

"prayer-starters"



Starters for the Prayer Meeting

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Starters for the Prayer Meeting

(Or For personal prayer time meditation)

What is a “prayer meeting starter” ?

A “prayer meeting starter” is a short Bible study on the subject of prayer, designed to get the pray-ers focused on the task at hand and to give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to prepare us for prayer.

A real prayer meeting is not a Bible Study. When we try to combine them, the meeting becomes a Bible study and prayer is minimized. The difference between a Bible study and a prayer meeting is in its primary purpose. The Bible study's purpose is to communicate the truth of what the Bible says. The prayer meeting's purpose is to unite in real and fervent prayer. To try to do both in one meeting is more than the human mind and body can endure in one meeting. Prayer deserves to be maximized and is worth a meeting exclusively for prevailing in prayer.

Robert Murray McCheyne said “A great part of my time is spent in getting my heart in tune for prayer.” This is true for the individual in secret prayer, but it is also true for the corporate prayer meeting. Corporate prayer needs careful and prayerful preparation: we need to prepare our hearts, pray for those leading the meeting, and pray for the Holy Spirit to make it the meeting He wants it to be.

How do we have a prayer meeting that is not a Bible study but is still nurtured by The Word of God? We suggest that the meeting be started with the Word of God. Not just the reading of it but the explaining and applying of it to our lives. Further, we suggest that the subject matter be “prayer” not a miscellaneous topic or text from the Bible. We need to hear what the Bible has to say concerning prayer, especially when we start to pray. It is at that time that we need to prepare our hearts and get our spirits in a praying mode.

Following are articles designed for the leader to use as “starter talks” to begin the prayer meeting. The “starter” should be long enough to develop a single idea and prepare the hearts for prayer, but not long enough to detract from prayer time. It should not become an end in itself, but a means to the end of prevailing prayer. It seems that it takes at least ten minutes and should normally take no longer than fifteen minutes. A one-hour prayer meeting with 15 minutes of receiving what the Word of God says about prayer and 45 minutes of fervent praying is a good basic plan to follow.

The need for the “starter” is that the pray-er is not always and naturally in a mental and spiritual mood to pray. These starters are designed to stir our hearts and minds to prayer. They could be used for corporate or personal prayer times.

We cannot anticipate specific needs and situations. Our plan is to give enough material for a beginner to be able to communicate a complete thought if he just reads the material with a few comments. Those leaders with more experience may not want to use all the material given. We suggest the "cafeteria" method---pick out what is right for the particular occasion.

It might be desirable to give the starter notes to the pray-ers in the meeting. They can keep them for future use in their secret prayer time and/or use them when they pray with others.

Eph 6:17-18 says “And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.” The Word of God is the Spirit's sword, not ours; it is for Him to use as He sees fit. We hope that the starters will be an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit to inform, inspire, and invigorate the pray-ers as they start to pray.



I. Old Testament

A Prayer of David - Ps 25

This is a good portion of Scripture to meditate on as we go to prayer and even to pray to God as our prayer. Our experiences are not that much different from David's, remember, **"These things happened to them as examples and were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come."** 1 Cor 10:11

1-7 David speaks to the Lord for Himself

"1 O LORD, I come before you in prayer." Prayer is a specific act, not merely an attitude. It is something we do, not just think about.

"2 My God, I trust in you." Trust here means "to confide in, so as to be secure and without fear" Who else can we go to. None other can understand or help.

"Please do not let me be humiliated; do not let my enemies triumphantly rejoice over me!" David prays for himself as he confronts his enemies. If we are in God's will, our enemies and God's enemies are the same. God cannot be defeated and neither can we.

"3 Certainly none who rely on you will be humiliated." God is trustworthy and will not fail us. David could sympathize and pray for others because of his own experience. We can never go wrong relying on God.

"Those who deal in treachery will be thwarted and humiliated." God will deal with the wicked in His time.

"4 Make me understand your ways, O Lord! Teach me your paths!" This is the attitude of an effectual pray-er. We must seek God with all of our heart and complete submission. We must be teachable and leadable.

"5 Guide me into your truth and teach me." Truth and doctrine are inseparable from one who is in communion with God.

"For you are the God who delivers me; on you I rely all day long." It is vain to look for our help from any other source.

"6 Remember your compassionate and faithful deeds, O Lord, for you have always acted in this manner." It seems that we humans constantly forget the goodness of the Lord, but He doesn't forget to be compassionate to us.

"7 Do not hold against me the sins of my youth or my rebellious acts! Because you are faithful to me, extend to me your favor, O Lord"

8-10 David acknowledges the character of the Lord

"8 The Lord is both kind and fair; that is why he teaches sinners the right way to live. 9 May he show the humble what is right! May he teach the humble his way!" The proud cannot learn the things of God nor can they pray when they have a stubborn will.

"10 The Lord always proves faithful and reliable to those who follow the demands of his covenant." God's methods and objectives are always good to His people.

11 David appeals to the Lord for forgiveness

"11 For the sake of your reputation, O Lord, forgive my sin, because it is great." David is concerned about God's honor, he want his sin forgiven and his life maintained so God will not be dishonored. All of us have a great weight of sin but it is those who come to God that feel it most. Feeling our sinfulness is not a disqualification of coming to God but it is an integral part of it.

12-15 David speaks about what the Lord does

"12 The Lord shows his faithful followers the way they should live. 13 They experience his favor; their descendants inherit the land. 14 The Lord 's loyal followers receive his guidance, and he reveals his covenantal demands to them. 15 I continually look to the Lord for help, for he will free my feet from the enemy's net." They that pray to know God's will are assured to know it, understand what He wants from us and have his protection. God reveals His secrets to those who dwell in secret with Him. We have no greater enemy than our depraved nature that so often snares us; but the Lord will deliver us as we commune with Him.

16-22 David speaks to the Lord again

"16 Turn toward me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and oppressed! 17 Deliver me from my distress;

rescue me from my suffering! 18 See my pain and suffering! Forgive all my sins! 19 Watch my enemies, for they outnumber me; they hate me and want to harm me. 20 Protect me and deliver me! Please do not let me be humiliated, for I have taken shelter in you! 21 May integrity and godliness protect me, for I rely on you! 22 O God, rescue Israel from all their distress! ” Many negative words are used to describe David’s condition. When we are going through the trials it feels as if we are alone. All we can do and all we should do is rely on our God; He is able to rescue us.

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The House of God - the Gate of Heaven

In Gen 28 we have the story of Jacob deceiving his father and his having to leave for fear of Esau. Verses 12-19 tell us of the dream he had as he traveled, “He saw a stairway erected on the earth with its top reaching to the heavens. The angels of God were going up and coming down it and the LORD stood at its top. He said, ‘I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the ground you are lying on. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. All the families of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using your name and that of your descendants. I am with you! I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you!’ Then Jacob woke up and thought, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, but I did not realize it!’ He was afraid and said, ‘What an awesome place this is! This is nothing else than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!’ Early in the morning Jacob took the stone he had placed near his head and set it up as a sacred stone. Then he poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel...” The Hebrew for Bethel means “house of God.” Jacob was afraid but not with a servant-like fear, but child-like fear; not a fear of the wrath and displeasure of God, but an awe of the greatness and glory of God.

When Solomon had built “the LORD’s temple” the Lord appeared to him and promised to accept their future repentance and then said in 2 Chr 7:15, “Now I will be attentive and responsive to the prayers offered in this place. Now I have chosen and consecrated this temple by making it my permanent home; I will be constantly present there.” Here God is making prayer especially important and associating it with His presence. This is not a reference to the omnipresence of God, but to His special and spiritually manifested presence. Here we have the first physical representation of “the house of God.”

Isaiah says in 56:5-8 “‘I will set up within my temple and my walls a monument that will be better than sons and daughters...I will set up a permanent monument for them that will remain. As for foreigners who become followers of the LORD and serve him, who love the name of the LORD and want to be his servants—all who observe the Sabbath and do not defile it, and who are faithful to my covenant. I will bring them to my holy mountain; I will make them happy in the temple where people pray to me. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my temple will be known as a temple where all nations may pray.’ The sovereign LORD says this, the one who gathers the dispersed of Israel: ‘I will still gather them up.’” Here we have again the temple, or “house of God,” associated with prayer, but it includes more than the Israelites. It is broadened to include ‘foreigners who become followers of the LORD...for my temple will be known as a temple where all nations may pray.’” God intends His temple “the house of God” to have prayer as a prominent ingredient.

Our Lord quotes this passage in Isaiah, “Then they came to Jerusalem. Jesus entered the temple area and began to drive out those who were selling and buying in the temple courts. He turned over the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those selling doves, and he would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Then he began to teach them and said, ‘Is it not written: *‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’?* But you have turned it into *a den of robbers.*” Mk 11:15-17 Jesus was very upset about “God’s House” not being used for prayer. We should ask ourselves, “How does the Lord Jesus feel about our churches today that have fine buildings, great organization, good entertainment and little or no prayer?” It is sadly obvious that almost all of our churches are not characterized by prayer.

In 1 Tim 3:14,15 Paul tells Timothy “I am writing these instructions to you...to let you know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God.” He is referring to 1 Tim 2:1-3:13 where the first thing he deals with is prayer-- “First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all

people...Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior...So I want the men to pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without anger or dispute.” Paul is instructing Timothy to lead the people of God to pray as a people of God in “the house of God.”

If the “house of God” is to be a “house of Prayer,” then the leaders need to lead the people to be proficient in this exercise. “It is a tremendous responsibility to lead God’s people to God’s throne and into God’s presence in public prayer. God can so strongly anoint the one who leads in prayer that all present are brought into consciousness of God’s presence until the one praying is forgotten and the people as one in heart and soul unit and agree in the prayer.” Wesley Duewel, *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, p 129

When we put prayer in its proper place in “the house of God” that we are worshiping in, we will say as Jacob did “This is nothing else than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!” Our prayer experience will be like “a stairway erected on the earth with its top reaching to the heavens” with the angels of God going up and coming down it and the LORD standing at the top. Angels are messengers and represent our prayers that go up and God’s responses that comes down. God will be at the top speaking to us and we will stand in awe of the greatness and glory of God.

God dwells not only where, O’er saintly dust,
The Sweet bells greet the fairest morn of seven;
Wherever simple folk love, pray and trust,
Behold the House of God, the Gate of Heaven.

