

Mark 1:35-39

May 26, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

Will you take your bibles and join with me this morning by turning to Mark's gospel, Mark chapter 1. This morning I would like to speak with you about our Savior's secret devotion to God in prayer. We are continuing our series on understanding spiritual maturity and certainly this is key. There is perhaps no better gage of a man's spiritual maturity than his secret devotion to God in prayer. You show me a man that is lax in private prayer, and I will show you a man that is a spiritual infant. I don't care how long you've known Christ, if you have no secret devotion to God; you remain in a stage of immaturity.

Your public prayers will tend to be ritualistic; they will tend to be mechanical, often repetitious, and sometimes ostentatious. You will have no appetite for the Word; you will have no burden for the lost. You will be infatuated with the pleasures of this world. People without a private prayer life will lack power in ministry. The theme of Christ will seldom be prominent in their conversations because it's not dominant in their heart. In fact I have never met a person with a robust private prayer life who struggles with things like, debilitating depression, addictions, or some life-dominating sin. I have never heard a spouse complain about a husband or wife that who is faithful in private prayer. I've never heard a child weep because they have a father or mother that prays too much.

I would ask you, do you only prayer before meals or do you ever pray before dawn? Most if they are honest, would say my prayer life is limited to before meals. Or when some great crisis comes into my life. But frankly, most people are unfamiliar with the mercy seat. They are strangers to the throne of grace. Communing with the lover of their souls is just not a priority because it is not their desire.

And why is this? Well partly because we are a very undisciplined people, but primarily it's because we love other things more than we love the Lord our God. I confess that as a pastor, my greatest frustration is I spend too much time in public ministry and not enough in private communion with the Lord. But I have learned that prayer is more important than preparation. I have learned that the closet is more important than the library. I have learned that the heart is more important than the mind. I have learned that prayer is the spade that unearths hidden jewels in the text. I have learned that prayer is the drill that bores deep into the caverns of living water. I have learned that prayer is what calls upon the Spirit to give life to the spiritually dead and dissolve hardened hearts. I have learned that it is prayer that ignites a preacher with holy zeal and transforms his clumsy rhetoric into tongues of fire. I have learned, beloved, that it is prayer, disciplined, fervent, private, persistent prayer that transforms weak, shallow, cowardly Christians into mighty warriors of the Cross. That is what I want for you, and that is what I want for me.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "pray without ceasing", the idea is that we should pray persistently, and regularly. I would ask you this morning, is this characteristic of your life? It was characteristic of the early church. In fact Luke described this kind of devotion to prayer, even before the day of Pentecost, in Acts 1:14, there we read: "These all (the

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apostles) with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

Well this is no surprise, because they were merely following the example of our Lord, and we see that here in Mark chapter 1. Let me give you a bit of the context before we look at verses 35 and following.

I marvel when I think of our Lord's life after His baptism, immediately He was taken into the wilderness. The text says He was there with the wild animals. For 40 days Satan tempted him. The angels had to come and minister to Him to keep Him alive. After that His ministry begins in Galilee. Next He calls Peter, James, and John and He goes to Capernaum. On the Sabbath day He goes into the Synagogue and He begins to preach the gospel to the Jews. In fact, that first day there in the Synagogue, He cast out a demon in one of the men which demonstrated His authority over the kingdom of darkness. Then immediately He goes into Peter's house where Peter's mother-in-law was sick and dying of a fever. So He comes and miraculously heals her. That is a pretty full day of ministry wouldn't you think?

But the day wasn't finished, in Mark 1:32 notice what happened:

"When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was."

What an amazing day! What an amazing past several weeks! You would think that now it's time for a little R&R, time to relax and kind of catch your breath and reflect upon what the Father and the Spirit had done in and through Him—a good time to take a few days off. But despite our Savior's human fatigue, I want you to notice what happened in Mark 1:35: "In the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there."

What an amazing event, after all that the Son of Man had just accomplished, despite His human fatigue, He has an intense desire to spend time with His Father in Heaven. Somehow I can see Him getting up from the little room where He was sleeping, it was still dark. The stars are out and I can see Him quietly slipping out of the house and down the lane, probably a few dogs begin to bark. He starts moving outside of Capernaum, I've been there, and it's a beautiful place. He probably meandered around through some of the hills until He found a little glen, a little secluded place far from everyone, far from any possibility of someone hearing His voice, and there He drops to His knees and He begins to pray.

