The Power of Effectual Prayer

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Romans 11:36

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."
ROMANS 11:36

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Introduction

Turn, if you will, please, to the book of Romans—the Constitution of Christianity, Romans chapter 11. And we are going to look primarily at one verse tonight.

And, before we look at that verse, I want to tell you there is a place in the Atlantic Ocean called the Bermuda Triangle. Sometimes, it is called the Devil's Triangle. It is said that in that body of water, a vast body of water, sometimes airplanes have been known to mysteriously disappear. Sometimes ocean liners and boats and fishing craft have just disappeared. People have vanished in this so-called Bermuda Triangle, or Devil's Triangle. Now, I think that is more myth than mystery. And I don't put any stock in that, but there is another triangle, not the Devil's Triangle, but a Divine Triangle, and it is not myth; it is miracle. And we are going to read about it right here in Romans chapter 11 and verse 36. Listen to it: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." Now, that is a divine triangle.

Can we have a triangle on the screen here? I want you to see how that works. We are going to be talking about prayer tonight. We are going to be talking about the power of effectual prayer. And you are going to find out that in God's economy there is a cycle, that things come, first of all, of Him, and then they go through Him, and then they return back to Him. And that is the cycle of victory that we have. Really, that is the theme of

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the entire Bible. Everything starts with God. Everything operates through God. Everything returns back to God.

A. Jesus Is the Producer of Creation

For example, the first verse in the Bible says, everything is of God. Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It all begins with God. And then, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 8, Jesus said, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, which was, and which is to come.” Do you see the way that this divine triangle begins, and it continues, and it ends? “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him.”

Think for example in the material world. How did the material world come to place? How did it all come to be? Put in your margin Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” In that one verse, you see the same truth, that first of all, the physical world, He, our God, is the power of creation. It is impossible to believe that everything came from nothing. Listen. We believe in God by faith, but the atheist has a whole lot more faith than we have. He, by faith, believes that it all just happened.

The scientists totally reject that; some scientists totally reject that. Sir Fred Hoyle at the British Academy of Science, who is a leading mathematician and astronomer, shook up a lot of people in the scientific community when he said this—and let me quote him: “We must now admit to ourselves that the probability of life arising by chance, by evolution, is the same probability of throwing six on dice 5 million consecutive times.” And then he goes on to say, “Let’s be scientifically honest with ourselves. The probability of having life arise to greater and greater complexity in organization by chance is the same probability of having a tornado tear through a junkyard and form out the other end a Boeing 747.” And this is a scientist talking, Sir Fred Hoyle of the British Academy of Science. He said, “Random and impersonal chance does not create complexity and design.” No, all things are by Him.

B. Jesus Is the Preserver of Creation

But not only is He the producer of creation; He is the preserver of creation. That same verse that I just read to you said, “By him all things consist.” Jesus is the glue of the galaxies. He is the one who feeds the sun with fuel. He is the one who veils the moon with beauty. He is the one who guides the planet on their courses. Take His hand away and everything would disintegrate. It is God who just does all of this.

I was studying some about astronomy. I am not an astronomer, but I love astronomy. And I got to thinking again about the speed of light, because I am preparing

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a message to speak at a convention about light. And you know that light travels at 182,282 miles per second—186, 282 per second. Well, how fast is that? Close your eyes. Now open them. Light just went around the world seven times. That's how fast light travels. Now, the sun is 93 million miles away, and it takes light approximately 8 1/2 minutes to travel from earth to the sun at 186,000 miles per second. Now, to reach the nearest star, however, you would have to travel 4 1/2 years at that speed, that is 27 trillion miles. That's the nearest star. They tell us that there are stars out there in our galaxy that are billions of light years away. As a matter of fact, the thing that we can see furthest in the distance with the giant telescopes are things called quasars. And they are 15 billion light years away—15 billion light years away. That's 90 billion trillion miles away. And, who knows what is behind that?