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Come to the morning-prayer;
Come, let us kneel and pray:
Prayer is the Christian pilgrim’s staff,
To walk with God all day.
At noon, beneath the Rock
Of Ages, rest and pray;
Sweet is that shelter from the heat,
When the sun smites by day.’
At evening, shut thy door;
Round the home-altar pray;
And, finding there the house of God,
At Heaven’s gate close the day.
When midnight veils our eyes,
Oh, it is sweet to say,
I sleep, but my heart waketh, Lord,
With thee to watch and pray.

James Montgomery (Quoted in *Prayer and its Remarkable Answers*, William Patton p 32)

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“By Many or by Few”

**Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering,
whether by many or by a few.**

1 Sam 14:1-14 “1 Then one day Jonathan son of Saul said to the servant who was carrying his equipment, “Come on, let’s go over to the Philistine garrison that is opposite us.” But he did not let his father know. 2 Now Saul was sitting at the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. The army that was with him numbered about six hundred men. 3 Now Ahijah was bearing an ephod. He was the son of Ahitub, who was the brother of Ichabod and a son of Phinehas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh. The army was unaware that Jonathan had left. 4 Now there was a steep cliff on each side of the pass through which Jonathan intended to go to reach the Philistine garrison. One cliff was named Bozez, the other Seneh. 5 The cliff to the north was closer to Micmash, the one to the south closer to Geba. 6 Jonathan said to his servant who was carrying his equipment, “Come on, let’s go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will intervene for us. **Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few.**”

Jonathan’s confidence was in his God not in himself or his army. God gave Jonathan a victory that day even though all the odds and circumstances were against him. “One of you makes a thousand run away, for the LORD your God fights for you as he promised you he would. **Jos 23:10**

Being few in number or weak in strength does not limit God. If God were limited by us He would be dependent on us. Sometimes the opposite is true, the greater the number and the supposed strength we have is an hindrance to God. Note the experience of Gideon **Jud 7:2**— “The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to hand Midian over to you. Israel might brag, ‘Our own strength has delivered us.’” God proceeded to reduce the army from 32,000 men to 10,000 and the Lord said “There are still too many men. ...” v 4 And He reduced them to 300 men. That is less than 1% of the original number. If a church has three hundred members, then three (1% of 300 is 3) or more members of that local church praying rightly is a greater number than God let Gideon have to fight and win the battle. Note the real reason why God reduced Gideon’s army, “lest Israel claim glory for itself.” God will get more glory if He does great things with few and feeble folk.

When David faced the Philistine he said, “The battle is the Lord’s” **1 Sam 17:47** David went on to boast in what he knew that His God would do, “Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands.” God doesn’t need (He is even hindered by) our methods and schemes. The question is not “What can we do with God’s help?” but “What does God will to do?”

Our effort and faithfulness is the occasion upon which God chooses to exert His power to advance His kingdom. Infinite power is still infinite even when exerted through small and insignificant instruments. God’s omnipotence is not conditional or limited and cannot be added to. The course of human history has always been directed by the dedicated few not the casual majority. This is especially true when the dedicated few are those striving for the Glory of God.

Why is this true ? Because the power is all in God. We cannot add to omnipotence. **1 Cor 2:4** “My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” The Spirit can demonstrate Himself and His power with many or few. Those of us praying and waiting on God may be few but God is able “to do far beyond all that we ask or think.” Eph 3:20

The speedometer on a car is not what makes the car travel at the indicated speed, it is the engine under the hood that makes the car move. So it is with the work of God. Prayer and effort on our part are the gauges that indicate what God is doing or is about to do.

2 Chr 14:11 “Asa prayed to the LORD his God: “O LORD, there is no one but you that can help the weak when they are vastly outnumbered. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you and have marched on your behalf against this huge army. O LORD our God, don’t let men prevail against you!” Note that Asa 1. prayed “cried out.” 2. He acknowledged God’s power and ability, 3. He told God he was trusting Him. 4. He went forward in God’s name. 5. He appealed to God as sovereign over man. This makes for good praying.

It can easily be shown that all want of success, and all failure in the spiritual life and in Christian work, is due to defective or insufficient prayer. *The Kneeling Christian*

The Difference

I got up early one morning
and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't have time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me,
and heavier came each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered.
He answered, "You didn't ask."
I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled on, gray and bleak;
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, "But you didn't seek."
I tried to come into God's presence;
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."
I woke up early this morning,
and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray.

—Author unknown

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[illegible]

Prevailing Prayer as seen in Jacob

Gen 32

1. Prevailing Prayer pleads the promises. v 9

Promises must be prayed over. God loves to be burdened with, and to be importuned in His own words; to be sued upon His own bond. Prayer is putting the promises into suit. Such prayers will be nigh the Lord day and night. **1 Ki 8:59** “And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require:” He can as little deny them as deny Himself.

2. Prevailing Prayer confesses its unworthiness. v 10

We do not receive blessing because of our confession, but we are not blest without it. **Lk 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.” **Ja 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.”

3. Prevailing Prayer asks definitely. v 11

Jacob knew what he wanted, and prayed accordingly. He had offended and robbed his brother, and now he seeks deliverance from his righteous anger. The Lord often over-rules our blunders to our benefit and His own glory. Jacob not only prayed for himself, but also for those who were near and dear to him.

4. Prevailing Prayer is to be alone with God. v 24

The words of Christ are “Pray in secret” **Mat 6:6**. Christ is our Example in this, for He went to the mountain to pray, **Mat 14:23**. By praying in secret we shall get revelations of His glory, as Daniel did at the riverside **Dan 8:16**; we shall have the consciousness of the presence of Christ, as John had on the Isle of Pathos **Rev 1**; we shall be commissioned, as Peter was, when he was on the housetop at Joppa **Act 10:9**; we shall meet the Rebekah’s of blessing, as Isaac did, when meditating in the field **Gen 24:63**; and we shall receive blessing, as Jacob did.

5. Prevailing Prayer is intensely earnest. v 24

This strife was not only corporeal, but spiritual; as well as by the force of his faith, as strength of body. “He prevaieth” saith the prophet **Hosea 12:4**, by prayers and tears. Our Saviour also prayed Himself into “an agony” **Lk 22:44**; and we are bidden to “strive in prayer” **Rom 15:30**; Nehemiah prayed himself pale **Neh 2:2**; Daniel prayed himself “sick” **Dan 8:27**. Hannah prayed, striving with such an unusual motion of her lips, that old Eli, thought her to be drunk **1 Sam 1:13**. Elijah puts his head betwixt his knees, as straining all the emotions of the heart in prayer **1 Kin 18:42**. Every sound is not music, so neither is every uttering of petitions to God a prayer. It is not the labor of the lips, but the travail of the heart. Common beggary is the easiest and poorest trade; but this beggary, as it is the richest so it is the hardest.

6. Prevailing Prayer is seen in a clinging faith. v 26

Jacob got no blessing while wrestling, but the wrestling led to the blessing. The angel touched his thigh, and then he could wrestle no more, but he held on the tighter, and would not let the angel go till he received a blessing from him. Three boys gave a definition of faith, which definitely illustrate the tenacity of Faith. The first boy said, “It was taking hold of Christ;” the second, “Keeping hold;” and the third, “not letting go.”

7. Prevailing Prayer is rewarded. v 28-30

1. He got his name changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince of God.
2. He received definite blessing from God.
3. He was a testimony for God ever afterwards in his halting gait.

Prevailing prayer is when intellect, emotion, and will unite to take hold of God.

Prevailing prayer is aggressive spiritual warfare.

Lord, I have wrestled through the livelong night

Do no depart,

Nor leave me thus in sad and weary plight,

Broken in heart;

Where shall I turn, if Thou shouldst go away,

And leave me here in this cold world to stay?

.

I have no other help, no food, no light

No hand to guide,

The night is dark, my home is not in sight,
The path untried;
I dare not venture in the dark alone—
I cannot find my way, if Thou be gone.

I cannot yet discern Thee, as thou art;
More let me see,
I cannot bear the thought that I must pass
Away from Thee:
I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless.
O, help me, Lord, in all my helplessness.
J. Sharp Gen 32

See also *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel p 63

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The God of Hills and Plains

In 1 Kings 20:1-21 we have the record of God working through Elijah to deliver king Ahab and the people from Ben Hadad of Syria. After the miraculous victory the Scripture says in 20:22-30, “The prophet visited the king of Israel and instructed him, ‘Go, fortify your defenses. Determine what you must do, for in the spring the king of Syria will attack you.’ Now the advisers of the king of Syria said to him: ‘Their God is a god of the mountains. That’s why they overpowered us. But if we fight them in the plains, we will certainly overpower them. So do this: Dismiss the kings from their command, and replace them with military commanders. Muster an army like the one you lost, with the same number of horses and chariots. Then we will fight them in the plains; we will certainly overpower them.’” He approved their plan and did as they advised. In the spring Ben Hadad mustered the Syrian army and marched to Aphek to fight Israel. When the Israelites had mustered and had received their supplies, they marched out to face them in battle. When the Israelites deployed opposite them, they were like two small flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the land. The prophet visited the king of Israel and said, ‘This is what the LORD says: Because the Syrians said, The LORD is a god of the mountains and not a god of the valleys,’ I will hand over to you this entire huge army. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ The armies were deployed opposite each other for seven days. On the seventh day the battle began, and the Israelites killed one hundred thousand Syrian foot soldiers in one day. The remaining twenty-seven thousand ran to Aphek and went into the city, but the wall fell on them. Now Ben Hadad ran into the city and hid in an inner room..”

Our God is not a God of one place or limited circumstances. Our God is able to deliver us, answer prayer, and give us victory for His glory, whether in the hills or in the plain.

Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson from his temporary case of Divine inflicted insanity “But at the end of the appointed time I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up toward heaven, and my sanity returned to me. I blessed the Most High, and I praised and glorified the one who lives forever. For his rule is an everlasting rule, and his kingdom extends from one generation to the next. All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he wishes with the army of heaven and with those who inhabit the earth. No one slaps his hand and says to him, ‘What have you done?’” Dan 4:34,35

Whether in the 17th century or in the 21st century, God is able to bless His people in a powerful way. Whether in Scotland or in America, God is able to send a mighty revival. Whether in New York City or Chicago or in Doolittle, Missouri, God is able to bless His people. To God there is not a distinction of “big” or “small”. To God

little more and they will stone me.” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?” The Psalmist praises God for this act of divine provision “Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?” Ps 78:20

In the spirit of 1 Cor 10:11 “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” we understand that Jesus is our “Smitten Rock” from which all our needs are met. Isaiah said “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” Isa 53:4,10 The water that flowed from the rock is typical of the provision and blessings we have from our smitten and suffering substitute.

