

THE PRAYER LIFE

Isaiah 64:1-7 (NASB)

¹ “Oh, that You would rend the heavens *and* come down, That the mountains might quake at Your presence—

² As fire kindles the brushwood, *as* fire causes water to boil— To make Your name known to Your adversaries, *That* the nations may tremble at Your presence!

³ When You did awesome things which we did not expect, You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence.

⁴ For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.

⁵ You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. Behold, You were angry, for we sinned, *We continued* in them a long time; And shall we be saved?

⁶ For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷ There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.”

It is saddening to consider how many Christians there are who seldom think or speak earnestly about the deep and immeasurable sinfulness of “the flesh” – **“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not” (Romans 7:18 NASB).**

The man who truly believes this may well cry out: **“But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:23-24 NASB).**

Happy is he who can go further and say: **“²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Would that we might understand God's counsels of grace for us! “The flesh” on the cross—the Spirit in the heart and controlling the life”... ²⁶ For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (Romans 7:25; Romans 8:2 NASB).**

This spiritual life is too little understood or sought after; yet it is literally what God has promised and will accomplish in those who unconditionally surrender themselves to Him for this purpose.

Here then we have the deep root of evil as the cause of a prayerless life. **“The flesh”** can say prayers well enough, calling itself religious for so doing and thus satisfying conscience. But **“the flesh”** has no desire or strength for the prayer that strives after an intimate knowledge of God; that rejoices in fellowship with Him; and that continues to lay hold of His strength. So, finally, it comes to this, “the flesh” must be denied and crucified.

The Christian who is still carnal has neither disposition nor strength to follow after God. He rests satisfied with the prayer of habit or custom; but the glory, the blessedness of secret prayer is a hidden thing to him, till someday his eyes are opened, and he begins to see that **“the flesh”**, in its disposition to turn away from God, is the archenemy which makes powerful prayer impossible for him.

“I had once, at a conference in South Africa, spoken on the subject of prayer and made use of strong expressions about the enmity of **“the flesh”** as a cause of prayerlessness. After the address, the pastor’s wife said that she thought I had spoken too strongly. She also had to mourn over too little desire for prayer, but she knew her heart was sincerely set on seeking God. I showed her what the word of God said about **“the flesh”**, and that everything which prevents the reception of the Spirit is nothing else than a secret work of **“the flesh”**.”

Adam was created to have fellowship with God and enjoyed it before his fall. After the fall, however, there came immediately, a deep seated aversion to God, and he fled from Him. This incurable aversion is the characteristic of the unregenerate nature and the chief cause of our unwillingness to surrender ourselves to fellowship with God in prayer. The following day she told me that God had opened her eyes; she confessed that the enmity and unwillingness of **“the flesh”** was the hidden hindrance in her defective prayer life.

Oh my brethren, do not seek to find in circumstances the explanation of this prayerlessness over which we mourn; seek it where God’s word declares it to be, in the hidden aversion of the heart to a holy God.

When a Christian does not yield entirely to the leading of the Spirit—and this is certainly the will of God and the work of His grace—he lives, without knowing it, under the power of **“the flesh”**. This life of **“the flesh”** manifests itself in many different ways. It appears in the hastiness of spirit, or the anger which so unexpectedly arises in you, in the lack of love for which you have so often blamed yourself; in the pleasure found in eating and drinking, about which at times your conscience has chided you; in that seeking for your own will and honor, that confidence in your own wisdom and power, that pleasure in the world, of which you are sometimes ashamed before God. All this is life "after the flesh". **“For you are still fleshly” For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”** ([1 Corinthians 3:3 NASB](#)) that text, perhaps, disturbs you at times; you have not full peace and joy in God.

I pray you take time and give an answer to the question: Have I not found here the cause of my prayerlessness, of my powerlessness to effect any change in the matter? I live in the Spirit, I have been born again, but I do not walk after the Spirit—“**the flesh**” lords it over me. The carnal life cannot possibly pray in the spirit and power. God forgive me. The carnal life is evidently the cause of my sad and shameful prayerlessness.