



*The Ministry  
of  
Prayer*

*Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger, D.D.*



## Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
1.	The Ministry of Prayer	3
2.	When and For Whom Do We Pray?	7
3.	Pray to God in Jesus Name	15
4.	Examples of Jesus Praying	19
5.	Does God Hear Prayers?	27
6.	Prayer of Forgiveness	33
7.	Prayer of Praise	40
8.	Prayer of Thanksgiving	44
9.	Prayer of Asking	47
10.	When Praying, Listen	53
11.	Praying the Great Commission	58
12.	Ways to Pray	62
13.	Waiting, or taking Actions	66
14.	Prayer of Jesus for Himself	73
15.	Notable Prayers. Part 1	78
16.	Notable Prayers. Part 2	85
17.	Notable Prayers. Part 3	90
18.	Prayer and Fasting	96

## Chapter 1

### THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER

Psalm 150:6 - "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

God deserves our praise. Praise God for His--faithfulness, goodness, forgiveness, truth, love, power, sovereignty, mercy, patience, peace, perfection, holiness, wisdom, eternalness, changelessness, justness, and grace. Praise Him because He is all knowing, ever-present and the Sustainer and Creator of everything.

Ephesians 5:20 - "Always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We need to give God thanks. Thank God for people, family, friends, enemies, teachers, situations (good, bad, and ugly), blessings (protection, wisdom, peace, love, conviction), provision (food, money, friends, family, shelter, freedom, school).

I John 1:9 - "If we confess our sins, He will forgive us."

When we confess our sins and accept God's forgiveness, our guilt and shame are removed. The time between sin and repentance determines our character. The time between our repentance, and when we forgive ourselves determines our maturity. Satan will try to make us feel guilty before we sin and after we are forgiven. He will also make us try and feel right when we sin. Identify his weapons, ask for forgiveness, and say "Satan, shut up."

James 4:2b "You don't have because you do not ask God."

We are not on God's permanent mailing list of blessings. We must ask Him, and expect Him to answer.

James 1:5 - "If you lack wisdom, ask God, and He'll give it to you."

John 15:7 - "God will always answer."

I John 5:14 - "He always listens and gives in line with His will."

Philippians 4:6 - "Don't worry; pray about anything. Tell Him your needs, thank Him for answers."

Romans 11:36 - "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things."

## LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12) “Heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ” Romans 8:14-17; 1 Peter 1:3-4.

What an amazing thing it is that God wants you to come to Him in prayer! He says: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3). How hard it is to understand God wants to do this for you! But God loved you so much He gave you His Son, and with His Son, He has promised to “also freely give to us all things” (Romans 8:32).

When God created the universe He made certain natural laws by which the world runs. There are many of them, and they cover every phase of activity - the law of gravitation; summer and winter; seed-time and harvest; the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind; every winged fowl after its kind; whatever a man sows he shall also reap; and the soul that sins shall die.

But God often intervenes and changes things. The question arises, “If God knows all things, why should I pray about anything? He knows my needs better than I do.” The answer is prayer is God’s chosen way for your obtaining, and His changing things for you.

James 4:2 says: “Ye have not, because ye ask not.” Matthew 7:7, 11, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you... If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

We will study the privilege and power of prayer in several different ways.

As redeemed sons in the household of God (Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 2:19). You can come to God as your Father, and expect Him to hear your requests because now you can come in Jesus’ name (John 16:23, 24).

As communion with Him, you “may know him” (Philippians 3:10; 1 John 1:3).

As ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20), you are laborers in partnership with God.

Jesus has left great and precious promises for you. He has ascended into Heaven, and is now at the right hand of God making intercession for you (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

### **“YE ASK, AND RECEIVE NOT**

Because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts [selfish desires]” (James 4:3). You must have the right attitude, but the scriptural way is still to ask. Money in the bank cannot help unless your checks are cashed, so ask!

### **PRAYER RELEASES THE ENERGY OF GOD – FAITH**

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).

### **FAITH IS EXPECTING GOD TO ACT LIKE GOD**

"It is taking His promises to Him and expecting Him to answer. “Hear my prayer...in thy faithfulness answer me” (Psalm 143:1).

### **ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**

God reveals His will in His Word. The more you understand and know His Word the better you will be able to pray (1 John 5:14, 15). *Prayer* could be defined as talking with God. You could divide it into at least five different parts.

Thanksgiving - your appreciation for what He has done for you.

Petition - asking for things.

Confession - agreeing or saying the same thing about your sins as the Holy Spirit says, as He points them out to you.

Intercession - asking for others.

Praise - worship and reverence toward Him.

You have been studying about petitions; now look at the importance of thanksgiving. The Bible says:

“With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6).

“Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18).

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR GOOD PRAYER HABITS**

Do not pray *at* others.

Do not pray *to* others.

Do not pray showy prayers to impress others.

Do talk naturally, but reverently.

Do be definite; do not wander.

Do set aside a certain time for daily private prayer, a “quiet time” with God.

In order to pray effectively as a child of God, you need to learn the privileges, promises and restrictions as revealed in God’s Word. It is important that you keep a balance in your life between prayer and Bible study. Prayer without Bible study leads to fanaticism. Bible study without prayer leads to coldness

## Chapter 2

### When and For Whom to Pray

#### **Luke 18:1**

" And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

To persist in prayer and not give up does not mean endless repetition or painfully long prayer sessions. Always praying means keeping our requests constantly before God as we live for him day by day, believing he will answer. When we live by faith, we are not to give up. God may delay answering, but his delays always have good reasons. As we persist in prayer we grow in character, faith, and hope.

#### **Romans 12:12**

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."

#### **Ephesians 6:18**

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

How can anyone pray on all occasions? One way is to make quick, brief prayers your habitual response to every situation you meet throughout the day. Another way is to order your life around God's desires and teachings, so your very life becomes a prayer. You don't have to isolate yourself from other people, and from daily work in order to pray constantly. You can make prayer your life, and your life a prayer while living in a world that needs God's powerful influence. "Praying for all the saints," means praying for all believers in Christ. Pray for the Christians you know, and for the church around the world

#### **Col. 4:2**

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Have you ever grown tired of praying for something or someone? Paul says we should "devote" ourselves to prayer and be "watchful" in prayer. Our persistence is an expression of our faith so God answers our prayers. Faith shouldn't die, if the answers come slowly, for the delay may be God's way of working his will in our

lives. When you feel tired of praying, know that God is present, always listening, always answering—maybe not in ways you had hoped, but in ways that he knows are best.

**1 Thes. 5:17**

"Pray without ceasing."

We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude at all times. This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing his presence within us, and determining to obey him fully. Then, we will find it natural to pray frequent, spontaneous, short prayers. A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer but should be an outgrowth of those times.

**1 Tim. 4:4-5**

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: [5] For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

In opposition to the false teachers, Paul affirmed that everything God created is good (see Genesis 1). We should ask for God's blessing on his created gifts that give us pleasure and thank him for them. This doesn't mean that we should abuse what God has made (for example, gluttony abuses God's gift of good food, lust abuses God's gift of love, and murder abuses God's gift of life). Instead of abusing, we should enjoy these gifts by using them to serve and honor God. Have you thanked God for the good gifts he has given? Are you using the gifts in ways pleasing to you *and* to God?

**We should pray for ourselves.**

**1 Chronicles 4:10** "Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request."

**Psalms 106:4-5** "[4] Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people, come to my aid when you save them, [5] that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may share in the joy of your nation and join your inheritance in giving praise."

**2 Corinthians 12:7-8** "[7] To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. [8] Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me."

**Hebrews 5:7** "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

**John 17:1** " After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.'"

A prayer for self is not by any means necessarily a selfish prayer. We may pray for something for ourselves in order that God may be glorified by our receiving it. (John 17:1)

**Psalms 50:14-15** "[14] Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, [15] and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

If we would pray more for ourselves, God would be more glorified in us, and we would be a greater blessing to others. It was well for the world that Jesus spent so much time in prayer for Himself. If we wish to be fit to pray for others we must spend much time in prayer for ourselves. It is a bad sign when one is always praying for others and never for himself. He is not like his Master

## **We Should Pray For One Another**

**James 5:16** "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Christ has made it possible for us to go directly to God for forgiveness. But confessing our sins to each other still has an important place in the life of the church. (1) If we have sinned against an individual, we must ask him or her to forgive us. (2) If our sin has affected the church, we must confess it publicly. (3) If we need loving support as we struggle with a sin, we should confess sin to those who are able to provide support. (4) If, after confessing a private sin to God, we still don't feel his forgiveness, we may wish to confess that sin to a fellow believer, and hear him or her assure us of God's pardon. In Christ's kingdom, every believer is a priest to other believers (1 Peter 2:9).

The Christian's most powerful resource is communion with God through prayer. The results are often greater than we thought were possible. Some people see prayer as a last resort to be tried when all else fails. This approach is backward. Prayer should come first. Because God's power is infinitely greater than ours, it only makes sense to rely on it—especially because God encourages us to pray.

**Romans 1:9-10** "[9] God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you [10] in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you."

When you pray continually about a concern, don't be surprised at how God answers. Paul prayed to visit Rome so he could teach the Christians there. When he finally arrived in Rome, it was as a prisoner (see Acts 28:16). Paul prayed for a safe trip, and he did arrive safely after getting arrested, slapped in the face, shipwrecked, and bitten by a poisonous snake. God's ways of answering our prayers are often far from what we expect. When you sincerely pray, God will answer although sometimes with timing and in ways you do not expect.

**We should pray for Ministers of the Word.**

**Ephesians 6:19-20** "[19] Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Undiscouraged and undefeated, Paul wrote powerful letters of encouragement from prison. Paul did not ask the Ephesians to pray his chains would be removed, but he would continue to speak fearlessly for Christ in spite of them. God can use us in any circumstance to do his will. Even as we pray for a change in our circumstances, we should also pray God will accomplish his plan through us right where we are. Knowing God's eternal purpose for us will help us through the difficult times

**Colossians 4:3** "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains."

The "mystery of Christ" is Christ's Good News of salvation, the gospel. The whole focus of Paul's life was to tell others about Christ, explaining and preaching this wonderful mystery.

**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2** " [1] Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. [2] And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith."

Beneath the surface of the routine of daily life, a fierce struggle among invisible spiritual powers is being waged. Our main defense is prayer God will protect us from the evil one and he will strengthen us. (See also comments on Ephes. 6:10-19 concerning our armor for spiritual warfare.) The following guidelines can help you prepare for and survive satanic attacks: (1) take the threat of spiritual attack seriously; (2) pray for strength and help from God; (3) study the Bible to recognize Satan's style and tactics; (4) memorize Scripture so it will be a source of help no matter where you are; (5) associate with those who speak the truth; and (6) practice what you are taught by spiritual leaders.

**We should pray for those who have been converted through our ministry.**

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-13** "[9] How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? [10] Night and day

we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. [11] Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. [12] May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. [13] May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."

It is remarkable how often Paul writes to his converts about his praying for them. We find Jesus also praying for His converts:

It is to be feared few modern ministers pray for their converts with the frequency and intensity Paul did for his. "Night and day praying exceedingly" he writes in one place.

### **We should pray for sick brethren.**

**James 5:14, 16** "[14] Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. [16] Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective".

People in the church are not alone. Members of Christ's body should be able to count on others for support and prayer, especially when they are sick or suffering. The elders should be on call to respond to the illness of any member, and the church should stay alert to pray for the needs of all its members.

**5:15** "The prayer offered in faith" does not refer to the faith of the sick person, but to the faith of the people praying. God heals, faith doesn't, and all prayers are subject to God's will. But our prayers are part of God's healing process. That is why God often waits for our prayers of faith before intervening to heal a person."

### **We should pray for any brother we see committing a sin that will not lead to the sinner's death.**

**1 John 5:16-17** "[16] If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying heshould pray about that. [17] All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death."

Commentators differ widely in their thoughts about what this sin that leads to death is, and whether the death it causes is physical or spiritual. Paul wrote some Christians had died because they took Communion “in an unworthy manner” (1 Cor. 11:27-30 ), and Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead when they lied to God (Acts 5:1-11).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit results in spiritual death (Mark 3:29), and the book of Hebrews describes the spiritual death of the person who turns against Christ (Hebrews 6:4-6). John was probably referring to the people who had left the Christian fellowship and joined the antichrist. By rejecting the only way of salvation, these people were putting themselves out of reach of prayer. In most cases, however, even if we knew what the terrible sin is, we would have no sure way of knowing whether a certain person had committed it. Therefore we should continue praying for our loved ones and for our Christian brothers and sisters, leaving the judgment up to God. Note John says, “I am not saying that he should pray about that,” rather than “You cannot pray about that.” He recognized the lack of certainty.

## **We should pray for all the saints.**

**Ephesians 6:18** "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

You don't have to isolate yourself from other people and from daily work in order to pray constantly. You can make prayer your life and your life a prayer while living in a world that needs God's powerful influence. "Praying for all the saints" means praying for all believers in Christ; so pray for the Christians you know, and for the church around the world.