The second occasion of God giving instruction to Moses about “the rock” is in Num 20:1-12 “Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam died there and was buried there. There was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron. The people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, “If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! “Why then have you brought the LORD’s assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? “Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink.” Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them; and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the rod, and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink.” So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, “Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

Moses made a serious mistake which cost him a great blessing. God told him “speak to the rock” v 7, but Moses “struck the rock twice with his rod” v 7. Remaining consistent with our symbolism of “the rock” being Christ we see that “our rock Christ” needs be smitten only once for blessing to flow and there after we are to speak to our Rock. God will still accomplish His plan, even when we do not follow our instructions as we should. What our imperfect obedience does is determine our relation to His plan. He will accomplish all His will even when we don’t pray but we will be the losers, and miss the promise land of joyous service. If we do something because it has worked in the past or “because we have always done it that way,” or if we refuse to do something differently because “we have never done it that way before” then we are just so much not serving God but serving our tradition and preconceptions; yea, even serving ourselves.

One of the most popular religions parade around idol-like images of the crucified Christ and teach in their religious service, the elements of the Lord’s Supper actually become the flesh and blood of Christ and are offered again and again. This is utter blasphemy and a dishonor to our Lord.

It is now time to “speak” to our Rock, Jesus Christ and He will supply all our needs. Jesus said of Himself “In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf.” Jn 16:23,24,26

We are responsible for and guilty of our own spiritual poverty. “You do not have because you do not ask.” Ja 4:2

We can believe the following only because it is the Divine Son of God making the statement. “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” Jn 14:13,14

The same rock that followed the Israleites is our rock and is with us, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Matt 28:18-20 He has all authority and He is with us untill the end.

O God enable us to ask great things of our Savior for His Glory.

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Our Ever Giving God

In chapter 36 Ezekiel is instructed to prophesy unto the mountains of Israel v 1. In v 6,7 God says that because Israel has borne the shame of the heathen they will bear their own shame. He proceeds to describe the prosperity that is to come, v 8-15. In verse 16 the word of the Lord comes again, recounts their sin, and God’s judgment on them 17-20 In verses 21-23 God explains that what He does for them, “is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.” In verses 24-25 we are told that God will replace them in the land and cleanse them of their sin. In verses 26-32 God says he will give them a new heart and explains what that involves. In verses 33-36 God says He will restore the land. After this long explanation of what God will do, in v 37, He gives us one more thing that He will do.

“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.’”

One would think that God had done enough. Now, after all He had done, God let’s them ask Him to do even more for them. It is as if God can’t stop giving, as if He is infinite in His giving. Now He gives them the privilege of prayer.

It is easy to see our selves in this story. We were thoroughly rebellious sinners with no heart for God, just like the Israelites. Loving the world and its pleasures and its idols more that God. But God came to us and showed us our sin and our misery. He didn’t owe us anything, this He did for His own glory. The Spirit of God worked in our lives first by giving us a new heart, one that loved God and was willing to do His will. “God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, complying with his holy will. Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul, as the turning a dead stone into living flesh. God will put his Spirit within, as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier.” Matthew Henry

The New Testament language is being, “born again” into the family of God, 1 Joh 5:1, and making us partakers of the Divine nature, 2 Pet 1:4. Now we are in a far better place than the Israelites ever had; For He was “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Eph 2:6,7

One would think that God has done enough. Now, after all He has done, God let’s us ask Him to do even more for us. It is as if God can’t stop giving, as if He is infinite in His giving. Now He gives us the privilege of prayer. We are told to “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Heb 4:16 We are to be coming openly, unreservedly to the throne of grace for what we need.

Jesus said “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you.” Joh 14:7 Did that text say “whatever you want?” Again He said “In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.” Joh 16:23 The “anything” of 14:7 sounds like the “Whatever” of 16:23. Did Jesus really mean what He said?

About 130 years before Ezekiel, Isaiah said “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; And give Him no

rest until He establishes And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Isa 62.6,7 This is our ever-giving God encouraging us to give him no rest until He gives the blessing.

It is obvious that part of God’s plan of blessing us is to move us to pray for His blessings. If we are not praying, we are not in the will of God and not in a condition to be blest of God.

What a great encouragement to know that God has designed into His plans our asking for what He is doing. Many things He has accomplished without our involvement such as creation and things too mysterious for our finite minds, but much of what God wants to do He requires us to ask Him to do. It is the will of God that we pray for those things He wants us to have. It is the process of asking that prepares us for the answer. There is no surer way to have our prayers answered than to pray in the will of God.

Yes, God is infinite in His giving. God will be giving us of Himself for eternity. God said to Abraham, I am your exceeding great reward.” Gen 15:1, Num 18:20 It is surprising enough that God would bless us wicked sinners, but then to let us have a part in fulfilling of His plans, that is more than one could have dreamed.

It is all of God; His determination to bless, the giving us a desire to be blessed, and giving us the privilege of praying for His will.

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare:

Jesus loves to answer prayer;

He himself has bide thee pray,

Therefore will not say thee nay.

Thou art coming to a King,

Large petitions with thee bring;

For his grace and power are such,

None can ever ask too much.

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Arguing with God

After the children of Israel had made the golden calf – “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ‘Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. 8 They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt! 9 The LORD said to Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. 10 Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’ 14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.” Ex 32:7-14

It is almost as if Moses began His prayer in disobedience. God said “**Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them;**” If there is such a thing as “holy disobedience” this must be it. God said “no” and Moses said “O LORD, why.” All of us parents have experienced this from our children, and sometimes we gave into their requests. Moses began arguing with God because He had an overwhelming love for the people. God especially likes intercessory prayer, it is the ministry that our Lord has now as we try to serve Him and

fail just as miserably as the Israelites. “George Mueller urged us to use ‘holy argument in prayer.’ Sibbes urged strong arguments because ‘they are of use and force to prevail with God.’ This is exactly what Moses did. It is what Luther and other men of importunate power have done.” *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel p 297

“I will make of you a great nation.” Moses cared not for himself but only for the people he wanted to see blest. This “arguing with God” kind of praying is not for one’s self, but for another. To argue with God we must be totally submitted to His will. Even our Lord had to practice submission, “Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” Mat 26:38,39 This kind of praying requires a total abandonment of one’s self-interest.

Moses argued that the people are His people, **“why does Your anger burn against Your people?”** How could God forget His people. They were the sheep of His pasture and He could not give them to the wolves.

Moses argued that God would be inconsistent if he brought the **“whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt.”** Did God start something that he could not finish, “I don’t think so.” Surely God could not be caught without a plan to finish His work.

Moses argued from the fact that God is all-powerful, **“with great power and with a mighty hand?”** God was a powerful God to deliver them from Egypt and He was still powerful a God to deliver them from themselves. God saved us from His wrath to come and can yet save us from our sinful habits.

“Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth?’ Moses argued that the Egyptians would say that God intended to do them harm. Moses knew that God was a good God and did not have any evil plan. The Egyptians needed to know that Jehovah is not like the other gods in Egypt. Moses argued for the glory of God’s name.

Moses makes his argument clear and unmistakable. **“Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people.”** Sometimes we error in our praying by not being specific. We need to have a specific burden and express it to God. One can be more insistent with God when he praying for another’s need.

“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens,’” Moses argued from the history of God’s redeeming acts for Israel. Moses argued from God’s faithfulness to His loyal servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and from the promises to them. Moses is saying, “God you said you would multiply their descendants not destroy them so you can’t destroy them now.”

“and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’ Moses argued from the promises that the people would inherit the land not be destroyed. God does not make promises and not keep them.

“So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.” Or so it would seem. God never really intended to destroy the people of Israel. He caused Moses to think that so he could be exercised to intercede for Israel. As Moses was conformed to the likeness of Christ in His intercession so are we when we give mighty arguments in praying for God’s people. “The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer.” C.H. Spurgeon

Only one who has established an intimate relationship with God can speak so boldly. “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” Ex 33:11 Being faithful to a secret life with God will give one the intimacy and boldness to argue with God. When a church gives corporate prayer its proper place then it can be a mighty force for God in the world.

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A Praying King

In Isaiah 36 and 37 we find an interesting story about Hezekiah king of Judah.

Our story begins in chapter 36:1 “Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.” In v 18 Sennacherib’s messenger says “*Beware* that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’ Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? ” Hezekiah’s reaction is “silence.” He does not argue with the enemies of God. It is vain to argue with the wicked. We should, as the old song says, “take our burdens to the Lord and leave them there.” Prayer is the answer to more of our problems than any of us realize. There isn’t anything that we should not pray about.

Instead of arguing with the enemy “he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD.” and sent a messenger to Isaiah (37:1,2) Here Hezekiah does three things. He humbles himself. He goes to the house of the Lord. He asked for help from someone who knows God. We would do well to follow Hezekiah’s example in the problems of our lives. Both personally and corporately we must humbly acknowledge our sin and repent from it. God will not hear us if we ignore our sin and do nothing about it. There is a time and place for personal prayer and there is a time and place for corporate prayer. Acts 12 gives us a similar confrontation with prayer as the remedy. Hezekiah also calls on someone that knew God to share his burden, that is, to be an intercessor. It is right to both ask for others to pray with us and for us to pray with others.

Isaiah’s response was “Thus says the LORD, ‘Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.’” verses 6,7 Hezekiah could not have received a greater encouragement. To hear a Word from God in the midst of our trouble can turn a fiery trial into a sunny beach.

Now what does Hezekiah do? Rest on the assurance that all will be well and go on with His normal life. No, He does what might appear to some a contradiction. In possession of God’s promise of deliverance Hezekiah sets himself to prayer. Notice where he prays. “Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.” Hezekiah went to the “house of the Lord,” the place of prayer. At the dedication of this temple, house of the Lord, King Solomon in 1 Kin 8:33,34 prayed for just such an occasion “When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy, because they have sinned against You, if they turn to You again and confess Your name and pray and make supplication to You in this house, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers” It times like these we need open, unashamed, bold, unreserved, humble, public prayer.

Notice what the letter says in verses 10-13 and what Hezekiah prays in verse 14 “he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, *even* Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who *were* in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, *and of* Hena and Ivvah?”

The unbelievers slandered God in saying that God was deceiving them with the false hope of deliverance. Other kingdoms have not been spared so you cannot expect to be spared. The fatal flaw in the logic of these unbelieving men is that God is no different than the other gods. Isn’t this the assumption in our pluralistic society? Everyone’s god is as good as anyone else’s god. Just as long as you are sincere. Sad to say, our modern brand of Christianity (?) is not appearing to be any different than any other religion.

