

A Prayer
March 9, 2014

A nationally known pastor often tells the story of a prayer he has prayed since he was a child. All through his teen years and later, he daily offered himself to the doing of God's will for his life. For decades he has prayed this prayer every day.

A similar thing was reported in a best selling book some years ago. You may remember the little book by Bruce Wilkinson titled *The Prayer of Jabez*. Bruce writes in the first chapter that he was introduced to this prayer in seminary. The prayer is in the Old Testament part of the Bible. Bruce was so impressed by this prayer that he started praying it every day and had done so for 30 years when he wrote about his experience in his book.

For 30 years these men had prayed a simple prayer. Over time its meaning became a part of them and God fleshed out His answer to their prayer in the course of their lives.

A few months ago I was reading through Psalm 119 and a short prayer request grabbed my attention. I started thinking about it, and praying about it, and it is the subject of this morning's sermon. Only, I decided to present what I had learned as an extension of the prayer. So the main section of my sermon today is presented as a prayer.

Thank you Lord, Jesus, for saving my soul. Thank you for giving me Your great salvation. I would be lost without Your offer of forgiveness. I would still be trapped in slavery to sin. I would stand before You on judgment Day with no hope of surviving. I would be bound over to Hell for eternity.

But You rescued me. You saved me. You offered me forgiveness. I believed in You, trusted in You. I still believe and grow more confident daily. Each day You prove Your faithfulness to all Your promises. As I pray, I experience Your presence. You comfort me in all my troubles.

As I try to fulfill my duties, I seek wisdom and understanding. When I must teach Your word, the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual truth. And I trust that the Spirit is speaking to the hearts of those I teach.

Lord, Jesus, You are worthy of more praise than I can give You. My heart is too shallow to praise You as You deserve. So I long for the day of Your return. I long for the day when I will see Your glory. You will lift me up from this earth and transform me. Then I will see me as I truly am. Then I will understand things I cannot now comprehend. Then I will be able to praise You, fully appreciating all You have done for me.

Until then, I offer my feeble thanks for all Your blessings. It is those blessings that motivates my prayer today. Your blessings are good, but they cause me concern.

Jesus, You have enabled me to live comfortably. You have blessed my family in both money and time. I do not struggle to put food on the table. I do not have trouble providing clothes and shelter. We are amply supplied by Your bounty. We have spare time in each day beyond what is needed for work and chores. We have time and money to pursue many leisure activities. And we are thankful.

But this is the cause of my concern today. With these blessings comes greater temptation to engage in worthless pursuits.

Lord, this is my simple prayer: Turn my eyes from worthless things.
(Psalm 119:37)

Lord, there are many worthless things around me. The world is full of what has little value. The only value of some things is that they pass the time. They simply occupy mind and body from being bored. These are not sinful pursuits, just, sometimes, wasteful.

There are times that I need to just sit and not think too hard. I have worked hard physically or mentally. I need a break. I need rest. I need to vegetate. It is those times that mindless TV is all I want to look at.

But I am learning that rest can be taken too far. Some people are workaholics. I tend toward the other direction. I am tempted to be a restaholic.

After I have rested enough, I could do something else, something of value. And yet, I continue to sit and watch. My resting is no longer resting, but wasting.

Similarly, I get pulled into the internet by all the ads and articles, promising me interesting things to learn. Like a hunter's eye is drawn to the movement of the animal, so my eyes seem drawn to worthless things. So often the titles of articles fail to deliver as promised. They are like the headlines of the sensational newspapers at the checkout counter. They promise much, and deliver little. They are a trap and a snare to me. I rarely see them as such at first. I see something interesting and give it my attention. It is only later that I realize I have wasted so much time. I can easily pass an hour on the net and have nothing to show for it.

I grieve all the time I have wasted in my life. I could have been improving myself, learning new skills. I could have been helping others, reaching out with friendship.

Jesus, help me to rest only as long as I need rest. Help me to sense when that is so I can pursue something of value with my time. I wish my life to be of more value to You, than it has been in the past. Turn my eyes from worthless things. Turn my eyes to things of value.

Of course all sinful things are worthless. Yet the world eagerly engages in sinful things. I am surrounded by sinful activities and values. Turn my eyes from all sinful things. They attract even in their perversions.

It is like driving by an auto accident scene. I find I cannot drive by without looking at the destruction. What is it in my heart that makes me want to see the destruction? What is it about sinful things that attracts us? Oh, Lord, guard me from such worthless things.

Guard me too from immoral values. Our world has such misplaced priorities. Turn my eyes from them. Where the world prioritizes looks, help me see a person's character. Help me see the beauty of a chaste and holy character. Turn my eyes to quality instead of style, to substance instead of flash. Turn my eyes to what is inside, not outside.

The world presents worthless things as if they are the most valuable, obtainable, and desirable things in the universe. Show me the things of real value, things that are attainable only in You. Turn my eyes to eternal things and away from temporal things. Only the things of heaven are of any REAL worth. Everything here will be left behind. Turn my eyes from the worthless things. Help me focus instead on heavenly things.

I ask Your help for I cannot resist the temptation of worthless things on my own. I need Your power working in me. I need the help of the Holy Spirit. Shout in my heart when worthless things are shouting to my eyes. Give me visions of the cross. Give me reminders of Your sacrifice.

Lord, Jesus, I ask this not on the basis of who I am. I am no one of any consequence. No, I ask this based on who You are. You are the one who created me for Yourself. You have planned my usefulness to Your kingdom. I am of value because You love me. Make my life useful to You. I am trusting Your faithfulness to equip me for life.

Lord, I want to see You face to face. I long for Your return to earth. When that moment occurs, I want to be busy doing things of value to Your kingdom.

Turn my eyes from worthless things so I can be clean and pure. I want to become holy. I want to be discovering and living out Your will. I want to fulfill Your purposes for me.

So, Lord Jesus, turn my eyes from worthless things.

Amen.

What are your eyes focused on today? What is your heart seeking? The world is full of worthless things. Which of these are you turning to? What might God do in your life if you prayed daily that He turn your eyes from worthless things?

Invitation

How often have you pursued worthless things?

How often have you pursued things you know are sinful?

You engaged in sin, turning your back on God.

Today, won't you turn to Him? He loves you, more than you know.

He loves you enough to send the Savior that you need.

Jesus is that Savior.

Right now, turn to Jesus who died for you.

God's forgiveness is promised to you because Jesus died in your place.

Believe on Jesus today and you will be forgiven of all sin.

Receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, turning your life over to Him, and He will begin the process of ridding your life of all worthless things.