## Chapter 3

### Pray to God, and Pray in Jesus Name

Matthew 6:9

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

This is often called the Lord's Prayer because Jesus gave it to the disciples. It can be a pattern for our prayers. We should praise God, pray for his work in the world, pray for our daily needs, and pray for help in our daily struggles.

The phrase "Our Father in heaven" indicates God is not only majestic and holy, but also personal and loving. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to hallow, or honor, God's holy name. We can honor God's name by being careful to use it respectfully. If we use God's name lightly, we aren't remembering God's holiness.

John 14:13-14

" And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

When Jesus says we can ask for anything, we must remember our asking must be in his name that is, according to God's character and will. God will not grant requests contrary to his nature or his will, and we cannot use his name as a magic formula to fulfill our selfish desires. If we are sincerely following God and seeking to do his will, then our requests will be in line with what he wants, and he will grant them. (See also John 15:16; John 16:23.)

John 15:16

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

Jesus made the first choice to love and to die for us, to invite us to live with him forever. We make the next choice to accept or reject his offer. Without *his* choice, we would have no choice to make.

John 16:23

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Jesus is talking about a new relationship between the believer and God. Previously, people approached God through priests. After Jesus' resurrection, any believer could approach God directly. A new day has dawned and now all believers are priests, talking with God personally, and directly (see Hebrews 10:19-23). We approach God, not because of our own merit, but because Jesus, our great high priest, has made us acceptable to God.

John 16:26

"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you."

Jesus taught, "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (Jn. 16: 23). Prayer in the name of Jesus is of great importance.

**Jesus is mediator between God and man.** Paul through the Spirit taught: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5).

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Jesus officiates both as "advocate" and "High Priest" in the matter of man praying to the Father (I Jn. 2: 1, Heb. 2: 17, 18). Jesus' mediation, advocacy, and High Priesthood are **involved** in praying in Jesus' name.

## **Prayer in Jesus' name means praying by Jesus' authority.**

To do something in another's name usually means simply by their authority.

Acts 4: 7,

" And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"

The view that "in the name of Jesus" only constitutes a formula which must also follow all of God's plan.

Col. 3:17

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Jesus taught regarding prayer (Matt. 6: 5-15). Yet, Jesus said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name..." (Jn. 16: 24). A key to understanding prayer in the name of Jesus is "And in that day..." (vs. 23). Jesus had to die and be resurrected (vss. 19-22).

The resurrection would proclaim him "to be the Son of God with power..." (Rom. 1: 4). Ask in Jesus' name.

Romans 1:4

" And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

## **To Pray in Jesus name, we follow a pattern.**

1. "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" - **Ep 5:20**
2. This means much more than simply adding a little phrase "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayers!

- a. We must realize Jesus is the only way by which we can Approach God -

John 14:6

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Hebrews 7:24-25

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. [25] Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

3. Appealing to God in the name of His Son can give us great Confidence that God will give us what we need!

Hebrews 4:14-16

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. [15] For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. [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."

## Lesson 4

### Examples of Jesus Praying

Matthew 11:25-26

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. [26] Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Mark 6:46

"And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray."

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened." Luke 3:21

Being in tune with his Father is how Jesus starts his earthly ministry.

He teaches prayer is claiming God's promises. God has made many promises, but to appreciate them, we must "Ask, and ye shall receive" (John 16:24). The greatest gift is God's holy spirit (Luke 11:13).

Jesus teaches prayer is power. Prayer tightens connection with the divine mind so wisdom and strength may flow without interruption.

#### **"Jesus Prayed in a Solitary Place."**

**Mark 1:35**

Arising early, while dark, Jesus goes to a solitary place and prays. Yesterday was packed solid with activity. He taught in the synagogue, healed a demon-possessed man, healed Peter's mother-in-law. At even, they brought all the diseased and possessed. He healed many. After a long, exhausting day, his strength was depleted.

When they find Jesus, Peter tells him a crowd is waiting. Peter thinks this is a good way to follow yesterday's work. But Jesus, having talked with his Father in the early morning hours, knows God's will is to preach in the next town.

Jesus teaches prayer clears the vision, pointing what God would have us do. Prayer stays alert in a hard-pressed society. Prayer strengthens the spirit.

Prayer defines duty toward God. As busy as yesterday was, today finds Jesus attune to God's will for him.

### **In the Wilderness**

#### **Luke 5:17**

"He withdrew himself into the wilderness to pray."

We marvel at the Lord's humility. Although perfect, he does not feel, "I can handle this crowd myself." The more teaching and healing he does, the more he feels the need of communication with the Father.

We often feel pressed by duty, opportunities for service, by great needs around us, for the harvest is truly great. Do we neglect time to pray, thinking work must be done? Or do we, like the Master, crave for the solitary privacy to commune with and take counsel of the Father? Jesus teaches prayer should have first place; then the service will be charged with power and wisdom from above.

### **All Night in Prayer**

#### **Luke 6:12**

"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

Tomorrow he will choose his twelve apostles and preach the Sermon on the Mount. The fact he is weary does not alter him from wishing to spend the night alone with his Father. People come to be healed of their diseases. He heals them all.

Looking at his disciples (Luke 6:20), he delivers his sermon on attitudes of the sons of God. Think of all the wonderful things Jesus is accomplishing! He is able to do all this because of the wisdom and insight he received of the Father last night. Jesus here teaches that all problems and vexations of life are accompanied by prayer, we will receive strength to endure, his power flowing through us.

### **Come Apart and Rest**

Matthew 14:13-23.

It is about the time of the third Passover and the beginning of his last year of service. He and his disciples are extremely busy, amidst great crowds coming and going. Then, they receive the sad, fearful news of John's tragic death at the hands of Herod. Jesus beckons them to come apart awhile and rest with him. Taking their boat, they head toward the eastern shore of the lake. The crowd watches, runs around the head of the lake, and arrives there before Jesus. As Jesus and his apostles step off the boat, over 5000 people are waiting. Jesus' reaction is they are as sheep without a shepherd. He has compassion on them, spending the whole day instructing them. At eventide, he provides food for all.

### **The Disciples Join in Prayer**

#### **Luke 9:18**

"And it came to pass, as he was praying alone, his disciples joined him." Jesus is away from the multitudes, but his desire is to pray in his disciples' presence, to draw them into his intimate life of prayer. He is gathering his chicks under his wings to nurture them, by example drawing them into his life of devotion to God.

Jesus teaches the importance of joint prayers with fellow brethren. At every meeting we attend, at least two prayers are offered. These prayers should use language of the innermost self, flowing freely. Prayer, praise and testimony meetings are another way of enhancing fellowship in prayer: hearts overflowing with love to our heavenly Father; prayers for our help or for our brethren; prayers of praise, and thanksgiving.

### **An Altered Countenance**

#### **Luke 9:29**

Another all-night session. Jesus goes up to the mountain to pray. While praying, his countenance is altered. We see Jesus' need for higher ground, for fresh assurance in the course he is taking.

The subject of Jesus' prayer is his departure at Jerusalem (v.31,21-26).

Through the transfiguration vision, God is confirming Jesus' Messiahship and suffering as it had been foretold. Moses and Elijah indicate the great encouragement Jesus receives from the Law and the prophets.

While this is Jesus' unique experience, we, too, may see God's glory while praying. "To see thy power and thy glory, so I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (Psa. 63:2).

## **A Thankful Prayer**

### **Luke 10:21**

Jesus commissions 70 disciples to preach the gospel in places he expects to visit. They return with a joyful report.

Jesus' heart overflows with joy. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Jesus' prayer teaches that the Father's face is visible to him at all times. He is always conscious of the Father's.

Through his sacrifice, Jesus makes the same privilege available to us. Do we avail ourselves of this privilege? Do we talk to our Father on the job, when frustrated, when we make mistakes, while at home amidst the drudgery of housework, in school when none of the students seem to understand us? How about the high moments of our lives? Do we pat ourselves on the back, or do we give thanks to God, the source of our victories?

Jesus' prayers are a powerful incentive to us to likewise offer praise to God.

## **Teach Us To Pray**

### **Luke 11:1**

Jesus is praying. When he finishes, his disciples ask, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). They are praying men. But they conclude there is more to prayer than they had realized. This request delights our Lord! It shows Jesus that his prayer-life example has aroused them to probe deeper into prayer for results.

The first three phrases of the model prayer express adoration concerning God's nature, kingdom, and will; the next five concern man's daily temporal needs, our need of forgiveness, our need to forgive others, our defense against temptation together in the unity of the spirit.

The closing verse of chapter 16 says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Jesus wasn't hiding the cost of discipleship, nor minimizing the dangers and pitfalls in the world. God never guaranteed to keep us out of troubles, but he did promise to bring us through them. Sanctification is more than separation from the sinfulness of the world. It means being equipped with the Word of God and totally dedicated to its service.

Jesus prays they may be perfected in one. As each member progresses, they become more adaptable to the position God has allotted to them. Christian maturity

should lead to less friction in the Body. A well-oiled machine does not create heat. Rather, it smoothly engages other parts and fulfills its function as a composite part of the whole unit.

No two people are exactly alike. We may not see eye to eye. There may be some friction even among the fully consecrated. Pray for more of God's spirit to cool us down and help us perform better with other parts of the unit., and our deliverance from evil.

God is indeed Jesus' Father, his lifegiver. By teaching us to pray "Our Father," Jesus is inviting us to share his private life and enter his own relationship as sons of God. This is a staggering thought. In John 20:17, he refers to God as "my Father **AND YOUR FATHER.**"

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." Hebrew names are meaningful. They contain promises and hope in God. God's name was left untranslated, "JHVH." No human description can convey God's name. If we're faithful, we will understand God better and we will know his name.

"Hallowed" means sacred, taken from a word meaning "holiest," also translated "sanctuary" or "holy place."

The Most Holy of the Tabernacle was God's dwelling. Vines Dictionary says, "[Hallowed] is to make a person the opposite of common." Deep reverence should be in our hearts when God's name is uttered.

Jesus teaches us the most important considerations in approaching the Father with honor, glory, and will.

## **The Prayer at Bethany**

### **John 11**

The most climactic point in Jesus' life was the death of Lazarus (John 11). Until the little family at Bethany experienced a personal crisis. Lazarus grew deathly sick. Jesus knew, loved and ministered to this family. They had a good understanding of his gospel.

Knowing his healing powers, the sisters sent word, "He whom thou love is sick," hoping he will come without delay. In the past, no amount of fatigue kept Jesus from healing. This time, he waits two days.

We visualize Mary and Martha saying, "Surely he will come." But instead they witness their brother sinking into death.

Jesus says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (v. 4). These words do not mean that the people for this great miracle will admire him, rather, they are a solemn reminder that through his own death, he will be glorified.

Now he lifts his eyes to heaven and says, "Father, I thank thee thou hast heard me." This is a prayer of thanks, not a request. When did God hear Jesus? God heard him when he started to pray, a few days ago. Before coming to the tomb, he was praying in secret about the raising of Lazarus; what follows is an answer to that prayer.

"What shall I say? [Shall I say] 'Father, save me from this hour', but for this cause came I unto this hour. [This is what I will say], 'Father, glorify thy name.' Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, 'I . . . will glorify it again.'" (v. 27, 28) It is only as we shut out the earth's sounds our ears become trained to hear the word from above. then, Jesus had been the fountain of living waters, the light of the world, the Good Shepherd. Now he would be seen as "the resurrection and the life (v. 25)".

## **In the Upper Room**

### **Luke 2, John 13**

It is Thursday night. Jesus is gathered with his apostles in the upper room. Jesus directs a statement to Peter because of his special weakness, but all of them were in the same category: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31, 32). Each one gathered at our Lord's table will succumb to one or more of the following temptations: self-confidence, selfishness, jealousy, anger, resentment, weariness, disappointment, betrayal, desertion. Were it not for the fact that Jesus prays for Peter and the other apostles, Satan would succeed in sifting them away from the Truth.

Jesus watches his disciples closely and prays for them as he notices their weaknesses. As Peter's boastfulness and extreme self-confidence come forward, Jesus prays for him to overcome. As he notices Thomas's doubting spirit, Jesus speaks to God about him.

Jesus is the same today. As our advocate, "He is able...to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

This fills our hearts with love and gratitude. Watching our lives, Jesus allows weakness and failure to become stepping-stones to the celestial city.

Some parents work hard at preventing failure or protecting their children from the knowledge they have failed. They do this by lowering their standards or shifting the blame. This keeps the child unequipped for life.

Our Father knows failure hurts. But it can make a positive contribution to our lives of consecration. Failure teaches us to rely on God. Despite his slipping and stumbling, with the Lord's help Peter was able to rise again, regroup his faculties, and feed Jesus' lambs.