C. **Jesus Is the Purpose of Creation**

Well, who keeps all of that in order? God. He calls all the stars by name. You see, Jesus is the producer of creation. He is the preserver of creation. And He is the purpose of Creation. The verse I just read to you from Colossians says all things were created for Him. What's the world coming to? What is the universe coming to? It is coming to Jesus. It is true in the physical world. It is true in the spiritual world.

How did we get saved—because we sought God? No. I read a verse to you this morning: "there is none that seeketh after God, no not one." The only reason you know Him is because He sought you. We love Him because He first loved us. By nature, we are all running from God. If God couldn't run faster than we could run, none of us would be saved. Friend, I want to tell you He takes the initiative. He first loved us. Then He takes our salvation and brings us to Himself. We have nothing to boast of. We live the Christian life through the power He gives, and one day we are going back to Him. For it is of Him, by Him, through Him, and to Him are all things.

It is the same thing in sanctification. It all begins with Him. I used to think, as a young Christian, if I could just be good enough, if I could live clean enough, pure enough, then maybe God would fill me with the Holy Spirit. That was so foolish. Because there is no way that I could live the Christian life apart from the fullness of the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean I can cling to sin and have God fill me. But it does mean this: that, friend, holiness is not the way to God. God is the way to holiness. That is so important that you learn this.

You know, some people want to get some money. They want to borrow some money. And they have the idea that if they can go to the banker and prove to the banker they don't need any money, maybe he will loan them some. Well, friend, we used to think that about God. You know, if we could just say to God, "Now, God, I'm perfectly clean and pure and holy; now fill me with the Spirit." No. You see it is of Him, and through Him, and to Him. We come to Him empty-handed, and say, "Lord, I am in a

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mess." And God says, all right, I am the one that put that desire in your heart, and I am going to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

It is the same thing in stewardship. What do we give to the Lord when we bring our money here? What He has given to us. Now, what do you have that you have not received? In the truest sense, how can you give anything to God? What do you have that you have not received? It is of Him, and through Him, and to Him. When our children were little, they would go out and buy me a Father's Day present. Do you know what they bought me a Father's Day present with? Money I gave them. Sure, but I enjoyed it. The whole thing is of Him, through Him, and to Him. That is the divine triangle.

Now, having that in mind, I want to talk to you about effectual prayer. And I want to tell you three wonderful truths about prayer. Now, listen to me now. Don't check me out. This is transformational, and this is truth. I want to apply it to your heart.

I. The Origin of Prayer

Let's think first of all of the origin—the origin of prayer. It roots in the purposes of God. That is so important. The origin of all effectual prayer roots in the purposes of God. For of Him are all things. Now, I have told you before, the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. Of Him are all things. Prayer is not some way to get earth's will done in heaven; it is God's way to get Heaven's will done on earth. You see, God is sovereign, and we are sinful. There is no way that prayer would work if it did not begin with God. But though God is sovereign, His sovereign throne is a throne of grace. And we can come to a sovereign God by grace. And grace means that God loves us before we loved Him. Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Now, have you ever thought about the fact of why we pray? Prayer is a great mystery. Why do we pray? Why do we tell God what He already knows? Why do we ask God to do what He already wants to do? If it already starts in His heart and mind, why do we pray? Why does God lay that burden upon our heart? Let me give you three reasons why we pray like this.

First of all, God gives us the privilege—listen to me—the privilege of working together with Him. Second Corinthians chapter 6, verse 1: "For we then are workers together with him." Now, Mark Dougharty and I, we work together. We meet, we pray, we talk, we laugh, we plan. And it is a privilege for me to work with Mark. I know Mark better because I work with him. He knows me better because we work together. What a glorious privilege to work with God. I mean to think of it, Paul said we are laborers together with him.

I have often used the illustration, but I'll dare use it one more time of sometimes I will

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fly with a person in a private airplane and sit up in the cockpit side by side. And that person will let me fly the plane. Well, friend, if he weren't there, I'd be a pilot, all right; I'd pile it in the field. But he is there to override my mistakes. And yet I am flying that aircraft. Now, he could do it without me. I could not do it without him. But together we are having fellowship. That's the way prayer is. God could do it without us. We could not do it without Him. But God has given us the privilege to pray. Prayer bonds your heart to God.

