

# Pray Without Ceasing

13 - Nehemiah: A Time of Restoration  
A Word for 2021 & Beyond Part II  
Church on the Park | Sunday, 17 JAN 2021

**Text:** “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” — 1 Thes. 5:16–22

**Theme:** Yes, you can pray without ceasing.

**Intro:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 is the main passage the Lord put in my heart for this upcoming year and beyond. In it, Paul says, “Pray without ceasing.” But how is this possible? How can you pray without ceasing? Many years ago, our family stayed in Toogoom; it’s a small and beautiful seaside village near Hervey Bay. The waters were amazingly still and tranquil, but that meant there were lots of mosquitos. Nothing seemed to drive away these pests until we bought incense coils. I would set the insect coils on fire, and then we could enjoy the outside balcony. Throughout Scripture, prayer is described as incense because it rises and permeates the atmosphere with the fragrance of Christ. It also drives away the enemy who often pesters us like mosquitos.

## 1) Pray without Ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17).

- Yes, it is possible to pray without ceasing.
  - The Greek of this verse can be translated in different ways:
    - Pray always, pray constantly, pray unceasingly, pray incessantly, pray without stopping or pray continually.
    - The main picture of the two Greek words that make up this verse is praying through something without failing. It has a sense of ‘not giving up, leaving or failing.’
      - ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε - ‘Unceasingly Pray’
  - The incense illustration
    - The incense stick is like your soul soaked in the spices of God’s Word.
    - The Holy Spirit is like the fire.
      - To pray without ceasing, we need to be set on fire and protect the fire.
        - As Paul says, “Do not quench/extinguish the Spirit” (1 Thes. 5:19).
          - In this verse, Paul is describing the Holy Spirit as fire.
    - Revelation, as well as other parts of Scripture, describe prayer like incense (Rev. 5:8).
    - In Exodus 30:1, 6-8 God commands the priests to keep the incense burning before the veil continually.
      - Their ministry was to keep it burning, and it is our ministry today.
        - In the past, it was physical incense; now, it’s the spiritual incense of prayer.
          - The incense continually burning is a picture of Christ, the Son of the Living God, who perpetually lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34).
            - Jesus is the fulfilment of the altar of incense.
      - On 4 Jan 2021, the Lord gave me this prophetic word:
        - “This year, I want my people to learn how to pray continually—to never cease praying. I have called them to be my walking altar of incense, carrying and spreading the fragrance of prayer everywhere they go. As they do, they will beautify and transform the world around them. Tell them they can make a difference if they burn in devotion and unceasing prayer to me. For my Son, Jesus was always praying. Night and day, his cry rose to my heart, and all of heaven heard. All night he prayed on a mountain and often in the mornings he was found hidden in the secret place of prayer. He lived from the secret place of my presence, and my people must live from this secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91). This is how they will abide in me and bear much fruit. While the world may fall into famine, my people will be fruitful. Then, they can help those in need. Like Isaac, they sow in famine and reap a hundredfold. Tell my people to be like Isaac, to joyfully sow—to laugh and sow—and expect an abundant harvest. Live in the hope of my harvest. Believe that even now you are going to reap the harvest you sowed into in days gone by. I am the Lord of the harvest, and my people are people of the harvest.”

- So how can you pray without ceasing? Here's some practical points:

## 2) R - Respond to every situation with prayer (Neh. 4:1-5).

- When Nehemiah and the remnant people of God were under attack through mockery and intimidation, they responded with prayer.
  - Listen to Nehemiah 4:1-5.
- Don't wait to pray; pray right away.
  - Someone is in pain—pray. You are anxious—pray. You are distressed about the world—pray. Some is attacking you—pray.
    - Respond as quick as you can with prayer.
      - Don't wait for church. Don't wait for your quiet times. These are great times to pray, but when a situation arises, respond in prayer straight away.
      - Teach your kids to respond to every stress and even every good thing with prayer.
- We are distressed about the USA. We are anxious about COVID. The only real solution is God himself—so let's pray.
  - Don't let the situations in this world and your world affect your relationship with God.
    - God never promised that our lives would be easy, nor that this year would be without trouble—but he did promise to be with us and bless us through it all.
      - Listen to Andrae Crouch's Song, Through it All
      - "I've had many tears and sorrows/I've had questions for tomorrow/There's been times I didn't know right from wrong/But in every situation/God gave me blessed consolation/ That my trials come to only make me strong
      - "Through it all/Through it all/I've learned to trust in Jesus/I've learned to trust in God/ Through it all/Through it all/I've learned to depend upon His Word
      - I've been to lots of places/I've seen a lot of faces/There's been times I felt so all alone/ But in my lonely hours/Yes, those precious lonely hours/Jesus lets me know that I was His own
      - "Through it all/Through it all/I've learned to trust in Jesus/I've learned to trust in God/ Through it all/Through it all/I've learned to depend upon His Word
      - "I thank God for the mountains/And I thank Him for the valleys/I thank Him for the storms He brought me through/For if I'd never had a problem/I wouldn't know God could solve them/I'd never know what faith in God could do."

## 3) E - Embark on everyday and event with prayer (Nehemiah 1)

- Nehemiah is a great example of what we should do when we see and feel brokenness.
  - He's also a great example of how we should embark on any new thing.
- He doesn't embark on fixing the walls in his own wisdom and strength.
  - Instead, he prays.
- To pray continually, you need to start with prayer.
  - This means you are starting in submission and dependence on God.
- This is why having a morning time of prayer is so important—it ignites the fire of prayer throughout your day.
- Whatever you embark on, begin in prayer.
  - This is why we say grace before a meal.
  - Our family even prays before driving.
- By embarking on something with prayer you are taking a common thing and making it holy—you are making the very thing you are doing worship.
- 1 Corinthians 10:31

## 4) C - Converse with Jesus like a friend throughout your day (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23).

- The main purpose of prayer is not getting stuff from God, rather it's intimacy with God.
  - Prayer is all about developing a closer friendship with Jesus.
- So continually talk to Jesus about everything and listen to what he has to say.
- There's nothing you should keep hidden from your best friend, Jesus.
- Prayer is not about receiving things, it's about receiving Jesus' words, life and grace.
  - Prayer is about receiving God's will, rather than enforcing our will.
    - Let's not make prayer into witchcraft—doing spiritual things to get what we want, rather than being centred in God's will.

To be continued...

**Conclusion:** Let's recap. 1) Pray without Ceasing, 2) R - Respond to every situation with prayer, 3) E -Embark on everyday and every event with prayer, 4) Converse with Jesus like a friend throughout the day.