



Culture of Prayer Conference

Session 2: The Call to Night and Day Prayer

I. The Glory of Unceasing Prayer and Praise:

I want to introduce a beautiful idea to you that might come across as shocking at first; God wants His Church to be a praying people. But it's more than what we are thinking; He actually wants us to offer Him unceasing corporate prayer and adoration. In this conference we are going to look at what the Bible has to say about what the culture of the New Testament Church is intended to look like. There are longstanding reasons that the Bible lays out as to why we must endeavor to build 24/7 prayer expressions and in this opening session I hope to help fuel us with reasons why we should pray in a literally unceasing manner.

A. Those that Think Only of the Cost:

Unfortunately, as glorious and biblical as unceasing prayer and worship is, we are probably most likely to immediately start thinking about the costs associated with it, what it might cost us personally and the toll it would take on our social life and how it might impact our family. We are therefore used to counting the costs without examining the benefits, which the Word of God makes clear to us. This is not unlike the begrudging host spoken about in the Book of Proverbs – he prepares a banquet but the whole time is thinking not about his guest's enjoyment of what he presents them but instead he is thinking the whole time about how much this gift is costing him. We do not want to be like him.

"Do not eat the food of a begrudging host, do not crave his delicacies; for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you (Pr. 23:6-7)."

B. Celebrating the Cost:

There is a difference between thinking of the cost in a disdainful way and thinking of those same costs as our beautiful offering to Jesus. On the day that the Lord told me to start this house of prayer He gave me a passage of scripture that I understand even then that I would need as a fundamental principle in my understanding in order to sustain the work here. It's the account in the life of David where he was told to build God an altar and was offered the land and the supplies for free; he refused to offer God a sacrifice that didn't cost him anything. This was a primary thought we all had in mind when we began daily 5am prayer meetings in my living room so many years ago and if we will allow it to it is still to motivate us and instruct our decisions.

"On that day God went to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David went

up, as the Lord had commanded through Gad...Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever he wishes and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood..." But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and...built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the Lord answered his prayer (2Sa. 24:18-25)."

C. Overwhelming Significance:

Unceasing prayer is necessary, unceasing adoration is a beautiful gift we can give Jesus and it's powerful for our souls and transformational to our culture. Unceasing adoration connects Earth to Heaven; it consumes the living creatures around the throne as well as the houses of prayer scattered across the nations. Night and day prayer is both a historic fact and a prophesied future promise for the expression of the Church. In this conference we will seek to unveil the glories, wonder of, and reasons for unceasing prayer and praise to fill the Earth.

II. The Will of God for the Church:

Did you know the Bible tells us the will of God for our lives as New Testament believers? The call to continual prayer is the consistent testimony from the New Testament writings. We see that Jesus has called His Church to operate in continual corporate prayer. It's not something on the menu for the people of God; it is intended to be the primary expression of who the Church is and what the Church does.

A. Jesus Taught Us to Always Pray:

To start with, this is what Jesus lived and taught to His disciples while He was here on Earth. There is a difference between "pray much" and "always pray," and the distinction is important so that we don't misunderstand the repeated admonition to pray in ways that are clearly called constant.

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up...will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth (Lk. 18:1-8)?"

"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man (Lk. 21:34-36)."

1. Jesus taught often about prayer as the way of the Kingdom.
2. He didn't just encourage prayer lives, He called for continual prayer.
3. He warned us that we should always watch and pray.
4. He actually said there are dire consequences if we don't.

B. The First Century Church Lived Constant Prayer:

This call to fervent devotion to the place of corporate prayer was how the Church was born. This is no small point because after it was born it became the normative expression of the early Church and the way that the Church was sustained.

“while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about...Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem...They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Ac. 1:4, 12-14).”

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Ac. 2:42).”

1. Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem and pray night and day.
2. They all joined together constantly in prayer.
3. They sustained this dedication to prayer.

C. Constant Prayer was the New Testament Model:

This was in fact the New Testament model that was handed down to the first century Church. All of the churches were instructed to live out continual prayer as the expression of their faith.

