

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, I Thessalonians 5:17

I. REVIEW: This series of messages is designed to challenge the tendency of believers to level off in our spiritual development. This trend is very observable and may differ in each congregation, yet adjusting to the group is seldom adjusting to God. The first study, LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST BELIEVING, focused on the large number of church attendees who are trusting religious rituals for redemption, but who have never been challenged to personally trust Christ's death on Calvary as the sole payment for their sin. The second study, LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST FOLLOWING JESUS, is for all believers who very well know Christ as Savior, but who like most average believers are only partially following the Lord, and like the disciples often follow from afar and maybe even following Him no more.

II. INTRODUCTION: This third message in this series, LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING, is vital to all believers. It is anticipated that this study will encourage every believer to become attentive to the invitation from a very holy God to come to Him in prayer – for all matters. The request and encouragement of an eternal, infinitely wise and powerful creator for believers is to come to him at any time to seek His guidance is a fully overwhelming concept!

III. EXIGESIS OF THE TEXT: "*Pray without ceasing,*" I Thessalonians 5:12-17

- A. The context is a general summary of Christian expectations that are assumed to be present in all believers.
- B. Pray without ceasing implies that every believer will be in an attitude of prayer, seeking and wanting God's guidance in everything and every area of their lives.
- C. Other assumed values shared by believer in the text teaches:
 - 1. comfort for others, v 11
 - 2. edify (to build up) each other, v 11
 - 3. esteem and respect workers and leaders, v 12,13
 - 4. warn those "out of step" in Christian conduct, v 14
 - 5. help those who are weak and have "small souls", v 14
 - 6. support the spiritually weak, v 14
 - 7. never be short tempered toward anyone, v 14

8. never treat anyone in an evil manner, v 15
9. always follow good people as examples, v 15
10. never stop trusting God for guidance, v 16

IV. DEFINITIONS OF PRAYER:

- A. Prayer is petitioning providence.
- B. Prayer is asking, (aitéo) used 39 times in the New Testament.
- C. The Lord's pattern prayer is all asking, Matthew 6:9-13.
- D. Prayer is seeking counsel from God.
- E. Prayer is looking for leadership by the Lord.
- F. Prayer is the economy that interacts from earth to heaven, from man to God and which moves the heart and hand of God.
- G. Prayer is talking directly to God about anything.
- H. Prayer is different from, but may include: confession, praise, meditation, humiliation, thanksgiving.
- I. Prayer is recorded in scripture as being private, public or with partners.

V. THE PATTERN PRAYER: Matthew 6:6-15

A. PERSONAL REQUEST, 6:1-8

1. The pattern prayer is private not public, 6:1-6
2. The pattern prayer is not to be a repetitive prayer, 6:7
3. The pattern prayer is anticipated by God the Father, 6:8.

B. PERSONAL RESPECT: 6:5-10

1. The pattern prayer presents God as a friend who is infinitely capable of providing for another friend, 6:5.
 - a. The friend is one tested by time.
 - b. The friend is one who can be reached at anytime.
 - c. The friend is one who cares about our situation.
 - d. The friend is one who has an infinite supply.
2. The pattern prayer presents God who is infinitely aware of our needs, and knows we are without resources to satisfy our situation, 6:6.
3. The pattern prayer presents God who is fully aware of the future, who may delay, but not deny our prayers, 6:7.
 - a. Delays are testings but not denials.
 - b. God helps when it seems inconvenient.
 - c. Asking implies desire, dependency, doubtlessness, and determination.

4. The pattern prayer presents God as a friend who acts on our urgency, 6:8.
 - a. We are to continue in prayer, Romans 12:12.
 - b. We are to continue until the answer comes.
 - c. We are to continue shamelessly.
5. The pattern prayer presents God as a friend who simplifies the complexities of life. Prayer can be understood by anyone, but explained by no one.

C. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, 6:11-15

1. Our prayers are to be to God our Father directly, 6:9
 - a. Prayers in the Bible are never directed to people living or dead.
 - b. Prayers are to the Father, through the High Priestly ministry of Christ as guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Prayers are to be a relationship of a son to a father who understands the nature of our need.
 - d. Prayers are to be a relationship of a son to a father who cares about the son's well being.
 - e. Prayers are to be directed to a God who is honored.
2. Our prayers are to be to God indicating our wish that His will in heaven be done in our lives here on earth, 6:10.
3. Our prayers are to be to God who gives in keeping with His wisdom about our daily needs, 6:11.
4. Our prayers are to be to God who gives and forgives in proportion to His power, 6:12.
5. Our prayers are to be to God who is aware of our human weaknesses, and who will never lead us to evil, 6:13.
6. Our prayers are to be to God who limits His forgiveness to the proportion that we forgive others, 6:14,15.

PRAYER IS EXPRESSING A DEPENDENCY AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S POWER AND WISDOM TO PROVIDE FOR OUR WELL BEING.