### **Gethsemane**

#### **Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 21**

It is Thursday night, after our Lord's Memorial and his prayer in John 17. Jesus takes his disciples to the garden of Gethsemane, a favorite place for prayer. He has no sleep this night, but he is used to this because of his habit of prayer.

It is difficult for us to understand the tremendous amount of stress and strain our Savior feels during these last hours of life on earth. The whole world depends on him. By his faithfulness, man's destiny will be determined eternal death or the opportunity for eternal life.

So great was Jesus' tension, a messenger was sent from heaven to strengthen him (Luke 21:43).

### **Calvary's Cross**

#### **Matthew 27, Luke 23, John 13**

Three prayers are uttered while writhing in agony. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Although this text is not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts, it does impart the true sentiments of Jesus' gospel. Stephen made a similar statement, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:16). Jesus' model prayer echoes the same sentiments, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The setting for Jesus' second prayer is as the daily evening sacrifice draws near. After a silence and darkness of three hours, we hear him cry to his Father, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46)

Shortly after this, we hear his last triumphant prayer, "It is finished. Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit" (John 19:30). All through his earthly ministry, Jesus was held in the hand of God. He felt the loving embrace of his Father always. There wasn't a single day that he was without the Father's smile. But, for a brief period on the cross his Father's face is turned away from him, enabling him to feel, and understand the sinner's condition. God's reproach breaks his heart.

And so, Jesus' ministry, which started out with prayer at his baptism, comes to an end with prayer.

Jesus used prayer in every emergency, every perplexity, great or small. When hard-pressed by work, he prayed. When hungry for fellowship, he prayed. He received counsel from above through prayer. If criticized, he prayed. If fatigued or wearied in spirit, he received his strength through prayer. There was no problem of life that prevailed over him, because of his unceasing prayers.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Does God Hear Prayers?**

Psalm 4:3

"But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him."

The godly are those who are faithful and devoted to God. David knew God would hear him when he called and would answer him. We too can be confident God listens to our prayers, and answers when we call on him. Sometimes, we think God will not hear us, because we have fallen short of his high standards for holy living. If we have trusted Christ for salvation, God has forgiven us, and he will listen to us. When you feel as though your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, remember

that as a believer you have been set apart by God that he loves you. He hears and answers, although his answers may not be what you expect. Look at your problems in the light of God's power instead of looking at God in the shadow of your problems.

Proverbs 15:29

"The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."

Proverbs 28:9

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

God does not listen to our prayers if we intend to go back to our sin as soon as we get off our knees. If we want to forsake our sin, and follow him, however, he willingly listens no matter how bad our sin has been. What closes his ears is not the depth of our sin, but our secret intention to do it again.

Isaiah 1:15

" And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

John 9:31

"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

1 John 5:14-15

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: [15] And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

The emphasis here is on God's will, not our will. When we communicate with God, we don't demand what we want; rather we discuss with him what *he* wants for us. If we align our prayers to his will, he will listen; and we can be certain, if he listens, he will give us a definite answer. Start praying with confidence!

The Bible leaves us in no doubt "Men ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

To persist in prayer, and not give up does not mean endless repetition, or painfully long prayer sessions. Always praying means keeping our requests constantly before God as we live for him day by day, believing he will answer. When we live by faith, we are not to give up. God may delay answering, but his delays always have good reasons. As we persist in prayer we grow in character, faith, and hope

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude at all times. This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing his presence within us, and determining to obey him fully. Then, we will find it natural to pray frequent, spontaneous, short prayers. A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer but should be an outgrowth of those times.

"In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6, R.S.V.).

To fail to pray is regarded as a sin; Samuel the prophet declared:

"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you"(1 Samuel 12:23).

The wheat harvest came near the end of the dry season during the months of May and June. Because rain rarely fell during this period, a great thunderstorm was considered a miraculous event. It was not a beneficial miracle, however, because rain during the wheat harvest could damage the crops and cause them to rot quickly. This unusual occurrence showed God's displeasure with Israel's demand for a king.

## **Two Men**

Jesus told about two men who went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One was a Pharisee -- a member of a leading religious sect of the day. The other was a tax collector. Since the Romans occupied the land of the Jews, we can imagine a Jew collecting taxes on behalf of the hated invaders was treated with contempt. So the parable portrays a member of the religious establishment and an outcast. But Jesus says the Pharisee prayed "with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes (i.e. 10% given to the religious authorities-the temple) of all that I get'. "Obviously this man thought he was doing a good job for God and expected to be commended.

"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' " (Luke 18:9-13, R.S.V.).

This man's circumstances had made him keenly conscious of a sense of personal failure. In that frame of mind he begged God to help him. Jesus tells us his prayer did far more good than the boasting of the Pharisee.

### **Old Testament Examples**

Elijah, for example, was "a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain: and it rained not in the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17).

What was the point of God responding to such a prayer? When we read through the narrative of 1 Kings 16:29 onwards we discover the people of Israel-God's witnesses-were in desperate need of reformation. The point of Elijah's prayer and God's response was to make the king and people realize only by submitting to God would they be able to survive. The prayer of faith was designed to bring healing from the sickness of sin, to convert sinners from the error of their ways.

Just as there had been a special demonstration of the power of God when Israel were brought out of Egypt under Moses, so during the period of Elijah and Elisha there was a time of miraculous activity to accompany the working of God's prophets. Elijah's overriding concern was God's will should be done, and his prayer was answered, because it accorded with God's will at that time. (There was, of course, another epoch of miraculous activity associated with the ministry of Christ and the apostles.)

Daniel's prayer, recorded in Daniel 9, is another example of prayer which was fully in tune with the will of God. From the beginning of the prayer we see how right was Daniel's attitude. At the time, Daniel was living in Babylon in exile with the Jews. The nation was suffering the consequences of failing to heed God's earlier warnings to serve Him faithfully. Daniel, praying on behalf of his people, accepts God is righteous and his people need forgiveness for their sins. This leads to his request in verses 16 and 17 that God should once more restore the fortunes of Jerusalem, which would mean the end of enforced exile.

Two points can be noted: firstly, anyone familiar with earlier writings of the Old Testament, and in particular the first five books of Moses, will realize phrase after phrase of Daniel's prayer echoes what has gone before. Daniel is praying as one who has filled his thinking with God's thinking -- and he has done this by regular reading of the books of the Bible that then existed.

Secondly, his prime petition-- his people should be forgiven and allowed to re-establish themselves and their worship in Jerusalem--was something Daniel knew God had promised He would carry out. Jeremiah, for example, had prophesied:

"For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it" (Jeremiah 30:31).

In addition, Daniel knew from Jeremiah 25:11-12 the period of captivity would last 70 years. Since the people were not taken into captivity all at once, he did not know exactly when the 70 years would end. But he knew approximately, as a result of which he fervently prayed that God's will should be done soon.

So Daniel prayed as a man who had humbled himself before God, who listened to God and became thoroughly familiar with what God had revealed in His Word and who prayed in harmony with what he knew to be the will of God. He was the sort of person referred to when God earlier declared:

"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).

### **Practical Consequences**

We have already seen to make our prayers effective, we need to think in harmony with the mind of God. Right thinking will have practical consequences. The first commandment is to love God; the second to love our neighbor. The second is the consequence of the first, and must result in practical concern for the welfare of others.

"Forgive us our sins," the Lord taught his disciples to pray. Indeed, without forgiveness of sins we cannot enjoy the relationship with God that enables us to address Him as "Our Father". We have to accept the practical consequence of asking God for forgiveness. Firstly we are told, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Following from this act of faith, we are no more "strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). That relationship with those who are now our brothers and sisters in the Lord makes demands upon us, and requires us to exercise our responsibilities as members of God's family. This in its turn requires us to show love, and compassion to all men, preaching the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ by word and deed.

The Lord emphasized these practical consequences when he added to the words "Forgive us our sins" the heart-searching confession, "for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (Luke 11:4, N.I.V.).

The Bible roundly condemns those who honor God with their lips, but have hearts far from Him. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Prayer *cannot* be effective if we are acting in ways that are patently inconsistent with the relationship we claim with God through our prayers

### **The Blessings of Prayer**

What blessings flow from the fellowship that is possible for those who seek the will of God through His Word and are united by their association with the person and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ! A study of the lives of great men in Bible times reveals how the practice of prayer was woven into the pattern of their lives. How wonderfully David, for example, was able to triumph over the turmoil of his life and achieves a state of calm and joyful assurance on the basis of his faith in the Lord. The Psalms, which he wrote, provide numerous examples of the power of prayer:

"O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in him" (Psalm 34:8).

The Lord God Himself challenges us to test for ourselves the benefits of that trust and obedience which is the basis of true worship:

"Prove me . . . saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10

An invitation is extended to each one of us, "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" may come to share the hope of the Gospel, as a result of which "the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Are you willing to pray the words of the Psalmist that follow?

"Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, Even thy salvation, according to thy word" (Psalm 119:41).

## Chapter 6

### Prayer of Forgiveness

Psalm 66:18

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:"

Our confession of sin must be continual because we continue to do wrong. But true confession requires us to listen to God and to want to stop doing what is wrong. David confessed his sin and prayed, "Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins." (Psalm 19:12-13). When we *refuse* to repent, or when we harbor and cherish certain sins, we place a wall between God and us. We may not be able to remember *every* sin we have ever committed, but our attitude should be one of confession and obedience.

Mark 11:25-26

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. [26] But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Jesus, our example for prayer, prayed, "Everything is possible for you, Yet not what I will, but what you will" Mark 14:36. Our own interests and desires often motivate our prayer. We like to hear we can have anything. But Jesus prayed with *God's* interests in mind. When we pray, we should express our desires, but want his will above ours. Check yourself to see if your prayers focus on your interests or God's.

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Confession is supposed to free us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. It should ease our consciences and lighten our cares. But some Christians do not understand how it works. They feel so guilty they confess the same sins over and over; then, they wonder if they might have forgotten something. Other Christians believe God forgives them when they confess, but if they died with unconfessed sins, they would be forever lost.

These Christians do not understand God *wants* to forgive us. He allowed his beloved Son to die just so he could offer us pardon. When we come to Christ, he forgives all the sins we have committed or will ever commit. We don't need to confess the sins of the past all over again, and we don't need to fear God will reject us, if we don't keep our slate perfectly clean. Of course, we should continue to confess our sins, but not because failure to do so will make us lose our salvation. Our relationship with Christ is secure. Instead, we should confess so we can enjoy maximum fellowship and joy with him.

True confession also involves a commitment not to continue in sin. We wouldn't be genuinely confessing our sins to God if we planned to commit them again and just wanted temporary forgiveness. We should also pray for strength to defeat temptation at the time we face it.

If God has forgiven us for our sins because of Christ's death, why must we confess our sins? In admitting our sins and receiving Christ's cleansing, we are: (1) agreeing with God our sin truly is sin and we are willing to turn from it, (2) ensuring we don't conceal our sins from him and consequently from ourselves, and (3) recognizing our tendency to sin and relying on his power to overcome it.

## **Forgiveness And Prayer**

### **Job 42:9**

"So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job."

What an interesting thing this is. God tells these friends, "There will be no pardon for you without Job's petition on your behalf. If you want to be received and forgiven, you must not only bring the sacrifices but also my servant Job must pray for you." What an instructive lesson this is on prayer. The significance of prayer is underscored in this passage, and it is so important God says unless Job prays, He will deal with the three friends "according to their folly" (Job 42:8).

How impoverished our lives and the lives of our friends and loved ones are simply because we think prayer is unimportant, and we do not bother to pray for one another. God emphasizes this here: "Your friends will not be accepted, Job, unless you pray for them." When Job prayed, they were indeed forgiven and pardoned.

What a beautiful picture of forgiveness here! Here is Job's chance, if he ever wanted it, to get even with these friends. When God sent them to him with their hats in their hands asking for pardon and asking for his prayers, how easy it would have been for him to have said, "Aha! I thought you'd come around! You were the ones who gave me all that trouble. You ran me down, you falsely accused me, you said all those evil things about me, and now I've got you where I want you. I'll let you sweat a little bit. I'm going to get even with you!" That is what many of us would have said, but it is obvious Job does not do that.

There is nothing more contrary to the Christian spirit than having an unforgiving heart, holding a grudge, refusing to speak to another Christian, or behaving coldly in relationships with each other. Nothing is more removed from the spirit of Christian forgiveness than that. It is a beautiful thing to see Job praying for his friends without a vestige of resentment or an attempt to get even on his part, but holding them up before God. God honors that prayer, forgives these men, and restores them to His grace.

When God invites us to pray for others, He is inviting us to participate in their forgiveness.

