



Biblical Manhood

Remembering Our Legacy, Fulfilling Our Destiny
May/June, 2019

Failure In Prayer

Have you ever felt like a failure in prayer? On the other hand, does it appear to you that your prayer life is stuck in neutral? You've been a Christian for years. You've been in church. You've done numerous Bible studies. You've read all the recommended books on prayer. Yet, your praying seems powerless and useless. You just don't seem to have the spectacular answers that others receive. Maybe you're wondering if you will ever grow and mature in prayer.

Chuck Swindoll authored a book entitled *Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back*. In this book, he writes about persevering through the pressures of life. He admits that there will be setbacks in your walk with God. Yet, the key is to persevere through the setbacks.

That title can be applied to our prayer lives. However, it might be more appropriate to title our prayer lives, "*One Step Forward, Four Steps Back*." Every believer experiences times of dryness in prayer. Answers do not come and you find yourself growing impatient with God. You don't sense God's presence or power. You question

if God is even listening. You wonder if you should keep praying. You think, "I've been a Christian for all these years. Yet, prayer is still a struggle." Times like these are inevitable. If you've never experienced times like this, you are blessed. Alternatively, perhaps your time has not come yet.

Joshua's Failure In Prayer

In **Joshua 9**, we see Joshua experiencing failure in his prayer life. Israel has dealt with the sin of Achan. They claimed their second victory, defeating and destroying the people of Ai. The people of Gibeon hear of this and are terrified of Israel's military might (**9:1-2**).

The people of Gibeon then devised a plan to trick the Israelites into a treaty with them (**9:3-5**). A treaty would deliver them from destruction and move Israel to help them whenever another army attacked them. They decided to deceive Joshua into thinking that they were from a distant land, posing no threat to him and the people of Israel. Once Joshua made a treaty

with them, it would be morally impossible for him to exterminate them.

The deceitful plan of the Gibeonites worked perfectly (9:6-15). They brought out worn-out clothes, sandals, wineskins, and sacks to give the impression that they had traveled from a distant land. They even presented Joshua with stale bread, giving the impression that it was fresh when they had left home. It all looked convincing.

Joshua and the leaders took the bait and fell to the Gibeonites' deception. They believed their story. They made a treaty with them, disobeying God's command to destroy the Canaanites. Why did Joshua fall into this trap? **Joshua 9:14** provides the ominous answer, "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel of the LORD." Joshua neglected to pray about this matter and experienced a spiritual setback. His lack of prayer led him to spiritual defeat.

Joshua believed that this was an open-and-shut case. If he had prayed, God would have revealed the Gibeonites' deception to him. Yet, he didn't think that this situation required prayer. His presumption created an irreversible mistake that cost Israel for generations to come. Joshua and the army of Israel later had to take time out to fight the Gibeonites' enemies. Yet,

even more damaging than this, God had set apart Israel as a holy people. Now they were intermingled with people who would be a hindrance and not a help to their relationship to God and their obedience to Him.

The Consequences of Neglecting Prayer

When you neglect prayer, you are headed for spiritual defeat. No believer is exempt from this spiritual principle. No matter how mature you are in the faith, if you neglect prayer, it will cost you dearly. No matter how long a person has walked with God, neglecting prayer is a tragic and expensive sin. On your worst day, you need God's grace, power, and guidance. Yet, on your best day, you still stand in need of these things. There will never come a day when you are not dependent on God.

Second, neglecting prayer can lead you to irreversible mistakes that will affect you and your relationship to God. It always results in a step back in your relationship with God. Prayerlessness is a sin that insults God and leaves you spiritually weakened and depleted. It has been said, "Heaven must be full of answers to prayer for which no one has ever bothered to ask." When you do not pray, you are cutting yourself off from God's guidance and blessings. Your

relationship to God will begin a downhill slide if you neglect prayer.

At the same time, neglecting prayer is a violation of **Proverbs 3:5-6**, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Prayer is the believer's way of expressing dependence on God. God wants to guide you and bless you. Yet, He has determined that you will receive from Him through prayer (**James 4:2**). As you pray, God makes you sensitive to His guidance. He pours out His blessings on your life. This requires that you pray and commit the details of your life to God. No matters are too small or insignificant to God. As you depend on God through prayer, He grants what is needed for your life and circumstances.

Prayerlessness is an insult to God. When we do not pray, we are depending on ourselves. In effect, we are saying to God, "I do not need You or Your help." This always grieves God, insults His character, and leaves us spiritually weakened and depleted. Prayerlessness also brings weighty consequences into our lives.

Grace In The Midst Of Failure

This chapter reveals another setback in Joshua's prayer life. He failed to pray and he paid the consequences. This truth stands true for Christians of every generation, including our own. Yet, there is good news in this text. Once Joshua made a treaty with the Gibeonites, he honored it. He would not break this covenant. Yet, he made the Gibeonites work for Israel. What was their job? They were to bring wood and water for the house of God. They would actually fuel the worship of God. What was a failure actually turned into something that helped Israel worship God.

In the Christian life, failure isn't final. We will have times of failure in our prayer lives. Yet, this is not the end. This becomes an opportunity. Let this failure drive your confession and repentance. Let it fan the flames of your worship. Let the memory of this prayerlessness stir you to see God with all your being. Your failures can actually become the opportunity to purify and renew your worship and prayer to God.

World Prayer Plan

July

- 1-Luxembourg
- 2-Macao
- 3-Macedonia
- 4-Madagascar
- 5-Malawi
- 6-Malaysia-The Church
- 7-Malaysia-The Lost
- 8-Malaysia-Open Doors
- 9-Maldives
- 10-Mali
- 11-Malta
- 12-Marshall Islands
- 13-Martinique
- 14-Mauritania
- 15-Mauritius
- 16-Mexico-The Church
- 17-Mexico-The Lost
- 18-Micronesia
- 19-Midway Islands
- 20-Moldova
- 21-Monaco
- 22-Mongolia
- 23-Montserrat
- 24-Morocco-The Church
- 25-Morocco-The Lost
- 26-Morocco-Persecuted Believers
- 27-Mozambique-The Church
- 28-Mozambique-The Lost
- 29-Myanmar (Burma)-The Church
- 30-Myanmar (Burma)-The Lost
- 31-Namibia

August

- 1-Nauru
- 2-Nepal-The Church
- 3-Nepal-The Lost
- 4-Nepal-Mission Efforts

- 5-Netherlands
- 6-Netherland Antilles
- 7-New Caledonia
- 8-New Zealand
- 9-Nicaragua
- 10-Niger
- 11-Nigeria-The Church
- 12-Nigeria-The Lost
- 13-Norway
- 14-Oman
- 15-Pakistan-The Church
- 16-Pakistan-The Lost
- 17-Pakistan-Open Doors
- 18-Pakistan-Persecuted Believers
- 19-Palau
- 20-Palestine West Bank-Open Doors
- 21-Palestine West Bank-Peace
- 22-Panama
- 23-Papua New Guinea-The Church
- 24-Papua New Guinea-The Lost
- 25-Paraguay
- 26-Peru-The Church
- 27-Peru-The Lost
- 28-Philippines-The Church
- 29-Philippines-The Lost
- 30-Pitcairn Island
- 31-Poland-The Church

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