



Glyfada Christian Center



26/01/2025

Preacher Brian van Deventer; Stavros Antoniadis

Series Prayer

Service Sunday Service

Passages Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:9-10; Psalm 34:4; 1 Peter 5:7;
Matthew 11:28-30; Philippians 4:6-7; Mark 4:35-41; 1
Thessalonians 5:17

A Year of Prayer – Stress to Strength

Pastor Brian – Welcome

1. So, good morning to all those who are here, and to those who are out there. We welcome you into the house of the Lord today, which we are together, but we also welcome the Lord into this house (our own selves), each one of us as individuals.

2. So, we're just going to start today by telling the Lord how good He is. Life is so full of challenges, and I find it's useful to just stop myself, kind of push everything aside, just for the moment and remind myself how good God is, and in particular, how good He is to me. I'm glad that He is good to you. But I rejoice in the fact that He is good to me. Can God's people say amen to that today?

Pastor Brian- Prayer

1. Lord, we just welcome You into this house again today. We are here for You. So, Lord, I pray You would focus our hearts, Lord. Lord, zone our minds in on You today. Lord, let Your love just flow over us, and our love for You, flow out from us. Lord, we declare our everlasting love for You. Just take a moment and let that rest on your heart. We have an audience of One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Brian- Announcements

1. Hallelujah. You guys know that I'm a worshipper. I like to stay there. I just really want to welcome the lord into this place today. I hope you are here for Him. I hope you're not here because it's Sunday and go to church is what you do. I hope you're not here because somebody called you and pressed you to come. But I hope you're here to meet with you Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is so good. Come on, He is so good!

2. We use those words a lot. You know, say, 'God is good, God is good', and sometimes, we hear it so much, it just becomes words. But like this base speaker back here, if you stand close enough to it you feel the reverberation. Today, I want us to feel the reverberations of saying, 'He is good!' Because He is. We're not doing the song 'Oh, He is Good' today, but I hear it in my head.

3. OK, well, welcome one another. Move around the room a little. As you go back to your seats, or if you're at home and come back from the kitchen, or that other room that we use for breaktime, we do want to remind you of just a few things.

4. First of all, I bring you greetings from pastor Gail, she's still in the USA. She'll be ministering in a couple of services this morning. Those are about 15:30 our time. And I'm going to ask you, more today that we normally do, if you remember to do, or set your alarm, spend just a few minutes in prayer for pastor Gail. She'll tell you more about her trip when she gets back, but she's pressing through on behalf of the Kingdom. So, really keep her in prayer today, for strength and wisdom. I wouldn't be surprised if she is online right now, so that I'll get a text later today, telling me everything I've done wrong. I'm just kidding. It'll be a text, 'How did it go?' And then she'll say, 'I saw this much, and it seems like God is good.' And then I'll tell her a lie, 'It was the best service all year'. And who knows, it might just end up being the truth. But yeah, keep her in prayer.

5. We want to remind the young men, and if you don't know what the definition of that is, come talk to me after church. They are meeting on Fridays at 17:00, I don't get to be a part of it, but it sounds like they're having a good time. And I want to say a special thank you to all the young guys that are here today, I meant to bring a picture, I may have sent it, I don't know, George. If it's possible, pull it up. Give it a try.

6. When I walked into men's breakfast yesterday, of course, Stavros was there, because it's his house, and George was there already, all the way from the island of Salamina, and if you don't know, George has moved to Salamina and he is still faithful to come here every week. It's one thing to come across town, and it's another thing to get onto a ferry and then come

across town. So, with Stavros and George and about 5 other guys under the age of 20; at least, I think you're all under the age of 20. Just blessed my heart.

For the rest of the announcements continue in the video.

Pastor Brian- main message

1. I was going to dress up a little more for you; I was going to put a sweater on, but I'm warm. So, you're going to have to handle this. Ah, we pray. You? We've declared that this is a season of prayer, this is the year of prayer for our house. And we are trying to find many ways to build that into our life more than before. Maybe you've had a full prayer-life, I don't know. But we're convinced that all the breakthroughs that we're waiting for, are found through prayer.

2. Pastor Gail has been praying through, 'What are some of the things we feel that we need to talk about, that prayer needs to affect'. Prayer impacts everything. We need prayer for everything. But there are certain things that we're trying to hear the voice of God about, that we believe will speak into the life of this church. So, she's identifying some of these things in her prayer-time, and devotion. And then she's been handing those topics out to those of us who preach and teach, and today she saw fit to assign to me, the subject of, 'Stress'. Maybe because she feels that I'm too stressed. You know they say you should always preach out of your strength. Sometimes though, you preach into what you need.