### **Other Bible Examples of People in Need of Forgiveness**

#### **Joseph (Genesis 50:15-21)**

His brothers to slave traders who brought him to Egypt and sold him to the captain of Pharaoh's guard had sold Joseph. It is quite an interesting story told in Genesis, chapters 37-50. Joseph eventually became ruler of Egypt next to Pharaoh. There came a severe famine to that part of the world, and Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy corn. They did not recognize Joseph, but Joseph recognized them. He had his whole family (70 persons) move to Egypt and took care of them. By and by their father Jacob died and with Pharaoh's permission was taken back to his homeland for burial. The brothers, knowing their father was dead thought Joseph might now get revenge on them. Read the story of their asking forgiveness and receiving it from Joseph in Genesis 50:15-21.

#### **Israel after making and worshipping a golden calf**

(Exodus 32). "The Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff necked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them and I will make you a great nation" (Exodus 32:9-10).

After going down from the mount of God and seeing the situation, verses 31-33 read:

"And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if you will forgive their sin, and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book that you have written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto you: behold, my Angel shall go before you: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made."

We see because of Moses' prayers, God did not wipe out the people. However, we see although he did this, the Lord did plague the people. Sometimes even though God forgives sin, the sins that have already been committed have set in motion a series of sufferings. Sometimes people are forgiven after living a very sinful life; God cleanses them, and clears their record so they are saved and can enter heaven, but here on earth they continue to suffer situations they themselves have created by their foolishness and sins. Sometimes suffering is in the form of broken homes, diseases that have resulted from sins and other situations. That does not mean, however, that God has not forgiven them nor that they cannot go to Heaven and escape hell.

**Nabal, a rich but a foolish man, who had insulted David and his men after they had done good to him (1 Samuel 25:4-31).**

Nabal was about to be killed by David and his soldiers. Nabal's good wife, Abigail, having been informed of their plans, took a gift of various foods, and went to meet David to ask for mercy for him. Read what she did in 1 Samuel 25:18-31 and what results she obtained.

**Israel, under the Old Testament arrangements:**

For various sins, specified animal sacrifices were to be brought to the tabernacle or temple. The priests would kill them, and burn them on the altar in a specified way, sprinkling their blood on the altar, and on the sinner. Throughout the chapters of Leviticus, these offerings were specific, and instructions given concerning them so the sinner could be forgiven. God forbade the eating of blood and said:

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

After the instructions God then said, "And it shall be forgiven him." See Leviticus 4:20-26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18, and others in the following chapters. Without forgiveness, God would hold their sins against them and they would be punished.

**All of us; everyone (Romans 3:23; 6:23).**

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **How To Be Forgiven**

We must go to God through Jesus Christ. In Acts 4:12 we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Then in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all." Then in Hebrews 7:24, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." In John 6:37b, Jesus said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out."

Acknowledge your sins to God, sorrow over them and turn from them. This is called repentance. Jesus said, "Except you repent you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Invite Jesus Christ to come into your life. Jesus said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him...." Read God's promise in Saint John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17). "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that does not believe shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

### **What Will Be the Results?**

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

**The Lord's Prayer** (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4).

One part of the Lord's prayer says forgive us as we forgive. Jesus then added, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. " Therefore if we want God to forgive us, we must also be willing to forgive others for wrongs they have done against us.

***Psalm 32:1:***

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."  
Stephen Prays for his Accusers

**“Lay not this sin to their charge”.** And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1. Philip's evangelistic tour (Acts 8:4-40)
2. Paul's (Saul's) conversion (Acts 9:1-30)
3. Peter's missionary tour (Acts 9:32-11:18)
4. The church in Antioch in Syria founded (Acts 11:19-26)

Then said Jesus, Father, **forgive them**; for they **know not** what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting him to death Jewish leaders, Roman politicians and soldiers, by standers and God answered that prayer by opening up the way of salvation even to Jesus' murderers. The Roman centurion and soldiers who witnessed the crucifixion said, "Surely he was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). Soon many priests were converted to the Christian faith (Acts 6:7).

Because we are all sinners, we all played a part in putting Jesus to death. The gospel, the Good News is that God is gracious. He will forgive us and give us new life through his Son.

**Lay** a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast **not** given him warning, he shall die in his **sin**, and his righteousness which he hath done shall **not** be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Prayer of Praise**

2 Chron. 20:21-22

" And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endures for ever.

"[22] And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushment against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."

Psalm 22:3

"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of Israel."

Psalm 30:12

"To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."

Psalm 34:1

" A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Bimetallic; who drove him away, and he departed.

I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Psalm 47:6

"Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises."

Psalm 63:4

"Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

Psalm 95:6

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker."

Psalm 96:5

"For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens."

Psalm 105:3

"Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord."

As Christians, we praise God. We do so in spoken word, in song, and in other worship. Do we understand what it means to praise God? Do we know what we are doing when we offer "the sacrifice of praise"?

In the Old Testament, there are different Hebrew words for “praise”. These different words indicate different nuances of meaning. There are at least five concepts behind the words for praise: thanksgiving, joy or rejoicing, adoration or worship, blessing and boasting. When we praise God, we do these things.

1) When we praise God we give thanks. The Bible is filled with the language of gratitude. Psalm 106:1\_ “Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endures for ever.” Hebrews 13:15 teaches the relationship between thanksgiving and praise: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” Undoubtedly, praise involves thanksgiving.

2) Praise also involves joy. Psalm 98:4 declares, “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.” In Luke 19:37 we see the two concepts used to extol Jesus in the triumphal entry. The text says, “...the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.” When the Christian appropriately praises the Lord, he does so with joy in his heart.

3) The concept of praise means we also love. We can see the love for God of Paul and Silas as they sang praises in the jail at Philippi ( Acts 16:25). The man at the gate called Beautiful no doubt was filled with love for God when he was healed. The text says, “And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.” ( Acts 3:8). Love and praise go hand in hand.

4) Blessing is also involved in praise. Psalm 145 is a song of praise. It declares: “Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever” (145:2). “All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee” (145:10). “My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever” (145:21). When we praise God, we bless God as well.

When we praise God we boast of His greatness. The Psalmist writes, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever” ( Psalm 44:8). Consider Paul's words in Romans 11:33 “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Here is a praise of exclamation that boasts of God's greatness. God is truly worthy of our boasting. Jeremiah wrote by inspiration, “But let him that glorieth,

glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24).

### **Examples of Using The Scripture for praise:**

1 Chron. 16:25-26

"For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. [26] For all the gods of the people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens."

Father, I praise you. You have blessed our land. I praise you. You have promised to be my God. You have given me directions to live by. when I fail to follow your plan, you lead me gently back into your Ways.

2 Chron. 7:14

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Father, I thank you for promising to hear my prayers, if I will humble myself and pray. If I seek your face, and I choose to turn from my wicked ways, hear my prayers and lead me where you would have me to go. Hear your people as you have promised!

1 John 1:9

Father, I praise you and thank you for this promise. I confess my sins to you and thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for cleansing me and making me pure in your sight. How precious is your love, Lord Jesus, that you would carry my sins that I may be so blessed by the Father.

James 5:16

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Oh, Father, I confess my sins . I have asked others to hold me accountable, and to pray for me regarding this sin. Please heal me now! I thank you in advance for the things you are going to do in my life, and I pray you will get all the glory and the honor.

We are confident he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. 1 John 5:14

Father, I thank you that you have promised to hear and answer our prayers. Right now I come to you with my request I thank you in advance for your answer to this prayer. I desire to be in your will, and know if the answer is not what I am expecting, then my will was not aligned with yours. I pray for you to open my heart and mind , that I may be totally in your will!

The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers.

1 Peter 3:12

Father, I thank you for the promise to hear my prayers. I thank you that I don't have to pray never knowing if you have heard me or not. Help me to be obedient to you, and to be a humble servant. May my life be a testimony of your love and power.

Praising God is an important part of the faithful Christian's life. Let's resolve to know what we are doing when we offer praise to God. It will both improve our worship and our spiritual lives.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Prayer of Thanks**

Ephes. 5:20

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

When you feel down, you may find it difficult to give thanks. Take heart in all things God works for our good if we love him and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). Thank God, not for your problems, but for the strength he is building in you through the difficult experiences of your life. You can be sure God's perfect love will see you through.

1 Thes. 5:18

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Paul was not teaching we should thank God *for* everything that happens to us, but *in* everything. Evil does not come from God, so we should not thank him for it. But when evil strikes, we can still be thankful for God's presence, and for the good that he will accomplish through the distress.

Psalms 26:7 "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works."

Psalms 50:14 "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High."

Psalms 69:30 " I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving."

Psalms 95:2 "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

Psalms 100:4 "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, [and] bless his name."

Psalms 107:22 "And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing."

Psalms 116:17 "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD."

Psalms 147:7 "Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God."

2 Corinthians 4:15 "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

2 Corinthians 9:11 "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

Philippians 4:6 "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Colossians 2:7 "Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Receiving Christ as Lord of your life is the beginning of a life with Christ. You must continue to follow his leadership by being rooted, built up, and strengthened in the faith. Christ wants to guide you and help you with your daily problems. You can live for Christ by (1) committing your life and submitting your will to him (Romans 12:1-2); (2) seeking to learn from him, his life, and his teachings (Col. 3:16); and (3) recognizing the Holy Spirit's power in you (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22).

**2:7** " Paul uses the illustration of our being rooted in Christ. Just as plants draw nourishment from the soil through their roots, so we draw our life-giving strength from Christ. The more we draw our strength from him, the less we will be fooled by those who falsely claim to have life's answers. If Christ is our strength, we will be free from human regulations."

Colossians 4:2 "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Have you ever grown tired of praying for something or someone? Paul says we should "devote" ourselves to prayer and be "watchful" in prayer. Our persistence is an expression of our faith God answers our prayers. Faith shouldn't die if the answers come slowly, for the delay may be God's way of working his will in our lives. When you feel tired of praying, know God is present, always listening, always answering, maybe not in ways you had hoped, but in ways he knows are best.

1 Timothy 4:4 "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."

In opposition to the false teachers, Paul affirmed everything God created is good (see Genesis 1 ). We should ask for God's blessing on his created gifts that give us pleasure and thank him for them. This doesn't mean that we should abuse what

God has made (for example, gluttony abuses God's gift of good food, lust abuses God's gift of love, and murder abuses God's gift of life). Instead of abusing, we should enjoy these gifts by using them to serve, and honor God. Have you thanked God for the good gifts he has given? Are you using the gifts in ways pleasing to you *and* to God?

Revelation 7:12 "Saying, Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

1 Thessalonians 5:18 " In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

It might be easy to call these days "uncertain times," especially when we focus on the temporal events and concerns that bombard us each day. God is at work in our world, and if we take the time to "be still" and look for Him, we can see that handiwork.

Our prayer is each one might know the reality of a living Savior, we might have the eyes to see where He is at work in our world, and we might have the courage to get involved where we see Him working.

## Chapter 9

### Prayer of Asking

Psalm 5:3

"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

Psalm 19:14

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

Psalm 86:6

"Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications."

Mark 11:24

"Therefore I say unto you, What things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Matthew 19:26

"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them. With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Luke 11:9

"And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Ephes. 6:18

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

James 5:16

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

1 John 3:22

" And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

1 John 5:14-16

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: [15] And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. [16] If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matthew 21:22

We have often heard people use this Scripture to prove that the "good" thing they received was due to their faith in praying for it, whether it was a singer or movie star gaining the fame they so desired, an athlete whose team was victorious in a game, someone who won the lottery, or a person whose disease was healed. Is this true, that whatever we pray for, having enough faith, we will receive? How do we explain the fact the Apostle Paul prayed three times for the evil spirit to stop buffering him, but he did not receive his request. He suffered this "thorn in the flesh" throughout his lifetime? (2 Cor. 12:7-8; Acts 9:18; Gal. 4:15)

Or how do we explain the fact Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father the night before he was crucified that *"if it be possible, let this cup [shame of dying as a blasphemer against God] pass from me"* (Matt. 26:39) but he did not receive his request, as it states in Isaiah 53:12, *"he was numbered with the transgressors?"*

### **The Purpose of Prayer**

Prayer is a general term for a variety of petitions, whether a request, a hymn, or an expression of thanksgiving and praise. One poet has expressed it, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." In James 4:8 it encourages all to *"draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."*

However, there is a **special** privilege of prayer during the present Gospel Age, beginning at Pentecost, that has been given to all who have made a full consecration of their lives to God. Those who have become a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17) have an advocate in Christ Jesus. As their advocate, Christ covers their imperfection with the robe of his own righteousness and presents them justified [made right] to the Father. Then these "new creatures" are given the special privilege of prayer, that they may "come **boldly** unto the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

### **Should We Pray For Anything We Want?**

Christians have received the privilege to come boldly to God in prayer. But does this give those who are in a covenant relationship through Christ license to pray for **anything**? Apostle James teaches we cannot when he says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James

4:3). The word "lusts" in this verse signifies desires. We are not to ask God to gratify our fleshly desires. God will not answer any petition that would not be for the spiritual good of His children.