Dear Christian, secret prayer was our Savior's habit, the question is, is it yours? If not, why not? If the Son of God who had no sin had such an intense desire to labor in private

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prayer, how much more should we be so prone to sin? Frankly most Christians are mere loiterers, they are not laborers in prayer, and yet this is not the example of the Lord.

I want to address the matter of prayer from 2 perspectives, one today and the other next week. The first perspective that we will look at today is some of the lessons from our Savior's secret devotion to God in prayer, and the next time we are together we will look at lessons from our Savior's outline, His model for prayer. My prayer for you is that the spirit of God will take His word and develop within you the mind of Christ that you might be devoted to prayer as He was.

As we look at verse 35, again, where we read, "In the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there." I believe there are four great lessons that emerge from this text that I want us to focus upon this morning.

1. Prayer reveals an intense longing to commune with God
2. Prayer should be the first priority to prepare our day.
3. Solitude is the Sanctuary of prayer.
4. Prayer is as important in times of blessing as it is in times of distress.

So first, *Prayer reveals an intense longing to commune with God.*

Let's look at this more closely. Now any of you who have ever spent time teaching know that it is an exhausting task especially when you are interacting with people as the Lord had done that day. And then if you have ever experienced power encounters, and certainly I have never experienced it like Jesus did, but I have experienced demonic forces in people. My friends that is utterly exhausting. Yet, we see here, He doesn't give up, He doesn't stay in bed and sleep. Instead, we see the incarnate Christ who was without sin, therefore without any need for confession, He had no pleading, no need for forgiveness of sin, and no need for restoration, instead He longs to be with His Father and the Spirit.

Now remember, Jesus knew that His source of strength (and certainly the place where He would go to supplicate for all that the Father had given Him) was His Father. But we see that His intense longing for intimate communion was motivated primarily by His perfect love and His intimate enjoyment of sweet fellowship with Him.

Again, does this describe you? Hopefully you've experienced this at some human level. Just think of your husband or your wife, those of you that are married. I know that the times that I have that I can spend with my dear wife is done not out of duty, but out of desire. It's motivated by my love for her and her love for me, which results in the oneness of fellowship and the joy that flows from that. How much more the soul satisfying perfections of the triune Godhead.

Now think about it, no man—save the God-man Jesus—has ever known the soul satisfying joy of perfect fellowship and communion with God the Father and the Holy

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Spirit. While every saint enjoys some level of joy and fellowship, because of the varying places we are with respect to our walk with Christ, we still, even though our fellowship is imperfect, we still enjoy spending time with the Lord. How much more so the Lord Jesus? I think about the imperfect fellowship that we have right now. Our communion is hampered because of remaining sin, because of our unredeemed bodies that await glorification. That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:9: "we (only) know in part...but when the perfect comes (eternal state), the partial will be done away...For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; (can you imagine what that will be like), now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known."

But folks even now in our state of unredeemed humanness, that sweetness, that ineffable joy of communing with the lover of our souls is the greatest experience that we have available to us this side of heaven. If that does not ring true of you, then you know nothing of a secret devotion to God in prayer. All who have truly tasted of the Lord, who have experienced the inexpressible joy of being in His presence and have experienced His power, want more and more. You're never satisfied. That is why David declared in Psalm 34:8. "O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him."

Asaph, the chief musician of Israel writes in Psalm 73:25,28: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. The nearness to God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge."

You will recall what Paul said in Philippians 3:8, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." In verse 10 he went on to say, "know Him, and the power of His resurrection."

One of the greatest benefits of our justification is that, according to Romans 5:11, "we exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." In other words we glory in Him, we revel in Him, we find our joy in Him, we rejoice in Him, we boast on account of Him. We exult in God. God is the supreme source of our joy, He is our greatest satisfaction in life and as a result of this we long to be with Him. My friends if you have no intense longing to commune with God, then you don't exult in Him for some reason. Perhaps you don't know Him, or perhaps you know little of what He has accomplished in your life, (being reconciled to Him through Christ), or perhaps in your stubbornness your walking far from Him.

One of the ancient priests of Israel writes in Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." The imagery is one of a deer who's dying of dehydration. And that's how we must be, thirsty souls that cannot survive apart from the life-giving waters of communion with God. This is why David said in Psalm 16:8, "I have set the LORD continually before me." You see, he knew what it meant to "exult in God" and for that reason he had an intense longing to commune with Him. He says, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my

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glory (literally my whole being) rejoices" and, "Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever."

