

Meeting God Daily

Can you name anything else more thrilling than meeting God?

Mark 1.35

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • March 10, In the year of our Lord, 2013

Scripture Reader and Reading: Kadin Lopez – Psalm 63.1, 2

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Kevin Michael – “Whisper a Prayer,” and others on prayer

Prelude:

I. Why did the psalmists want to pray in the morning?

3 My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord;
In the morning I will direct it to You,
And I will look up.
(Psa 5.3)

17 Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.
(Psa 55.17)

13 But to You I have cried out, O Lord,
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.
(Psa 88.13)

II. There is something about prayer

A. that made the psalmists hungry for it in the morning.

B. It is not so much prayer, but who they met in prayer.

Persuasion:

I. Meeting God

A. Robert Murray McCheyne preached in the Church of Scotland

1. from 1835 to 1843,

2. starting when he was 22 and ended when he died at 29 years of age.

B. When he turned 18,

1. he began a lifelong ritual of having a quiet time in the morning

2. for reading God's word and praying.

a) Of this experience, he wrote in his journal for February 23, 1834,

“Rose early to seek God and found Him whom my soul loveth. Who would not rise early to meet such company?”

b) He put a premium on meeting God before meeting anyone else,

“Never see the face of man till you have seen his face who is our life, our all.”

“It is far better to begin with God—to see his face first—to get my soul near Him before it is near another.”

c) He said one day in reference to beginning the day with prayer,

“I cannot begin my work for I have not seen the face of God.”

d) He said of neglecting prayer,

“Brethren, if you are ever so much taken up with any enjoyment that it takes away your love for prayer or for your Bible...you are abusing this world.”

“Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness; and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then, when secret prayer comes, the soul is often out of tune.”

C. He heart problems and tuberculosis, and

1. went on a trip to recover from his weakness and frailty, but

2. he missed the church in Dundee, Scotland for which he was preaching, and

a) he wrote a letter to them on February 27, 1839,

“I wish to be like Epaphras in Colossians 4: ‘Always laboring fervently

for you in prayer.' When hindered by God from laboring for you in any other way, it is my heart's joy to labor for you thus. When Dr. Scott of Greenock, a good and holy minister, was laid aside by old age from preaching some years before his death, he used to say, 'I can do nothing for my people now but pray for them...' This I also feel."

b) He died a few years later in 1843 at 29 years of age.

D. Speaking of the effectiveness of prayer, he said,

"If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much we could find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children."

1. In other words,

16b The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (Jam 5.16).

2. Or as John said,

22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight (1Jo 3.22).

II. Laboring in Prayer

A. Remember what McCheyne said about Epaphras,

1. as found in Colossians 4,

2. that this fellow-worker of Paul,

a) worked zealously for the Colossian Church,

b) seeking to help them be perfect and complete in God's will,

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, *always laboring fervently* for you in *prayers*, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis (Col 4.12, 13).

B. Do you associate the word “labor” with praying?

1. I think of a woman in labor.
2. I think of a man engaging in hard physical work.
 - a) Yet, Epaphras prayed always for his home congregation.
 - b) He prayed fervently for the Colossian Church.
 - (1) Put together “prayer,” “always,” and “fervently,” and
 - (2) you come up with labor.
 - (a) He wanted them to stand perfect and complete
 - (b) in all the will of God, and
 - i) Epaphras believed that God could help them do that.
 - ii) Therefore, the man worked hard at addressing this issue.

C. McCheyne wanted to do the same thing for his church,

1. even when his health was failing, for
2. he evidently could not do much more, so
 - a) he spoke to the Father about his home church *relentlessly*.
 - b) Aside from prayer,
 - (1) what would you have to do to help people
 - (2) stand perfect and complete in all the will of God?
 - (a) You would have to teach them constantly, but
 - (b) that requires much preparation, because
 - i) teaching requires much thought.
 - ii) Seeking to change people’s
 - (1) belief systems, and
 - (2) their behavior
 - (a) is not easy, but

- (b) requires labor,
- (c) such as praying relentlessly.

D. Therefore, Epaphras thought on what he would say to God.

1. That is wearisome to the flesh.
2. The Bible shows that such people think carefully on how they speak,

28a The heart of the righteous studies how to answer...
(Pro 15.28a)

23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth,
And adds learning to his lips.
(Pro 16.23)

6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one (Col 4.6).

- a) I think we see the wisdom of those passages
- b) if we are speaking for God to people, but
 - (1) we should see the wisdom of those passages
 - (2) when speaking to God for people!
 - (a) Then we will not be haphazard in prayer, but
 - (b) we will find ourselves laboring in prayer.
 - i) Laboring in prayer means
 - ii) you seek it first thing in the morning.