We should not tell the Lord what we would like to have Him do for us; He knows best what we need. Our prayers should be along higher lines than these. We should strive to be thankful for whatever His providence may give us, whether much or little. He knows what we have need of along earthly lines.

Jesus did not pray to God in a mandatory fashion. With his petitions, he said, "*Not my will, but thine, be done.*" This prayer of Jesus indicates he had no will of his own; he had given up his will and desires to have God's will done. His was a prayer of full submission. It did not mean Jesus did not pray in faith, nor that he would not get what he desired. It meant that he desired to learn the Father's will; and he learned the Father willed that he should drink the cup of suffering to the very dregs.

### **For what should we pray?**

Matthew 7:7-11 states, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give **good things** to them that ask him?"

These Scriptures are often misunderstood to mean God is happy and willing to give us **anything** we ask for. But it says God will give **good things** to his children who ask. What are the good things we should pray for? We should first ask: What do "new creatures" in Christ need? We are told in Luke 11:13, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

New creatures are on trial for the new nature, for glory, honor, and immortality. And this reward is promised them only if they are found worthy unto death. The terms upon which new creatures enter into spiritual relationship with God are they shall mortify [deaden] the earthly impulses, and seek to have the spiritual impulses quickened [made alive]. (Romans 8:10-14) So what consecrated Christians especially need to strengthen them is the holy spirit of God.

God's plan is that his children should walk by faith and not by sight. Therefore, we should not only not ask for anything unauthorized by His Word, but as we grow spiritually, our petitions will be primarily for spiritual favors, growth in love, patience, the knowledge of His plan, etc. And even in asking for these, we should not specify how they are to come. We should look for the answers to our prayer in natural rather than supernatural way, since God's usual method is to use supernatural means only where the natural means are inadequate.

### **Answer to Prayer Conditional**

John 15:7, "**If ye abide in me and my words abide in you**, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." This is a conditional promise, "If ye abide in me."

In other words, prayers made according to God's will shall be answered, but those contrary to His will shall remain unanswered. To abide in God means we have entered into, and remain in spiritual relationship to God as a member of Christ's body, the Church. And to have His words abide in us implies we have a knowledge of God's Word.

This requires study of God's Word so we may know for what to pray. It is only after the Christian has come to this position he may continue to make his request, nothing doubting. Very likely we will then find our requests will be more for spiritual increase instead of earthly increase.

The essence of prayer is not so much the words on our lips but the attitude of our hearts.

### **Prayer and Asking God for What We Desire**

- Asking God for what we long for is an important part of prayer
- Jesus encourages us to ask of God with total confidence.
- What does it mean when we do not get what we have asked God for in prayer?
- We are to trust in God's goodness not our praying.
- Prayer is not a "mechanism," it is a relationship.
- God is not a vending machine; God is our loving parent and faithful friend.
- The God of whom we ask in prayer is not a royal genie who grants our wishes but a suffering savior who dies to save us.

### **Prayer and Hurt and Anger**

- Because God is our loving parent and faithful friend, we can say anything and everything to God.

- In pouring out our heart and soul to God we also pour out our anger, sadness, and hurt.
- When we pour out our negative emotions to God, we must also listen and pay attention to them.
- Looking at what hurts us is the first step toward what can heal us.
- As we recognize our needs and hurts we come to know ourselves more truly and to recognize the needs and hurts of others.

### **Prayer and Submission to God's Will**

- In his last mortal hours Jesus shows us how to pour out our hearts to God and then leave things in God's hands.
- Jesus prays that he might be spared his suffering, but his final prayer is that God's will, not his will, be done.
- Praying "your will, not mine, be done," is a hard prayer because we do not know if God's will suits our wishes, but we trust it suits our welfare.
  - Praying "your will, not mine, be done," opens us to transformation because only God's intentions, not our desires, will transform us.
- Jesus' wish was to avoid the pain. God's will is resurrection!

## Chapter 10

### When Praying, Listen

1 Kings 19:12

"And after the earthquake came a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

Elijah knew the sound of gentle whisper was God's voice. He realized God doesn't reveal himself only in powerful, miraculous ways. To look for God only in something big (rallies, churches, conferences, highly visible leaders) may be to miss him because he is often found gently whispering in the quietness of a humbled heart. Are you listening for God? Step back from the noise and activity of your busy life, and listen humbly and quietly for his guidance. It may come when you least expect it.

Psalm 4:3

"Stand in awe, and sin, not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah."

The godly are those who are faithful and devoted to God. David knew that God would hear him, when he called, and would answer him. We too can be confident God listens to our prayers and answers when we call on him. Sometimes, we think that God will not hear us because we have fallen short of his high standards for holy living. If we have trusted Christ for salvation, God has forgiven us, and he will listen to us. When you feel as though your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, remember as a believer you have been set apart by God, and he loves you. He hears and answers, although his answers may not be what you expect. Look at your problems in the light of God's power instead of looking at God in the shadow of your problems.

Hebrews 10:19

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Hebrews 12:25

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

## **Hearing God's Voice Through His Word**

In his book *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer says, "God has spoken to man, and the Bible is His Word, given to us to make us wise unto salvation."

The Bible itself declares, John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"

2 Tim. 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

The Bible is God's Word! Can we rely on it? The evidence of history, archaeology, fulfilled prophecy and personal testimony over thousands of years is overwhelmingly the Bible. It is, indeed, God's Word. Do you want to hear God's voice? Then read the Bible. Find a good daily reading plan, and stick to it.

## **Hearing God's Voice through Prayer**

God loves to hear us talk to Him, and it's in those moments we prepare ourselves to hear the voice of God. Prayer is like saying, "Hello, God, it's me. I believe You created me, and You know way more about how I should live my life than I do. I'd like to get to know You better. Here's what's going on in my life, and I'd sure like Your thoughts on how to handle it. Would You please speak to me about this today?"

In an ordinary conversation, we speak, then listen for the response of the other person. It's the same with God! Once we've prepared our hearts to listen through prayer, we're more likely to hear the voice of God. Does He speak to us through an audible voice? Some claim He does, but usually that's not the case. We may not actually "hear" the voice of God, but He speaks to us in many ways. Here are some of them:

God speaks through His Word.

God speaks through our thoughts.

God speaks through conversations with others.

God speaks through circumstances.

I have found most of the time when an idea comes to us we would like to pursue, and it does not bring harm to ourselves or others, we may wonder if this plan is God's will. Most of the things we desire to accomplish, the Lord will allow us to pursue and bless us. Sometimes, when it would be bad for us or others, there is something like an inner alarm that says, maybe you better rethink this. In this case, it might be an idea to not pursue.

### ***Hearing God's Voice through Jesus***

The Bible also tells us

Jesus is God in the flesh. Therefore, if you want to hear the voice of God, you must study, and know the teachings of Jesus. Here's how John describes Him: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life." (1 John 1:1). You must also have a personal relationship with Jesus. Have you ever tried to carry on a conversation of any depth with a person you did not know? It doesn't usually go very far.

Shortly before He was crucified, Jesus met with His disciples to reassure them of what would happen after He was gone. He promised them a helper: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit, then, is the fulfillment of the way we hear God's voice!

### ***Hearing God's Voice with the Help of the Holy Spirit***

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26). The second chapter of Acts describes the events that occurred on the day of Pentecost, after Jesus ascended into Heaven. Verse 3 says, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, the Counselor promised by Jesus. This unique aspect of God's personality did not come to them as someone they could see and touch, but rather He came to live inside them. That same Spirit is available to you and me today. Are you a Christian? If so, you already have the Holy Spirit available to you. Ask God for a fresh filling everyday, and He will prepare your heart to hear God's voice. His Spirit, that still, small voice inside you, is the One who will remind you of what God said, and help you recognize God's opportunities in your life.

### **Hearing God's Voice - Conclusion of the Matter**

So we have the Bible, prayer, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and our own hearts to help us in hearing God's voice. Do you want to hear God's voice? That is the final question, for God responds to willing hearts. In the book of Revelation, we read: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. God will never force you to obey Him, but waits for your willing response to His call. Are you hearing His voice right now? Don't let your final answer be the wrong one.

### **“He who is of God hears God's words;” (John 8:47)**

Jesus cries out seven times to the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The Holy Spirit is speaking to God’s people. For those who listen and obey, they are about to move forward into the greatest outpouring of God’s Spirit that the world has ever known.

This is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward." (Jeremiah 7:23-24 NKJV

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Leaning has the sense of putting your whole weight on something, resting on, and trusting in that person or thing. When we have an important decision to make, we sometimes feel we can't trust anyone, not even God. But God knows what is best for us. He is a better judge of what we want than even we are! We must trust him completely in every choice we make. We should not omit careful thinking or belittle our God-given ability to reason; but we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must not be wise in our own eyes. We should always be willing to listen to and be corrected by God's Word and wise counselors. Bring your decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as your guide; and then follow God's leading. He will make your paths straight by both guiding and protecting you.

To receive God's guidance, said Solomon, we must acknowledge God in all our ways. This means turning every area of life over to him. About a thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth (Matthew 6:33). Look at your values and priorities. What is important to you? In what areas have you not acknowledged him? What is his advice? In many areas of your life you may already acknowledge

God, but it is in the areas where you attempt to restrict or ignore his influence that will cause you grief. Make him a vital part of everything you do; then he will guide you because you will be working to accomplish his purpose.

## Chapter 11

### **Praying the Great Commission With Confirmation**

1 Samuel 23:2-4

"Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. [3] And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? [4] Then David enquired of the Lord yet again. And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand."

Judges 6:37-39

"Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. [38] And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. [39] And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew."

Acts 9:8

"And I said, what shall I do, LORD? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do

Mark 16:16-20

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. [17] And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; [18] They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. [19] So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. [20] And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

This evangelist passes over other appearances of Christ, recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to the most solemn; one appointed before his death, and after his resurrection. All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith, will worship him. Yet the faith of the sincere may be very weak and wavering. But Christ gave such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as made their faith to triumph over doubts. He now solemnly commissioned the apostles and his ministers to go forth among

### **Christ commissions His Disciples**

Matthew 28:16-19

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. [17] And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [19] Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

Matthew 28:20

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The salvation they were to preach is a common salvation; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit; all are welcome to Christ Jesus. Christianity is the religion of a sinner who applies for salvation from deserved wrath and from sin; he applies to the mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, but one God, in all his ordinances and commandments.

Baptism is an outward sign of inward washing, or sanctification of the Spirit, which seals and evidences the believer's justification. Let us examine ourselves, whether we really possess the inward and spiritual grace of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, by which those who were the children of wrath become the children of God. Believers shall have the constant presence of their Lord always; all days, every day. There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, in that day, that hour, they would be undone. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, but never a God at a distance. To these precious words Amen is added. Even so, Lord Jesus, be thou with us and all thy people; cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.



## Chapter 12

### Ways To Pray

1 Kings 8:54

"And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven."

1 Kings 8:35-48

" When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: [36] Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance. [37] If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; [38] What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: [39] Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) [40] That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. [41] Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; [42] (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; [43] Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calls to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have built, is called by thy name. [44] If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: [45] Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. [46] If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy,

so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; [47] Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; [48] And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name."

Psalm 5:3

"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

Some Things to Consider in Prayer:

1. Talk to God as you would an intimately close friend.
2. Give **thanks** for things in your life and in the world that are going well.
3. Ask for God's involvement in the lives of **other** people who need God's healing touch.
4. Ask God how **you** might be able to make a difference; i.e. to let God work through you.
5. Boldly ask for **forgiveness** for doing what you shouldn't do and for failing to do what you should. Accept God's of pardon and ask God to help you repent and your life toward healthier ways of living.
6. Ask for God's assistance in **your own** life and circumstances.
7. **Thank** God for spending this time with you.

### The Peace Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy;

**For Others Lord:**

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying we are born to eternal life

### **Scripture Reasons for Prayer:**

1. "Lord, show Your glory over all the earth."

• *"O God c let Your glory be over all the earth."* Psalm 108:5

• *"Be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told."* Habakkuk 1:5

This is a moment for God to do something no diplomat, no world leader, no army could possibly do\so all will know "the Lord He is God."

2. "Lord, use these anxious and uncertain times to bring many to Christ."

• *"Pray c that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored."* II Thessalonians 3:1

• *"May God be gracious to us and bless us c that Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among the nations."* Psalm 67:1,2

God can use this fearful time to reach the hearts of many\in Iraq, in America, across the Middle East, among the young men and women of the military.

3. "Lord, guide our leaders to be instruments of Your will on earth."

• *"I urge c that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone\for kings and all those in authority."* 1 Timothy 2:1,2

Authority transcends political labels and issues\it is a spiritual responsibility!

4. "Lord, protect the innocent."

• *"Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble c "* Psalm 41:1

• *"A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling."* Psalm 68:5

A believer's responsibility to "honor the king" (I Peter 2:17) and to pray for those in need.

