the greatest weapon and means of ministry at their disposal from Heaven was Prayer.

The giants of church history dwarf us because of the time and energy that they devoted to private prayer. They were Daniels in private and in public.

Luther spent the first two hours of every day in prayer. He once said to Melancton that he had so much to do that he needed to spend an extra hour in prayer. We too often see prayer as an interruption to our ambition.

Luther was not shy in his prayers. He would often pray loudly and boldly. It was said He prayed loudly so the Devil would hear him.

He said praying was hard work. More difficult than any duty or responsibility in church. More than teaching. more than preaching, more than evangelism. More than any other work in our lives. Prayer is hard work. And he's right.

In all of his busyness, Calvin spent hours in prayer every day. Unless we fix certain hours of every day in prayer, he said, it would slip from our memory.

We need to strive to grow in our persistence in prayer.

John Welch, the son-in-law of John Knox would pray several hours a day. His wife said after he past away, that never a night would pass that he would not get up in the cold of night in Scotland and begin to pour out his soul to God. His wife was afraid he would catch cold or pneumonia and die or get desperately ill so she would follow him out, not daring to go in the room he was in because it was too sacred. She would stand outside the door and say John, don't you think you should come to bed....He would call back thru the door, and say "Oh my dear, I've got 3000 souls to care for and I know not how it tis with each of them. He was calling our

their names one by one in the middle of the cold night.

The Puritans were the same way. They often would rise early, at 4 am, hours before sunrise, long before the shoe makers and the blacksmith would begin their trade, to fellowship with God in prayer because they felt their LORD deserved more attention than the masters of the shoemaker and blacksmith.....

John Knox said that the prayers of these great cloud of witnesses rebuked us in our prayerlessness.

The great tragedy of American Christianity may be an arrogant belief that the Church has outgrown or matured to a point that it no longer needs to heed any call from God to return to a personal, private, consistent "prayer life".

Horatius Bonar's book, "Words to Winners of Souls," was published in 1877, but it makes reference to the condition of the Scottish church in 1857. It was not a pretty picture. He called his peers to personal repentance and corporate contrition by reminding them of their heritage, and republishing the Church of Scotland's Ministerial Confession of 1651.

This Ministerial Confession of 1651 was prepared and placed before the pastors of the land when their country was locked into a life and death struggle for survival in a war with England. Oliver Cromwell's forces had proven to be a powerful adversary and the Church of Scotland was on the brink of collapse in the midst of the chaos, confusion and conflict raging throughout Scotland. Every Scottish school boy of 1877 knew the chronology and consequences of these great events, but Bonar pointed the pastors of his day to The Confession of 1651 as a reminder to them of their responsibility to keep their own hearts hot for Jesus, regardless of the tempestuous times in which they lived.

A brief review of The Confession of 1651 reveals a perpetual, and potent danger that stalks the leaders of the Church in every generation. Pastors constantly face the temptation of allowing the system to overshadow their Savior. In doing so, they may be faithful in carrying out their perceived duties within the Church system, but at the same time fail to maintain their personal intimacy with the Savior who gave His life to establish His Church. In 1651, after self-examination, and personal reflection, the pastors of The Church of Scotland confessed they had been guilty of spending more time in the work of

The Lord than they had been spending with The Lord of the work. They had taken great pride in their reformed root system that had grown out of the powerful teaching and preaching of John Knox, but in less than a century, they had lost their focus on Jesus.

I believe the dilemma and the response of the pastors of The Church of Scotland in 1651, and Bonar's call to his Scottish peers in 1857 is a guideline to pastors in America and around the world. <http://www.garydonmiller.com/blog/2015/3/3/the-confession>

Number twelve in the list of sins of the confessions addresses their prayerlessness.

**12). We have not been men of prayer.**

The spirit of prayer has slumbered amongst us. The closet has been too little frequented and delighted in. We have allowed business, study, or active labor to interfere with our closet-hours. And the feverish atmosphere in which both the church and nation are enveloped has found its way into our closet, disturbing the sweet calm of its blessed solitude. Sleep, company, idle visiting, foolish talking and jesting, idle reading, unprofitable



occupations, engross time that might have been redeemed for prayer.

Why is there so little anxiety to get time to pray? Why is there so little forethought in the laying out of time and employments so as to secure a large portion of each day for prayer? Why is there so much speaking, yet so little prayer? Why is there so much running to and fro, yet so little prayer? Why so much bustle and business, yet so little prayer? Why so many meetings with our fellow-men, yet so few meetings with God? Why so little being alone, so little thirsting of the soul for the calm—sweet hours of unbroken solitude, when God and His child hold fellowship together as if they could never part? It is the want of these solitary hours that not only injures our own growth in grace, but makes us such unprofitable members of the church of Christ, and that renders our lives useless.

In order to grow in grace, we must be much alone. It is not in society, even Christian society, that the soul grows most rapidly and vigorously: in one single quiet hour of prayer, it will often make more progress than in days of company with others. It is in the desert that the dew falls freshest and the air is purest. So with the soul. It is when none but God is nigh; when His presence alone, like the desert air in which there is mingled no noxious breath of man,

surrounds and pervades the soul—it is then that the eye gets the clearest, simplest view of eternal certainties; it is then that the soul gathers in wondrous refreshment, power, and energy.

Nearness to God, fellowship with God, waiting upon God, resting in God, have been too little the characteristic either of our private or of our ministerial walk. Hence our example has been so powerless, our labors so unsuccessful, our sermons so meager, our whole ministry so fruitless and feeble.

**3** Finally, brethren, pray for us,

### **Leonard Ravenhill**

No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few prayers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere.

**3** Finally, brethren, pray for us,

## II. The Necessity of Prayer for the Success of the Message.

**3** Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you,

## III. The Necessity of Prayer for Safety of the Messengers

<sup>2</sup> and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.