

*no man is greater than his prayer life
& his prayer life is no greater than he is.*

THE LIFE THAT CAN PRAY John 15:1-7

I pray that God will take the message tonight and apply it personally to your own life.

Tonight we are speaking on the most, or probably one of the most important aspects of prayer, the person who can pray -- John chapter 15 -- I want to read one verse. But keep your Bibles opened please to that chapter, because I am going to be referring to several verses throughout this chapter. John chapter 15, verse 7. ...

You can preach without being right with the Lord. And you can teach in a SS class without being right with God, and you can serve as a deacon without being right with God. You can make a visit without being right with God. You can witness without being right with the Lord. But you cannot pray without being right with God. Because you see in preaching, it is a preacher to people encounter, in teaching, it's a teacher to student encounter, in visiting it is a member to a prospect encounter, but praying is a face to face with God encounter. And you may words but they are not praying. You cannot pray right unless you are right.

And I said last Sunday night there are two things that determine the answer to any prayer -- 1 -- is this request according to the will of God -- the other is: is the person ~~XXX~~ praying right with God. Because you see it is the life that prays. No man, no Christian is ~~greater~~ greater than his prayer life, no matter what else he may be. He may be a deacon, preacher, you may be a great Bible scholar - but you are not any greater than your prayer life. And ~~XXX~~ a man's prayer life is no greater than his own life. It is the life that prays. In James 5:16 -- the Bible says -- effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. David recognized this when in Ps. 66:18 he said "if I regard iniquity David recognized that for him to be able to pray and pray right his heart had to be right. In I John chap 3 it says *Jm 3:22* The most important aspect as far as you are concerned in this matter of praying is - am I the person who can pray - am I qualified to pray. And I will be very honest with you, knowing what God can do through prayer, and you read through the Bible, and all of the things that are ours through prayer, and all that God wants to do through us through prayer and all he wants to do for us in prayer, I don't know about you, but whatever it takes to be able to pray, I want to do ~~XXX~~ it. I cannot conceive of anything being so important in a person's life that he had rather have than and cling to that thing rather than being able to pray right.

I have had a lot of joys as a Christian - I never will forget the first sermon I preached, I felt great - before I preached - I was 15 years old and I preached at the Fort Smith City Jail. I was on the outside looking in, a captive audience - this was the only time nobody in the audience got up and walked out of the building. But I preached - the great thing about being a preacher is I get to do what I want to do and I get paid for it. ... you can't have any more than that. Every once in a while I'll meet a fellow who is earning a living but it is not what he wants to do. He wants to do something else, but it won't pay him enough, or he can't make a living at it. So he does what he is doing in order to support ~~himself, but~~ himself but it is not what he wants to do. And one of the greatest joys and blessings that the Lord has given me is that I get to do what I want to do and I get paid for it, and that's a pretty good deal. There's great joy in preaching - I enjoy it.

There's a great joy in leading someone to Christ. I never will forget the first person I ever led to Christ personally. There's no joy, there's just no joy like going to somebody and being instrumental, being used of God in seeing that

person come to Christ.

I have even gotten some joy out of performing weddings for certain people.

But I want to tell you tonight, and I mean this with all of my heart, there is no joy that has ever come to me as a Christian compared to the joy of praying and asking God to do something definitely in my ~~life~~ heart or in the life of somebody else and seeing it come to pass. There is absolutely nothing at all like it. And Jesus said that this is what will make your joy to be full --- in that you ask ~~XXX~~ what you will and the father will do it. Your joy may be full. And if you have never had the experience and have never tasted the joy of being able to go to God as your Father, and without a guilty conscience, and having confidence that you know that everything is right between He and you, and ask God for what needs to be done in your life, or in the life of someone else, and rise from your knees with the assurance that God will do it, and then see that thing come to pass, then you have missed a great experience in the Christian life.