We can only imagine the blessed nature of our Lord's interaction with the Father and the Spirit. But child of God do not forget: this is also available to us because we have been hidden in Christ. For indeed God is our Father, the Spirit of God dwells within us.

In fact, according to Romans 8:26, 27 in fact, "the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning's too deep for words...He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

The great Oxford theologian back in the 17th century, an English Puritan pastor, Joseph Alleine (who had a profound impact on Charles Spurgeon) wrote this to a dear friend, "Though I am apt to be unsettled and quickly set off the hinges, yet, methinks, I am like a bird out of the nest, I am never quiet till am in my old way of communion with God; like the needle in the compass, that is restless till it be turned toward the pole. I can say, through grace, with the church, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night and with my spirit within me have I sought thee early." My heart is early and late with God; 'tis the business and delight of my life to seek him."

Would that we all enjoy such delight as a result of private worship. We must remember that God greatly delights in our communion with Him. Proverbs 15:8 say, "the prayer of the upright is His delight."

So not only does prayer reveal an intense longing to commune with God but,

2nd. Prayer should be the first priority to prepare our day.

We don't see this as a command, but we do see it as an example throughout scripture. Again in Mark 1:35, "In the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there."

So in other words before looking upon any other face, He wants to see the face of His Father. Before hearing any other voice of any other person, He longs to hear the voice of His Father. Before any demand is placed upon Him, He seeks the strength and the wisdom of the Most High. Beloved, morning prayer produces midday power, and midnight joy. A Godly man would no more start his day without prayer than he would enter into a day of hard labor without eating any food.

Spurgeon said, "Take not thou to running till thou hast in prayer laid aside every weight, lest thou lose the race."

My friend no ministry will be effective, no marriage will be fulfilling, no family will ever be blessed apart from the pleadings of private prayer.

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As we look at the context of this passage there is good reason to believe that it was that very day that Jesus preached His sermon on the mount.

Let me draw your attention for a moment to another passage in Psalm 5:3. Here we have David's lament and he says, "In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch."

Now, most fail to realize this, but serving Christ is war. Serving Christ is war. Jesus experienced this every minute of the day and sometimes the battle is fierce. Those involved know all too well what I am talking about. Those who are involved in the battle for the gospel are very acquainted with solitary morning private worship. What I want to say to you dear friends is that most Christians pray little because they fight little, they never suffer. But those who fight suffer much. Those who are on the front line of the great gospel commission know the fatigue and the pain and the sorrow and the wounds and the casualties of battle. When I am talking about serving Christ there are many ways we can do that. But we all are commanded to be involved at some level of discipleship, face to face, one on one, bibles open, involvement, intentional involvement with other people. And when your involved that way with the lives of others, believe me, you will not have to force yourself to find your closet. You will want to live in it. Communion with the Almighty will be the last activity before you go to sleep, and it will be the first priority when you wake.

I would submit to you that prayer will never be the early dawn priority of the sluggard that likes to sleep in, nor will it be the priority of the Sunday morning Christian that pretends to be serving Christ for a few hours on Sunday morning and then the rest of the week lives for himself. But it absolutely will be the priority for the battle weary soldier of the cross who is constantly crying out for more strength, who is begging for more discernment, who is pleading for more light in the word, who is imploring the Lord for more boldness in battle. Because this soldier knows that he can do nothing apart from God. Therefore he will attempt nothing without first seeking his aid.

Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." What better time to plead for that strength than first thing in the morning. We all know what it's like to endure some trial in our life. You know what it's like when you can't sleep. It's like the computer screen is still on and you can't get it out of your mind. And when you finally do go to sleep, what's the first thing you think of when you wake up? That trial. This is the same for the soldier of the Cross. Those who are fighting that battle always experience a burden for the lost. There is ever with them the constant sorrow of the prodigal. There is ever with them the pain of persecution. My friends that kind of Christian will be no stranger to prayer before dawn.

Persecuted saints know this all too well. I've talked with many of them before. Even some of our missionaries will describe how their little children will be sleeping in blissful ignorance, not knowing the dangers that are lurking outside of their little home, while the

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parents are kneeling all through the night agonizing in prayer. They are the ones that will pray as Paul commanded. They will understand what it means to, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Beloved please understand that when the battle is so fierce that you are unable to sleep, when the tears roll down your cheeks, when you agonize over the people that God has called you to minister to, then you will crave that life sustaining communion with the Lord. Only then will you cry out with the Psalmist in Psalm 21:1, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." I remember that verse from when I was a little boy, and now I understand it.