In the violence of war, of oppression, of terrorism, only God can protect the innocent\innocent citizens, innocent victims, innocent combatants.

5. "Lord, use human authorities to bring punishment on evildoers."

• *"The governing authorities c are God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the evildoer."* Romans 13:1,4

• *"It is God who judges; He brings down one, He exalts another."* Psalm 75:7

Ultimately it is God Himself, sometimes using human instruments, who removes those He does not want in authority any longer. "He brings princes to naught." (Isaiah 40:23)

6. "Lord have Your way and Your will in the lives of our enemies."

- *"Pray for those who mistreat you."* Luke 6:27

Jesus has charged us to represent even our enemies before His Throne of Grace.

7. "Lord make a way for people to live in the dignity and freedom that goes with being made in Your image."

- *"Live as free men c "* I Peter 2:16

- *"Weep and wail, because of the misery that is coming upon you c you who have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men c "* James 5:1,5,6

- *"Act justly c love mercy c walk humbly with your God."* Micah 6:8

Every person on this planet is "God's workmanship" (Ephesians 2:10), worthy of the dignity and respect a "God's image" person should have.

8. "Lord, help Your people model peace in these troubled times, pointing the people around them to Jesus\at a time when hearts are soft."

- *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm, and secure."* Hebrews 6:19

- *"Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."* John 4:35

This uncertain time is a life-saving moment\when those who belong to Jesus have an unusual window to introduce Him to those who don't. But the window may not be open for long.

9. "Lord, use world events to open many doors that have been closed to Your gospel."

*"The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm."* Nahum 1:3

- *"Pray that God may open a door for our message c "* Colossians 4:3

God's plan is much larger than disarmament, political change, or military victory.

It's about getting the Good News of His Son to hearts and places it has never gone!

10. "Lord, bring peace out of all that's happening."

- "That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Timothy 2:2

God has told us that the result He desires in answer to our prayers for our leaders is a climate where peace and righteousness can flourish.

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

## Chapter 13

### Waiting Or Taking Action

Psalm 27:14

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

David knew from experience what it meant to wait for the Lord. He had been anointed king at age 16, but didn't become king until he was 30. During the interim, jealous King Saul chased him through the desert. David had to wait on God for the fulfillment of his promise to reign. Later, after becoming king, he was chased by his rebellious son, Absalom.

Waiting for God is not easy. Often, it seems that he isn't answering our prayers or doesn't understand the urgency of our situation. That kind of thinking implies God is not in control or is not fair. God is the worth waiting. Lamentations 3:24-26 calls us to hope in, and wait for the Lord because often God uses waiting to refresh, renew, and teach us. Make good use of your waiting times by discovering what God may be trying to teach you in them.

Psalm 37:9

"For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth."

Anger and worry (fretting) are two very destructive emotions. They reveal a lack of faith God loves us and is in control. We should not worry; instead, we should trust in God, giving ourselves to him for his use and safekeeping. When you dwell on your problems, you will become anxious and angry. If you concentrate on God and his goodness, you will find peace. Where do you focus your attention?

Psalm 40:1

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

Waiting for God to help us is not easy, but David received four benefits from waiting: God (1) lifted him out of his despair, (2) set his feet on a rock, (3) gave

him a firm place to stand, and (4) put a new song of praise in his mouth. Often blessings cannot be received unless we go through the trial of waiting.

Psalm 62:5

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

David expressed his feelings to God and then reaffirmed his faith. Prayer can release our tensions in times of emotional stress. Trusting God to be our rock, salvation, and fortress (Psalm 62:2) will change our entire outlook on life. No longer must we be held captive by resentment toward others when they hurt us. When we are resting in God's strength, nothing can shake us

Daniel 10:3

"I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

Daniel refrained from eating choice foods, and using lotions because these were signs of feasting and rejoicing

Daniel 10:12-13

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. [13] But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

Although God sent a messenger to Daniel, a powerful spiritual being ("prince of the Persian kingdom") detained the messenger for three weeks. Daniel faithfully continued praying and fasting, and God's messenger eventually arrived, assisted by Michael, the archangel. Answers to our prayers may be hindered by unseen obstacles. Don't expect God's answers to come too easily or too quickly. Prayer may be challenged by evil forces, so pray fervently and pray earnestly. Then expect God to answer at the right time.

Neh. 4:9

"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

Nehemiah constantly combined prayer with preparation and planning. His people trusted God, and at the same time kept vigilant watch over what had been entrusted

to them. Too often we pray without looking for what God wants us to do. We show God we are serious when we combine prayer with thought, preparation, and effort.

### **Depend on the Holy Spirit.**

In prayer, you should look to the Holy Spirit to help you to pray effectively. He can give you the right words with which you can pray effectively. Its very good to ask the Holy Spirit to help you to pray. Talk to the Holy Spirit as a person, and ask Him to help you to come to the Father in Jesus' name.

Spend at least part of your time seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The more filled you are with the Spirit, the more effective will be your whole life with God.

Psalm 25:3

"Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause."

(Those who do not wait are transgressing without cause. We run out of patience, and therefore lose trust in Him. Anything that is not of faith is sin.)

Psalms 25:5

"Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day."

Our waiting starts when we arise and ends when we go to sleep. We are waiting to be lead and taught. Instruction means correction. When we encounter attributes in others we do not like, it is to show us what we are like. Not waiting results in not seeing.

Psalm 25:21

"Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee."

Integrity is a "united heart," a heart with one Lord.

Psalm 27:14

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Wherever we are in the process of our salvation, waiting is our task. He will not fail to teach us.

Psalms 37:7

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

If ones we know seem to prosper in their own way, do not be concerned. The end of each matter takes time. The fool is "prosperous." Prosperity does not refer merely to money, but to "happiness," an elusive thing which is lost when sought. We do not "try Jesus" to be happy. Jesus is our Lord, not our hobby. He changes us radically. Radical change does not make one "happy." Radical change causes you to reject YOUR OWN WAY.

We must cease performing and start RESTING. Resting and waiting go together. If we are not resting, we can not wait. The Lord provided a remedy for the sins of man BEFORE he created man. This should make us to rest in Him. He provides before the need exists.

Psalm 37:9" For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth."

Psalm 37:34 "Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it."

Psalm 52:9 "I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints."

Psalm 62:5 "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

Psalm 69:3 "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God."

Psalms 104:27 "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season."

Psalm 106:13 "They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel:"

Psalm 130:5 "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."

Psalm 130:6 "My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

Proverbs 20:22 "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee."

Isaiah 8:17 "And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him."

Isaiah 25:9 "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Isaiah 26:8 "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee."

Isaiah 30:18 "And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him."

Isaiah 33:2 "O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble."

Isaiah 40:31 "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Isaiah 59:9 "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness."

Isaiah 64:4 "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waits for him."

Jeremiah 14:22 "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things."

Lamentations 3:25 "The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."

Lamentations 3:26 "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."

Hosea 12:6 "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."

Micah 7:7 "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."

Zephaniah 3:8 "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy."

Zechariah 11:11 "And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD."

Romans 8:25 "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Romans 12:7 "Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;"

2 Thessalonians 3:5 "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

Rather than rushing in to God's presence, and saying many things, it is good many times to quiet your mind, and wait in God's presence so you can feel God's heart, and pray the things the Holy Spirit shows you to pray. We should realize learning to listen to God is an important part of prayer.

We are told to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18). It is the Spirit who is to lead us in the kind of prayer we offer to God. He gives us the power to pray.

## Chapter 14

### **The Prayer of Jesus for Himself (John17:1-5)**

There is one word that dominates Jesus' prayer for Himself in verses 1-5—**glory**. It occurs in some form five times in these verses. Initially, it seems unfitting for Jesus to pray He might receive glory for Himself. Looking more closely, we find there are several observations concerning this request for glory, which put the matter in a different light.

**(1) Jesus requested He be glorified in order to bring further glory to the Father.** Jesus' petition was not to receive glory independently from the Father, but to be glorified to the praise of the Father. "... Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee" ( b). "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, ..." Satan wanted to usurp God's position and glory. He wanted to receive glory independently of God. Jesus prayed for glorification in order to exalt the Father.

**(2) Jesus requested the glory which rightfully belonged to Him.** "And now glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was". When the second person of the Godhead left heaven to become God incarnate, He temporarily set aside His glory. This '*kenosis*' was illustrated by the washing of the disciples' feet in . Our Lord did not lay aside any of His deity, but rather added perfect humanity to His deity. When the work of the cross was completed the glory which was momentarily laid aside was given back to Him. This, in part, is that which Jesus requested in His prayer. **Christ's glory was earned at the price of the cross.** In addition to the restoration of the glory which our Lord possessed prior to His incarnation, there is additional glory which was earned by His earthly life and ministry. He had glorified the Father by His earthly life of obedience and submission. He was glorified, along with the Father in the salvation of men by His work on the cross. It is because of Christ's willingness to set aside the glory that was rightfully His in order to save sinful men, the Father gave Him even greater glory.

¶ Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

What a beautiful commentary these verses in Philippians chapter two provide on the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed to be glorified so the Father

would receive glory. Jesus received the glory that was already His, but because of His work on the cross, was given an even greater glory.

### **Jesus Prays for His Disciples**

- a. The Bible is filled with great prayers. We are impressed with Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8), Abraham's prayer (Genesis 18), and Moses' prayer (Exodus 32), but this prayer is by far the greatest recorded in the Bible.
- b. "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God himself." A person's innermost being is revealed by genuine prayer. This is an unique opportunity to see the nature and heart of Jesus. In this prayer, Jesus will touch on many of themes developed in this gospel: *glory, glorify, sent, believe, world, love.*

**John 17:9-26** [9] 'I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. [10] All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.'

What did Jesus mean when he said "glory has come to me through them"? God's glory is the revelation of his character and presence. The lives of Jesus' disciples reveal his character, and he is present to the world through them. Does your life reveal Jesus' character and presence?

[11] "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name -- the name you gave me -- so that they may be one as we are one."

Jesus was asking that the disciples be united in harmony and love as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united the strongest of all unions. (See the note on § John 17:21-23.)

[12] " While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled."

Judas was the "one doomed to destruction," who was lost because he betrayed Jesus (see Psalm 41:9)

[13] "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them."

Joy is a common theme in Christ's teachings. He wants us to be joyful (see John 15:11; John 16:24, 33). The key to immeasurable joy is living in intimate contact with Christ, the source of all joy. When we do, we will experience God's special care and protection and see the victory God brings even when defeat seems certain.

[14] "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world."

The world hates Christians because Christians' values differ from the world's. Because Christ's followers don't cooperate with the world by joining in their sin, they are living accusations against the world's immorality. The world follows Satan's agenda, and Satan is the avowed enemy of Jesus and his people.

[15] 'My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. [16] They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. [17] Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

A follower of Christ becomes sanctified (set apart for sacred use, cleansed and made holy) through believing and obeying the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). He or she has already accepted forgiveness through Christ's sacrificial death (Hebrews 7:26-27). But daily application of God's Word has a purifying effect on our minds and hearts. Scripture points out sin, motivates us to confess, renews our relationship with Christ, and guides us back to the right path.

[18] "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

Jesus didn't ask God to take believers *out* of the world but instead to use them *in* the world. Because Jesus sends us into the world, we should not try to escape from the world, nor should we avoid all relationships with non-Christians. We are called to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), and we are to do the work that God sent us to do.

[19] "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. [20] "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."

Jesus prayed for all who would follow him, including you and others you know. He prayed for unity (John 17:11), protection from the evil one (John 17:15), and sanctity (holiness) (John 17:17). Knowing Jesus prayed for us should give us confidence as we work for his kingdom.

[21] "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: [23] I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Jesus' great desire for his disciples was for them to become one. He wanted them unified as a powerful witness to the reality of God's love. Are you helping to unify the body of Christ, the church? You can pray for other Christians, avoid gossip, build others up, work together in humility, give your time and money, exalt Christ, and refuse to get sidetracked arguing over divisive matters.

Jesus prayed for unity among the believers based on the believers' unity with him and the Father. Christians can know unity among themselves if they are living in union with God. For example, each branch living in union with the vine is united with all other branches doing the same .

[24] "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. [25] Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. [26] I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

This entire chapter is Jesus' prayer. From it, we learn that the world is a tremendous battleground where the forces under Satan's power and those under God's authority are at war. Satan and his forces are motivated by bitter hatred for Christ and his forces. Jesus prayed for his disciples, including those of us who follow him today. He prayed God would keep his chosen believers safe from Satan's power, setting them apart and making them pure and holy, uniting them through his truth.

How do we get eternal life? Jesus tells us clearly here by knowing God the Father himself through his Son, Jesus Christ. Eternal life requires entering into a personal

relationship with God in Jesus Christ. When we admit our sin and turn away from it, Christ's love lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

Before Jesus came to earth, he was one with God. At this point, when his mission on earth was almost finished, Jesus was asking his Father to restore him to his position and Stephen's dying exclamation (Acts 7:56)—attest Jesus did return to his exalted position at the right hand of God.