And prayer is also the way that God disciples us. Have you ever asked God for something and didn't get the answer? Let me see your hand. Come on. Sure, of course you did. And you say, "Well, why did God not answer my prayer?" A boy may ask a girl for date, and she says no, and he says, "I wonder why. I wonder if I have bad breath." And so he gargles. And then, later on, he says, "I wonder if my fingernails are messy." So he cleans his fingernails. And then he says, "I wonder if my dress is not appropriate." And he begins to clean up and dress up. And then, after a while, she may say yes.

Now, that is the way God is. God is working on us. And God disciples us through prayer. Prayer is God's way of, when we have prayers that are not answered, to cause us to examine our hearts.

And prayer binds us and bonds us to God. God does not want us to be independent of Him. Now, all prayer begins in heaven. If you want your prayers answered, you are going to have to hear from heaven. John 15, verse 16—Jesus said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

Now, Jesus said, I have chosen you. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I ordained you, that you would bring forth fruit. And whatever you ask the Father in my name, I will do. That means, I am the origin of the prayer. In my name means, I have signed the purchase order.

Now, the disciples went out fishing one night and didn't catch anything. And Jesus said, well, cast your net on the other side of the boat. And the disciples said, look, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing. It begins with we; it ends with nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word, we will. And then, listening to Him, they cast out their net and caught a boatload. The whole point is this that prayer begins with God.

So many times, we are trying to bend God's will to our will. Prayer is not bending God's will to our will; prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. Don't be like the little boy who was heard praying, "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo." Somebody said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I have just had a geography test and I am praying to make Tokyo the capital of England." You are not going to change God by prayer. God's will is what prayer lays hold of. Prayer is not bending God's will to our will. Now, that is

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the origin of all prayer. It roots in the purposes of God. That's the reason I said this morning, "It is not, name it and claim it."

II. The Operation of Prayer

Now, here is the second thing I want you to notice: not only the origin of prayer, but the operation of prayer. It relies on the power of God. Now, even if you have the right origination, if you knew the will of God, you still need the anointing to pray. Did you know that you need God in order to pray? God is the one who gives you the desire to pray. Remember Romans 3, verse 10 and 11. I have told you, "There is none that seeketh after God; no, not one." Your old nature does not want to pray. Romans 8, verses 5 through 7: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal man"—that means the fleshly man—"is enmity against God"—that means warfare against God—"for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

You will never train the old man to love prayer. Your may as well try to train your dog to love opera. Your old nature does not want to pray. It is God that gives you the desire to pray. He has put His Spirit in your heart crying "Abba Father." If you have no desire to pray, it is because you are not walking in the Spirit. Now, God gives not only the desire to pray; God gives the direction to pray. He teaches us what to pray for. Matthew 6, verse 8: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him." God knows what you need to pray. God knows what you need. Is that a comfort to you? It ought to be.

Sometimes we might want things that we don't need. Sometimes we ask God for things we don't need. Mrs. Billy Graham said, "If God had answered my prayer, I would have married the wrong man on four different occasions." We ask God for things. I remember one time there was a car that I thought I needed when I was in high school. A buddy of mine had an old rattletrap car, and I think he was going to sell it for $75. I thought, man, if I could get $75, I could have that car. I asked God for it, and God didn't give me $75, and I didn't get the car. Somebody else got it, and the motor fell out of it. I mean, literally fell out of it. I don't see how a motor can fall out of a car. But I had to thank God. "Lord, thank you for not letting me get that automobile." Sometimes we think we need things that we don't need. And sometimes we need things that we don't want. My dad used to say, you need a spanking. He was right. I didn't want one, but sometimes we need things we don't want. God knows what we need. And sometimes we think we need things we already have.