Notice the content of Hezekiah’s prayer in verses 14-22. He spread the letter and symbolically said, “God, here is the problem, I give it to you. I can’t deal with it; it is up to you to deliver us.” v 14 In verses 15 & 16 Hezekiah extols God and honors Him as the sole supreme and only God. “You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.” In verse 17 Hezekiah ask God to hear his prayer and deal with Sennacherib who has reproached God. In verses 18 & 19 Hezekiah acknowledges the enemy’s accomplishments and in essence says I am defenseless against them. In verse 20 Hezekiah makes his specific request, “O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand” and equally important he gives the reason why God should answer this request “that all the

wood.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘Do it again.’ So they did it again. Then he said, ‘Do it a third time.’ So they did it a third time.” v 31-34 This drenching the sacrifice was going to make it abundantly clear that what God does is undeniably His doing. Too often we try to help God when we ought to be obeying, even if it means doing things that appear contrary to God’s will.

8. A 30 Second Prayer With A Right Motive. The power of Elijah’s prayer was not in the 62 words he said, nor in the way he said it, or even in the circumstances in which he said it. He experienced such powerful manifestation because God was working “When it was time for the evening offering, Elijah the prophet approached the altar and prayed: ‘O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are the true God and that you are winning back their allegiance.’” v 36 ,37

9. True Answer To Prayer Honors God. “Then fire from the LORD fell from the sky. It consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and the dirt, and licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell face down to the ground and said, ‘The LORD is the true God! The LORD is the true God!’” v 38,39

10. The Foundation Is Laid To Deal With Needs. “Then Elijah told Ahab, ‘Go on up and eat and drink, for the sound of a heavy rainstorm can be heard.’” v 41 The ears of faith can hear the blessing of answered prayer before the fact. Once we are right with God personally and corporately we can experience the blessing of God.

Let’s pray that God will do something that is undeniably of Him

A great prayer and a great victory for God and His people, but we forget that Elijah had been alone with God for over three years. It takes a lot of faithful “behind the scenes” praying to make visible victory like Elijah’s. A church that prays in the lonely nights will see the blessings on Sunday mornings. “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

The victories won by prayer;
By prayer must still be held;
The foe retreats, but only when
By prayer he is compelled.
Anonymous

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II. New Testament

But Prayer

In Acts 12:1-18 we have a story of a prayer meeting that got it’s answer while they were praying.

“About that time King Herod laid hands on some from the church to harm them. He had James, the brother of John, executed with a sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too. (This took place during the feast of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison, handing him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him. Herod planned to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. So Peter was kept in prison...” Ac 12:1-5

God is making darkness for His light to shine into, so that, we will better appreciate it and He will be more glorified. When diamonds are displayed it is done on a black background under bright lights. The black background gives contrast for the light that come through the diamond. God let all the circumstances build against these early Christians and especially Peter. He shines His grace and goodness on them and they sparkle for His glory. God is still bigger than all the circumstances even though they are combined in a single event. Things looked bad, the

execution of James, the arrest of Peter and under heavy guard, the cruelty of Herod, the hatred of the Jews, but it is simply a matter of God having them where He wants them for His purpose.

Everything was about as bad as it could be—"But." But someone prayed. **"but those in the church were earnestly praying to God for him."** Not just a repeated prayer like "now I lay me down to sleep." Nor, was it individual or momentary prayer. It was corporate prayer that was earnest. They had important things to be earnest about. So do we, the difference between them and the average church today is that they felt the urgency and they prayed. The average church today is content and unconcerned while being surrounded with problems of eternal consequences. Luke says they were "earnestly praying." Literally it could be translated "They were continually stretching themselves out." This was no doubt some serious praying. This is the kind of praying that is necessary to advance the kingdom of God today.

In Eph 2:16 we have another "but," the Divine "but" of our salvation that "And although you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly lived according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest... 4 **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, 5 even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you are saved!— 6 and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." We were lost, dead, hopeless, worthless—"but God." This made all the difference. The "but" of Eph 2 and the "but" of Acts 12 illustrate both the divine and human energies involved in advancing the Kingdom of God.

"On that very night before Herod was going to bring him out for trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the prison cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly!" And the chains fell off Peter's wrists. The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." Peter did so. Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your cloak and follow me.' Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening through the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 After they had passed the first and second guards, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went outside and walked down one narrow street, when at once the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, 'Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from everything the Jewish people were expecting to happen.' When Peter realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many people had gathered together and were praying." Ac 12:6-12

In the Divine order of things prayer is the circumstantial cause of what is prayed for and realized. God could have delivered Peter without the prayer meeting. But "Through prayer God gives humankind the dignity of limited causality." Pascal God could fulfill the "Great Commission" without our involvement but He gives us the privilege of being involved, to give, to pray, and to sacrifice for His glory. God is the first cause and ultimate cause of all things and He includes in His plan instrumental and circumstantial causes.

"When he knocked at the door of the outer gate, a slave girl named Rhoda answered. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she did not open the gate, but ran back in and told them that Peter was standing at the gate. But they said to her, "You've lost your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was Peter, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" Now Peter continued knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were greatly astonished. He gave them a signal with his hand to be quiet and then related to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. He said, "Tell James and the brothers these things," and then he left and went to another place." Ac 12:13-17

It seems that it was harder for Peter to get into the prayer meeting that it was for him to get out of jail. I wonder if God feel like it is harder to get His people praying that it is to get His preacher out of jail. The answer was just too good to be true., "You've lost your mind!" they said to Rhoda. There is nothing that encourages the people of God more than God's answer to prayer, especially when it is their own prayer that He has answered. In our prayer meetings we need to prayer for specific needs and to share the answers to those prayers.

Prayer is at the same time the greatest and most unused resource that Christians have. It ought to be the first recourse and the most used resource we have. There is nothing that we cannot pray about. If it weren't for times like

these we wouldn't pray at all. It is the trial and suffering that makes us pray. Many of us can testify that we do our best and maybe our only real praying when there is a crisis.

What is the state of our families and of our churches. When David saw the Philistine giant, Goliath, he expressed his concern and his brothers scolded him but he said, "What have I now done? *Is there not a cause?*" 1 Sam 17:29 There was a cause for David to take action and such is it with us. We can conquer all of our enemies and problems with prevailing prayer. History is replete with situations in which someone prayed. There are great needs today, will you be one that will pray.

God has appointed prayer as his way of dispensing, and our way of obtaining all promised good.

The Prayer Meeting and Its History, J. B. Johnston

A church is never more like the New Testament church than when it is praying.

He answered prayer—not in the way I sought

Nor in the way that I had thought He ought;

But in His own good way; and I could see

He answered in the fashion best for me.

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Jesus' Dying Prayers

Jesus prayed three times while He was on the Cross. We have all heard of "death bed" prayers. Jesus died a death completely different from the comforts of a bed. He used His dying breath to pray for others and commit Himself to God.

1. His prayer of intercession.

Lk 23:32,34 "Two other men, both criminals, were also led away to be executed with him. So when they came to the place that is called 'The Skull,' they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. But Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.' Then they threw dice to divide his clothes." It is easy for us to pray for those nearest to us that we love and who love us. We even pray for our friends. Our "Christianity" is not very Biblical if this is the only way we pray. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and 'hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be like your Father in heaven, since he causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don't they?" Mat 5:43-46 Jesus could have prayed for the Father to extinguish his persecutors, He was not deserving of such treatment and it would have been right for God to end it all and throw the wicked men into Hell fire. Instead, Jesus prayed for their forgiveness. What an example for us in our prayer life. If we can't pray for someone who hates us, then we haven't really learned to pray. What about the person that has lied about us or cheated us out of something we should have had? Can our prayers stand the test?

2. His prayer of confession.

Matt 27:45,46 "Now from noon until three, darkness came over all the land. At about three o'clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Out of Jesus' darkest hour we can hear Him pour out His heart to God. Not the confession of sin, for Jesus never sinned and could not sin. "God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God." 2 Corth 5:21 Jesus did not have any personal knowledge of sin and therefore had no sin to confess. But He did confess His true feelings to His Father. When all the world around us goes dark, can our voice be heard crying out to God? The Son of God that had never, from eternity past, known a moment of separation from the Father's loving fellowship was now forsaken. Jesus suffered the loss of the presence of God for a short time so we would not have to suffer that for ever. In a time when things were the most opposite to everything He had ever known, He confessed His true feelings.. So must we, be completely open and honest with God. "And

no creature is hidden from God, but everything is naked and exposed to his eyes to whom we must render an account.” Heb 4:13

3. His prayer of resignation.

Lk 23:46 “Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And after he said this he breathed his last.” Each one of us is going to breath our last. None of us know when it will be, therefore, we should live as if each day were the day we would breath our last. Jesus was a dying sacrifice totally resigned to the will of His Father so should we be a living sacrifice totally committed to our Father’s will. “Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service.” Rom 12:1 This is the way to glorify God and satisfy our souls. Each morning when we awake we should, commit our lives into the hands of our Father, in every experience of our life we should commit it all to our Father, our every desire should be submitted to the sovereign will of our Father. “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Gal 2:20 Our prayer life should acknowledge our complete commitment to the will of God. We should verbalize this as Jesus did, we should express our love for our God and our desire to be completely committed to Him in everything and ask for His help to live such a life.

He prayed upon the mountain,

He prayed for you and me,

He prayed in humble dwellings,

He prayed beside the sea.

He prayed in early morning,

Prayed with all His might,

He prayed at noonday and at dusk,

He prayed all thro’ the night.

He prayed for those who scorned Him,

For those who killed Him, too,

He prayed, “Father forgive them:

They know not what they do.”

He prayed when He was lonely,

He prayed when He was sad,

He prayed when He was weary,

He prayed when He was glad.

He prayed for those in sorrow,

He prayed for those in sin,

He prayed for those in trouble

That they might come to *Him*

D.W.L.