And I cannot think of anything tonight, I cannot conceive of anything, of any pleasure, of any possession to me that would be worth clinging to at the sacrifice, at the forfeit of being able to pray and have God answer your prayers. I talked about the Judgement Seat of Christ this morning - I honestly believe with all of my heart that one of the things that is going to embarrass us and going to ~~XX~~ bring tears to our eyes at the JS of Christ, is to see revealed to us all of the things that we could have had, all the things that God could have done for us and through us if we had only been on praying ground, and yet we did not pray. Won't it be an amazing revelation when God shows us -- when He says, now listen, if you had prayed, if you had lived the life that could have prayed, you could have asked for this person to have been helped and they would have been helped. You could have asked for this person to have been healed, and they would have been healed. You could have asked for this person to be saved, and they would have been saved. You ~~could have asked for this money to be sent to the mission field and their needs would have been met.~~ If you had only prayed, I ~~would~~ wanted to walk with you through prayer. And I wanted to bless you and bless others through prayer, but you would not pray, and you would not live the life that would allow you to pray, and look at all that failed to be done in God's Kingdom because you yourself failed in this matter.

A man always saved his most important words for the last. What a man says before he dies sometimes is the most important. And Jesus is on His way to the cross and in Jn 14, 15, 16 he ~~was~~ giving last minute instructions~~X~~ to disciples. Everything he said now, he is repeating some of it, he knows that he is (cram course) going to be taken from them, they are going to be disillusioned, they are going to suffer defeat, and he must get into their minds, into their hearts, the things of utmost importance. And in these three chapters, Jesus has more to say about praying than he has to say about anything else. And in this vs 7 in John chap 15, he talks about and describes the person who can pray. Remember it is the life that prays. Nobody is greater than his prayer life, and no prayer is greater than the life. You won't pray if you aren't right with God, you know that is the funny thing. When you get a little bit cold in heart and something comes in and separates you from God, you don't ~~may~~ want to pray. You cannot pray when you are not right with God and if you do force yourself to pray as some of us do when we are out of fellowship with God it is just meaningless words and nothing ever happens. So Jesus says in Jn 15:7, "if - there is a condition -- - what a tremendous promise: ask what you will, whatever it is, no limit, ye shall ask what you will and it may be done unto you. He doesn't put any maybe or perhaps, he says it will come to pass, if you abide in me, and my words abide in you. There are really 2 conditions that Jesus lays down in that verse. And every other condition that you will find for answered prayer throughout the Bible can be contained in these two statements. First of all, the person who can pray, and have his

is that person who is abiding in Christ. That's the first thing Jesus said, if you abide in me. Now what is he talking about? Throughout this whole chapter, Jesus is using a figure of speech. He begins by saying, I am the vine, -- you are the branches --- perhaps as Jesus is leaving the upper room with his disciples was walking to the garden of G. - perhaps they passed a vineyard. The vine was the symbol of the nation Israel and perhaps as they walked by the temple there they saw the insignia, the sign chiseled on the temple -- that of a vine. Israel was called the vine. God said you are my vine. Jesus said I am the true vine - I am the true vine, and you are the branches. You are the branches, if you abide in me you will bring forth fruit. Now Jesus is saying that my relationship to you is that of a vine to its branches. I am the vine, all the life comes from me, you are branches, that is all you are. What are branches? What is the purpose of a branch? What good is a branch? Of what use is a branch? A branch is put there in order that the life of the vine can flow through it and bear fruit. The only reason that a branch has of existing is that it might bear the fruit that the vine produces. The branch doesn't produce any fruit. The branch merely bears the fruit. The branch has no life of itself. It is just worthless wood unless the sap, unless the vine, unless the life that is in the vine flows through that branch bears the grapes, bears the clusters bears the fruit. Now Jesus said, I am the vine, the life is in me, I have ~~produced~~ produced you, the branch. And your purpose for existence is that you might allow me to produce my fruit, what I want to do, through you. Now Jesus says the one primary condition, the one kind of life that can go to God and ask what it will and it will be done, is that person who is living the branch kind of life. The branch life. The branch life is when I recognize that my only reason for existence is that Jesus can bear fruit through me. And when Jesus said if ye abide in me, he meant if you will look upon yourself as a ~~branch~~ branch and only a branch, nothing more, nothing less. If you will place yourself at my disposal and allow me to use you in any way I want to. Allow me to bear my fruit through you, just put yourself at my disposal, yield to me, and submit to me. Make yourself available to me - you abide in me, let me run your life, let me flow through you. You just simply be the branch that produces my fruit, ye shall ask what ye ~~will~~ will and it shall be done unto you.