“that you may devote yourselves to prayer (1Co. 7:5).”

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Eph. 6:18).”

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Php. 4:6).”

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will (Co. 1:9).”

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful (Co. 4:2).”

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Ro. 12:12).”

“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you (2Th. 1:11).”

D. Paul Boldly Called Continually Prayer God’s Will for Us:

Quite in contrary to our modern expression of Christianity, Paul said that this continual corporate prayer thing was actually the will of God for us as Christians. This confronts everything that we know about the way we do Church in our culture. Paul actually said that this is God’s will for us as believers in Jesus –like we are missing something big time if we are living

a version of life where we aren't plugged into this type of expression of Christianity.

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1Th. 5:16-24)."

1. Paul calls continual prayer the will of God for our lives.
2. Not quenching the Spirit is related to continual prayer.
3. Continual prayer is related to us being sanctified through and through.
4. Blamelessness is part of the byproduct of continual prayer.

III. Jesus is Worthy of All We Can Give:

The Lord is worthy of it all, for from Him and to Him and through Him are all things. The destiny of mankind is that we will love the Lord our God with all our heart; currently around the throne in Heaven Jesus is declared as the Worthy Lamb who is due all power and wealth and honor and praise (Re. 5:12). This heavenly praise is the perfect picture of what will become the eternal reality for all creation; Christ will be praised night and day as the center of all the nation's worship because He is worthy.

A. He is Worthy of Praise:

It is doubtful that any true believer in Jesus would argue that He is worthy to be praised; the scriptures make this point too clear to dismiss. But, the question remains, to what extent much praise is Jesus worthy of? We are going to spend this session looking at just how much praise He is due.

"Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise...Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy in his dwelling place. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength, ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness (1Ch. 16:23-29)."

"For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise (Ps. 96:4)."

B. His Immeasurable Worth:

The primary purpose and the only needed reason for our worship is because He is worthy. There is nothing to compare Him to and no one in all creation that is as fascinating, as beautiful and majestic and holy. He alone is worthy and His immeasurable worth by itself is reason enough to praise Him. To Him belongs glory forever.

"For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen (Ro. 11:6)."

C. Christ is Worthy of 24/7 Praise:

It's not even enough that right now a few hundred million people on the Earth praise Him once a week on Sunday mornings. He is worthy of everyone's praise and He is worthy of it unceasingly. Unlike anyone else, unlike anything in all creation, He is worthy of constant attention, unceasing adoration and worship. The immeasurable worth of Jesus leaves us with great limitations as to how lavishly we can express His worth. Continual prayer and worship all the hours in a year is our limitation.

"Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom (Ps. 145:3)."

"In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise (Re. 5:12)!"

IV. The Premise of Night and Day Worship on Earth:

We have been looking at the immeasurable worth of our King and why it is right in light of His indescribable worth that we organize night and day worship for Him. In this section we are going to take that a step further and look at the mandate that Jesus gave the Church to establish things on the Earth like they are in Heaven. Specifically, we are going to make the connection between what is transpiring around the throne of God right now and how that reality is intended to have a mirrored expression in the cities of the Earth.

A. The Teaching and Prayer of Jesus:

Jesus' primary teaching on prayer was that we should pray that the Father's will and Kingdom would be made manifest on Earth as it is in Heaven (Mt. 6:9-10). Worship continues night and day before the throne of God where Jesus is worshiped perpetually and where Christ Himself (and others) never cease to make intercession in the presence of the Father.

"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:9-10).'"

B. How it is in Heaven:

In Heaven right now there is literal unceasing prayer and adoration lifted up to Jesus by the Heavenly hosts. When we talk about Heaven and think about what goes on there, we need to understand this as one of the most defining characteristics of what Heaven is like.

C. The Reality Around the Throne:

All of us have at least some notion of the fact that the environment of Heaven is dramatically different from our day to day reality down here.

