Liberty University
DigitalCommons@Liberty University

What You Need to Know About... | Willmington School of the Bible

2008

What You Need to Know About Prayer: Part 4

Harold Willmington
Liberty University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/will_know

Recommended Citation
Willmington, Harold, "What You Need to Know About Prayer: Part 4" (2008). *What You Need to Know About....* Paper 27.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/will_know/27

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Willmington School of the Bible at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in What You Need to Know About... by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRAYER
(PART FOUR)

(Part four will deal with questions 8-12.)

"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 four in a series of four during 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 <u>with</u> and some divine responses <u>to</u> 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?

What are some hindrances to prayer?
Known sin— *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psa. 66:18).

Insincerity— *"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward"* (Matt. 6:5).

Carnal motives—" *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts"* (James 4:3).

Unbelief— *"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. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed"* (James 1:5-6).

Satanic activity— *"And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 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. 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"* (Dan. 10:10-13).

On certain occasions the sovereign God for a short period of time may allow satanic interference to block the prayer line of the believer. This is usually for the purpose of testing and purifying his child, as the book of Job and tenth chapter of Daniel so vividly illustrate.

Domestic problems—"*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered"* (1 Pet. 3:7).

Is this writer the only one to have observed that if a sudden disagreement develops between pastor and wife, or a church leader and their spouse (Sunday school teacher, choir member, etc.) it often occurs en route to the church building? This surely is no accident. If the enemy can cause even a very brief domestic problem, then the planned sermon, Sunday school lesson, or song will not accomplish that which God had intended.

Pride— *"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 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. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Luke 18:10-14)

Robbing God— *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, 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"* (Mal. 3:8-10).

Refusing to help the needy—"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Prov. 21:13).

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:16-17).

Refusing to submit to biblical teaching— *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"* (Prov. 28:9). (See also Prov. 1:24-31; Zech. 7:11-14.)

Refusing to forgive or to be forgiven— *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"* (Matt. 5:23-24).

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:12, 14).

What are some problems associated <u>with</u> and some divine responses <u>to</u> prayer?

Problems associated with prayer:

Feelings—*"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God…Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High"* (Psa. 43:5; 77:9, 10).

Wasted prayers (praying concerning the sex of an unborn child, etc.)

Demanding prayers—*"And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul"* (Psa. 106:15).

Failure to appropriate secondary means (refusing medical care when sick, etc.)

Failure to do our part: A classic example who <u>did</u> his part and whose prayer <u>was</u> answered is Elijah the prophet. After he had repaired a broken altar, dug a trench and filled it with water, gathered some wood and prepared an animal sacrifice, he cried out to God, "I have done all those things at thy word." God then answered his prayer by sending down fire from heaven. (See 1 Kings 18:30-37.)

Insufficient praying: *"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"* (Mt. 7:7, 8). *"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting"* (Mark 9:29).

The realization that our prayer requests often involve the actions of others. Example: A distraught mother might earnestly pray for the salvation of her wayward son, but the son must of his own will come to Jesus. God will not force him against his will.

Divine responses to prayer: God may respond to our particular prayer in one of five ways:

NO! *"Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in"* (1 Chron. 17:1-

4). *"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers"* (1 Kings 19:4).

YES! *"Therefore David enquired 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. 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? 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"* (1 Sam. 23:2-4).

WAIT! "*For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise"* (Heb. 10:36).

IF! *"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"* (2 Chron. 7:14).

SILENCE! *"And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day"* (2 Sam. 14:37). *"And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets"* (1 Sam. 28:6).

What are some practical approaches to prayer?

Walking (moving about when you pray)
Speaking (praying out loud)
Writing (committing your prayers to paper)
Singing

Scriptural examples (Ex. 15:1, 21; Judg. 5:3; 2 Chron. 20:22; Ezra 3:11; Psa. 30:4; 66:4; 135:3; 147:7; Isa. 12:5; Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3)

Hymnal examples (Secure a song book and sing your praises to God)

Reading the Psalms: (See 103, 139, etc.)

Fasting: (3 kinds)
Abstinence from sex (1 Cor. 7:5)
Abstinence from sleep (2 Cor. 6:4; 11:27)
Abstinence from food (Ex. 24:18; Mt. 4:2)

Thanking:
For God's existence (1 Kings 18:26-39)
For God's sovereignty (Rom. 8:28)
For God's creative works (Rev. 4:11)
For God's redemptive works (Rev. 5:9)

Focusing:
Upon God Himself (Psa. 62:5)
Upon God's Word (Psa. 1:1, 2)
Upon God's works (Psa. 72:12)
Upon God's faithfulness (Psa. 103:2; 143:5; Lam. 3:21-23)
Upon wholesome things (Phil. 4:8)

Corporate praying: (Matt. 18:19; Lev. 26:8)

Preventive praying: ("Lord keep me from sin today.")