+ +

Prayer Meetings

Condensed from a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.”— Acts 1:14

The subject, therefore, this evening, suggested to me by the fact that we are going to meet for a day of prayer to-morrow, is that of prayer-meetings —assemblies of the people of God for worship of that peculiar kind which consists in each one expressing his desire before the Lord. Let us then go through very briefly: —

I. The Apostolical History of Meetings for Prayer.

They were, doubtless, every-day things. The first meeting for prayer which we find after our Lord’s ascension to heaven is the one mentioned in the text, and we are led from it to remark that *united prayer is the comfort of a disconsolate church*. Can you judge of the sorrow which filled the hearts of the disciples when their Lord was gone from them? They were an army without a leader, a flock without a shepherd, a family without a head. In the deep desolation of their spirits they resorted to prayer. They were like a flock of sheep that will huddle together in a storm, or come closer each to its fellow when they hear the sound of the wolf. Poor defenseless creatures as they were, they yet loved to come together, and would die together if need be. They felt that nothing made them so happy, nothing so emboldened them, nothing so strengthened them to bear their daily difficulties as to draw near to God in common supplication. Beloved, let every church learn the value of its prayer-meetings in its dark hour. There is but one remedy for these and a thousand other evils, and that one remedy is contained in this short sentence, “Let us pray.” One of the first uses of the prayer-meeting, then, is to encourage a discouraged people.

Again, if you look at the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you will perceive that *the prayer-meeting is the place for the reception of divine power*. “They were all with one accord in one place,” making their prayer, and, as they waited there, suddenly they heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, and the cloven tongues descended upon them, and they were clothed with the power which Jesus had promised them. Common fishermen became the extraordinary messengers of heaven. Illiterate men spake with tongues that they had never themselves heard. Now, the great want of the Church in all times is the power of the Holy Ghost. Now, if we want to get this, the most likely place in which to find it is the prayer-meeting. Oh! yes, this is the place to meet with the Holy Ghost, and this is the way to get his mighty power. If we would have him, we must meet in greater numbers; we must pray with greater fervency, we must watch with greater earnestness, and believe with firmer steadfastness. The next incident in this apostolic history you will find in Acts 4:31 and there you will see that *the prayer-meeting is the resource of a persecuted church*. Peter and John had been shut up in prison. They resorted to prayer, and we read that “when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness; and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” Anything that would make us pray would be a blessing, and if ever we should come to times of persecution again we must fly to the shadow of the Eternal, and keeping close together in simple, intense prayer, we shall find a shelter from the blast. In Acts 12 you find *the prayer-meeting made a means of individual deliverance*. Peter was in prison, and Herod promised himself the great pleasure of putting him to death. He was sleeping one night betwixt two soldiers, chained, and the keepers of the door kept the prison. But prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. And so in the middle of the night an angel smote Peter upon the side, and raised him up, and his chains fell off; he put his garments about him; every door opened as he advanced, and Peter found himself in the street, and wondered whether he was awake, or whether it was a vision. In Acts 13:13 we find a prayer-meeting *suggesting missionary operations*. Whilst the servants of God were met together in fasting and in prayer, the Holy Spirit 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. I think if we were oftener on our knees about God’s work, we should oftener do right, and the right methods and the right men, and the right plans would come to us. Oh! that we would but pray for such men, and, having got them, pray that God would make them full of himself, for they cannot run over with blessings to others, until they are full of blessing themselves. We should understand what the prayer-meeting is, if we did this. What was *the first Christian service that was held in Europe?* Do you know? Why, it was a prayer-meeting, in Acts 16. Paul went to the place where prayer was wont to be made by the river-side, and there he met with Lydia, and preached to her, and her heart was so opened that she received the truth. Very often, I do not doubt, in a Christian enterprise, the first foothold that a cause gets is the prayer-meeting. This, then, is the missionary’s lever; he begins with the prayer-meeting. I have gone through the early history of prayer-meetings, and shown you the extreme value of such to the Church of God.

II. What Are the Uses of the Prayer-meeting?

The prayer-meeting is useful to us in itself, and also very useful from the answer which it gets. *It is a very useful thing for Christians to pray with each other, even apart from the answer.* God has made our piety to be a thing which shall be personal, but yet he looks for family piety and makes us feel that all the saints are our brethren and sisters, and that, therefore, our meetings as Christian families, and as Christian Churches in the prayer-meeting, become the natural outgrowth of social godliness. The prayer-meeting sometimes *also generates devotion*. Some of the brethren may be very dull and heavy, but others who are at that time in a lively state of mind may stimulate and excite them. When you have been busy all the day, and are not able to shake off the cares of business, you get warmed up by getting near to each other in your prayers. And, more than that, the united fires being placed together on the hearth, the fire-brands are made to burn with greater power. There is a kind of divine force comes upon us sometimes at the prayer-meeting. Oh! it is a grand thing thus to be made fit again, with joints all oiled, and muscles all braced, and nerves all strung, for the battle of life. United prayer, then, serves this purpose, and therefore is it valuable. But, again, **united prayer is useful inasmuch as God has promised extraordinary and peculiar blessings in connection with it**, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." God asks agreement, and, once the saints agree, he pledges himself that the prayer of his agreeing ones shall be answered. Why, see what accumulated force there is in prayer, when one after another pours out his vehement desires; when many seem to be tugging at the rope; when many seem to be knocking mercy's gate; when the mighty cries of many burning hearts come up to heaven. When, my beloved, you go and shake the very gates thereof with the powerful battering-ram of a holy vehemence, and a sacred importunity, then is it that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. When first one, and then another, and yet another, throws his whole soul into the prayer, the kingdom of heaven is conquered and the victory becomes great indeed. The prayer-meeting is an institution which ought to be very precious to us, and to be cherished very much by us as a Church, for to it we owe everything. When our comparatively little chapel was all but empty, was it not a well-known fact that the prayer-meeting was always full? And when the Church increased, and the place was scarce large enough, it was the prayer meeting that did it all.

III. What Are the Hindrances to the Prayer-meeting?

There are some hindrances before the people come. **Unholiness hinders prayer.** A man cannot walk contrary to God, and then expect to have his prayers heard. **Discord always spoils prayer.** When believers do not agree, and are picking holes in each other's coats, they do not really love one another, and then their prayers cannot succeed. **Hypocrisy spoils prayer**, for hypocrites will creep in, you cannot help it. But there are some things which hinder the prayer-meeting when we are at it. One is **long prayers**. It is dreadful to hear a brother pray us into a good frame, and then, by his long prayer, pray us out of it again. Long prayers spoil prayer-meetings, for long prayers and true devotion in our public assemblies seem pretty much to be divorced from one another. Prayer-meetings are also hindered when those who get up to pray do not pray, but **preach a little sermon**, and tell the Lord all about themselves, though he knows their own better than they do, instead of asking at once for what they want. Prayer-meetings are often hindered by **a want of directness**, and by beating about the bush. I did admire a prayer I heard last Monday night, in which a brother said, "Lord, the orphanage wants £3,000; be pleased to send it." Prayer-meetings are sometimes hindered by **a want of real earnestness** in those who pray, and in those who pray in silence. I fear that much of our prayer is lost because we do not sufficiently throw our hearts into it. But the prayer-meeting may also be spoiled *after we have been to it*. "How say" say you. Why, **by our asking a blessing, and then not expecting to receive it**. God has promised that he will do to us according to our faith, but if our faith is nothing, then the answer will also be nothing. **Inconsistency, too, in not practically carrying out your desires** will also spoil the prayer-meeting. If you ask God to convert souls, but you will not do anything for those souls; if you ask God to save your children, but you will not talk to them about their salvation; if you ask God to save your neighbors, and you do not distribute tracts amongst them, nor do anything else for them, are you not altogether a hypocrite? You pray for what you do not put out your hand to get. You pray for fruit, but you will not put out your hand to pluck it, and all this spoils the prayer-meeting. Earnest prayer, however, is always to be followed up by persevering efforts, and then the result will be great indeed.

IV. What Should Be the Great Object of the Prayer-meeting, And That for Which We Should Seek the Answer?

First, **it must be the glory of God**, or else the petition is not sufficiently put up. Pray that King Jesus may have his own. Pray that the crown-royal may be set upon that dear head, that once was girt with thorns. Pray that the

thrones of the heathen may totter from their pedestals, and that Jesus may be acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And then, in subservience to that, let us **pray for a blessing on the Church**. We ought to exercise a little of our love for one another in praying for our fellow-members. Pray for the minister, for he needs it most; his necessities in that direction are the greatest, and therefore let him ever be remembered. Pray for the church officers: pray for the workers in all organizations: pray for the sufferers: prayer for the strong, for the weak, for the rich, for the poor, for the trembling, for the sick, for the backsliding, for the sinful. Yes, for every part of the one great body of Jesus let our supplications perpetually ascend. Then we should also pray **for the conversion of the ungodly**. Oh! this ought to be like a burden on our hearts; this ought to be prayed out of the lowest depths of a soul that is all aglow with sympathy for them. They are dying; they are dying; they are dying without hope. It is of no use my preaching to the people, my dear Christian brethren, unless you pray for them. It may be that you who pray have more to do with the blessed results than we who preach. He has given us his pledge that he will answer: believe it, and you shall see it, and you shall have the joy of it whilst His shall be the glory. Amen

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"Pray without ceasing"

1 Thess. 5:17

(From Works of Ezekiel Hopkins, 1874, Vol. 3, pp 579-581)

1.

That may be said to be done without ceasing, which is **done constantly, and at set times and seasons**. So we have the word used, Gen. 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter. and day and night, shall not cease:" that is, they shall not cease, in their courses and appointed times. So, here, "Pray without ceasing:" that is, observe a constant course of prayer, at fixed and appointed times; still keeping yourselves from any superstitious observations. And, thus, Exod. 29:42: the daily sacrifice is called "a continual burnt-offering;" and yet it was offered up only every morning and every evening, and yet God accounts it a continual offering. So here "Pray" continually, or "without ceasing:" that is, keep up frequent and appointed times for prayer, without intermission.

2.

To pray without ceasing, is to **pray with all importunity and vehemence**. So, in Acts 12:5, "the Church" is said to pray for Peter "without ceasing;" that is, they were very earnest and importunate, and would give God no rest until he heard them. So, also, in the parable of the unjust steward, which our Saviour spake on purpose to show how prevalent with God importunity is, Luke 18:1, it is said, that the Lord would teach them that they "ought always to pray:" that is, that they ought to pray earnestly and importunity is not giving over till they were heard. So, also, I Sam. 7:7,8, the children of Israel entreated Samuel not to cease crying to the Lord for them: that is, that he would improve all his interest at the throne of grace to the utmost in their behalfs. So we are bid to "pray without ceasing:" that is, to be earnest and vehement, resolving to take no denial at the hands of God. But yet we must do other duties also, though we are vehement in this. We may learn how to demean ourselves in this case towards God, by beggars who betimes come to your doors and bring their work along with them: they beg importunately, and yet they work betwixt whiles: so also should we do: we should beg as importunately of God, as if we depended merely upon his charity; and yet, betwixt whiles, we should work as industriously as if we were ourselves to get our livings with our own hands.