I was moved by the words of Joseph Alleine's wife when she wrote regarding this subject after his death. Here is what she wrote, "At the time of his health, he did rise constantly at or before four of the clock, and would be much troubled if he heard smiths or other craftsmen at their trades before he was at communion with God; say to me often, 'How this noise shames me. Does not my Master deserve more than theirs?'" From four till eight he spent in prayer, holy contemplation, and singing of psalms, in which he much delighted and did daily practice alone, as well as in the family. Sometimes he would suspend the routine of parochial engagements, and devote whole days to these secret exercises, in order to which, he would contrive to be alone in some void house, or else in some sequestered spot in the open valley. Here there would be much prayer and mediation on God and heaven."

The apostle Paul tells us that we are to "Discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness." And if you look at the context of that particularly exhortation in 1 Timothy 4, you will see that it has to do with laboring and striving for Christ. But I would submit to you that unless your laboring and striving for Christ and disciplining yourself in that way, you will never have a desire for predawn worship, or any worship for that matter. You see friends our longing for God is proportional to our love for Him. And our love for Him is really measured by our willingness to serve Him and to suffer for Him. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Isaiah understood this in verse 26:9: "At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently."

As we look at Psalm 5:1-3 we read: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my groaning. (Do you ever come and moan before the Lord?) Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch." You see morning seems to be the most fitting time to meet with God, giving Him our day. This is the time when our minds are the sharpest. In fact Spurgeon said, "Prayer should be the

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key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star."

But I want you to notice something in Psalm 5 at the end of verse 3. The Hebrew is very interesting here, he says, "in the morning I will order (direct) my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch." The term "order" was used to describe the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim on the altar for sacrifice. It was also used of putting the shewbread on the table. So the idea here is, "I will carefully and purposely arrange and order my prayer before Thee, as the priest would arrange the morning sacrifice. In the same way my prayers, therefore, will be acceptable to You."

Now there is a place for prayer while we are driving to work, I understand that, but friends there is a place for uninterrupted times of orderly, organized prayer. Notice he says, "I will eagerly watch" in other words I will expect an answer. I'm going to eagerly look for it. I fear that too often we treat our prayer life with contempt as if it is some unwelcomed intrusion on our life. "After all, I am so busy." Kind of like driving through the fast food line, we want to hurry up and get something to eat because we have something more important to do. We want to perform our spiritual disciplines the same way we operate our Internet, we want everything quick, high speed, right there. Wishing our prayers could be run on a faster modem.

Think how our priorities have become so selfish. Think about this; we demand high speed Internet, instant messaging, cell phones even attached to our ears so we can never miss a call. We have email, text messaging, twitter and tweets, I don't understand all of that, but some of you do. All this technology to be able to communicate with man! And some of you spend hour's everyday communicating with each other. Most of it frivolous dribble. And yet we have no time for God? We rush into the presence of the king without any forethought, without any humility as if His presence is some huge imposition on our time.

What blasphemy to demand an audience with the Most High while we multi task, while we spout off a quick praise and a few hasty petitions. Too often our petitions are hastily contrived, self serving, utterly bereft of meditation, any organization, any groaning. There is no desire for God to work within us in such a way as to ultimately bring Him glory. It's tantamount to prayers before meals—a mere "now I lay me down to sleep I pray thee God my soul to keep." Our prayers lack fervency because too often they are whipped up on the run.

How can we honestly expect the King to answer such insolent requests when we've given no forethought to them? How can we expect Him to be moved by that which we have given so little attention? Needless to say without thoughtful preparation there will be no patient expectation as was so with the psalmist. But not so our precious Savior. This is why prayer was the priority of His day and the passion of His heart.

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Three, *Solitude is the Sanctuary of Prayer*. Notice again it says, "...went away to a secluded place, and was praying there." We see the Savior's desire for seclusion in other passages. In Luke 6:12 where he prayed before choosing the 12 disciples we read, "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God."

In Matthew 14:23 after He had feed over 25,000 people we read, "Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone." By the way, a few hours later the disciples were terrified in a storm, and Jesus walks out to them on the water and Peter comes to Him, you remember the story and Jesus calms the storm.