Now the question that you and I have to ask is, am I living that kind of life? Am I living that branch kind of life tonight? Am I abiding in Christ? Now I know that Christ is abiding in me because it says when I trusted Christ as my Saviour that he through His HS came to take up residence in my life, He dwells in me. Christ abides in me - that is for my salvation. But He says I am also to abide in Him, I am to remain in close contact with Him. I am to live in fellowship with him. I am to live in communion with Him. There is to be no distance between me and Jesus. I am to stick to Him, to abide in Him, and to live every day conscious that He is my life and that the only reason I have for existence is that He can use me to bear fruit. I must make myself available ~~to~~ whatever God wants to do through me -- that's all right with me.

Now this is what David meant when in Ps 37 vs 4 he made this statement, and to me it is one of the great statements in the Bible -- he said, Now look at the promise, look at the second part of that verse for a moment, He shall give you the desire of your heart. Isn't that ~~xx~~ tremendous. There's not a person on the face of the earth tonight that wouldn't give their souls to be able to have the desire of their hearts. Whatever their heart desires is what they will have. Just imagine, whatever your heart desires, you can have it. Jesus says, if you delight yourself in the Lord then God will give you whatever your heart desires, do you see the relationship. If my desire is to glorify Him, if all of my joy and all of my delight is in the Lord, this is what I rejoice in, this is what I live for- then every desire of my heart God will give it to me. Because every

--- and notice in vs. 22: and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him -- why? Because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Jesus says the same thing, If you abide in me, and my words -- the things that I have said - ~~the words~~ words that I have spoken, my precepts, my commands, they abide in you - if they control you, if they dominate your life - if you give obedience to my words - to my will. Then you can ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

You know there are some people, when they pray, they are not really concerned about what God ~~XXX~~ wants- about God's will. And if I were to come to you individually tonight and point at you and say, listen, is your life obedient to the will of God -- or you obedient tonight to the word of God? Can you think of anything tonight in this word of God that you are rebelling against? Can you think of anything that this book says tonight, that Jesus said, that you are not in harmony with? -- that you are rebelling against? that you resist? If there is then you cannot pray and have your prayers answered. For when he said if my words abide in you - it is different that hearing his words. Jesus doesn't say if you go to church and hear my words -- and believe them, ye shall ask what ye will. Because that means all of us tonight could pray and have our prayers answered, because most of you will hear what I say tonight and will believe it. But that's not ~~what~~ the same thing as the words sticking with you. You see, he says if my words abide in you, if they take a place in your heart and if they stay there and stick there. Now most of the time we read the Bible, we hear a preacher preach or a teacher teach ~~X~~ - and we hear the words and we believe them and we leave them in the Bible or in the church and we go our way and never do anything about it. The life that can pray is that life that when through the word of God, God tells you to do something and you immediately go and do it. I'll tell you the kind of spirit that can pray - it's that little air force wife up in Denver that came to me one night and said, listen, you said something the other night in your sermon about tithing - I'd never heard of that before, but I said to myself if the Bible teaches tithing I need to do it, so she said, I went home and looked it up in the Bible and sure enough there it was, it taught tithing, and I want to start - how do I do it? That's obedience. That's what Jesus means when he says if my words abide in you, take root, stay there - influence you.

But it means something else - it also means that that word not only controls us, but also cleanses us. Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches, and then he says something else. My father is the husbandmen - and every branch in me that is bearing fruit, he purges it, he cuts at it in order that it may bring forth more fruit, he cleans it up - and he says now are you clean through the word that I have spoken unto you. You see every branch and every vine if it is going to bear fruit, there has to be a certain element of ~~purging~~ purging - certain things have to be cut away. And the only reason you cut something away is because it is useless. It is just so much wood and it is not producing any fruit. The life of the vine is not flowing through it. All it is doing is just taking up sap and taking up extra space in the vine and so you cut it off. It is not producing anything - and then as you purge it, then it can produce more and more and more. Now Jesus says if you are going to abide in me and my words are going to abide in you, you are going to have to put up with a little bit of pruning and purging in your life. There are some things in your life that the father is going to have to cut out and cut away. You are going to have to be clean - this is what David meant when he said, if I regard iniquity, that doesn't mean if I commit a sin that I cannot pray, the word regard means if I hang on to it, if I retain it - if I won't let go of it. When I go to Christ and go to God and begin to pray, and God shows me the things in my life that are wrong - the sins I have committed - if I ignore those sins, if I refuse to deal with them, if I cling to them, if I retain them, then God will not hear me when I pray. But as God puts the spotlight of his Spirit upon my life and points out the things in my life that need to be dealt with and the things ~~in my life that~~ that need to be ridded of, then I must be willing to let Him cut those things out. Now this is so important because