I am amazed at churches in building programs that are asking God to give them the money to build a building when they have the money in their pockets. The people have

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the money in their pockets. They are asking God to send somebody else to give them money, rather than asking God. Listen, friend. God gives you what you need. He knows what you have need before you ask Him. And God gives you the desire to pray. And God gives you the direction for praying, what to ask for.

Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, why doesn't God therefore direct me more?" I was thinking about this, this afternoon. I will tell you one thing. There is so much in this Bible that we do know about that we ought to pray about and we don't pray about. Why do we whine about the things we don't know about? There are so many things that are revealed to us clearly—clearly.

Now, listen to what Jesus said—Jesus in His humanity. I want you to notice how Jesus did not originate His prayers, but He listened to the Father. Put this down—John 5, verse 19: "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, the Son"—speaking of Himself, the s-o-n—"can do nothing of himself,"—did you hear that? I mean God incarnate, God in human flesh, He said I can't do anything of myself—"but what he seeth the Father do, for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Jesus said, I stay tuned to heaven, and whatever I see, whatever I hear, that's what I say; that's what I do. Friend, when you come to God, and abide in God, God is going to speak to your heart. We need more loving, lingering, listening prayer. Because the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. All things are of Him and through Him.

I have had experiences in my life that are so phenomenal—so phenomenal—where God has spoken to me, and I have obeyed. I've asked God for something that God laid on my heart. And it just happened in such a way that I cannot believe it's coincidence. There was a man named Johnny—Johnny Sowell. I had Johnny on my heart, praying for Johnny, wanting Johnny to be saved. I was down in Florida when this happened. And I had prayed for Johnny. I tried to witness to Johnny. Every time I would go to the house where Johnny was boarding there would be so many people around, and they would crowd around me, and I couldn't get Johnny alone to talk to him. But I knew that if I could just get Johnny alone—Johnny was about nineteen years of age—if I could get him alone, I could lead him to Christ. I had borrowed a deacon's home for prayer. I was just there in his living room on my knees praying for Johnny. And I felt this strange thing come into my heart. I felt God saying, ask Me for this. Ask Me that you can go downtown and there in the middle of town you will see Johnny. Ask Johnny to ride to Vero Beach with you, and tell Johnny about Jesus, and Johnny will get saved. Now, there is no reason for this. I had no idea where he was, what his work schedule was, where he would be in town, or anything else. No apparent reason. I am there, actually on my knees; I believe, if I remember, I was on my face. I said, "Lord, I am going to ask You. Therefore, I am going to go downtown, and I am going to ask you that You let me

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meet Johnny. I am going to ask Johnny to go to Vero Beach with me, and I want to talk to him about You, and I want him to get saved." I got in my Ford automobile, went down to the main street, the crossroads there, and there is Johnny standing on the corner. I said, "Johnny, I am going to go to Vero Beach. Will you ride with me?" He said, "Sure thing," and jumped in the car. Why should he go with me to Vero Beach? On the way there, I talked to him about Jesus. On the way back, we stopped, parked the car, he prayed and asked God to come into his heart.

Well, how do you want to explain that? I mean, I am not clairvoyant, but I felt God telling me to pray this. I have had—I could name, not a lot, but enough—experiences like that, that make me wonder why I don't stay more in tune with the Lord. I am not holding myself up here as a paragon of excellence in this matter. And I believe that God many times just speaks to us clearly and plainly in plain English about His will, and we know it is of Him. And sometimes it is not always that dramatic. But I am telling you, it is God who originates the prayer. He is the origin of this prayer. And He is the operation of this prayer.

III. The Objective of Prayer

Now, here is the third and final thing, as we think about prayer. And that's the objective of effective prayer. It results in the praise of God. It roots in the purpose of God. It continues in the power of God. And it always results in the praise of God.

Now, God does not hear selfish prayers. God is in the business of getting glory to Himself. There is one verse that most adequately defines prayer to me, and it is John 14, verse 13—listen to it: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." That's it. "When you ask in my name," Jesus said, "I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.