In light of Israel's rejection and just before He asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Luke tells us in 9:12 that "He was praying alone." He prayed alone in His high priestly prayer that we read earlier this morning in John 17 and there my friends, He interceded on our behalf. He prayed alone in the garden of Gethsemane where He sweat drops of blood in anticipation of what He would endure on our behalf. He prayed alone when He hung on the Cross and said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" later He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

But Jesus commanded us to pray in private. In Matthew 6:6, there we read, "But you, when you pray, (in other words unlike the Pharisees that like to pray on the street corners so everybody can hear them) go into your room (which basically means the most private place available), and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

Here in Mark 1 and in other places, we see how the Lord deliberately sought after secluded places to pray. Now, why would He do this? Well certainly it would be to commune with God without distraction and without an audience. We are not to be like the hypocrites, who according to Matthew 5 pray, "in order to be seen by men." By the way, that is not a prohibition against public prayer, but it is against pretentious prayer.

But there is more, solitude offers more. May I suggest a few things that we see as we examine the Word of God. Certainly number one, *solitude provides an atmosphere that is free from distractions*. I was reading some research done by the associated press. Do you realize that the average attention span of a person in 2012 is 8 seconds? By the way, that is down from in 2000, 12 years ago, when it was 12 seconds. I also found it interesting that a goldfish has an attention span of 9 seconds.

We have been programmed to look here and there and to do all of these things . . . that is just how we think these days. I would ask you, how many of you have taken 1 hour, just 1 hour, in the last month and sat down and meditated on a passage of scripture? How many of you have taken just 30 minutes to read a book? And yet think of the thousands of

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hours you spend doing so many other things. We are like little babies that grasp at anything that sparkles. Satan's world system is programming us to be useful idiots that never think past our nose. How rude to seek the Lord's face without making any provision for no interruptions. Our Lord deserves our undivided, uninterrupted attention.

Second, *seclusion provides an opportunity for intimacy*. There we can pour out our hearts to God. We can freely express ourselves. I would ask you, do you feel more at ease communing with your husband or your wife in private? Or would you feel comfortable in doing it up here in front of everyone? Obviously no. Solitude provides an atmosphere of intimacy. I would also say:

Thirdly, *solitude provides for us an atmosphere where we can pray out loud*, where we can talk with the Lord, where we can give full throat to our supplication. Where we can cry out to the Lord. You know, Jesus in the garden fell down on His face, and we read that He cried out, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but Thou wilt."

I'm sure many of you are like me, I love to be out some place—especially to be able to walk and talk with the Lord—out in nature. Somehow the sanctuary of God's creation provides the perfect acoustics to let your voice be raised up to the Lord. Sometimes I imagine Him in my mind; that I can turn and I can talk with Him, and I'm sure you have done the same thing. As I think about it, Paul says in Romans 8 that, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." Solitude provides that kind of atmosphere. What solemn, sacred, sweet dialogues await those who come to the Lord in secret prayer?

A fourth reason why solitude is so important is friends it four, *gives you an opportunity to commune in silence*. We talk way too much don't we? And we meditate too little. What a joy it is to be able to take a passage of scripture and to read it, meditate upon it, in the presence of the One who has revealed it to us, the One who has saved us by it. May I encourage you in your prayer life to not only have a list of things that you pray for, but have the Word open, let the word always be a catalyst to your prayers, pray the Word, because it is the Living Word of the Living God, and what soul satisfying joy there is in just being, silently at times, in the presence of our Redeemer.

Well fourthly we see from this text that *prayer is as important in times of blessing as it is in times of distress*. Now remember, we must pray to obtain a blessing, but here we see that we must pray all the more after we have received it. Think about this, why would Jesus pray after all that He had just done? Well the answer is, for protection from the enemy. He had already endured Him for 40 days in the wilderness.

You see friends, great blessings spark great warfare, and Jesus understood that. There are many blessings here at Calvary Bible Church. We continue to see God pour out His love upon us, but my, are we targets of the enemy. Even right now we are under spiritual

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attack. Most of you will never know about the things that are going on, but certainly I do and the elders know some of them. Some of them you wouldn't believe if I were to tell you. But the reason we must pray after receiving great blessing is not merely because of some type of Satanic, demonic retaliation, although that is there, but we have to pray because of our flesh! That is our enemy!

