



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Role of Prayer in a Spiritual Awakening – Part 1

Guest(s): David Platt

Air Date: May 3, 2022

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: A consistent, fervent prayer life is important for every believer's walk. When we commune with the Lord every day, it can bring radical revival to our lives, as well as to the lives of those around us. Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh.

Now, today on the program, you're going to hear our presentation that focuses on the effect of our prayers. Statistics show, according to new research from the Barna Survey Group, that people are praying less and less. Well here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we rely on prayer. We stress it as an essential ingredient in every believer's life and in our family lives as well.

Now, as we continue a special week of programming here on the broadcast that centers on prayer, please know we are leading up to the National Day of Prayer this Thursday, which will be celebrated all across the country and hopefully in your town. And to do so today, we have a very special guest to help us do just that. Our featured speaker is David Platt, the lead pastor at McLean Bible Church in Washington, D.C. David has served there since 2017 after Pastor Lon Solomon retired. David is also the founder and president of Radical, a ministry that provides resourceful assistance to churches. A native of Atlanta, Georgia, David has authored dozens of books. His most popular and recognizable work, *Radical*, was a *New York Times* best-seller. David and his wife, Heather, have four children and they make their home in the Washington D.C. area.

David's presentation is really a sermon, and he delivered it at the 2019 National Day of Prayer event in Washington, D.C. He'll be preaching from Exodus chapter 32, where God met and spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. David Platt will explain how Moses's passionate plea for grace impeded God's wrath toward Israel. He will also acknowledge what we can learn about God's character by studying the effective prayer of Moses. Here now is David Platt on the special edition of Family Talk.

David Platt:

I recently returned from preaching in South Korea. And I'd been with our brothers and sisters there before, but the Lord convicted me in a fresh and deep way regarding the role of prayer and spiritual awakening in that country. Many of you know the story, how at the turn of the century in 1900, less than 1% of the Korean population was Christian. That all began to change at a conference of leaders in what is now known in Korean history as the Pyongyang Revival of 1907, what many have called the Korean Pentecost. In January of that year, there was a conference held with a number of Christian leaders, including both Koreans and missionaries from other countries in Pyongyang, what is now the capital of North Korea. In anticipation of that many meeting, many of them were pleading before God. The country was struggling. Church of were struggling. They were desperate.

And during the meeting, the preachers, both missionaries and Korean pastors, while they were preaching became overwhelmed by sin in their own lives and the need for repentance. They started confessing their sin publicly, including hidden sin before God, before others, even bitterness they'd held toward each other in the church. Their confession led others in the audience to do the same. People started spontaneously standing up and confessing their sin, crying out for God's mercy. Many of them praying aloud at the same time.

One pastor wrote about that first night. He said, "The sound of many praying at once brought not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse of prayer. The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne. Just as on the day of Pentecost, God came to us in Pyongyang that night with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep and in a moment the whole audience was weeping."

He continued, "Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction. One friend tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it and cried to me across the room, 'Pastor, tell me, is there any hope for me? Can I be forgiven?' Then threw himself to the floor and wept and wept and almost screamed in agony. Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of people praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping. We would all weep, we could not help it. So the meeting went on like this until two o'clock in the morning with confession and weeping and praying."

What happened that night continued the next day, and the next, and the marks of Korean revival were born. Study of God's Word, confession of sin, collective audible prayer and crying out for God's mercy. And in the days to come, that movement of God's spirit swept into village after village and church after

church. People started coming to Christ left and right, churches were being planted, Christians were praying early in the morning, every morning they would gather for all-night prayer gatherings fast forward, one short century later. As we know, all sorts of political turmoil, persecution in South Korea alone. So less than 1% Christian in 1900, by the year 2000, there were over 10 million followers of Jesus.

10 million. And South Korea is now second, only to the US in number of missionaries sent around the world, which is pretty startling when you realize its population is the size of California and Florida combined. Do you feel the wonder of this story? I picture a country that's less than 1% Christian today, Afghanistan or Yemen. Can you imagine a hundred years from now, 10 million followers of Jesus in Afghanistan or Yemen, and sending out missionaries all around the world from those countries. Is that possible? Absolutely, it's possible. Why? Because of prayer before the Great I Am. And not just prayer across the country, but prayer among leaders in the church. Don't miss the point of the story. Spiritual awakening started in South Korea, not when the country started praying, but when church leaders started praying, like really praying, crying out to God all night in prayer, leading their churches to do the same.