Now, praise and thanksgiving complete the triangle of prayer. First of all, there is a petition. And then, there is praise. You see, thanksgiving enjoys the gift, but praise enjoys the giver. Don't just merely thank God for what He has done for you, but praise Him. Look at the verse again—verse 36: "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever." The purpose of prayer is to glorify God. When you learn that secret of wanting to glorify God, you see, prayer goes into God's presence to carry something away, and that's wonderful. But praise goes into God's presence to remain there forever. Now, that's the reason we are to pray in the name of Jesus. Listen to this verse again, in John 14, verse 13: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

What does it mean to ask in His name? Does that mean to say whenever we pray for whatever we want, we just say, in the name of Jesus, and that somehow sanctifies

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it? No. When you are asking in His Name, it means, first of all, with His approval. Could He sign His name to it? Secondly, with His authority. Is it something that He Himself approves and therefore gives His authority to? And thirdly, is it for His acclaim or for His glory? Don't just rattle off, in the name of Jesus, if you are not really praying for His acclaim, with His approval, and in His authority.

Now, when you pray, pray in the name of Jesus. And when you pray in the name of Jesus, and ask Him for whatever you ask Him for, ask yourself this question: "Am I praying this prayer because God the Holy Spirit put this thing in my heart either through the written Word or through His Spirit—the *rhema* that I spoke about this morning? Am I now praying in the energy of the Spirit rather than the energy of the flesh? And is the desire of my heart that God would be glorified?

Conclusion

Let's put the triangle back up there again and look at it again. Look at it now. See at the point up there. There is God in heaven. For of Him—it all starts with God. He knows what things we have need of before we ask Him. And then, it is through Him. We pray in the Spirit, not in the energy of the flesh, as He gives us the desire and the direction to pray. And then, the prayer goes right back to Him, and He is the One who receives the glory. And, when we begin to pray this way, then God begins to work in a very supernatural way. Now, let me give you a definition of prayer, and then we are going to have an invitation. Here is the best definition of prayer that I have ever learned. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our hearts, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross. Would you like to hear it again? Nod your heads. All right now, listen. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our hearts, and then, sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross. For of him, and through him, and to Him are all things. And this is very simple, but very wonderful. He, Almighty God, is the purpose of prayer. He is the power of prayer. He is the origin. He is the operation. He is the object of all true prayer.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, let me say this: that you cannot, you never will, pray in power outside the will of God, and you will never know the will of God, until you abide in Him. And you can never abide in Him, if you are not saved. And so, if for no other reason, not even to escape hell and go to heaven, if for no other reason than to be on praying ground, you ought to be saved. But you cannot pray in the name of Jesus, God cannot speak to you in sweet communion, until you get saved. So, if you would like to be saved, give your heart to Jesus. Now, the Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And that word believe does not mean intellectual belief alone; it means trust. You can believe an

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airplane can fly, but you don't trust it till you get on it. Are you ready to trust Jesus? Would you like to invite Him into your heart? Then pray a prayer like this: "Dear God, I am a sinner and I am lost." And, friend, don't be ashamed or afraid to admit that you are a sinner. You know you are. And the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. The wrath of God burns against sin. You dare not face God with unconfessed, unforgiven sin. "I am a sinner, Lord." Confess it. "I need to be saved." You do need to be saved, if you have never been saved. And then, make a confession of faith like this: "Jesus, You are the Son of God. You paid for my sin debt with Your shed blood on the cross. God raised You from the dead. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus." Don't just utter the words. Pray it from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then, by an act of faith, don't look for a feeling; don't look for a sign, but just by an act of faith stand on the Word, and say, "Thank you for doing it. Just thank you for doing it. I receive it by faith. If you give a feeling, emotion, that's fine, but I am not depending upon that. Emotions are fickle. By faith, I thank you for saving me. You are now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. Begin now, Lord Jesus, to make me the person you want me to be, and help me never ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. We are going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand here at the head of every aisle all the way across the front to receive those…

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