3. So, We gave this the title, 'Stress to Strength'. How do we turn the stress in our life into strength in our character? Now, how many of you know that life is full of stress? There are a few honest enough to raise their hands. As I was thinking of this, I thought of a story, of a young lady I met one day, on the street who was very stressed out. So, I asked her, 'What's wrong? Why are you so uptight?'

4. She was a young lady, unmarried, and had been very much wanting a husband. So, she went to a department store. It was a department store for men, as in order to find one. Now, this department store, had six floors. Each one with descriptions of men that could be had. And she could explore all of the floors. The problem was that the escalators only went up. You could never go back down.

5. So, she went to the first floor, and she saw the sign, 'Men with good jobs.' This floor is filled with men with good jobs. Oh, wow! This is good. But I wonder what's upstairs. So, she went up to the second floor, and the sign said, 'Men with good jobs, who love family.' Oh, wow, this is getting better! He loves family too. But I wonder what's on floor three? So, she went up again. The sign said, 'Men with good jobs, who love family and do housework.' Come on ladies.

6. But there's a fourth floor. And she thought, 'What am I going to find there?' So, she saw the sign when she got up there, 'Men with good jobs, who love family and do housework and are very romantic.' But come on, this is only the fourth floor. What's on five? So, she went up to five. The sign here said, 'Men with good jobs, who love family and do housework, are highly romantic and are very, very handsome.' Wow!

7. But if it's this good on five, what am I going to find on six? So, she went up to the final floor. And there was the sign, 'Sorry, there are no men here'. This floor exists solely to illustrate that women can never be truly satisfied.' See, the ladies had the Amens until floor five, but I noticed the men were pretty silent on the sixth floor.

8. So, what's the point of the story? We often create our own stress. Because, a lot of our stress comes from the fact that we are living with unmet expectations. There are things that we want to happen, and life just doesn't work that way. It's an unavoidable part of life. Whether like me, it's deadlines at work, for some of you it might be family responsibilities, health challenges, unexpected setbacks. Every one of us in this life, are going to experience times that feel weighty, even overwhelming.

9. But as believers, God has given us a powerful, tool to manage the stress. And it's called, 'Prayer.' Because, it not only connects us with God, but if we allow Him, He provides comfort, clarity and peace that the world cannot offer.

10. So, let's think about this a little bit. You know this Scripture, Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Look at the transition, from anxiety, to peace of God, through what? By prayer and petition.

11. What's the difference between prayer and petition? Prayer is a word of communication. There are many kinds of prayer. In fact, prayer is also sometimes listening. Petition, is actually a legal word. In English, we say, 'You petition the court', you come to the court for an answer. So, Paul gives us a combination here, of simple communication with God, that also involves our petition. Present your requests to God. Now, I can do a lot with that one bit of Scripture. But I want us to see three simple things today in the Scripture.

a. Number one, I want us to notice that prayer shifts our focus. Stress most often comes because we are looking inwards. We dwell on our problems. We overanalyze our situations. We try to carry burdens we were never meant to bear. But when we pray, we shift our focus from here (inward) to there (upward). From ourselves to God. Jesus taught us this in Matthew 6:9-10, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done." Prayer begins with acknowledging who God is. He is our Father. He is our Creator. He is our Sustainer. He is our Redeemer. In fact, just rest on those words for a moment. And think of Him as Father. Image Him as Creator. Picture Him as your Sustainer. Give amazing thanks because He is your Redeemer. When we remind ourselves of this, of His power, of His faithfulness, of His sovereignty, our problems can become very light in front of His greatness. As an example, think of king David. He was in a time of incredible stress, when his enemies were chasing him to kill him. And yet in the middle of that he declared, "I sought the Lord and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4. David knew the danger was there. But he did not dwell on the danger. He looked to God. So, in prayer, we realign our perspective. If we're always trying to look inwards, most of what you're going to see is dirt. But when you set your eyes on things above, it becomes light, as the song says, 'In His glorious grace.'

b. The second thing that prayer does, is that it positions God to become our burden carrier. Think about this. God invites us, to give Him our burdens. 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety

on him because he cares for you.” So, prayer is the act of transitioning our worries to God. In your mind, just picture yourself before the throne of God saying, ‘Here take it. This thing that is occupying me and harming me, You asked for it, oh God. Here take it.’ This word ‘Cast’, cast all your anxiety on Him, the Greek word there is used only in one other place in the New Testament, and it’s the time when the disciples cast their garments on the donkey so that Jesus could ride. Can you just picture them just taking their clothes and throwing them over the back of the donkey, so that Jesus could get up there and ride. When I learned that, I used that image for my prayer. I’m going to take this burden and I’m going to cast it there, so that Jesus can ride. Jesus emphasized this. Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Quietly say to yourself, ‘You will give me rest.’ Look at the strength of those statements. “I will give you rest. You will find rest” So, prayer is like a divine exchange. Our burdens for His peace. Our weakness for His strength. But the process between them, is prayer.