At the church I was preaching out recently, they still gather. Every morning they have a prayer gathering at 5:00 AM. Every Friday night, all night to pray. Prayer is not a formal event for them once a year. Prayer is a way of life every single day in their churches. And I walked away convicted because I've not led the church well in this way in the country where I live. I'm part of a church culture where I preach at conferences and events filled with hours of talks and sermons and relative minutes of prayer and confession. Leaders in this church culture are known today for preaching and teaching, writing and blogging, organizing and strategizing, planning and planting, but we are not known for our praying and fasting. And in this, we are in profound danger of missing the whole point.

When was the last time we gathered together with the church, just for worship on Sunday and crowds of people fell on our faces, weeping for hidden sin in our midst, crying out for God's mercy upon us? Like we have no room for this. We have to get onto the next song we have planned, the next program that's waiting. And what kind of church culture have we created where we, pastors, members of churches alike are content to go week after week after week in church, watch what happens on a stage or worship, perform there and then move on with our lives as normal?

God, wake us up to our need to stop and seek your face every morning, all night, in complete desperation and passionate intercession, believing that when we cry out to God, God hears our prayers and God answers with power. Do we believe this? That when we pray, like really pray, not just go through monotonous religious motion, this frightens me. I can actually get up in front of a group like this, or even in the church I lead. And I can just say, "dear God," and just start praying without thinking. Mindless words. Like I know how to do that in a setting like this. How about this? I can even pray in a way that I hope will

somehow impress you. How sick is that? I can be praying to God and thinking about what you're thinking about me.

And on top of that, I know, at least I think that many of us have a tendency in our heads, in a meeting like this when we pray, we have this tendency to just let our minds wander. And then seconds of somebody starting to pray, we can all be thinking about all kinds of other things. Details of our day, things we need to do, messages we need to check, calls we need to make. Just a myriad of thoughts around the room. So, in a matter of seconds, if we're not careful, there can be this perfunctory prayer exercise going on in a place like this while all of Heaven is shouting, "Do you realize who you're talking to? Do you realize what you're saying?" Like you're talking to God. Hundreds of you at once talking to God and He's listening to you. Sure, He's upholding Mars at the same time in addition to trillions of stars that He knows by name and 7.2 billion people on the planet that He's sustaining their very organ right now, but you have God attention in this place. So don't let your mind wander. Don't treat prayer like it's perfunctory. It's not. It's powerful.

Without further ado, I want to take us to a passage of Scripture that reminds us of the power of prayer before our God. I want to take you to a passage that I believe is one of the most biblically baffling, practically provoking stories of prayer in all of Scripture, Exodus 32. After God miraculously rescues these people out of slavery in Egypt, leads them to Mount Sinai, reveals His glory to them, gives them His law. Moses goes up on the mountain to meet with God while the people are at the foot of the mountain. And as the people's representative stands at the top of the mountain with God on their behalf, they begin worshiping another god that they create with their own hands at the bottom of the mountain. And they indulge in all kinds of not just idolatry, but immortality flowing from that. So we pick up in verse 7 as God speaks to Moses on the mountain.

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" And the Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.'

"But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, 'O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did He bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?' Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will

give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.' And the Lord relented from the disaster that He had spoken of bringing on his people."

God relented? Some translations say, God changed His mind. It's a word that's used in other places in Scripture to describe how people change their minds. It's also the same word that's used in Scripture to describe how God doesn't change his mind. So what in the world does verse mean? And what does it teach us about prayer? I want to show you in this text what Moses knows that drives how Moses prays. Four truths here.

