

# Dear Christian, Do You “Take Hold of God” in Prayer?

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A sad mark of our times comes to light when we find that many say their *prayers* but few really *pray*. Many pray the same old prayers day after day yet few wrestle with God; few beg God to intercede; few frequently storm the throne of grace; few hold God accountable to His own promises; and sadly, few ask God to move mightily. Many have a list of prayer requests but the manner, tone, and setting of their prayers is so filled with boredom that even the person praying bores himself. Indeed, I exhort you to “take hold of God” in prayer. Don’t be like Israel where no one called upon God’s Name and no one aroused himself to take hold of God in prayer (Isa 64:7).

In the ensuing essay, I wish to provide for you six compelling reasons why you ought to pray.

## **1. Prayer is a *mark of a believer*.**

Just as the first response that a newborn baby has upon entering this world is crying so it is with a child of God. He cries out to God. By nature, every child knows how to cry out to his parents. The true believer calls out to God in prayer to express his trust in the Lord (Ps 25:2; 31:14) and his gratitude for God’s salvation (Ps 142:7). The child of God cries out to God for help (Ps 88:13). Truly it is said of Saul that when God converted him and told Ananias to go find him the mark that distinguished him was that he was “praying” (Acts 9:11). Prayer is the expression of sole dependence on the Lord. And only the child of God can offer prayers to God’s throne that will be heard and answered by God. Those who live in persistent sin and reject God and His Lordship over their lives will not be heard by God (Ps 66:18; Isa 1:15; Jer 7:27). So, a child of the living God sets himself apart from the world by praying to God regularly (Dan 6:10; Ps 55:17).

## **2. Prayer is a *sign of holiness*.**

Without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14). A sure mark of holiness — growth in sanctification — is one’s heartfelt and hopeful trust in the Lord through frequent prayers (Ps 115:11). One of the results of being filled with the Spirit is the giving of thanks in all things to the Lord (Eph 5:20). When God’s Word dwells richly in the heart of God’s child, he will eagerly teach others with the Word of God, desire to sing the Word of God, and he will be thankful in his heart to God (Col 3:16). Apart from prayer, Christian growth is stunted. But with persistence in prayer, Christian growth is accelerated.

## **3. Prayer *brings power from the Spirit*.**

The immeasurable greatness of God’s power available to every Christian should prompt the daily grace of taking hold of God in prayer. The mighty power of God is available to the child of God who prays and asks God to give strength in weakness, sight in the fog, and encouragement in seasons of discouragement. Paul prays and asks that the believers in Ephesus may be able to comprehend the surpassing greatness of God’s power toward believers (Eph 1:20). Paul also prays for the church in Rome and asks that God may fill them with hope in believing so that

they may abound in hope and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13). The Spirit takes up residence in each Christian (1 Cor 3:16). God glorifies His great Name in manifesting His strength in and through the weakness of His people (2 Cor 12:10). The power of the Spirit needed to win souls (Prov 11:30), to evangelize the nations (Acts 1:8), to abound in hope and joy in the Christian life (Rom 15:13), to grow in Christlikeness in the inner man (Eph 3:16), and to bring about true gospel growth as the Word is preached (1 Thess 1:5) is achieved through prayer. The power of the Spirit that all believers need to overcome sin and live purely in this life is attained through prayer. To neglect praying for the power of the Spirit is like a man neglecting to put gasoline in his car. It may look normal on the outside but on the inside it is hollow and useless. Let us pray more for the power of the Spirit to fill us and control us in our lives.

#### **4. Prayer prevents backsliding.**

To neglect to pray is to invite backsliding. To omit praying from a daily schedule is to welcome temptations from Satan's schemes. If one does not intentionally fight in the war against sin, then he is already losing the battle within. Backsliding comes when sin is entertained. But a Christian cannot entertain sin when he is daily praying against that sin! Because of our sinful flesh, we are already sliding downhill, and without the active and intentional climb back up the hill we will naturally slide downwards. Without daily prayer, we open the gates of our heart to the tricks of Satan. A Christian knows his sin. A Christian searches his heart. A child of God knows his weak spots and where Satan might attack. To pray and storm the throne of God's grace is to shut the gates and secure them tightly so as to refrain from giving into sin. A child of God backslides first on his knees before he ever backslides in practice. In other words, a man backslides first in private before he ever backslides in public.

#### **5. Prayer breeds contentment.**

Apart from prayer, we find it easy to complain. Murmuring takes up residence in the mind and heart of every worldly person. To complain is to argue with God. To complain is to attempt to push God off His throne, slaughter Him, and reestablish "self" on the throne. Complaining is opposition to God's sovereign providence. To resist complaining, the child of God must pray frequently. He must persistently offer up prayers on God's altar so as to assure his own heart of God's sovereign kingship and to demand that his own will enjoy God's sovereign kingship. When trials come and wisdom is needed as to how to approach a situation, the man of God must pray (James 1:5-7). A born-again person cannot complain while he is thanking God for His omnipotent grace. They are mutually exclusive. Like the psalmists, may we learn to pour out our hearts to God (Ps 62:8), even when enemies rage (Ps 27:2-3, 12), and when confusion arises (Ps 73:1-16).

#### **6. Praying obeys God.**

To neglect prayer is to sin. To not be in a constant spirit of prayer is to engage in transgression. God says to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). We are to "strive together to God" in praying (Rom 15:30). We are to pray at all times in the Spirit (Eph 6:18). We must continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God (Heb 13:15). To neglect prayer is to forfeit manifold blessings from God. To reject praying is to squander the promised blessings from God. To be "too busy" for fervent praying is to say that other things are more important than God. We make time for what is most important to us. Let us obey our God and "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil 4:6).