c. Number three. Prayer does bring God’s peace. What a fantastic result of prayer. That God wants for us, peace. And not just any peace, but the peace, He says, that goes beyond any human understanding. He promised us this. Philippians 4:6-7 where God instructs us to request of Him, with thanksgiving, and He said He would guard our hearts. When we pray, God guards our hearts, and our minds from the turmoil of stress. Now notice that He doesn’t say that He will immediately remove the source of stress. But He does give us the inner calm and the confidence to endure whatever it is. It’s the kind of peace that Jesus displayed in the storm. You all know the story from Mark 4:35-41. The storm comes, the disciples panic; Jesus sleeps. In Christ, in the world we live in, the storm comes, the people panic, we sleep. Because in Christ, in Christ, is peace that passes understanding. And when He woke up, He just calmed the storm. And when we pray, it’s us speaking to the storm. Peace, be still. Be still my heart. Be still my mind. And then, be still my circumstances. Not because we have that power, but because Jesus speaks to the storm. “Cast your burdens on me, and I will give you rest. I will speak it. Peace, be still.” That’s a pretty good exchange. Can you say a little Amen?

12. So, what do we do to relieve our stressful habits? Simple; Number one, start with prayer. Start with prayer. Don’t start with complaint. Don’t start with calling that person to tell them all the bad. Don’t start by trying to figure it all out. Start with prayer. Surrender your plans. Surrender your concerns, and your needs to God, before you make them. There’s a lot of excitement in that idea.

13. Number two, pray continuously. We are encouraged to pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17. When I was young, I couldn’t figure out what that meant. How was I supposed to pray without stopping. But I have learned this habit, to stop many times throughout the day, and just whisper a prayer. God, I’ve got all of this to deal with; let me just stop for ten seconds here, and say, ‘Lord it’s on you.’

14. Number three, pray with thanksgiving. Gratitude. Gratitude shifts our heart from what is wrong to what is right. I don’t say it often, because people don’t understand it, or maybe they do. God’s not afraid of a bitter prayer. You know what a bitter prayer is, right? God,

that! I don't like You right now! God's not afraid of a bitter prayer. But I'm pretty sure He doesn't enjoy it. I think He receives it. I think He loves you through it. But I'm not so sure He enjoys it. I think He probably sits back saying, 'Must you? Have I not already told you. Cast it on Me and I'll give you peace.'

15. Gratitude. Understanding who God has been, who He is, and who He will be, because His Word is true. And the path to that, to really live in that, our refuge in it all, is prayer. It shifts our focus from problems to God. It allows us to cast our burdens on Him. And it fills us with His peace. When we kneel before God, I believe this with my heart, we rise up stronger. We rise up calmer, we rise up more confident, because we know His ability.

16. So, the next time stress threatens you, don't just carry it, pray it. And pray it through. We had a saying all the time in the churches I grew up in, 'Pray it through.' In our church that meant, come to this altar, and don't even get up until you're done with it. And we would pray, and pray, and I would sleep, and people would still be praying, and I would wake up, I would pretend to pray again, until everybody started getting up, and then we would go to our seats. And then we would worship, until the people ran the church. If you came to my church today, you would think that we were crazy.

17. But I'll tell you what I did learn, pray it through. Pray it, until you're done carrying it. But we tend to pray, release, take it back, and go. Not a good plan. Because the Lord you serve, is ready to listen; He is ready to respond, and He is ready to change your stress to strength. That is the God He is. He will turn your stress to strength, if you believe Him for it, and you practice your prayer. And God's people said, Amen.

18. Now, I'm going to ask the musicians to come, and we're going to do something. It doesn't make a lot of sense to talk about prayer, without doing it. Thank you for those shaking your heads. We're learning again to be a praying church.

19. Some of you walked in here today, carrying things. And that's OK, that's good. But you don't have to walk out with the same stuff. And we're going to spend a little time in a worshipful attitude. I'm not going to ask you to sing.

20. But if it's to come to one of these spaces at the altar, or it's to sit right where you are. Maybe some of you would like to find open spaces and kneel at one of the chairs. I know it's hard in between these rows. But if you could and you would, I would like as many of us as possible, to find a place to pray. And if you can't, or you just don't feel like it, just sit where you are.

21. But we're going to spend some time with the opportunity to talk to God. The only thing we can do is provide the opportunity. I can't inspire your prayers. But I know the Holy Spirit and He will. So, if you'd be willing, just find a place, and we're just going to take some time to cast our stuff on the Lord.