III. Time for Prayer

A. McCheyne started off the day with Scripture reading and prayer.

1. He loved God and
2. that created excitement in his heart for that time.
 - a) This is why he questioned,

b) “Who would not rise early to meet such company?”

B. Mark 1 shows Jesus the same way.

1. Something awakened Jesus and

a) drove Him to find a place where He could pray in solitude.

b) He wanted to be with His Father before the endless activity of the day,

35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed (Mark 1.35).

2. Luke 6 shows Jesus on one occasion spending an entire night in prayer,

12 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 6.12).

C. Lest we think that only the Son of God could do such a thing,

1. First Samuel 15 shows the judge and prophet Samuel

2. praying all night because of a heavy matter on his soul,

10 Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, 11 “I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.” And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night (1Sa 15.10, 11).

D. I do not believe that McCheyne, Jesus, or Samuel,

1. set out to pray all night, or first thing in the morning, but

2. that it was just something they felt they had to do, or wanted to do, because

a) it came naturally from a heart

b) that loved God.

(1) We love speaking with the ones we love.

(2) We do not see it as a chore, but as life itself.

E. “Don, I can’t waste my time praying; I’ve got too much to do!”

1. Let’s rephrase that objection:
2. “Don, I can’t waste my time speaking to God; my life depends upon me, not Him!”
 - a) God has blessed us in the flesh and in the spirit beyond measure, but
 - b) He cannot help us with our heavy loads for the present and the future?
 - (1) Is that what we are saying?
 - (2) Are we saying that we cannot find time to acknowledge
 - (a) Him for what He has done in the past, and
 - (b) we cannot trust Him for the present and for the future?

F. We will think the way Robert Murray McCheyne did,

1. we will make prayer the priority of our day,
2. we will want to arise early for prayer,
3. we will labor fervently in prayer,
4. we will see how prayer could be all night for a special occasion,
 - a) when we understand and love
 - b) the One to whom we pray.
 - (1) The One who created all things.
 - (2) The One who maintains all things.
 - (3) The One who can change anything.
5. Robert Murray McCheyne rose early to meet God, because
 - a) McCheyne loved God.
 - b) We love God
 - (1) when we know who He is,
 - (2) when we know His love for us, and

(3) when we know that He also eagerly anticipates our time with Him.

Exhortation:

I. God wants to meet you everyday, several times a day.

A. Yes, He wants you to hear what He has to say in the Scriptures, but

B. He also wants to hear what you have to say in prayer.

1. This is one of the main messages of the Book of Revelation.

2. When you begin reading the Book of Revelation,

a) you will see and hear constant activity

b) until you get to chapter 8,

1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour (Rev 8.1).

c) What stopped all activity in heaven?

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets (Rev 8.2).

d) However, those angels did not yet sound their trumpets.

3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand (Rev 8.3, 4).

e) God silenced heaven as our prayers ascended to Him.

5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake (Rev 8.5).

- (1) Once God received our prayers,
- (2) the activity of heaven resumed.

II. Yet, you say that you do not pray!

A. What is wrong?

1. Do you feel unworthy?
2. Do you harbor sin in your life?

B. God wants to do something about that problem.

1. In Isaiah 59, God had the prophet reveal the reason for hindered prayer,

- 1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.
- 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden His face from you,
So that He will not hear.
(Isa 59.1, 2)

2. Hindered prayers, and
3. hindered salvation go together.
 - a) If you do not have one,
 - b) you do not have the other.
 - (1) If you have one,
 - (2) you have the other.
4. You are God's creation.
 - a) He wants you to be with Him, and
 - b) He wants to hear you now in prayer, but
 - (1) the hindrance needs removal, and
 - (2) He can do it through the sacrifice of His Son.

III. Do not give sleep to your eyes,

A. do not put food into your belly,

B. do not go on with life,

1. until you have addressed this matter and
2. made a decision to have God forgive you of all your sins, and then
 - a) make meeting God daily your top priority.
 - b) Are you ready right now to make that decision?
 - (1) Do you know what to do?
 - (2) The Bible says here is what you do,

38 “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2.38).

- (a) Repent, or turn to God and live as He commands and instructs.
- (b) Let us baptize you, and God shall do two things:
 - i) First, He will remit your sins, or forgive you.
 - ii) Second, He will give you the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) With sin gone, you can pray.
 - (2) The gift of the Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee
 - (a) that He will hear your prayers, and
 - (b) that He will invite you to heaven when you die.