

Pray Without Ceasing – 1 Thess 5:17, Rom 12:12, Col 4:2, Psalm 116:1-2

Children of the Conquest - #7

Introduction – The topic of prayer is immense, and this sermon is not going to deal in any kind of exhaustive way with it. Providentially, we are all finding ourselves in a situation that is bringing us to pray more, or at least think about praying more – and so there is general application for all of us in these times. I am going to emphasize what we should understand and do about praying for our children as we continue this series. We have seen how the promises of the New Covenant are for us and our children. How then should we pray?

Steadfast in Prayer (Rom 12:12) – The topic provokes feelings of inadequacy and often, guilt. That is not my goal. But look at this whole verse, part of a long series of exhortations. Would you like to be one who is “rejoicing in hope” and “patient in tribulation?” These exhortations go with and come forth from “continuing steadfastly in prayer.” “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength (or “rock of ages”)” (Isaiah 26:3-4). The neglect of prayer accounts for most of our emotional problems because we haven’t heeded God’s command (and invitation) to cast all our cares upon Him. We look elsewhere, self-help books, pills, therapy, crystals, all kinds of things, but we refuse to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). When it comes to training up your children, prayerlessness will take your eye off the promises and the Father of those promises, Who is everlasting strength.

Pray Without Ceasing (1 Thess 5:16-18) – There are many and constant trials associated with child rearing, and every season of child rearing brings new trials. Armed with our theology and faith, we are to learn to give thanks for the trials as being sent by Him, rejoicing always in the promises of God (such as Rom 8:28) and then praying a lot (without ceasing). These commands rebound off each other, one stimulates the other and neglect of one weakens the other. Rejoicing in God’s plan to save the world through the Seed of Abraham and giving thanks for the covenant promises to us and our children, we can and must pray about anything involved in raising our kids.

Prayer and Predestination – I must take a bit of a rabbit trail because this is the question that comes up time and again. If God has already determined who is going to be saved (the doctrine of election), if He has already given us promises for our children (the doctrine of the covenant succession), if He has already predestined all things (including the path of each child’s sanctification) then why pray? The doctrinal answer is that God has both predestined the means as well as the ends. More importantly, the personal answer is that Jesus, understanding all these truths, prayed a lot (Matt 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12, 5:18). Jesus modeled true submission in His prayers (Matt 26:39) and He also exhorted us to ask for anything (John 14:13-14). We must imitate the submission and respond to the invitation.

Therefore, Pray – Use the Word and pray that God would give your child a new heart (Ezek 11:19), that He would circumcise their hearts (Deut 30:6), that He would put His Spirit in them and cause them to walk in His statutes (Ezek 36:27), that He would grant them repentance and the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:25-26), and that He would open blind eyes so that they would believe the gospel and all its implications (Acts 16:14). Pray these things from the time they are born and never cease praying these things in salvific and sanctifying details. But pray all these things believing God is sovereign, good, and in the promises He gives Christian parents (Psalm 103:17-18).

How Then Should We Pray? – Praying without ceasing means that our prayers come in different styles and formats, and this is certainly true when it comes to all that needs to be prayed over in this area of our lives. Here is a very imperfect and non-exhaustive list of the ways in which we are to pray.

Pray that God Would Show Them the Riches That Are Theirs (Eph 1:15-19, 3:14-21) – Consider one of your children and pray through Paul’s prayers for the Ephesians; put their name into the prayer. It teaches you the kinds of things to pray for which God is pleased to hear – and answer.

Pray (and Sing) the Psalms of Promise – For example, sing Psalm 128 regularly around your table claiming those promises while you sing, adding your AMEN with faith. Also, learn to pray claiming the promises for your great-great-great grandchildren now. These promises are to a thousand generations. Most of you will, by God’s grace, be an ancestor to tens of thousands of people. So, pray for them.

Family and Personal Prayer – As a family, pray over specific temptations, trials and tasks with and/or for each child. When appropriate, make those requests together as a family. Parents should use prayer as an investigative tool, asking God to bring all aspects of the child’s life to light. There should be prayers for the present and for the future, including future spouses.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer – Pray through it and use it as a model to pray about every circumstance in your child’s life, again considering the purposes and promises of child-rearing. We teach and learn to make short prayers – and we learn to give ourselves earnestly by working from the Lord’s Prayer as an outline.

Pray the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32, CC pg 428) – Simeon sang over a child. Likewise, we can look upon our children according to the promises of God and depart (from our day) in peace. Or pray St. Patrick’s Breastplate chorus (“*Christ be with me, Christ within me...*”).

Take Advantage of What is Already Going On – At the beginning and end of seasons, give thanks, seek a blessing, pray particularly for those involved (school year, sport’s season, anniversaries, birthdays, Mother’s Day...).

Let Your Children Pray – Ask your children to give thanks at dinner (for instance) and while they are praying, pray silently for that child. Honor them for leading the family in prayer.

Pray with Your Children – What do they want prayer for? Nothing is too trivial for God, so don’t let anything be too trivial for you. Teach them how to pray by how you pray; follow up with them over that special concern.

Give Thanks for Answered Prayer (Psalm 116:1-2) – Reinforce how kind and good God is, how His timing is always perfect, and how our constant prayers grant us deeper love and devotion to Him.

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