Planned praying: (When asked in advance to pray in public, plan your prayer.)

What do you mean, plan your prayer? Isn't this unspiritual? Shouldn't you just open your mouth and say whatever might come to mind? Perhaps, but consider the following: you have been selected as the spokesperson for a group of people who have secured an appointment with the President of the United States to discuss some very important matters. Question: Would you spend some time before entering the Oval Office in preparing your presentation? Surely this would be the case.

However how much more important to pre-plan your prayer as a congregational spokesperson when you stand before the King of Kings!

Does God ever hear the prayers of an unsaved person?

Two well-known Bible teachers comment on this:

Robert J. Little:

From the scriptures it would appear that God often responds to a cry for help, but it is less likely that He would answer intercessory prayers offered by unsaved persons. However, we can never limit God, and He often shows grace where we would not. (See Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35; Psa. 72:12.) (*Here's Your Answer,* Robert J. Little, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, p. 137)

Wayne Grudem:

Does answer the prayers of unbelievers? Although God has not promised to answer the prayers of unbelievers as he has promised to answer the prayers of those who come in Jesus' name, and although he has no obligation to answer the prayers of unbelievers, nonetheless, God may out of his common grace still hear and grant the prayers of unbelievers, thus demonstrating his mercy and goodness in yet another way (cf. Psa. 145:9, 15; Matt. 7:22; Luke 6:35-36). This is apparently the sense of 1 Tim. 4:10, which says that God is *"the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe."* Here "Savior" cannot be restricted in meaning to "one who forgives sins and gives eternal life," because these things are not given to those who do not believe; "Savior" must have a more general sense here, namely, "one who rescues from distress, one who delivers." In cases of trouble or distress God often does hear the prayers of unbelievers, and graciously delivers them from their trouble. (*Systematic Theology,* Wayne Grudem, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 662)

Bottom line: While God has indeed only obligated Himself to answer the sinner's prayer for salvation (Rom. 10:13), He may (and doubtless has) responded to other desperate requests of unbelievers; such as, "Lord, heal my dying son," or, "protect my life in battle," etc.

Who was probably scripture's greatest prayer warrior?

Many believe it to be the apostle Paul.

Paul began and ended his Christian life by prayer.

The beginning: *"And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth"* (Acts 9:11)

The ending: *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge"* (2 Tim. 4:16).

Paul prayed everywhere he went:

In a prison: Acts 16:25—*"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them"* (Acts 16:25).

On a seashore:

At Miletus: *"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all"* (Acts 20:36).

At Tyre: *"And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed"* (Acts 21:5).

In Jerusalem (Acts 22:17)

On an island: *"And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him"* (Acts 28:8).

Paul prayed for almost everyone he met:

For the churches (Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 13:7; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:16; 3:14; Phil. 1:4, 9; Col. 1:3, 9; 1 Thess. 1:2; 3:10; 5:23; 2 Thess. 1:3, 11; 2:13).

For Philemon (Philem. 4)

For Timothy (2 Tim. 1:3)

For Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16-18)

For those who forsook him in Rome (2 Tim. 4:16)

For Israel—*"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved"* (Rom. 10:1).

For all men (1 Tim. 2:1-3, 8; 4:4-5)

Paul constantly asked others to pray for him. (1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1; Philem. 22; Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3).

In my mind musician Albert Reite captured the essence of these four studies on prayer by his beautiful hymn, Teach Me How To Pray. Here are the words:

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;
This is my heart-cry day unto day;
I long to know Thy will and Thy way;
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.

Chorus: Living in Thee, Lord, and Thou in me;
Constant abiding, this is my plea,
Grant me Thy power, boundless and free;
Power with men and power with Thee.

Power in prayer, Lord, power in prayer,
Here 'mid earth's sin and sorrow and care;
Men lost and dying, souls in despair;
O give me power, power in prayer!

My weakened will, Lord, Thou canst renew;
My sinful nature Thou canst subdue; F
Fill me just now with power anew,
Power to pray and power to do!

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;
Thou art my Pattern day unto day;
Thou are my Surety now and for aye;
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.

--Prepared by Dr. H. L. Willmington, Dean
Willmington School of the Bible
Liberty University

Copyright © 2008 by Dr. H. L. Willmington