

## Why Pray?

Why pray? One good excuse is that the world has plenty of trouble and sorrow.

When Jesus is confronted by unspeakable wickedness in the case of demon possession in the synagogue, He knows there is an onslaught to come. He knows that our oppressor has latched onto Him, because He has come to snatch us from the fiend. He has come to box the devil on the nose and cast him out: “*‘What do we have in common with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God!’*” Jesus spoke sharply to him: “*‘Be quiet and come out of him!’*” (Mark 1:24-25)!

Why pray? Because the devil is prowling about seeking to devour you! The devil knows what is afoot. He can name the Lord. The devil knows what the game is, even if he is trying to hide it from us.

So it is in these days in which God’s laws are flaunted in the name of love; a love bent from the purposes for which it was given by God. There can be no right love, outside of the commands of the God who is Himself love. And yet our enemy is trying to blind us to this with worldly demands for fairness. Our own natural blindness finds us calling God’s Law unloving and calling moral discipline names I dare not repeat. Satan would prefer us to be instructed by teenagers and morally formed by those who have not yet matured in their judgment. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld was quoted as saying about his own adolescent daughter, “They just want to use these words. ‘That’s racist. ‘That’s sexist.’ ‘That’s prejudiced.’ They don’t even know what they’re talking about.” Such “wise, adult” children should turn again and become God’s children, subject to a loving Father’s discipline.

The older I get, the more childlike I want to become—if that childlikeness is God’s childlikeness. “Yes, dear Father, I am Your child and would do as you have commanded. I know that I will falter, but I will never glory in my fault, but confess it, sorrow over it, and seek Your mercy. Dear Father, forgive me. Turn me away from my sin. Restore me that I may not die.” The sin in the world leads me to pray about my own sin. If you don’t need to pray, place your hand on your heart and check to see if it is still beating. If it is, you are still in the world and there is plenty of trouble, sorrow, sin, and suffering in it.

Why pray? Because I see so much needless suffering around me, much of it is caused by me. Jesus certainly prays at pivotal moments in His ministry. In Mark 1, He makes the first public appearance of His ministry. On the night of His betrayal, He prays continually: at the Supper, for Himself, His disciples, and us in the Upper Room and in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is ready to be offered the eternal plan to die, a plan devised by Him from the foundation of the world. And yet now He is confronted by the enormity of His suffering (and not just its physical cost): the weight of human depravity which He is owning now to remove it from you. He is facing the implacable and stubborn unbelief of the humans who howl for Him to die and for whom, despite their rage against Him, He has come to die. In the darkness, He cries out to His Father. In the darkness, great drops of bloody sweat ooze from His pores.

Why pray? Because we are in such deep trouble!