it is exactly at this point that most of us are defeated in our prayer life. I don't know how interested you are tonight in really being able to pray and going to God and having God answer your prayers, and living that ~~ix~~ kind of life that God wants you to live, but I tell you one thing, if you are interested in that, you must, you must, deal with the sins in your life. I scarcely ever begin to seriously pray but that God first of all before He will let me bring anything to Him, ~~How~~ He first of all has some things that he wants to say to me. And I have mentioned this to you before, but it is remarkable how great your memory becomes when you start to pray. As I told a group the other night, sometimes those little things that you forget about and don't even remember, yet when you start to pray it is as obvious as an elephant in a phone booth - you just can't miss it, there it is, that thing that you said about that person that wasn't right, that little act of dishonesty that you committed, that person that you are angry with -- and you try to pray, and you try to pray around that, and you can't do it. I have had some controversies with the Lord - there have been some times when I have started to pray and everytime I would start to pray, God ~~has~~ holds up something there and I'll try to pray around it and over it and through it, and I am just wasting my time. Charles G. Finney, who was one of the great ~~revivalists~~ revivalists of our country and a man that had power in prayer. He said, I'll tell you I pray a lot - sometimes I spend whole nights in prayer. He said most of the time it is just getting Charles G. Finney right so he can offer one petition to God. That's the way it is. It's the life that prays. It's the life that prays. And you cannot pray and have power with God in prayer unless your heart is absolutely, totally, 100% right as far as God reveals it to ~~you~~ you. You must be willing to deal with the sin in your life, you must be willing to let God come with his pruning shears and clip out and cutoff everything in your life that he wants to get rid of. Sometimes it may not be something that is bad, it is just something that is worthless -. You know it is an interesting thing about ~~pruning~~ pruning - purging and cutting off the vines. Every time you cut it off, you are reducing the wood, there is less wood, less wood, but there is more fruit. You know what John the Baptist said talking about Jesus -- He must increase and I must decrease. And this matter of getting ready to pray and getting right to pray is letting God reduce you a little bit -- getting less and less and less wood and less and less of me but having more and more fruit. There are some of us right now who know what some of the things are that God would cut off first in our life if we took this thing seriously, and that's the reason some of us don't pray. Because we recognize that you cannot pray and not be right with God - and yet we are not willing to deal and let God deal with our sin.

I wonder tonight if you are living this kind of life, if you know what it means to be a branch on the vine, and God is bearing fruit in your life, the fruit of the Spirit, and you feel that you could go to God tonight and pray and there would be that guilty conscience, like John says, if your heart doesn't condemn ~~me~~ you then God is greater than your heart and he won't condemn you either. But if your heart condemns you, then there is something wrong with God. And when you begin to pray, and you are troubled in your heart, and your heart is condemning you, and you don't feel confidence in coming to God, it is because something is wrong in your life and you need to sit there for awhile and let God open your heart and your eyes. But he says when you can come to God and your heart doesn't condemn you, and you are not convicted of sin in your life, then you can pray and ask what you will, and God will do it. It is the life that prays. ~~It~~ Is your life qualified to pray tonight? That's what God wants of us -- He is the vine and you are the branch, and that's all he wants you to be - just the branch, just to place your life at his disposal, let Him cut around you, let Him do a little pruning, cut off those things in your life that are not right, clean you up, dress you up. You see, if you once yield yourself to the Father, he will see to it that you are able to pray - and that is the blessed thing about it, you don't have to worry about it, He'll see to it. The branch doesn't ~~not~~ sit around all day worrying about himself - the husbandman takes care of it -- all the branch has to do is just to yield to the blade. If you want to be able to pray, and you are willing to be just the branch, that is all God asks of you. You can rest

assured that he'll see to it, with your permission, that your life is qualified to pray.