

Mark 7:24-30 — “The Power of Persistent Prayer—Importunate Praying!”

Prayer meetings were influential in times of revival. The 1620s revival in Ireland was spurred on by prayer meetings. So were awakenings in the 1740s. Two generations prior, Josiah Woodward had published *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London*, which described forty distinct prayer groups in London. As the awakenings spread, prayer meetings multiplied. Thomas Houston writes in his *The Fellowship Prayer Meeting*, “The awakenings which took place in various parts of England, under the ministry of Wesley and Whitefield, led to the establishment of social prayer-meetings; and, at this period, when within the pale of the National Establishment, and without it, all was under the torpor of spiritual death, this organization was a powerful means of exciting earnest minds to pursue after eternal concerns.” (Joel Beeke)

Importunity:

- This is the subject of **IMPORTUNITY** - persistent, powerful, shameless praying!
- Importunity is made up of intensity, perseverance, patience and persistence. The seeming delay in answering prayer is the ground and the demand of importunity.

THESIS — This text gives us 4 compelling & crucial lessons on prayer so that you will manifest GREAT FAITH in great PRAYERS!

I. COME TO JESUS URGENTLY! (24-25)

And it seems like GOD is not answering, do this:

- 1.Continue to pray! (Lk 18.1)
- 2.Reaffirm your Theology! (Ps 84)
- 3.Trust God’s Sovereignty! (Ps 145)
- 4.Marvel at Providence! (Eph 1.11)
- 5.Don’t Grow Discouraged! (Ps 42)

II. COME TO JESUS PERSISTENTLY! (26)

- She “keeps shouting at us!” (Matt 15.23)

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Importunate praying is earnest, internal, persistent. It throws ALL you are into prayer!.... Importunate praying never faints nor grows weary; it is never discouraged; but is buoyed up by a hope that knows no despair, and a faith which will not let go. Importunate praying has patience to wait and strength to continue. It never prepares itself to quit praying, and declines to rise from its knees until an answer is received. (EM Bounds)

God may deny us in order to increase your desires and affections in prayer and make you more eager in pursuing mercy. God often denies what we seek for not because He is unwilling to listen but to see how your heart will be drawn out towards Him in prayer. He wants to make you more vehement and importunate in your desires.

III. COME TO JESUS *HUMBLY!* (27-28)**IV. COME TO JESUS *EXPECTANTLY!* (29-30)**

- ✓ importunity goes to God
- ✓ importunity cannot be put off
- ✓ importunity is specific
- ✓ importunity is expectant
- ✓ importunity prevails

The Intolerable Burden Demands:

- ★ urgency - I *MUST* be heard!
- ★ importunity — I will come & keep coming!
- ★ humility — i’m low as your slave
- ★ expectancy — I’m gonna pray in faith
- ★ victory — God answers for His glory!

Oh, men and women, pray through; pray through; pray through! Do not just begin to pray and pray a little while and throw up your hands and quit; but pray and pray and pray until God bends the heavens and comes down!

(R.A. Torrey)

Why should a church pray for revival?

1. The church that prays for revival prays for God’s power (Acts 1:8). There is a certain amount of power mankind has been given. We can be persuasive. We can be innovative. We can be attractive, to a degree (as long as you don’t look too closely). We can plan and organize and pull off amazing feats. But all of those things are nothing compared to the power held within God. When a church prays for revival that church is praying for a power not their own. They are praying for the power of the Holy Spirit to be poured out in greater measure than they can imagine. It is a prayer of faith, a prayer of need, and a prayer of humility.

2. The church that prays for revival prays for a great awakening (Acts 3:19-20). There is a reason the revivals in early America are referred to as the Great Awakenings. If there is anything needed today it is an awakening from our slumber. We are so sleepy toward God, even the best among us. Our God-sensibilities, by and large, are so dreary that many Christians no longer even pick up their Bible. Entertainment has dulled us, yes, but the problem is deeper than that. We haven’t merely been entertained by other things, we have failed to be awed by God. The church that prays for revival, then, is praying for an awakening to God. They are praying for times of refreshing from the Lord.

