Good morning, Family. Think about this truth with me: The God of the Universe, the One who created all things and sustains them all by His power, the One who is radiant and full of glory, invites us to connect with Him, to pour out our hearts, to enter into His presence through the gracious gift of prayer. And it is prayer that is His chosen method of communicating with His children. Now let’s follow this beautiful truth with this question: How is your prayer life? Is prayer a priority or just something you do occasionally? isHhAdrian Rogers has said, “Prayer is our greatest Christian privilege and our greatest Christian failure.”

 Church! Prayer is a privilege. It is an invitation to connect with God. The child of God shares matters of the heart with the Father, connecting and communing with God in prayer. His peace guards our hearts and minds as we live in Christ Jesus; Paul writes, “6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). And as any good Father, He wants to hear from His children (\*Psalm 8:3-4). The Bible is, in fact, the story of how God has pursued us and has made a way for us through His grace and unfailing love to be with Him. And our prayer with Him awakens our awareness of God’s presence and work. To make excuses for our failure to pray is spiritually dishonest and dangerous.

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\*Philippians 4:6-7

3 When I consider your heavens,

 the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars,

 which you have set in place,

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

 human beings that you care for them?

 On March 10, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell uttered the first message ever transmitted on a telephone: “Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you!” This call to his assistant traveled successfully through an electronic line to receiver two rooms over. Imagine what Bell would think about how his invention as developed. Then think about this: God is not way out there in Heaven simply tolerating you, Christian. Because of His love, you are in a covenant relationship with Him. He loves to hear from you. Ask and allow God to develop your prayer life! The good news is, just as you don’t have to understand electricity to turn on the lights you need, you don’t have to understand how prayer works. You need only engage. James Houston says, “Prayer is keeping company with God.” Praise, thanksgiving, adoration, confession, petition—all comprise prayer. And in our prayer, He develops and grows us. Our prayer expresses and reflects our dependence upon Him. Our dependence upon Him helps us to remain grateful and pursue greater intimacy. Prayer is our expression of our faithfulness to Christ. “12 Be joyful in
hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer,” Paul writes to the Romans (12:12), and to the Colossians, he writes, “2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (4:2). – Yes! We Christians must be devoted to prayer. Family, listen. We don’t pray to impress or inform God. We pray to unite with Him. It’s a conversation. Prayer helps us lay hold of God’s will. As He cheers you on—and He does—devote yourselves to the privilege of prayer. Christian! You can pray to have a longing for prayer. You can pray for a soul that clings to God; David prays, “I cling to you; your right hand upholds me” (Psalm 63:8). Your prayer time with Him can help you take hold of Him, knowing that He has hold of you. And listen. Let my exhort and encourage you a bit. Wives, keep praying for your husbands; husbands keep praying for your wives. Parents keep praying for your children. God hears you. You are workers together with Him in the spreading of His Gospel. And let me encourage you with this also: There is *nothing* outside the reach of prayer: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (“Philippians 4:6). Literally NOTHING is outside the reach of prayer! If you feel distant or not up to the task, you can ask God to help you to be devoted to prayer. As in the days of Noah, we live in time of decadence and rebellion. We need to lean into the privilege and priority of prayer. True prayer is communing and reaching out to hold God—to behold and follow His will and His peace! Prayer aligns our will to His. True prayer blesses us by guarding our hearts and minds as we live in Christ. The Gospel proves the willingness of Christ to meet the needs of those He loves. Prayers of repentance, adoration, praise, and confession allow Him to work in our lives.

 Consider again the significance of the invitation from our Holy God to commune with Him in prayer. Family, prayer is an expression of our trust in our Holy God, of our belief that God can do the impossible. We may not pray consistently if we fail to focus on God’s all-powerful ability; trusting in His goodness, sovereignty, and wisdom keeps us grounded in hope. It is through our trust in Him that we find our hope and peace because we know the character of Him to whom we pray. True prayer does not mean twisting God’s arm to listen to us. He listens because He knows us completely and loves us unreservedly, and He invites communication because He loves to talk with His children. When we pray, we do not expect results because of our words but because they come through the power and authority of our Holy, loving God.

 So Christian, is prayer a priority for you? Is it a lifestyle? Does your soul cling to Him? Remember, we don’t pray to inform or impress God but to unite with Him. John Stott has said, “The purpose of prayer is emphatically not to bend God’s will to ours, but rather (it is) to align our will to Him.” Prayer is a gift and is the way God has chosen for us to express our conscience need for Him, to affirm our dependence upon a dependable God. How’s your prayer life?

PASSAGES IN SUPPORT OF THIS SERMON:

Psalm 63 A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

1 You, God, are my God,

 earnestly I seek you;

I thirst for you,

 my whole being longs for you,

in a dry and parched land

 where there is no water.

2 I have seen you in the sanctuary

 and beheld your power and your glory.

3 Because your love is better than life,

 my lips will glorify you.

4 I will praise you as long as I live,

 and in your name, I will lift up my hands.

5 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;

 with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

6 On my bed I remember you;

 I think of you through the watches of the night.

7 Because you are my help,

 I sing in the shadow of your wings.

8 I cling to you;

 your right hand upholds me.

Colossians 4:1-6

4 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.