3.

To "pray without ceasing," is to **improve all occasions, at every turn, to be darting up our souls unto God in holy meditations and ejaculations**. And this we may and ought to do, when we hear or read the word, or in whatever duty of religion we are engaged: yea, this we may and ought to do, in our worldly employments. If your hearts and affections be heavenly, your thoughts will force out a passage, through the crowd and tumult of worldly businesses, to Heaven Ejaculations which are swift messengers, which require not much time to perform their errands in. For there is a holy mystery in pointing our earthly employments with these heavenly ejaculations, as men point their writings sometimes with stops [periods]; even now and then shooting up a short mental prayer unto heaven: such pauses as these are, you will find to be no impediments to your worldly affairs. This is the way for a Christian to

4.

Prayer worth calling prayer, prayer that God will call true prayer and will treat as true prayer, takes for more time by the clock than one man in a thousand thinks. Alexander Whyte

God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm.

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Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;

The clouds ye so much dread

Are filled with mercies, and shall break

In blessings 'round thy head.

[illegible]

“Behold he is praying”

Lessons from the conversion of Paul Acts 9:1-25

Acts 9:11 “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 is praying.**” The Greek says “praying for himself,” he wasn’t depending on someone else to do his praying. “God has no stillborn children; as soon as any are quickened by his grace, they cry unto him; prayer is the breath of a regenerate man, and shows him to be alive. He who before was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, now breathes after communion with Christ and them.” Our Lord said “Behold” a new Christian praying.

Prayer is the initial experience in salvation. v 5

Note that- the first thing Paul does is acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This initial experience was initiated by God Himself. In v 4 the Lord begins this dialogue.

Prayer is instinctive to the Christian. v 5

Without thinking, Paul responded in prayer and in submission. We should have the habit of praying without hesitation or question. We just do it. Pray and Obey.

Exceeding Abundant Encouragement to Prayer

Eph 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto 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 the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Do you ever get discouraged in praying? Do you ever have an inner desire to pray fervently and victoriously but just can't get over being discouraged? The Bible is abundant with texts and testimonies to encourage us in prayer. It is probably true that, if we are discouraged from praying it is because we are not reading our Bibles.

This portion of Scripture is a great remedy for discouragement.

Notice first what Paul is praying for:

that we may be strengthened in the inner man,
that Christ may dwell in our hearts,
that we be rooted and grounded in love,
that we may know the love of Christ,
that we may be filled unto the fulness of God.

All these things are aspects of Christian character. If our character and our relationship to God are what they ought to be all else will be as it should be.

Paul recaps what he is praying for by giving his praying and us over to God, "Now unto him." He recognizes that God is all-powerful. God is necessarily all-powerful (or omnipotent). He would not be God if He did not possess all and unlimited power. Paul is reminding God that He is able to do what he is asking, and encouraging himself and us at the same time. God's power reaches to all things: past, present, and future; good and bad; in His will or out of His will; directly from Him or through delegated powers. The only thing that God cannot do, are things contrary to his nature and inconsistent with his will. "He cannot deny Himself." 2 Tim 2:13

Paul encourages us to expect answers to our praying by saying that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." If He can do above what we ask of think then certainly He can do what we ask or think. Sometimes He answers before we ask and other times it is after much asking. Sometimes it is what we can understand to be for our good and His glory and other times it is something we can't imagine that can be for any good or any glory to Him. God is in total control.

This gives us great encouragement to go to God, and ask such things of Him as we want, and He has provided. Heb 4:16 says "Let us therefore draw near with boldness (free speaking) unto the throne of grace, "

All this He does as He develops Christian character in us "according to the power that works in us." God has worked powerfully to deliver us from the wrath of His infinite justice and He is accordingly working in us now to make us what we ought to be and useful for His glory.

The conclusion of the apostle's prayer, in which the power of God is celebrated, is "unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

Thou art coming to a King; large petitions with thee bring.

The Lord Has Heard and Answered Prayer

The Lord has heard and answered prayer

and saved his people in distress;

this to the coming age declare,

that they his holy name may bless.
The Lord, exalted on his throne,
looked down from heav'n with pitying eye
to still the lowly captive's moan
and save his people doomed to die.
All men in Zion shall declare
his gracious name with one accord,
when kings and nations gather there
to serve and worship God the Lord
The earth and heav'ns shall pass away,
like vesture worn and laid aside,
but changeless you shall live alway,
your years forever shall abide.
You, O Jehovah, shall endure,
your throne forever is the same;
and to all generations sure
shall be your great memorial name.

Psalm 102:17-27 The Psalter, 1912; alt. 1990 mod.

Tune 1973 from the Oxford Books of Carols by permission of Oxford University Press

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Bold Praying

Let's do a word study. The Greek word *parresia* means "outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech that conceals nothing" (Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon of NT*); "freedom in speaking without concealment, ambiguity, or circumlocution" (Thayer); "the speaking all one thinks, free-spokenness, as characteristic of a frank and fearless mind" (*Critical Lexicon & Concordance*) To sum up these definitions "boldness," *parresia*, is, saying all that one thinks, in clear terms, not hiding anything or running in circles with our words, or more simply "unreserved & direct speaking."

Bold or "unreserved & direct speaking" in our praying is necessary for effectual praying. Following are four occurrences of this word in the N.T. which encourage us in praying.

Bold Praying with Access and Confidence

Eph 3:12 "In whom we have **boldness** (*parrhesia*) and access with confidence by the faith of him." Note the association with "access" and "confidence." Access is the right or opportunity to get to someone. Confidence is trust in knowing that we can exercise our access and be accepted and not rejected. This access is with boldness, or "unreserved & direct speaking." We can and should use the access that we have to God to say what ever we want to say. We should have a holy courage or confidence and trust that God will accept and hear us. We have no reason to have fear or a spirit of bondage.

Bold Praying for Mercy & Grace

Heb 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. 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. Let us therefore come **boldly** (*parrhesia*) unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” How can a defiled and sinful person approach God? He must first cleanse and qualify himself, but this he can not do to the satisfaction of an infinitely holy and vengeful God. The work of qualifying us must be done for us. There are two things that this text says we get by boldly coming: 1. **Mercy**, which is not getting what we deserve, that is eternal judgment and 2. **Grace**, which is getting what we do not deserve, that is, all “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Eph 2:7

Bold Praying by the Blood of Jesus

Heb 10:19 “Having therefore, brethren, **boldness** (*parrhesia*) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” The blood of Jesus has cleansed us of all defilements so there is nothing to hinder us. If our coming to God depended on our own worthiness we would have great reason to fear. We have liberty granted to us by God on the basis of what our substitute has accomplished for us. To be timid in our approach to God would say that we don’t trust what has been done for us or that what has been done is maybe not sufficient. What a great compliment and glory it is to God for us to take Him at His word and come with “unreserved & direct speaking.”

Bold Praying’s condition

1 Jn 3:21,22 “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we **confidence** (*parrhesia*) toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” also **5:14** “And this is the confidence (*parrhesia*) that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:” Jesus laid the foundation for this in Jn 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 always the secret to answered prayer, even in the case of Jesus Himself. This abiding relationship is the assumed condition of all answers to prayer. So, what should be our responsibility in relation to prayer being answered? Simply this, “to abide in Him.” We are to be in constant obedience and fellowship and we can claim the promise “ask anything in my name, I will do *it*.” Jn 14:14

All four of these passages are in the Present tense, which is saying that we are to be continually having this boldness or “unreserved & direct speaking.” This is something that should be natural and normal to us which God would have us to experience on a continual basis. . My dear fellow-prayer **“Let us have boldness with our great God.”**

The Spirit imparts a sense of sonship and acceptance that creates freedom and confidence in the presence of God.

Behold the Throne of Grace!

Behold the throne of grace!

The promise calls me near:

There Jesus shows a smiling face,

And waits to answer prayer.

That rich atoning blood,

Which sprinkled round I see,

Provides for those who come to God,

An all-prevailing plea.

My soul, ask what thou wilt;

Thou canst not be too bold:

Since his own blood for thee he spilt,

What else can he withhold?

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What wond'rous grace! who knows its full extent?
A creature, dust and ashes, speaks with God--
Tells all his woes, enumerates his wants,
Yea, pleads with Deity, and gains relief.
'Tis prayer, yes, 'tis 'effectual, fervent prayer,'
Puts dignity on worms, proves life divine,
Makes demons tremble, breaks the darkest cloud,
And with a princely power prevails with God!
And shall this privilege become a task?
My God, forbid! Pour out thy Spirit's grace,
Draw me by love, and teach me how to pray.
Yea, let Thy holy unction from above
Beget, extend, maintain my intercourse
with Father, Son, and Spirit, Israel's God,
Until petitions are exchanged for praise
Irons.

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Mary's Example in Prayer

The mother of Jesus exemplifies true praying. In Jn 2:1-11 we have the story of Jesus turning the water into wine. It begins "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine----" Now let's see how Mary reacts to this situation.

1. **"And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him"** She goes to the right place with the need. In 6:68 "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."
2. **"They have no wine"** She was assuming someone else's problem--she was being an *intercessor*. To pray for ourselves (i.e. our family and friends) only, is selfish and forsakes the responsibility we have in prayer.
3. **"They have no wine"** She states the problem. Prayer is simply telling it to Jesus and leaving it in His care and timing. 1 Pe 5:7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
4. **"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come."** Mary is rebuffed. Sometimes we are rebuffed when God doesn't quickly answer our prayer. This is "trusting time."
5. **"His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."** She had done enough. She did not try to influence or help Him or even express concern. Jesus knew the problem and that was enough.
6. **"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."** She did not concern herself with the means that Jesus might use. She is in submission to what ever Jesus does and in whatever way He does it. If we give God great liberty to work He will do great things in great ways.
7. **"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece."** Jesus worked in the existing circumstances by using the six water pots. God can bless us right where we are and with what we have. Obedience where we are is our responsibility.

8. **“Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.”** Jesus gave a simple and what seemed to be an unrelated command. Remember Naaman in 2 Ki 5:11 who said, “Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.” He was upset with God’s means but when he obeyed he was healed. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

9. **“And they filled them up to the brim.”** They obeyed as much as possible, “to the brim.” In 2 Ki 13:18,19 the prophet told the king to smite the ground, he smote only three times and the prophet rebuked him. We need to obey to the degree we want God to bless.

10. **“And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.”** Obedience is consistently required. Trust even when there’s risk of embarrassment and failure.

11. **“When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was:”** God normally works behind the scenes and with people that are not significant to the people of this world. Here it is the servants, the least esteemed, that God uses. Are we willing to be such to be used of God?