Typically when we think of Heaven our minds most naturally go straight to the throne room where God rules the universe and the angels all surround Him. For us to enter into any understanding of how Jesus wants for things to be on Earth, we need to see exactly what it is that is happening there in Heaven.

D. Night and Day Adoration:

First of all, day and night the elders and living creatures and all the angels in the courtroom constantly have their gaze fixed on Jesus, the elders fall down on their face before Him, and all the thousands of eyes of the living creatures are on Him.

“In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back...and...all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty (Re. 4:6-8).”

“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne...the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him...and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power (Re. 4:9-11)”

E. Night and Day Intercession:

Secondly, we need to know that there is actual prayer going forward around the throne night and day as well. Prayer is being offered in that place by Jesus Himself. Even the one being worshipped is praying night and day. If Jesus is always praying then it is not a stretch to presume that those with Him around the throne, those closest to Him, are praying too, following His leadership in this regard.

“Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them (He. 7:24-25).”

V. **Jesus’ Bold Declaration About His House:**

God isn’t after ministries with the title “house of prayer;” He wants houses defined by prayer in reality. This is perhaps the simplest truth we have looked at; the house of prayer is to be a house primarily identified by prayer far above all the other pursuits together. The foremost reality of His House is that it would be a place of continual prayer and that it’s activities would be ones that are supportive and strengthening of the mandate to pray. God has great zeal to make sure that there are places in the Earth that make prayer the absolute center of all they do and that those places remain committed to actually pray.

A. The Beginning of Jesus’ Ministry:

At the beginning of His earthly ministry, we see Jesus explode into a loud and disruptive episode at the temple. He comes to His Father’s house and finds that they have turned it into a marketplace. So, He overturned their tables and drove everyone out; both men and animals.

"In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts...and overturned their tables...he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market (Jn. 2:14-16)!"

B. The End of Jesus' Ministry:

The John 2 passage above took place at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry and now we will look at the Matthew 21 account, which took place right before the crucifixion. Here we see Him erupting into an unpredictable rage demanding that the temple be a place of continual prayer and worship to exalt the Father.

"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers (Mt. 21:12-13)."

C. Only Times Jesus Got Physical:

These two accounts represent the only times that we have record of Jesus getting physical with anyone. Jesus saw injustice being done to the poor in His lifetime, He bore extreme persecution, He was misunderstood by His family, He was abandoned by those closest to Him and betrayed by a close friend. Jesus certainly witnessed countless wrongs, but what drove Him on these two occasions to start whipping people and yelling and turning over tables violently? Zeal for His house, for the 24/7 prayer altar that was supposed to be being lifted up in that place. There is perhaps nothing that has His attention like this subject.

"His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me (Jn. 2:17)."

D. His House Must be a House of Prayer:

In this session we've been looking at truths related to how God feels about the house of prayer. The theme of this message however is that we as a house of prayer would understand the zeal that the Lord carries for His house. As we stare at His zeal in this session, hopefully we will be impacted by His intense emotions for His house and see that as a modern-day house of prayer we should contend to have that same zeal and ought to be people who fight for His house in our day. Prayer is the purpose of God's house; it's the point and the focus. While other things will occur there in a limited way, God identifies His house as a house of prayer. This specific aspect of His house is repeated again and again in His Word, emphasized in Isaiah, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

"these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Sovereign Lord declares— he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered (Is. 56:7-8)."

"It is written," he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer (Mt. 21:13)."

"He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations (Mk. 11:17 NASB)?"

"It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers (Lk. 19:46)."

E. Why Jesus Cleared the Temple:

Jesus violently cleared out all the non-prayer stuff out of His Father's house. In this wild act He was declaring that this building was not His house of prayer just because it had a title. He expressed His Father's heart that the house of prayer be set apart for His purposes; that it actually and fully be a place of prayer, dedicated to that agenda and committed to stay that way. He prophesied that a time was coming when His Father's house would become that set apart reality; that God's house would be a house of prayer for real.

*"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'" *The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them (Mt. 21:12-14).**