

Sermon Notes – May 3, 2015, Pastor Alan Smith

“Staying Connected”

I have to admit I've been a little distracted by the events in Baltimore. I'm sure we have all watched the news and share concern over the violence in Baltimore. Our concern should not stop there. There are some underlying issues across this country.

Today we are looking at the teaching of Jesus about the vine and the branches. This teaching is familiar to most, so I'm not going to go in to great detail about most of this teaching. I want to focus on just on principle of this teaching. I want to focus on verse 4:

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

I want to look at how we remain in Him. Remain in the Greek is “men'ō.” It means to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy), abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, stand, tarry. I think of it as to stay connected. In our world there many ways to stay connected. You can reach me through phone, four different email accounts, text, Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, and snail mail. Yet with all these avenues of communication there are still times that you can't reach me. With this age of technology we can stay connected to the world 24/7. But do we stay connected to God?

Our line of communication is prayer. I believe that prayer is one of the most important parts of our Christian walk. In **1 Thessalonians 5: 17** Paul tells us to never stop praying. Now I know that we can't drive a car and have our eyes closed in prayer, but we can be in an attitude of prayer at all times, ready to lift up a request to God. Let's look at a prayer less life and some of its causes and effects.

One of the things that causes us not to pray is being tired. We seem to be constantly on the move – a 24/7 society. This makes us tired and being tired can cause us not to pray.

- **Luke 22:45 (NLT) — 45 At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief.**
- **Matthew 26:40 (NLT) — 40 Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Couldn't you watch with me even one hour?”**

We see that being tired caused the disciples to not pray. We find that when our relationships are broken or in discord, they can interfere with our prayer life.

1 Peter 3:7 (NLT) — 7 In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.

We see when there we have a lack of prayer in our lives and our churches there is no intercessor for God’s people or even our nation and the world:

Ezekiel 22:30 (NLT) — 30 “I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one.

We need to stand in the gap for our nation, church, our community and the world. When we ignore our prayer life we become alienated from God. Our relationship with Him lessens.

John 15:6 (NLT) — 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

A prayer less life causes us to be in spiritual poverty.

James 4:2 (NLT) — 2 You want what you don’t have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can’t get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it.

We see the cause and effects of a prayer less life. Now let’s look at a prayerful life.

A prayerfulness becomes a way of life:

- **Psalm 5:3 (NLT) — 3 Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.**
- **Daniel 6:13 (NLT) — 13 Then they told the king, “That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day.”**

It is something we want to do. Something isn’t quite right if we don’t pray. The desire to be with God is a driving force of our prayers.

If you have a loved one that is far away we like to call and talk with them. It is that feeling we should have when we pray. The Psalmist wrote **Psalm 84:1–2 (NLT) — 1 How lovely is your dwelling**

place, O LORD of Heaven's Armies. 2 I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the LORD. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God.

When we have a life full of prayer we show that we trust God.

Psalm 63: 6-8 I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night. 7 Because you are my helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings. 8 I cling to you; your strong right hand holds me securely.

A prayerful life continues even when life gets hard.

- **Acts 16:25 (NLT) — 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.**
- **1 Peter 4:7 (NLT) — 7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.**

It was while the disciples were in prayer when the church was started through the Holy Spirit.

- **Acts 1:14 (NLT) — 14 They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.**
- **Acts 2:42 (NLT) — 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.**

Our prayers are a response to God. Through prayer we have fellowship with God.

- **Psalm 73:23–26 (NLT) — 23 Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. 26 My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.**
- **Matthew 18:20 (NLT) — 20 For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”**

We respond to God's presence in our lives through a meditative prayer.

Psalm 27:4 (NLT) — 4 The one thing I ask of the LORD— the thing I seek most— is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, delighting in the LORD's perfections and meditating in his Temple.

We pray when our sin is exposed. David wrote in **Psalm 51:1–2 (NLT)** — **1 Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. 2 Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.**

We pray in response to God's call in our lives. Mary prayed in **Luke 1:38 (NLT)** — **38 Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.**

Because of God's mercy and grace we can come to Him with confidence.

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT) — **16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.**

National day of prayer is this Thursday. Our nation needs prayer! There are many things that are dividing our nation and we need to pray. It is through prayer that God can move through this nation.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT) **14 Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.**

It is through our being humble that God will heal our land. It is through our prayer that God will heal our land. It is through our seeking Him and turning from our wicked ways that God will heal our land.

We need to pray and not just on Thursday. We need to live out that scripture in 2 Chronicles. We need to pray for the salvation of our nation. I'm going to close with something Sara Dillow wrote this week:

A man lies in his casket while a city erupts in chaos. No resting in peace. No arresting in peace. When everyone insists on being right, the only thing left is ignorance. When someone feels entitlement, the only thing they will ever truly own is the exclusive rights to a tainted reputation. There will never be peace in our world until we have peace in our communities. There will never be peace in our communities until there is peace in our homes. There will never be peace in our homes unless we have peace in our hearts. There will never be peace in our hearts until we come to know the Prince of Peace. ~ Sara Dillow