

Unceasing Prayer

Paul commanded us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He also practiced what he preached. He told the Colossians that he never stopped praying for them, asking God to fill them with the knowledge of his will (Colossians 1:9). Does this mean he was constantly on his knees, praying only for the Colossians? Hardly. He prayed for others as well. He also did other things besides pray. How then could he be said to pray without ceasing?

What we see from Paul's example is a life offered up to God at all times, so that prayer was the spontaneous and natural outflowing from his heart to God on behalf of others. We are to follow him as he followed Jesus. As he prayed, so are we to pray. He was in a constant spirit of prayer, because he knew he was living his life in the constant presence of God. That was the understanding that the Reformers captured in their rediscovery of the gospel—that we indeed live all of life *coram deo*, before God himself. Continual prayer, on all occasions, is a way we remind ourselves of God's continual presence with us.

Prayer is to be as natural and spontaneous to us as breathing. But going from prayer in general to giving thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18) may be harder to grasp. We can more easily see the importance of prayer as a regular feature of Christian living than we can the possibility of thanksgiving in all situations. We find ourselves praying for help to get out of trouble. We don't easily find ourselves thanking God for the trouble itself.

But that isn't what this command teaches. It instructs us to give thanks in the *midst* of the trouble. All our circumstances are directed and ordered by our loving heavenly Father. That means nothing, not even the worst outcome we can imagine, is independent of his control and plan. By thanking God in the midst of difficulty, we are not allowing ourselves to be controlled by the difficulty. We are allowing ourselves to be controlled by God, who has promised us that in all things he works for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

Though we may not understand how, we accept by faith that what is now happening—whether persecution, disease, or death—will turn out for our best, as well as for God's glory. Because nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord
Teach us to
Pray
John 14:6

Covenant Presbyterian Church
1623 University Avenue, Berkeley, California 94703
www.berkeleyopc.org

MORNING WORSHIP – 11:00 A.M.

THE LORD CALLS US TO HIMSELF

Salutation and Call to Worship

*Hymn of Praise # 16

“Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord”

*Invocation

*Hymn of Praise # 32

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

CONFESSION OF SIN AND THE LORD'S ASSURANCE

The Law of God

Matthew 22:37-40

Confession of Sin (Congregation in Unison)

Almighty God, we are unworthy to come into your presence, because of our many sins. We do not deserve any grace or mercy from you, if you dealt with us as we deserve. We have sinned against you, O Lord, and we have offended you. And yet, O Lord, as we acknowledge our sins and offenses, so also do we acknowledge you to be a merciful God, a loving and favorable Father, to all who turn to you. And so we humbly ask you, for the sake of Christ your son, to show mercy to us, and forgive us all our offenses. Forgive the sins of our youth, and the sins of our old age. By your Spirit, O God, take possession of our hearts, so that, not only the actions of our life, but also the words of our mouths, and the smallest thought of our minds, may be guided and governed by you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Assurance of Forgiveness

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9)

OFFERING OURSELVES IN THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

Worship in Giving

Hymn of Thanksgiving # 221

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

Worship in Prayer

Interlude

*Congregation Standing

We extend a cordial welcome to each visitor!

Wayne K. Forkner, Minister

510-928-8024

THE LORD FEEDS US FROM HIS WORD

*Hymn of Preparation # 170

“Fairest Lord Jesus”

Sermon Text

Isaiah 35

Sermon

THE TRANSFORMING PRESENCE OF THE LORD

*Hymn of Response # 98

“Now Thank We All Our God”

THE LORD DISMISSES US WITH HIS BLESSING

*Gloria Patri (Praising our Gracious Lord)

734

*The Lord's Benediction

Announcements

Today, 10:00am. Adult Sunday School class.

Today, 12:30pm. A potluck luncheon will be held in the church. All are welcome. We are studying the book of Ephesians.

Tuesday, 7:30pm. Weekly Bible Study at the church or via Zoom. We are studying the book of Deuteronomy. Our Bible study at the church begins with dinner at 7:00pm, followed by a time of study at 7:30pm. For information on attending the study via Zoom, please send an email to Pastor Wayne at wforkner86@mac.com.