You see it's easy when God gives us a blessing for us to become self-sufficient. It's easy for us to become proud and then we become lethargic in our service. We become lax in our sober-mindedness. It's easy when blessing comes our way for us to become lax and our zeal begins to diminish and our faith begins to degenerate into presumption, and blessings then can become the fuel for some sense of entitlement. All of these things we are prone to, and gradually if we are not careful we can become like the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 where they left their first love for Christ. That passionate, chaste, pure love like a husband would have for his newly wedded bride. We can degenerate into a loveless orthodoxy. Or like so much of the church today, be a part of a Christless Christianity.

But Jesus also prayed for what lay in front of Him, and that was His Galilean ministry. What was His priority in His ministry? Notice verse 36, this is fascinating. "And Simon and his companions hunted for Him; and they found Him and said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.' Now let's get the context here. They wake up, it's breakfast time, where's Jesus? Well I don't know, oh my goodness, look outside, and look at all the people? Where's Jesus? So it says that they hunted for Him and they found Him and they said to Him, "everyone is looking for you." By the way, that phrase, "looking for You," is used 10 times in Mark's gospel and every time it is used it is used in a negative connotation.

So the idea here is they are a bit frustrated. "Jesus, everyone is looking for You. What are You doing out here on a hillside all alone? Don't You see that You are missing such a great opportunity! Look at all the people! There are seekers everywhere! You have really connected with the people. You have connected with the culture and look at these crowds." You see what has happened now that word has gotten around. "This man Jesus has healed these people. He has cast out demons. Let's get all of our sick relatives and loved ones." He has fed all the people and all of these folks are just ecstatic. So they are looking for Jesus, but friends they were just curious, they were looking for another miracle, they weren't looking for a Savior. Isn't it sad like so many today, the disciples confused excitement with conviction. There is a huge difference between enthusiastic crowds and those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

It's amazing, at the very outset of Jesus' ministry, His own disciples unwittingly—in their ignorance and misplaced zeal—seek to corrupt the very mission that Jesus came to fulfill. So He says to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, (you wouldn't have expected that? You would have expected Him to say, "oh my goodness, let's go guys!"

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but no, that's not what He said) in order that I may preach there also; for that is what I came out for."

You see my friends; Jesus came to preach the gospel. That was His primary objective. He came to save sinners, to reconcile them unto Himself. He didn't come to merely meet physical needs. If I can put it in a way that we understand it, He didn't come to fix our marriages. He didn't come to straighten out our kids. He didn't come to help us recover from our addictions. He didn't come to make us successful or give us some special purpose in life. He didn't come to save the planet, or ban abortion. This might come as a surprise to some of you, but He didn't come to help us elect conservatives. He came to save sinners.

Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." No doubt this was theme of His pre-dawn prayers. "Father, Spirit help me as I preach the gospel." He came to the lost sheep of Israel first, and with every gospel presentation He knew He was walking inexorably towards the cross. In fact it's fascinating, we read how He always goes into the synagogues, and the synagogues were constructed in such a way that every one of them would be designed where the speaker would be facing Jerusalem. So here He would be in Galilee, so the place where the speaker would be, would be facing south towards Jerusalem. Also when the people would leave, they would go out the door towards Jerusalem. Think about it, every time the Lord stood up to preach and to teach, He was facing the place where He would go to be the sacrifice for sin. Knowing what He must face, He prayed. My friends knowing what He faced on our behalf, we should also pray that others would be saved and also pray in private worship to give Him praise for what He has done.

In closing, may I say very lovingly as your pastor, but as forthrightly as I know how to put it? If you serve at Calvary Bible Church in some capacity and you have no secret devotion to God, if you have no habit of prayer, I would ask you to repent or step down from whatever your doing until you get your private worship in order. Because you see my friends, you have nothing to offer except what's in your flesh. We don't need your flesh, we need the Spirit. And you will not be empowered by the Spirit unless you get serious about your private devotion to God. So won't you get in the battle, and once you get in the battle you'll have no problem running to the Lord in secret. You'll have no problem learning what it means to order your prayers. Maybe even beginning tomorrow you can take some time in the morning, even if it's just a few minutes, to refresh your soul in solitude and plead with the Savior to give you strength for that day and give Him thanks for all that He has done, and to empower you to be bold for the sake of the gospel.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for these truths, my what an amazing example we have from our Lord. I pray that by the power of your Spirit we would emulate what we see in Christ, for indeed You have called us to be conformed to His image. Move upon our hearts I pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Our Savior's Secret devotion to God in Prayer

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Mark 1:35-39

May 26, 2013

Dr. David Harrell