12. **“But the servants which drew the water knew”** “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” Jon 15:15

13. **“The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”** We never get the best until Jesus comes and becomes our Savior and Supplier. If we are feeling rebuffed and still waiting on God’s blessing, cheer up, “it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.” 1 Co 2:9 “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” The good wine will come last and it must come from Jesus because of what He did for us.

14. **“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory.”** Rom 11:36 “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

15. **“and his disciples believed on him.”** Seeing God work, glorify His name and meet needs always increases the faith of His people and glorifies God.

Let us pray that Jesus will come into our lives and work for His glory and our good.

You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.
John Bunyan

Oh, closer every day;

Let me lean harder on Thee, Jesus,

Yes, harder all the way.

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Our Continual Responsibility to Pray

The Greek word *proskartereo* makes an interesting and helpful study on prayer. The dictionary gives great breadth in its meaning: “to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing, to persevere and not to faint, to show one’s self courageous for, to be in constant readiness for one, wait on constantly.” We put this together as: **“To be steadfastly attentive to with constant readiness and unremitting care that one might persevere and show oneself courageous.”** Five of the ten occurrences of this word are used in exhortations to pray. Nothing else has this degree of emphases. Not: giving of money, attending church, showing of hospitality, exercise of gifts, doctrine, or preaching. All five occurrences are in a continuous action tense, emphasizing the continual responsibility we have to prayer.

1. Ac 1:14 “All these **continued** together in prayer with one mind, together with the women, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” The first occurrence of our word is pre-pentecost and in preparation of pentecost. This is referring to corporate prayer. They continued “to be steadfastly attentive to prayer with constant

readiness and unremitting care, persevering and showing themselves courageous” and the promised blessing of pentecost came in power and glorifying of God in Christ Jesus. The historical context was the beginning of an entirely new program in God’s eternal plan. Nothing could be more appropriate than this kind of prayer at this point.

2. Ac 2:42 “They **were devoting themselves** to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” After pentecost the believers continued “to be steadfastly attentive to with constant readiness and unremitting care, persevering and showing themselves courageous” in **corporate** prayer and the blessings continued to come. Sometimes we long for our churches to have the zeal and power that the church in Acts had. It seems obvious that Acts 2:42 contains the secret to their usefulness for God. Why and for how long will we continue in our own powerless ways?

3. Ac 6:4 “But we **will devote ourselves** to prayer and the ministry of the word.” The leaders of the new born church took the necessary precaution “to be steadfastly attentive to pray with constant readiness and unremitting care, persevering and showing themselves courageous.” As they began to lead the church they understood the necessity of prayer. Prayer was so important to them that they delegated other necessary duties to others, so they could have sufficient time for prayer. What a change we would see in our churches if its leaders would protect their responsibility to pray. Most of our churches are run in the energy of the flesh and not in the power of the Spirit.

4. Rom 12:9-13 “Love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another. Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in suffering, **persist** in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, pursue hospitality.” Paul is exhorting us to not be hypocritical, but sincere in expressing our love. When he says “persist in prayer,” he is telling us to “to be steadfastly attentive to prayer with constant readiness and unremitting care, persevering and showing ourselves courageous in prayer.” The context suggests that this praying is “intercessory prayer” i an exercise of our love. Love is the identifying characteristic of the children of God, “Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another.” Jn 13:35 It is impossible for one to love God if he does not love his fellow Christian. 1 Jn 4:20 “If anyone says ‘I love God’ and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar, because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” We must love and pray for our brothers and sisters in our Lord.

5. Col 4:2-5 “Be **devoted to prayer**, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may make it known as I should.” He adds emphasis by saying that we should “keep alert in prayer with thanksgiving” He also gets personal with the saints at Colosse when he asks them to intercede for him that they might have opportunity to “proclaim the mystery of Christ.” Paul is making thanksgiving and intercession integral parts of the kind of prayer we are to be devoted to, that is, “to be steadfast, attentive to with constant readiness and unremitting care, persevering and showing ourselves courageous.” We certainly have much to be thankful for, this in itself is sufficient to make our praying full and lively. Then again, Paul is the missionary and the Colosse Christians are to support him in intercessory prayer. Most of us know someone who is either on the mission field or in the ministry of a church that we could pray for. There are three ways to fulfill the great commission “go and make disciples of all nations,” Ma 28:19: **1. In person** as Paul did. **2. In financial support** as the Philippians did Ph 4:15, **3. In prayer** as the Colosse Christians are exhorted to do.

Four of the above five occurrences are dealing with corporate prayer and the fifth (Ac 6:4) is dealing with prayer in the leadership of the Church. The basic lesson is that prayer should get its proper emphasis in our churches. Without it there is no hope for the presence and power of God.

A church is never more like the New Testament church than when it is praying.

A congregation without a prayer meeting is essentially defective in its organization, and so must be limited in its efficiency. *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

It is not enough to begin to pray, nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must pray patiently, believing, continue in prayer until we obtain an answer. George Mueller

Prayer is indeed a continuous violent action of the spirit as it is lifted up to God. This is comparable to that of a ship going against the stream. Luther

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Paul's Prayer for the Colosse Christians

**"For this reason we also, from the day we heard,
have not ceased praying for you and" Col 1:9-12**

I. The Object of Paul's prayer.

"asking God to fill you with the knowledge" Paul is praying for a completion and perfecting of that which God has begun in them. "To fill" is to carry into effect, bring to realization. Knowledge here is "a knowledge grounded on personal experience" Paul want us to come into complete realization of our personal experience of God. **"of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,"** Paul is praying that we might have personal experience in "spiritual understanding" of the mysteries of grace. God gives us understanding in "things angels long to catch a glimpse of." 1 Pet 1:12

II. The Purpose of Paul's prayer involves two things.

1. Our Character **"so that you may live worthily of the Lord"** "I, therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live worthily of the calling with which you have been called," Eph 4:1 "to walk by faith in him;" 2 Cor 5:7, "to walk after his Spirit," Gal 5:16, and according to His word, to have a way of life as becomes his Gospel, Phil 1:27, and worthy of that calling wherewith the saints are called by grace to the obtaining of his kingdom and glory. 1 Thes 2:12

2. His pleasure **"and please him in all respects"** In ourselves we can do nothing to please God, but because of Christ redeeming work for us, we have faith and love toward God that makes our works acceptable.

III. The Answer of Paul's prayer.

Note four phrases that describe the action of knowing God's will. **"bearing fruit in every good deed,"** children of God are trees that bear righteousness, they are a planting of the Lord and under the influence of divine grace they bring forth the fruits of righteousness. **"growing in the knowledge of God,"** When a Christian becomes full of knowledge, his capacity grows so there is room for more knowledge of God's person and will. The cycle continues and will continue into eternity. **"being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might"** Believers are weak in themselves, and insufficient to do or bear anything of themselves, but stand in need of strength from above, proportionate to the various kinds of services, temptations, and trials they are called unto. All power belongs to God, it is a perfection of his nature, and has been, and is gloriously displayed in many things; as in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the upholding of all things in their being. **"for the display of all patience"** To bear patiently all afflictions and tribulations and wait patiently for the things promised by God, "to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing" Tit 2:13 **"and steadfastness,"** to be slow to anger, and not easily provoked to wrath; to be ready to forgive injuries; and to bear long, and with patience, all reproaches and persecutions for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; **"with joy"** with a cheerful spirit, or with joy in the Holy Ghost; to esteem reproach for Christ's sake above the riches and honors of this world; to rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. **"giving thanks to the Father"** As Paul prays for us to be thankful for all things, so should we pray for ourselves and for one another, that we should be humble and full of gratitude toward God.

How does the contents of this prayer compare with the contents of our prayers. Our Spiritual needs are more important than our physical. We should be praying for ourselves and for one another that we might be full of experiential knowledge of God's will in a spiritually wise and understanding way so that we may walk worthily of our Lord and please Him in all things as we bear the fruit of good deeds, ever growing in knowing Him, manifesting patience, steadfastness, and joy.

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

I thought that in some favoured hour
 At once he'd answer my request;
 And, by his love's constraining power,
 Subdue my sins and give me rest.
 Instead of this, he made me feel
 The hidden evils of my heart,
 And let the angry power of hell
 Assault my soul in every part.
 "Lord, why is this?" I trembling cried.
 "Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?"
 "Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
 "I answer prayer for grace and faith."
 "These inward trails I employ
 From self and pride to set thee free,
 And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
 That thou may'st seek thy all in me!"

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Paul's Requests for Prayer

Our Lord said in Mat12:34-37 "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." There is a definite correlation between what one thinks or the desires in His heart and what he talks about. This applies to one's praying. We pray for, and ask others to pray for, what we hold dear in our hearts. If we are praying for health and wealth, then that reveals what is dear to us. The requests given out in our prayer meetings reveals what we are most concerned about. Some prayer meetings have been nicknamed named "an organ recital" because there are so many requests for hearts, kidneys, livers, gall bladders, etc. The first two requests the Lord taught us (Luke 11:1) to include in our prayers are "Father, hallowed be your name." the honor and glory of God; and "Your kingdom come," the success of God's program in this world. After this we are told to pray "Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins..." It is helpful to review the prayer request that Paul had. Notice what he requested each of the following churches to pray.

1. The Romans--for His Service. Rom 15:30,32 "I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company."

2. The Thessalonians--that God's Word Might Prosper. 2 Thess 3:1-3 "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."

3. The Thessalonians--for Deliverance. 2 Thess 3:1-3 "Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."

4. The Hebrews--for the Brethren. Heb 13:18,19 "Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner."

5. The Corinthians--for their Gifts to Him. 2 Cor 1:11 "You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many."

6. The Ephesians--for His Preaching. Eph 6:18-20 "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak."

7. The Colossians--for an Open Door. Col 4:3,4 "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak."

Prayer 89 Bible Outline Studies, Basil Miller, p 54

The above prayer request could be an outline for our praying, personally of corporately. May we accept Paul's request as if our own leaders and friends were making it.

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Paul's Prayers for Others

Intercessory prayer is the responsibility of all Christians and especially of Christian leaders. If one is sincere about wanting to help people to have a better relationship with God, he will pray for them. Genuine Christian love will cause one to pray for the one loved. Godly leaders will follow the example of our Lord and pray for the sheep. God has given us good example in Paul of how to pray for others. Paul prayed for:

1. The Romans - to come them. Rom 1:8-19 "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you." We are to pray for others with thankfulness conditioned on the will God. We should pray for others that we have never met, thanking God for what he has done in and with their lives. We should be consistent in praying for others, this shows true concern for them. We should pray that we might be able to make a contribution to their lives as God wills and for His glory.