We can have an intimate walk with God and with other believers. Jesus prayed we might have a deep intimacy with God just as they have with one another. "Just as you, Father, are united with me and I with you, I pray that they may be united with us, so that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21). Also, he said we could have unity with fellow believers as "the one new man" (Ephesians 2:15). If our relationship with the Father is understood as a daily walk, he becomes more real and present in our lives. We can learn to hear his voice and discipline ourselves to speak with him many times during the day. This is what the Bible calls "prayer"—speaking with and listening to our Lord. Frequent conversation becomes characteristic of our walking with God.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Notable Prayers Found in the Bible**

#### **Part 1**

Matthew 6:9-15

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [10] Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread. [12] And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. [14] For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: [15] But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

This is often called the Lord's Prayer because Jesus gave it to the disciples. It can be a pattern for our prayers. We should praise God, pray for his work in the world, pray for our daily needs, and pray for help in our daily struggles.

The phrase "Our Father in heaven" indicates God is not only majestic and holy, but also personal and loving. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to hallow, or honor, God's holy name. We can honor God's name by being careful to use it respectfully. If we use God's name lightly, we aren't remembering God's holiness.

The phrase "Your kingdom come" is a reference to God's spiritual reign, not Israel's freedom from Rome. God's kingdom was announced in the covenant with Abraham (Matthew 8:11 ; Luke 13:28), is present in Christ's reign in believers' hearts (Luke 17:21), and will be complete when all evil is destroyed and God establishes the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1).

When we pray "Your will be done," we are not resigning ourselves to fate, but praying God's perfect purpose will be accomplished in this world as well as in the next.

When we pray "Give us today our daily bread," we are acknowledging God is our sustainer and provider. It is a misconception to think we provide for our needs ourselves. We must trust God *daily* to provide what he knows we need

Luke 18:13

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Pharisee did not go to the temple to pray to God but to announce to all within earshot how good he was. The tax collector went recognizing his sin and begging for mercy. Self-righteousness is dangerous. It leads to pride, causes a person to

despise others, and prevents him or her from learning anything from God. The tax collector's prayer should be our prayer because we all need God's mercy every day. Don't let pride in your achievements cut you off from God.

Habakkuk 3:1-19

"O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. [3] God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. [4] And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. [5] Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. [6] He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. [7] I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. [8] Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? [9] Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. [10] The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. [11] The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. [12] Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. [13] Thou went forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou wound the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. [14] Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. [15] Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters. [16] When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops."

[17] "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: [18] Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. [19] The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."

Habakkuk knew God was going to discipline the people of Judah and it wasn't going to be a pleasant experience. But Habakkuk accepted God's will, asking for help and mercy. Habakkuk did not ask to escape the discipline, but he accepted the

truth Judah needed to learn a lesson. God still disciplines in love to bring his children back to him (Hebrews 12:5-6). Accept God's discipline gladly, and ask him to help you change.

### **The Prayer of Ezra 9:5-15**

"And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God. [6] And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. [7] Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. [8] And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. [9] For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. [10] And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, [11] Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness. [12] Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. [13] And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; [14] Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? [15] O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this."

After learning about the sins of the people, Ezra fell to his knees in prayer. His heartfelt prayer provides a good perspective on sin. He recognized: (1) that sin is serious (Ezra 9:6); (2) that no one sins without affecting others (Ezra 9:7); (3) that he was not sinless, although he didn't have a pagan wife (Ezra 9:10ff); (4) that

God's love and mercy had spared the nation when they did nothing to deserve it (Ezra 9:8-9, 15). It is easy to view sin lightly in a world that sees sin as inconsequential, but we should view sin as seriously as Ezra did.

Ezra's prayer confessed the sins of his people. Although he had not sinned in the way his people had, he identified with their sins. With weeping, he expressed shame for sin, fear of the consequences, and desire the people would come to their senses and repent. His prayer moved the people to tears (Ezra 10:1). Ezra demonstrated the need for a holy community around the rebuilt temple. We need a holy community in our local churches too. Even when we sin in the worst imaginable way, we can turn to God with prayers of repentance

### **The Prayer of Daniel 9:4-19**

"And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; [5] We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: [6] Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. [7] O Lord, righteousness belongs unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. [8] O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. [9] To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him; [10] Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. [11] Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. [12] And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. [13] As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. [14] Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. [15] And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we

have sinned, we have done wickedly. [16] O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. [17] Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. [18] O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. [19] O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

Daniel knew how to pray. As he prayed, he fasted, confessed his sins, and pleaded God would reveal his will. He prayed with complete surrender to God and with complete openness to what God was saying to him. When you pray, do you speak openly to God? Examine your attitude. Talk to God with openness, vulnerability, and honesty, and be ready for God's reply.

The captives from Judah had rebelled against God. Their sins had led to their captivity. But God is merciful even to rebels, if they confess their sins, and return to him. Don't let your past disobedience keep you from returning to God. He is waiting for you and wants you to return to him.

God had sent many prophets to speak to his people through the years, but their messages had been ignored. The truth was too painful to hear. God still speaks clearly and accurately through the Bible, and he also speaks through preachers, teachers, and concerned friends. Sometimes the truth hurts, and we would rather hear words that soothe, even if they are false. If you are unwilling to accept God's message, maybe you are trying to avoid making a painful change. Don't settle for a soothing lie that will bring harsh judgment. Accepting the truth, even if it is painful can only help you.

Daniel mentioned the curses outlined in Deut. 28. God had given the people of Israel a choice: obey me and receive blessings, or disobey me and face curses. The affliction was meant to turn the people to God. When we face difficult circumstances, we should ask ourselves if God has reason to send judgment. If we think so, we must urgently seek his forgiveness. Then we can ask him to help us through our troubles

Daniel spoke about how God continually tried to bring Israel back to himself. Yet even after disaster struck them, they refused to obey him. God still uses circumstances, other people, and, most important his Word to bring his people back to him. What would it take for God to get your attention?

It would be a mistake to read the Bible as dry history and miss the deep personal feelings. In this section, Daniel was crying out to the Lord. He had a deep concern for his nation and his people. So often our prayers are without passion and true compassion for others. Are you willing to pray by pouring out your deep feelings to God?

Daniel 9:18 "Daniel begged for mercy, not for help, because he knew that his people deserved God's wrath and punishment. God sends his help, not because we deserve it, but because he wants to show great mercy. If God would refuse to help us because of our sin, how could we complain? But when he sends mercy when we deserve punishment, how can we withhold our praise and thanksgiving?"

## Chapter 16

### Notable Prayers Found in the Bible

#### Part 2

##### Prayer of Blessing

Numbers 6:24-26

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: [25] The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: [26] The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace ".

A blessing was one way of asking for God's divine favor to rest upon others. The ancient blessing in these verses helps us understand what a blessing was supposed to do. Its five parts conveyed hope that God would (1) bless and keep them (favor and protect); (2) make his face shine upon them (be pleased); (3) be gracious (merciful and compassionate); (4) turn his face toward them (give his approval); (5) give peace. When you ask God to bless others or yourself, you are asking him to do these five things. The blessing you offer will not only help the one receiving it, it will also demonstrate love, encourage others, and provide a model of caring to others.

##### Hezekiah Prays:

Isaiah 38:2-8

"Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, [3] And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

[4] "Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, [5] Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. [6] And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. [7] And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; [8] Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down."

When Isaiah went to Hezekiah, who was extremely ill, and told him of his impending death, Hezekiah immediately turned to God. God responded to his prayer, allowing Hezekiah to live another 15 years. In response to fervent prayer, God may change the course of our lives too. Never hesitate to ask God for radical changes if you will honor him with those changes.

According to 2 Chron. 32:24-26, Hezekiah had a problem with pride even after this double miracle of healing and deliverance. Eventually he and his subjects humbled themselves, so God's judgment was put off for several more generations.

### **Prayer of Jabez**

1 Chronicles 4:10

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Jabez is remembered for a prayer request rather than a heroic act. In his prayer, he asked God to (1) bless him, (2) help him in his work ("enlarge my territory"), (3) be with him in all he did, and (4) keep him from evil and harm. Jabez acknowledged God as the true center of his work. When we pray for God's blessing, we should also pray that he will take his rightful position as Lord over our work, our family time, and our recreation. Obeying him in daily responsibilities *is* heroic living.

Jabez prayed specifically to be protected from harm and pain. We live in a fallen world filled with sin, and it is important to ask God to keep us safe from the unavoidable evil that comes our way. But we must also avoid evil motives, desires, and actions that begin within us. Therefore, not only must we seek God's protection from evil, but we must also ask God to guard our thoughts and actions. We can begin to utilize his protection by filling our minds with positive thoughts and attitudes

### **The Prayer of Hezekiah**

2 Kings 19:15-19

"And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwells between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. [16] Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. [17] Of a truth, Lord,

the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, [18] And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. [19] Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only."

Although Hezekiah came boldly to God, he did not take God for granted or approach him flippantly. Instead, Hezekiah acknowledged God's sovereignty and Judah's total dependence on him. Hezekiah's prayer provides a good model for us. We should not be afraid to approach God with our prayers, but we must come to him with respect for who he is and what he can do.

### Elijah's Prayer at Mt. Carmel

1 Kings 18:36-39

"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. [37] Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. [38] Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. [39] And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

God flashed fire from heaven for Elijah, and he will help us accomplish what he commands us to do. The proof may not be as dramatic in our lives as in Elijah's, but God will make resources available to us in creative ways to accomplish his purposes. He will give us the wisdom to raise a family, the courage to take a stand for truth, or the means to provide help for someone in need. Like Elijah, we can have faith whatever God commands us to do, he will provide what we need to carry it through.

### Solomon Dedicates the Temple

1 Kings 8:22-30

"And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: [23] And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keeps covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: [24] Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promises him: thou speakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day. [25] Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy

servant David my father that thou promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me. [26] And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou speaks unto thy servant David my father. [27] But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builds? [28] Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prays before thee to day: [29] That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place. [30] And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive."

Solomon was referring to the promise God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-15 that one of David's sons would build the temple.

In his prayer of dedication, Solomon declared even the highest heaven cannot contain God. Isn't it amazing, though the heavens can't contain God, he is willing to live in the hearts of those who love him? The God of the universe takes up residence in his people.

### **The Prayer of David**

2 Samuel 7:18-29

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? [19] And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? [20] And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. [21] For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them? [22] Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. [23] And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeems to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? [24] For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee forever: and thou, Lord, art become their God. [25] And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. [26] And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel:

and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. [27] For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. [28] And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: [29] Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

This section records David's prayer expressing his humble acceptance of God's promise to extend his dynasty forever. David realized these blessings were given to him and his descendants in order that Israel might benefit from them. They would help fulfill God's greater purpose and promises through the nation, the whole world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

## Chapter 17

### Notable Prayers Found in the Bible

#### Part 3

##### Abraham Prays for Mercy:

Genesis 18:23-25

" And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? [24] Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? [25] That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Did Abraham change God's mind? Of course not. The more likely answer is God changed Abraham's mind. Abraham knew God is just, and he punishes sin. Abraham may have wondered about God's mercy. Abraham seemed to be probing God's mind to see how merciful he really was. He left his conversation with God convinced God was both kind and fair. Our prayers won't change God's mind, but they may change ours just as Abraham's prayer changed his. Prayer helps us better understand the mind of God.

Why did God let Abraham question his justice and intercede for a wicked city? Abraham knew God must punish sin, but he also knew from experience God is merciful to sinners. God knew there were not ten righteous people in the city, but he was merciful enough to allow Abraham to intercede. He was also merciful enough to help Lot, Abraham's nephew, get out of Sodom before it was destroyed. God does not take pleasure in destroying the wicked, but he must punish sin. He is both just and merciful. We should be thankful that God's mercy extends to us.

God gave the men of Sodom a fair test. He was not ignorant of the city's wicked practices, but in his fairness and patience, he gave the people of Sodom one last chance to repent. God is still waiting, giving people the opportunity to turn to him (2 Peter 3:9). Those who are wise will turn to him before his patience wears out.

Was God being unfair to the people of Sodom? Did he really plan to destroy the righteous with the wicked? On the contrary, God's fairness stood out. (1) He

agreed to spare the entire city if only ten righteous people lived there. (2) He showed great mercy toward Lot, apparently the only man in the city who had any kind of relationship with him (and even that was questionable). (3) He showed great patience toward Lot, almost forcing him to leave Sodom before it was destroyed. Remember God's patience, when you are tempted to think he is unfair. Even the most godly people deserve his justice. We should be glad God doesn't direct his justice toward us as he did toward Sodom.

God showed Abraham asking for anything is allowed, with the understanding God's answers come from God's perspective. They are not always in harmony with our expectations, for only he knows the whole story. Are you missing God's answer to a prayer because you haven't considered any possible answers other than the one you expect?