3. The church that prays for revival prays for salvation of many far from God (Acts 2:47). Revival always demands attention. I’m not sure it can be said something is revival if people far from God have no idea it has been going on. Those who currently mock and scoff at the Lord, in times of revival, come to him – miraculously. All of the work pastors and elders and ministry leaders can do in 50 years the Lord can do in one minute. God is in the business of bringing people to himself, and therefore, manifesting his glory. That is done best when people are saved, when Jesus is lifted up and all people are drawn to him. That happens in massive quantities, with great wonder in times of revival.

What does praying for revival teach the church?

1. When a church prays for revival the church learns to be expectant (Eph. 3:20). Praying for something that only God can do is hard because it pushes us down into new areas of humility. We are more comfortable praying for God’s help in our current plans, but to pray for God to do something that only he can do reorients our prayers away from ourselves and onto God. It is risky, but it is bold – and Christians should be bold. We serve a God who is able to work wonders.

2. When a church prays for revival the church learns to plead with God in prayer (Luke 11:5-13). Here’s what I mean: when was the last time you used Scripture to ask the Lord to do again what he has done in the past? How much do you take God’s word and use it back to him in prayer? That’s what you’re doing when praying for revival. You look at the book of Acts, for example, and see the multitudes coming to Christ and you’re saying to God, ‘Lord, I don’t see this in my city today. Why? Will you do this again? Will you pour your Holy Spirit out on us? Your name must be magnified here. You must become glorified in our city, in our time. Please, Lord. Do this for the sake of Christ.’ That is not irreverent. That is pleasing to God. Jesus told us so in Luke 8 with the parable of the friend in need at midnight. But most of all, it is pleasing to God because God wants to glorify himself. Do you want him to be glorified? Asking him for more of himself magnifies his glory.

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3. When a church prays for revival the church learns to wait on the Lord. Similar to number 1 above, praying for something that only God can do puts us on God’s timetable. He doesn’t live in our space/time box. He lives outside of it. But he does care about it, and he does work in and through it. Our patience is so thin compared to God’s. What if you spent your entire life praying for revival only to miss out on it? What if through your patiently expectant prayers your children or grandchildren experienced the revival that you spent your life praying for? Are we ok with our prayers today being the means of blessing for our children tomorrow? We must wait on the Lord. After all, what we are asking for is his work in his way through his means for his glory. We wouldn’t want it manufactured. We have enough of that in this world. We want it only as he would give it to us. So we wait – pleading expectantly.

Why is a category for revival important in the life of a church?

Revival is an important category for a church to have. The history books are filled with revivals. They are significant. They have spurred the church onward, and given her new life time and again. Reading about, talking about, and remembering revival stories are important in the life of the church for at least these reasons:

1. Revival is an important category for a church to have because revivals remind us that we aren’t God (Isa. 6:5). We should remember this, but we seem to quickly forget that we aren’t God. Our next great idea is enough to push God to the sidelines. We puff ourselves up. One stroke of the ego explodes our heads and we believe that our way of ministry is God’s gift to the world. Well, it may be. But more likely you fall in line with the rest of the church throughout history that is ruled and reigned by God. He is God, and you are not. Your ideas may be gifts from him, but the real gift is God himself. Remember that.

2. Revival is an important category for a church to have because it reminds us that there is always great hope for the church (Matt. 16:18). We are in God’s hands, not the world’s. When the landscape looks the bleakest, the sun is about to rise. The world does not seem to be getting better. Sin is still powerful. Satan is still the prince of the power of the air. Creation is still groaning. But there is a great hope because God is still God. There is a great hope because the Lord Jesus Christ is alive and through his Spirit he is calling men and women to himself. History has proven that God is still able to move in great power for extended periods of time to bring massive amounts of people into his kingdom. As long as Christ is on the throne we have hope – and he’s not moving. Neither should your hope.

