

Sermon Outline

“For the Sake of Your Prayers”

“Desperate” series, Part 5 – 1 Peter 4:7 – Joshua Harris – November 7, 2010

Introduction

1. Colossians 4:2 states, “Continue steadfastly in prayer.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “pray without ceasing.” Romans 12:12 says, “be constant in prayer.”
2. Desperate people pray. John Laidlaw said, “A sense of real want is the very root of prayer.” When we sense our real want—when we see just how weak and incapable we are—we reach out to God, we long to commune with him, to talk to him and to ask for his help.
3. Learning to live desperate for God is really synonymous with learning to cultivate a spirit of prayer. A spirit of prayer invites God into every moment and circumstance because we need God in every moment and circumstance.

“The End of All Things Is at Hand...”

1. 1 Peter 4:7 begins by reminding us why a spirit of prayer is so important: “the end of all things is at hand.”
 - a. The “end of all things” is a reference to the end of the world and God’s final judgment. The Bible teaches us that world history is headed toward a conclusion. God the Creator started the world, and he will bring it to an end. Soon, we will all stand before him and give an account to Jesus Christ who died and who was raised from the dead by the power of God. (see Hebrews 9:27; Acts 17:31)
2. For Christians, knowing that the end of all things is at hand is a call to live differently, to live in light of Christ’s return. It means believing that what matters most in this life is what pleases the eternal God.
 - a. How should this reality shape our lives? We should control our desires (i.e., be self-controlled) and keep a clear head (i.e., be sober-minded) so that we can pray.

“For the Sake of Your Prayers”

1. Our text says, “be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.” What does this phrase mean? When you do something for the sake of someone, it means you do it for the good of that person. For example, because you cherish someone, you work or sacrifice or give for the sake of or for the good of that person.
2. That’s what Peter is saying here. If we want to cultivate a spirit of prayer, we can’t have out-of-control appetites and passions driving us. If we want to cultivate a spirit of prayer, we can’t have a clouded, distracted mind. They can’t coexist. A spirit of prayer requires self-control and a sober mind.

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For the Sake of Your Prayers be Self-Controlled

1. Self-control is the ability to restrain our passions and appetites. It's the ability to say "no" to ourselves—to control our emotions and desires and the expression of them in our behavior. (see Prov. 25:28; Gal. 5:23)
2. Why this is so important when it comes to prayer? If we are not able to say "No" to and control our own desires, prayer will inevitably get pushed out of our lives. *What feels good and what is easy and immediate will always take precedent*—sleep, work, relaxation, entertainment, or social media—all of which are good. But without self-control any one of these good things can crowd out prayer.
3. One application of learning self-control is to curb how much time we spend consuming media and using the internet. So often, we can live with some kind of screen in front of our eyes almost 24 hours a day. God tells us to pray without ceasing. Instead many of us are watching TV, texting, e-mailing, twittering, browsing the web and Facebooking without ceasing. This kind of preoccupation with media, entertainment and the internet is the opposite of a spirit of prayer.
 - a. *"One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time."* —John Piper

For the Sake of Your Prayers be Sober-Minded

1. Peter uses the word "sober-minded" 3 times in this letter.
 - a. *"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* – 1 Peter 1:13. Peter is saying that a sober mind is a ready mind—it's a mind that is spiritually engaged.
 - b. *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* – 1 Peter 5:8. Peter is communicating that a sober mind is a watchful mind. It's aware of an enemy who seeks to destroy. It is spiritually on guard against sin and temptation and the lies of Satan.
 - c. In 1 Peter 4:7, we learn that a sober mind is a prayerful mind. A sober mind sees spiritual realities, and so it prays.
 - d. *Here's Peter's point:* We will not realize our need to pray if we are not spiritually alert.
2. If we think that this world and its treasures are all that matter, we will neglect prayer. If we think that this world's kingdoms and power will go on forever, we won't cry out to an unseen God. If we drink deeply of the world's distorted message that sin doesn't really matter, we won't pray. Instead, we will be spiritually dull. And spiritual dullness can come in many forms:

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- a. For one person it might be spending hours at a mall that is shouting that material possessions and beauty is all that matters. Shopping can dull you spiritually.
 - b. For another person it might be sitcoms and romantic comedies that make sexual sin seem normal and even good. This kind of entertainment can dull you spiritually.
 - c. For another person it's music. Beautiful melodies can cloak songs that exalt man and belittle God. Music can make us melancholy when we should be awake to God's faithfulness.
3. Having a sober mind means being spiritually clear-headed. It's the opposite of being drunk and drowsy with the things of this world.

Fellowship Starters

1. What changes in your life (your priorities, how you spend your time, how you spend your money, etc.) would you make if you lived aware that the "end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7a)?
2. Josh taught us that if we are not able to exercise self-control and say "no" to our own desires, prayer will get pushed out of our lives. Where do you need to grow in practicing self-control so that prayer can increase?
3. Josh shared that to be sober-minded means to be spiritually alert and clear-headed; the opposite is to be spiritually dulled by the things and perspectives of this world. What activities dull your heart and mind spiritually? What takes you away from a spirit of prayer? How can you cultivate sober-mindedness?
4. What is shaping your mind? Are the things you read, watch, listen to and meditate on drawing you toward prayer and the reality of Jesus and his return? Or are they taking you away from it?
5. Purposeful Application
 - a. Pray for self-control and sober mindedness.
 - b. Choose just one area of self-control to focus on for the sake of prayer.
 - c. Cultivate a sober mind by choosing one moment in your day to decrease the input of worldly values and increase your intake of God's word.