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What You Need to Know About Prayer: Part 2

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRAYER (Part Two)

"And he spake a parable unto them [to this end], that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

This is Part two in a series of four at which time twelve questions on prayer are being considered. These are:

- 1. What is the meaning of prayer?
- 2. What eight relationships are seen in the model prayer of Jesus?
- 3. What kind of person is unable to pray the Lord's Prayer?
- 4. What are some reasons for prayer? Why should you pray?
- 5. What are the ground rules of effective prayer?
- 6. What about the direction and objects of prayer?
- 7. What about positions in prayer and time of prayer?
- 8. What are some hindrances to prayer?
- 9. What are some problems associated with and some divine responses to prayer?
- 10. What are some practical approaches to prayer?
- 11. Does God ever hear the prayers of an unsaved person?
- 12. Who was probably Scripture's greatest prayer warrior?

Part two will deal with questions 4 and 5.

4. What are some reasons for prayer? Why should you pray?

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

Because of the repeated command of God—

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way" (1 Sam. 12:23).

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12).

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2).

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

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8).

Because of the example of Christ—

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

Because of the example of the early church—

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14).

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5).

Because prayer is God's chosen method for the following:

Defeating the devil—"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Saving the sinner—"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" (Luke 18:13).

Restoring the backslider—"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...Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:16, 19-20).

Strengthening the saint—"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20).

Sending forth laborers—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38).

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3).

Curing the sick—"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:13-15).

Glorifying God's name—"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5:8).

"And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev. 8:2-4).

Accomplishing the impossible—"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).

"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29).

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17-18). (See also Acts 12:5-17.)

Giving good things—"He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psa. 102:17).

"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?" (Matt. 7:7-11). (See also Matt. 21:22.)

Imparting wisdom—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Bestowing peace—"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:5-7).

Keeping one from sin—"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

Revealing the will of God—"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. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:9-10).

Bottom line: The church has many organizers, but few agonizers; many who pay, but few who pray; many wresters, but few wrestlers; many who are enterprising, but few who are interceding. People who are not praying are playing.

What are the ground rules of effective prayer?

Prayer should be humble—"LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear" (Psa. 10:17). (See also Luke 18:13-14.)

Prayer should be bold—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him"(1 John 5:13-15).

Prayer should be in faith—"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Prayer should be sincere— "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (Psa. 145:18).

Prayer should be simple— "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7).

Prayer should be persistent— "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" (Luke 18:7). Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2).

Prayer should be definite— "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psa. 27:4). Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5).

All too often our prayers are so vague and indefinite as to render them totally meaningless. Petitions such as "Lord, save that soul nearest hell," or "Heal all the sick and comfort all the lonely," simply provide no basis for divine action.

Prayer should be in accord with Scripture— "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

Prayer must be grounded in and bounded by the Word of God if we are to find his will for our life.

Bottom line: Two prerequisites of dynamic Christian living are vision and passion, and both of these are generated in the prayer closet. The ministry of preaching is open to a few. The ministry of praying is open to every child of God.

Don't mistake action for unction, and rattles for revivals.

The secret of praying is praying in secret. A worldly Christian will stop praying and a praying Christian will stop worldliness.

When we pray, God listens to our heartbeat. Hannah's "lips" moved, but her voice was not heard (1 Sam. 1:12, 13). When we pray in the Spirit, there are groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26).

Tithes may build a church, but tears will give it life. That is the difference between the modern church and the early church. Our emphasis is on paying, theirs was on praying. When we have paid, the place is taken. When they had prayed, the place was shaken (Acts 4:31).

In the matter of effective praying, never have so many left so much to so few. Brethren, let us pray.

--Author unknown

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