Number one, Moses knows that the perfections of God are unchanging. The perfections of God are unchanging. So, when I use perfections here, I'm referring to the perfect attributes of God that permeate His being. These things never change. God is perfectly holy. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. Isaiah 6:3. He's without error and without equal, that will never change. God is perfectly loving. God is love. 1 John 4:16. He doesn't just demonstrate love. He defines it. God is perfectly just. Deuteronomy 32:4. A faithful God who does no wrong. Upright and just is He. So just ponder the paradoxical perfections of God. He's perfectly transcendent and perfectly imminent at the same time. Perfectly full of wrath and perfectly full of love at the same time. Perfectly self-existent, perfectly self-sufficient, perfectly omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent all at the same time and in all of these attributes in every single one of them. He says in Malachi 3:6, "I, the Lord, do not change." He does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. Hebrews 13.

Brothers and sisters, Psalm 90 is true, from everlasting to everlasting, God is God. Period. The perfections of God are unchanging. And Moses knew this. Listen to his prayer from the start in verse 11, he says, "Oh Lord, Yahweh." He calls on the covenant name of God. The name that represents God's revelation of Himself, which we just sang about in Exodus chapter 3. Moses then goes on to acknowledge God's wrath while appealing to God's love. He acknowledges God's might while appealing to God's mercy. Acknowledges God's glory while pleading for God's grace. Moses prayer is plainly grounded in the perfections of God. So mark it down. God is not malleable. He's not open or progressive, gradually learning or suddenly growing. Our Heavenly Father, Matthew 5:48, is perfect. Period. Moses knows and God help us to know the perfections of God are unchanging.

Second, Moses knows the purposes of God are unchanging. Moses appeals to the purpose of God in verse 12, "You brought your people out of Egypt for your praise among the Egyptians. Your purpose was not to kill them, but to save them, for your name's sake among the nations." And that purpose Moses pleads, has not changed. So, Moses is relaying in this prayer truth that reverberates throughout God's word, Psalm 33:11, "The plans of the Lord stand firm forever; the purposes of His heart throughout all generations. Isaiah 46, "My purpose will stand," God says. "I will do all that I please. What I have said, that I will bring about out. What I have planned, that will I do." Moses knows

that the aims of God don't undergo amendment or adjustment because the aims of God are always achieved. His purposes are unchanging.

And third, Moses knows that the promises of God are unchanging. Talk about shockingly bold language in verse 13, as Moses says to God, "Remember." Huh, remember, to the omniscient God who knows all things. Who not only knows all things, but ordains all things and knows all things that He has ordained at all times. Moses has the appalling audacity to say to God, "Maybe you need to remember something." Remember Abraham, does that ring a bell? Isaac, Jacob... Moses points to the patriarchs and says, "You promised you would give them and their family, the land to which you are now leading them. You cannot go back on your word." Moses knows.

So, Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man that He should lie or a son of man that he should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?" And praise God for this reality, praise God that His promises are not pathetic. His promise of forgiveness is not feeble. Praise God that His promise of unending life with Him is not in doubt because of some kind of limit in Him. Praise God, Matthew 24, though all Heaven and earth will pass away. His words shall never pass away. Moses knows the promises of God are unchanging.

So isn't it interesting that in the very passage that sparks in the Old Testament, some of the most discussion today, about what changes in God, Moses basis his entire prayer on that which never changes in God. But then that brings us to verse 14, where the Bible tells us the Lord relented from the disaster that He had spoken of bringing on His people. So how are we to understand this? Because amidst all that's unchanging of God, it certainly seems like something changed here. So what's going on?

Fourth truth that Moses knows, perfections of God unchanging, purposes of God unchanging, and the promises of God are unchanging. Yet forth, the plan of God is unfolding. The plan of God is unfolding. Now follow me here. By separating plan of God like this, I'm not implying that God's plan is changing. So we've already covered this when we think about God's perfections, purposes and promises. God is perfect. His purposes are fixed. He's faithful to His promises. God always knows what He is doing. So when we come to Exodus 32, we've got to realize that God is not surprised by what is taking place here. He's not surprised when His people sin and God is not surprised when Moses prays. Yet we have this story for a reason because this story shows us the unfolding plan of God. This story powerfully portrays how God judges men in their sin.