3. Revival is an important category for a church to have because we need to constantly repent (1 John 1:7). Nothing will drive us to repentance quicker and with more consistency than to talk through, think through, and pray through the hindrances to revival in our church. What are we thinking about God? What are we asking him for? What areas of our lives need cleansing? Praying for revival brings greater clarity to our own desperate situation and great need. The biggest problem in any church is the low thoughts of God that are prevalent throughout the congregation. Look at the revivals of history and see the great humility that it brought, see the great conviction of sin, see the great awakening. We should heed Peter’s words in Acts 3, ‘Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.’ Acts 3:19-20.

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But the main reason revival is an important category for the church to have is . . .

While those are all good categories of thought in regards to revival, there is something more pressing, something more urgent. We must begin praying for revival in our churches because the evil we see (and the much greater evil we don't see) will not be redeemed without the Lord bending down toward us. ISIS will not fall. Human trafficking will not stop. Abortion will not end. None of the evil that keeps us up at night will even pause for a moment without the gracious God above looking upon this wicked earth with mercy and grace. When we pray for revival we are praying for God to end the madness. We think of it as abnormal, but revival is the only true normal in the universe. Everything else is a distortion.

If you want the world to be shaken, so that you wake up from your slumber, so that the interstates shuffle less girls across state lines, pray for the Lord to rend the heavens and come down. Pray with passion. Pray with urgency. Pray with expectancy. Pray with humility. Pray without ceasing. Pray. Just pray. God is able to break through.

The only final solution to all the evil in the world, and all the evil in your heart, is the glory of God shining forth.

When Can it be a Blessing for God Refuse to Answer Your Prayers?

- 1. If it is something sinful in itself**
- 2. If it would cause us to sin**
- 3. If He gives something better in exchange**

As Bernard of Clairvaux says, God will either give us what we ask or what He knows to be better for us.

4. If He intends to increase your desire for it

You find this in the woman of Canaan (Matthew 15:22). Jesus Christ takes no notice of her; He answers her not a word (verse 23). That is discouragement. One would have thought she would desist, but she prayed again, and the disciples besought Him to send her away. That is another discouragement, which would have knocked off many; but she continues her request still. Jesus Christ Himself answers her, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” That is a third discouragement; and yet that does not cool her affections, but she comes afresh to Christ, and worships Him, saying, “Lord, help me.” She found yet another repulse, and that worse than the former (Matthew 15:26). Christ calls her a dog but she takes encouragement even from this discouraging answer. She was resolved not to give up till she got what she came for. The denials and discouragements God's people meet with make their desires stronger and their affections to burn hotter.

5. If He sees that we have an excessive desire for it

PRAYER WITH PERSISTENCE (by John Newton)*Tune: “Crown him with many crowns”*

Our Lord, who knows full well
 The heart of every saint;
 Invites us, by a parable,
 To pray and never faint
 He bows his gracious ear,
 We never plead in vain;
 Yet we must wait, till he appear,
 And pray, and pray again

Though unbelief suggest,
 Why should we longer wait?
 He bids us never give him rest,
 But be importunate
 Then let us earnest be,

And never faint in prayer;
 He loves our importunity,
 And makes our cause his care!

And shall not Jesus hear
 His chosen, when they cry?
 Yes, though he may awhile forbear,
 He'll help them from on high
 His nature, truth and love,
 Engage him on their side;
 When they pray on, his passions move,
 And can they be denied?

SHE CAME TO JESUS*Tune: “Be thou my vision”*

She came to Jesus from outside the fold —
 Canaanite woman! Persistent and bold!
 Looking to Jesus, she wanted to see
 One who would help her and set her child free.

Claiming a blessing, a touch of God's grace,
 She knew God's love was not bounded by place.
 Jesus, you listened, and spoke and then healed —
 For in her asking, her faith was revealed.

God, you still bless those who seek you in prayer.
 You welcome your servants who faithfully dare.
 In Christ, now risen, your mercy extends:
 Those on the outside are welcomed as friends.