### **Stephen Prays for His Accusers:**

Acts 7:59-60

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. [60] And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The penalty for blasphemy, speaking irreverently about God, was death by stoning (Leviticus 24:14). The religious leaders, who were furious, had Stephen stoned without a trial. They did not understand Stephen's words were true, because they were not seeking the truth. They only wanted support for their own views.

As Stephen died, he spoke words very similar to Jesus' words on the cross (Luke 23:34). The early believers were glad to suffer as Jesus had suffered because that meant they were counted worthy (Acts 5:41). Stephen was ready to suffer like Jesus, even to the point of asking forgiveness for his murderers. Such a forgiving response comes only from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can also help us respond as Stephen did with love for our enemies (Luke 6:27). How would you react if someone hurt you because of what you believe

Ephesians 3:14-21

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [15] Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, [16] That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; [17] That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; [19] And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God

[20]"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, [21] Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

The family of God includes all who have believed in him in the past, all who believe in the present, and all who will believe in the future. We are all a family because we have the same Father. He is the source of all creation, the rightful owner of everything. God promises his love and power to his family, the church (Ephes. 3:16-21). If we want to receive God's blessings, it is important that we stay in contact with other believers in the body of Christ. Those who isolate themselves from God's family and try to go it alone cut themselves off from God's power. God's love is total, says Paul. It reaches every corner of our experience. It is *wide*—it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world. God's love is *long*—it continues the length of our lives. It is *high*—it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is *deep*—it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love. For another prayer about God's immeasurable and inexhaustible love, see Paul's words in Romans 8:38-39.

"The fullness of God" is fully expressed only in Christ (Col. 2:9-10). In union with Christ and through his empowering Spirit, we are complete. We have all the fullness of God available to us. But we must appropriate fullness through faith and through prayer as we daily live for him. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is also for you. You can ask the Holy Spirit to fill every aspect of your life to the fullest. This *doxology* prayer of praise to God ends Part One of Ephesians. In the first section, Paul described the timeless role of the church. In Part Two (Ephes. 4-6), he will explain how church members should live in order to bring about the unity God wants. As in most of his books, Paul first lays a doctrinal foundation and then makes practical applications of the truths he has presented.

### **Paul Prays for the church:**

Col. 1:9-12

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; [10] That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; [12] Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:" Paul was exposing a heresy in the Colossian church that was similar to *Gnosticism* (see the note on § Col. 2:4ff for more information). Gnostics valued the

accumulation of knowledge, but Paul pointed out that knowledge in itself is empty. To be worth anything, it must lead to a changed life and right living. His prayer for the Colossians has two dimensions: (1) they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and (2) they would bear fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Knowledge is not merely to be accumulated; it should give us direction for living. Paul wanted the Colossians to be wise, but he also wanted them to *use* their knowledge. Knowledge of God is not a secret only a few can discover; it is open to everyone. God wants us to learn more about him, and also to put belief into practice by helping others.

Sometimes we wonder how to pray for missionaries and other leaders we have never met. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he faithfully prayed for them. His prayers teach us how to pray for others, whether we know them or not. We can request they (1) understand God's will, (2) gain spiritual wisdom, (3) please and honor God, (4) bear good fruit, (5) grow in the knowledge of God, (6) be filled with God's strength, (7) have great endurance and patience, (8) stay full of Christ's joy, and (9) give thanks always. All believers have these same basic needs. When you don't know how to pray for someone, use Paul's prayer pattern for the Colossians.

Ephes. 1:15-23

" Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, [16] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; [17] That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: [18] The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, [19] And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,"  
[20] "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, [21] Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: [22] And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, [23] Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

### **Make Request With Joy:**

Philip. 1:3-11

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, [4] Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, [5] For your fellowship in the gospel

from the first day until now; [6] Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: [7] Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. [8] For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. [9] And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; [10] That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; [11] Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

This is the first of many times Paul used the word *joy* in his letter. The Philippians were remembered with joy and thanksgiving whenever Paul prayed. By helping Paul, they were helping Christ's cause. The Philippians were willing to be used by God for whatever he wanted them to do. When others think about you, what comes to their minds? Are you remembered with joy by them? Do your acts of kindness lift up others?

The Philippians first heard the gospel about ten years earlier when Paul and his companions visited Philippi (during Paul's second missionary journey) and founded the church there.

When Paul said the Philippians were partners in the gospel, he was pointing out their valuable contribution in spreading God's message. They contributed through their practical help when Paul was in Philippi, and through their financial support when he was in prison. As we help our ministers, missionaries, and evangelists through prayer, hospitality, and financial donations, we become partners with them.

## Chapter 18

### Prayer and Fasting

Prayer and fasting is defined as voluntarily going without food in order to focus on prayer, and fellowship with God. Prayer and fasting often go hand in hand, but this is not always the case. You can pray without fasting, and fast without prayer. It is when these two activities are combined and dedicated to God's glory they reach their full effectiveness. Having a dedicated time of prayer and fasting is not a way of manipulating God into doing what you desire. Rather, it is simply forcing yourself to focus and rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom you need.

Matthew 6:16-18

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. [17] But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; [18] That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Fasting is going without food in order to spend time in prayer is noble *and* difficult. It gives us time to pray, teaches self-discipline, reminds us we can live with a lot less, and helps us appreciate God's gifts. Jesus was not condemning fasting, but hypocrisy fasting in order to gain public approval. Fasting was mandatory for the Jewish people once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:32). The Pharisees voluntarily fasted twice a week to impress the people with their "holiness." Jesus commended acts of self-sacrifice done quietly and sincerely. He wanted people to adopt spiritual disciplines for the right reasons, not from a selfish desire for praise.

Olive oil was used as a common cosmetic like a lotion. Jesus was saying, "Go about your normal daily routine when you fast. Don't make a show of it."

Matthew 17:18-21

"And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. [19] Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? [20] And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye

shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. [21] Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The disciples had been given the authority to do the healing, but they had not yet learned how to appropriate the power of God. Jesus' frustration is with the unbelieving, and unresponsive generation. His disciples were merely a reflection of that attitude in this instance. Jesus' purpose was not to criticize the disciples, but to encourage them to greater faith.

The disciples were unable to drive out this demon, and they asked Jesus why. He pointed to their lack of faith. It is the power of God, not our faith, that moves mountains, but faith must be present to do so. The mustard seed was the smallest particle imaginable. Even small or undeveloped faith would have been sufficient. Perhaps the disciples had tried to drive out the demon with their own ability rather than God's. There is great power in even a little faith, when God is with us. If we feel weak or powerless as Christians, we should examine our faith, making sure we are trusting not in our own abilities to produce results, but in God's.

Jesus wasn't condemning the disciples for substandard faith; he was trying to show how important faith would be in their future ministry. If you are facing a problem that seems as big and immovable as a mountain, turn your eyes from the mountain, and look to Christ for more faith. Only then will your work for him become useful and vibrant

Luke 2:37

"And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."

Although Simeon and Anna were very old, they had never lost their hope they would see the Messiah. Led by the Holy Spirit, they were among the first to bear witness to Jesus. In the Jewish culture, elders were respected, so because of Simeon's and Anna's age, their prophecies carried extra weight. Our society, however, values youthfulness over wisdom, and potential contributions by the elderly are often ignored. As Christians, we should reverse those values wherever we can. Encourage older people to share their wisdom and experience. Listen carefully when they speak. Offer them your friendship and help them find ways to continue to serve God.

Anna was called a prophetess, indicating she was unusually close to God. Prophets did not necessarily predict the future. Their main role was to speak for God, proclaiming his truth.

Acts 13:2

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I have called them."

The church set apart Barnabas and Saul to the work God had for them. To *set apart* means to dedicate for a special purpose. We too should dedicate our pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers for their tasks. We can also dedicate ourselves to use our time, money, and talents for God's work. Ask God what he wants you to set apart for him.

This was the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey. The church was involved in sending Paul and Barnabas, but it was God's plan. Why did Paul and Barnabas go where they did? (1) The Holy Spirit led them. (2) They followed the communication routes of the Roman empire this made travel easier. (3) They visited key population and cultural centers to reach as many people as possible. (4) They went to cities with synagogues, speaking first to the Jews in hopes that they would see Jesus as the Messiah and help spread the Good News to everyone

### **A Message from Dr. Bill Bright**

---

---

"I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the spiritual atomic bomb that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world."

How to Begin Your Fast:

---

---

How you begin and conduct your fast, will largely determine your success. By following these seven basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding.

#### **STEP 1: Set Your Objective**

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer, we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

### **STEP 2: Make Your Commitment**

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14,15). For Him it was a matter of *when* believers would fast, not *if* they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front: How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts).

The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often),

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations, and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

### **STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually**

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart: Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins.

Confess every sin the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).

Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.

Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His *command* in Ephesians 5:18 and His *promise* in 1 John 5:14,15.

Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1,2).

Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13).

Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).

#### **STEP 4: Prepare Yourself Physically**

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

Do not rush into your fast

Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.

#### **Prayer and Fasting - What the Bible Says**

The Old Testament law specifically *required* prayer and fasting for only one occasion, which was the Day of Atonement. This custom became known as "the day of fasting" (Jeremiah 36:6) or "the Fast" (Acts 27:9). Moses fasted during the 40 days and 40 nights he was on Mount Sinai receiving the law from God (Exodus 34:28). King Jehoshaphat called for a fast in all Israel, when they were about to be attacked by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20:3). In response to Jonah's preaching, the men of Nineveh fasted and put on sackcloth (Jonah 3:5). Prayer and fasting was often done in times of distress or trouble. David fasted when he learned Saul and Jonathan had been killed (2 Samuel 1:12). Nehemiah had a time of prayer and fasting upon learning Jerusalem was still in ruins (Nehemiah 1:4). Darius, the king of Persia, fasted all night after he was forced to put Daniel in the den of lions (Daniel 6:18).

Prayer and fasting also occurs in the New Testament. Anna "worshipped night and day, fasting and praying" at the Temple (Luke 2:37). John the Baptist taught his disciples to fast (Mark 2:18). Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before His temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:2). The church of Antioch fasted (Acts 13:2) and sent Paul and Barnabas off on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). Paul and Barnabas spent time in prayer and fasting for the appointment of elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).

## **Prayer and Fasting - What Does it Accomplish?**

Spending time in prayer and fasting is not automatically effective in accomplishing the desires of those who fast. Fasting or no fasting, God only promises to answer our prayers when we ask according to His will. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him." In the prophet Isaiah's time, the people grumbled because they had fasted, yet God did not answer in the way they wanted (Isaiah 58:3-4). Isaiah responded by proclaiming the external show of fasting and prayer, without the proper heart attitude, was futile (Isaiah 58:5-9).

How can you know if you are praying and fasting according to God's will? Are you praying and fasting for things that honor and glorify God? Does the Bible clearly reveal it is God's will for you? If we are asking for something that is not honoring to God or not God's will for our lives, God will not give what we ask for, whether we fast or not. How can we know God's will? God promises to give us wisdom when we ask. James 1:5 tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

Fasting is where the power is, because fasting puts us in harmony with an All Powerful God who demands humility from those who wish to be close to Him. Fasting humbles the flesh. When it is done for that purpose, it pleases the Spirit of God.

You can go a certain distance in God, and experience many things, without fasting much, but the highest, richest and most powerful blessings always go to those who together with other disciplines, fast much unto God. The most significant Biblical characters, with the possible exception of Abraham, were all men of fasting and prayer. Jesus, the Son of God, was a man of fasting and prayer (Matthew 4:2). So was the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 11:27). Moses fasted 80 days. Elijah fasted 40 days. The early church fasted before starting any major work. The greatest spiritual leaders of the 20th century who are making an impact are all men of fasting of prayer to my knowledge. Anyone who started a significant spiritual movement in Christianity was, to the best of my knowledge - Luther, Wesley, Finney, and Booth were all men of fasting. In our day, Cho, Bonnke, Osborn, and Annacondia are all men of much fasting. If done right, fasting counts much with God.

Fasting is not magic, nor does it twist the arm of God. God wants to do many amazing things, **but He looks for those willing to urgently make the corrections needed to come into line with him.** God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Successful fasting is also the fastest way to learn patience. It takes

patience and endurance to fast for more than a day. Many of God's tests come quicker to us when we fast, and we have a better opportunity to pass them. If we want to go far with God, we would have to face these tests anyway. Sometimes it comes much later, and in a more time consuming and difficult way. We need to "bite the bullet", and embrace the correction God wants to apply to our souls.

Fasting gives believers God's focus for their lives. It is a major key to hearing God's voice (the other is true worship - the two are related). We need focus from God more than anything. The world we live in is working overtime to distract us, to entice us, to win our hearts and minds, our focus, and to determine our vision. Fasting cuts out the world so we can tune into God. If we are obedient to God fasting will make us catalysts for revival and awakening.

References:

Holy Bible: Kings James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Translation

*Life Application Study Bible*: Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print