The people of Israel sin grievously against God. He says they've turned away their stiff neck. They are worthy of death. That's true, remember? Remember this is the unchanging perfections of God. He is holy. He will judge men and women in their sin. Sin is an infinite offense in His sight and demands His righteous wrath. So verse 9 and 10, we see God judges men in their sin. But then God provides a mediator for sinners, which is the whole picture Exodus has given us up to this point. Moses is the covenant mediator. The one who goes

back and forth between God and His people. The one who stands before the people on God's behalf and before God on the people's behalf. And God had set it up that way.

So, when you get to Exodus 32, look at the text back in verse 7, God says to Moses, "Go down to your people." Think about this. If God was going to destroy the Israelites on the spot, then why did He send Moses down? The answer is that God was planning to spare His people through Moses' mediation. The reality of Exodus 32 is crystal clear. God will demonstrate His wrath against the people of Israel, unless, unless, unless a man steps in and mediates on their behalf. And all of this squares with the unchanging perfections of God. God is holy and just. He will punish sin. At the same time, He is loving and merciful. He will be true to His covenantal promise to save this contemptible people. So how does He do it? How is God true to His unchanging perfections, His unchanging promises, while fulfilling His unchanging purposes? He does it through an unfolding plan. He appoints a mediator to stand in the gap for sinners. Think about it.

This unfolding plan is not unfamiliar to us in Scripture. Think about Jonah, whom God sent to Nineveh to proclaim this word "40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Nineveh was going to be destroyed because of their sin in 40 days. That's what God said. At the same time, God sent a prophet to tell them that. Why would God do that? It's the same picture we're seeing here. God was judging the Ninevites in their sin. At the same time, He was sending a preacher to warn them. So that Jonah, after spending a few days in the digestive system of a fish, does in fact warn them. And Jonah 3 says when God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He said He would do to them. And He did not do it. It's the same picture. God judges sin and provides a mediator through whom He displays His mercy. This is the gospel.

In our sin, you and I stand under the judgment of a holy God. He is compelled by the perfection of His character to condemn us. The wages of sin is death. Death is not a hypothetical possibility for us. It's our sure and certain penalty, a concrete reality for you and me in our sin. But praise be to God, He has provided a mediator. God has said to Him, "Go down Jesus, go down because your people have become corrupt. They have turned away from me in idolatry and immorality. And unless you intercede for them, they will surely be destroyed by my wrath." And Jesus comes down. He stands in the gap as a substitute for sinners, and because of His sacrifice, hallelujah, God relents His wrath from you and me.

I am eternally grateful for the unfolding plan of God, that God unchanging in His perfect justice and grace has saved me from my sin for His name's sake. He's promised to raise me up to new life with Him and He is done it all through the mediation of His Son on my behalf. God's perfections, purposes and promises are unchanging. Yet His plan is unfolding, ever unfolding under His providence mind you, in that perfect plan it makes perfect sense for God and His mercy to

say, "Man and sin warrants wrath, yet I will raise up a man to mediate on their behalf and I will relent." In light of this, see how what Moses knows drives the way Moses prays. See how Moses' doctrine drives him in devotion. He knows God is in control of all things, and he knows that doesn't make prayer meaningless. He knows God has purposes, and he believes God is going to use his prayers to accomplish those purposes.

Roger Marsh:

I'm Roger Marsh. And I'm so sorry to have to interrupt this passionate presentation by David Platt. But unfortunately, we are out of time for today's broadcast. So be sure to listen to tomorrow's program for the conclusion of this powerful presentation, which he delivered at the 2019 National Day of Prayer event. And we'll have that for you tomorrow here on Family Talk. In the meantime, be sure to visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org for more information to about Dr. David Platt, McLean Bible Church, and the ministry of Radical. You can find all of that information by going to drjamesdobson.org and selecting the tab that's marked today's broadcast.

I'm Roger Marsh, reminding you again to stay with us every day this week, as we celebrate the power of prayer and move with anticipation toward this Thursday, the National Day of Prayer. And remember to join us on our Facebook page beginning at 8:00 PM Easter Time, this Thursday May 5th, to watch the official NDP telecast. Just go to Facebook and search for "Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk," or you can watch at drjamesdobson.org. And finally, be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of David Platt's powerful message about the power of prayer. He'll continue to speak about Moses and his effective prayers to God for the nation of Israel. You won't want to miss what he has to share. That's coming your way tomorrow right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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