2. The Thessalonians - to see them. 1 Thes 3:10-12 "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith? Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." We are to pray much "Night and day." We are to pray for God to direct us so that we might have the opportunity to help others in areas that lack and that they may abound in love for others.

3. Israel - that they might be saved. Rom 10:1-5 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." We are to pray for the salvation of others, even for those who have rejected the truth and the Savior. Even though they have persecuted us and fought against God, we are still to pray for them.

4. The Corinthians - that they might be pure. 2 Cor 13:7 "Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates." We are to pray for the "holiness" of others in relation to God and for their "honesty" in relation to others without regard for our reputation.

5. The Ephesians - that they might have wisdom. Eph 1:16-19 "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 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: 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, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." We are not

6. The Phillipians - that they might abound in love. Phil 1:9-11 "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." We are to pray for others that they may increase in knowing God and in the ability to apply truth to everyday life without being offensive, and have the righteousness of Christ.

Prayer 89 Bible Outline Studies, Basil Miller p 55

Intercession is the Noblest Work of God Entrusts to us Humans

The power of the Church truly to bless rests on intercession--asking and receiving heavenly gifts to carry to men. of prayer, men mighty in prayer. *Power Through Prayer*, E. M. Bounds

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Acts 1:14 “All these continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” Jesus’ last instruction to the disciples was “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Ac 1:5 We can’t be sure of what they understood “baptized with” to mean but obviously they were willing for it. Jesus further entices them with “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 1:8 I suspect that the last phrase “to the end of the earth” just blew their minds, but it didn’t seem to scare them. After Jesus was taken up from them into Heaven they quickly obeyed. They returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper room and our text describes what they did. They continued or they were steadfastly devoting themselves to prayer, they gave themselves unremittingly to prayer, they persevered and did not faint in their prayer, they were in constant readiness for prayer. Acts 2 recorded the unsurpassed events that resulted. The lesson is clear, if we give prayer its proper

place, God will bless beyond our comprehension. “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,” Eph 3:20

Acts 2:42 “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.” Verse 41 ends with “and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” This mighty work of God compelled these early Christians to continue or to be steadfastly devoted to prayer, to give themselves unremittingly to prayer, to persevere and not to faint in prayer, to be in constant readiness for prayer, as they had before this in 1:14. The result of their faithfulness to persist in doing what was right is recorded in v 43 “And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.” It is both simple and mysterious. Nothing complicated about giving ourselves to prayer, but mysterious when we realize we don't do it. It is obvious that they, plural, corporately gave themselves to the teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. All four items have the definite article making it a matter of specific identity. If the first three are corporate, then the fourth is also. They were praying in “the prayer meetings” with steadfast devotion.

Ac 6:4 “But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” Now things have grown to the point that problems have appeared and some needs of the people are not being properly met. Priorities have to be identified and responsibilities have to be delegated. The apostles determined that their first priority would be to “give ourselves continually to prayer” that is, to steadfastly devote themselves to prayer, to give themselves unremittingly to prayer, to persevere and not to faint in prayer, to be in constant readiness for prayer, “and to the ministry of the word.” This they are doing together, corporately. We see proof of this in the plural “ourselves” and the fact that “ministry of the word” is a corporate ministry. They were not satisfied in each one having his secret time of prayer. They were serious and corporately laid hold of God in prevailing prayer.

Rom 12:12 “Rejoicing in hope; be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” The glory days of Pentecost are in the past, now it is tribulation times and the exhortation is to be steadfastly devoted to prayer, to give unremitting to prayer, to persevere and not to faint in prayer, to be in constant readiness for prayer, Note the flow of the context, v 1 “I appeal to you...brothers...” v 3 “I say to everyone among you...” v. 4 “as in one body we have many members,” v 5 “though many, are one body in Christ” v 10 “love one another with brotherly affection” v 12 “...be constant in prayer” v 13 “contribute” to the needs of the saints” v 16 “Live in harmony with one another” v 18 “...live peaceably with all men.” The entire context is speaking to the Roman Christians as a corporate body. The exhortation to be steadfastly devoted to prayer, to give unremittingly to prayer, to persevere and not to faint in prayer, to be in constant readiness for prayer is given to the corporate body of believers. We as a body of believers are to be rejoicing in hope, being patient in tribulation, and continue in prayer.

Eph 6:18 “Praying always at all times and in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.” Paul is discussing the armor of God with which we should equip ourselves. After he names all the equipment, climaxing with “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” he brings it altogether by saying “pray.” That is, we are to be praying always at all times, we are not to cease and there is no inappropriate time to pray. Prayer must be in the Spirit and watch with a steadfast devotion to prayer, giving ourselves unremittingly to prayer, that we might persevere and not to faint in prayer, being constant readiness for prayer. It seems that Paul can not say enough about prayer and how important it is. Even with all the armor of God in place we still must pray.

Col 4:2 “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving;” We are to be steadfastly devoted to prayer, to give unremittingly to prayer, to persevere and not to faint in prayer, to be in constant readiness for prayer, and be careful to watch for all those things we should be thankful. We will never be without much for which to thank God.

If one understands the importance that the Bible attaches to pray, he is not surprised that six times such a strong exhortation is pressed upon us. If one does not understand the importance of prayer then he has these six exhortations to press him into the practice of prayer so he will understand. Both on the corporate and the individual levels we are to be steadfastly devoting ourselves to prayer, to giving unremittingly to prayer, to persevering and not to fainting in prayer, to be in constant readiness for prayer."

We have plenty of Biblical examples. There is a wrestling Jacob, a Daniel who prayed three times a day, and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elias; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises. We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent

in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much need of it. So deep are our necessities, that until we are in heaven we must not cease to pray. CHS

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The Ultimate Answer to Prayer

No doubt Genesis 15 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. It is the climax of God's dealing with Abraham, known as the Father of the faithful. "After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen 15:1 cp Deut 10:9

When Abraham rescued Lot from the kings (Ch 14), he refused to take any reward for doing so. Abraham's concern was not the spoil of battle; he was a man of principle and was occupied with the transcendent truths of God. The "word of the Lord" that here comes to Abraham was probably the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. He says, "**I am...** thy exceeding great reward." He Himself would be Abraham's reward. Christ is our reward; He was our representative before the judgment of God when he died in our stead. Our reward is the fruit of His labors, we have His imputed righteousness and He is our intercessor for us now at the Father's right hand. All the blessings of grace and glory are ours because of Him and His work for us, now and for all eternity.

"The word of Lord," the incarnate Christ Jesus speaks to us with a similar message. In Luke 11:11-13 our Lord is teaching us about prayer. After He tells the story of the three friends, which illustrates intercessory prayer, He makes the analogy of a Father giving a son good things. "And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? Or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, **how much more shall your heavenly Father give...**" This is simple but profound and powerful logic. Of course a Father would not give a rock and a scorpion to his son who asks for an "egg sandwich." Our Heavenly is not only as good as an earthly father; He is infinitely better. But notice how our Lord interjects a new and startling idea. Jesus identifies the object of the Father's giving as "the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Just as Abraham had the person of God as His reward, which is infinitely better than all material and family blessings, so we can have the person of the Holy Spirit as our very own, which is infinitely better than all other things combined.

If the Holy Spirit is a gift of our Father then we can easily see the reasonableness of our asking for what He wants to give. The text says "...to them that ask." Isn't that the essence of what prayer really is, asking for what God wants to give. Why should we ask for the Holy Spirit? We must have the help of the Holy Spirit in wanting to pray. We must have His power in the exercise of prayer. Phil 2:13 "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." We do not know what to pray for so we need Him to inform us and lead us in prayer. Rom 8:26 "in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought;" Prayer is an intimate partnership with the Holy Spirit, He give us boldness to wrestle and prevail, as Jacob in Gen. 32:24, to the overcoming of God's reluctance to bless. Heb 4:16 "Let us therefore draw near with boldness."

Ultimate prayer request is appropriate for the ultimate answer to prayer. We need to be begging God for a special relationship and presence of the Holy Spirit. Is not God, the Giver, more than all His gifts?

Only when we have the Holy Spirit as our Lord is teaching will our prayer life and our prayer meetings be what they need to be.

But it is the Holy Spirit of God Who is prayer's great Helper. *The Kneeling Christian*

Prayer is an art, which only the Spirit can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer. C. H. Spurgeon

The biggest thing God ever did for me was to teach me to pray in the Spirit. Samuel Chadwick

Come, O Come, Thou Quickening Spirit

Come, O come, thou quick'ning Spirit,

God from all eternity!

May the power never fail us;

dwell within us constantly

Then shall truth and life and light
 banish all the gloom of night.
 Grant our hearts in fullest measure
 wisdom, counsel, purity.
 That we ever may be seeking
 only that which pleaseth thee.
 Let thy knowledge spread and grow,
 working error's overthrown.
 Show us, Lord, the path of blessing:
 when we trespass on our way,
 cast, O Lord, our sins behind thee
 and be with us day by day.
 Should we stray, O Lord, recall;
 work repentance when we fall.
 Holy Spirit, strong and mighty,
 thou who makest all things new,
 make thy work within us perfect
 and the evil foe subdue.
 Grant us weapons for the strife
 and with victory crown our life.

Heinrich Held, ca. 1664; Charles F. Gounod, 1872; Tr. by Charles W. Schaeffer, 1866; alt; alt. 1961

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We have Prayer because there was a Resurrection

Christ's resurrection proves He has the power to fulfill His promises. Jesus said, "ask what so ever you will and it will be done." "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you." Mk 11:22-24 A dead Christ could not make good on any promise, especially one like this. Only a resurrected and powerful Jesus can give all things we ask in prayer.

Christ's resurrection was necessary so He could continue His work. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:12-14 He could not do it, what ever that might be, if He had not risen and gone to the Father. We could not do greater things than He did if He were not alive and working in us. There could not be answered prayer if He had not risen and ascended. But He has risen and there is answer to prayer. Praise God and the Lamb forever.

The first encounter with the resurrected Christ was to Mary as she lingered in the garden, after the others had left perplexed and discouraged, John 20:11-18 **The Second** was to the two on the road to Emmaus Luke 24:13-32 **The Third** was to the eleven after the two followers of Jesus talked to Him on the road to Emmaus, came to Jerusalem. Luke 24:33-49 Note the progression: Jesus showed Himself to one, then two, then to a small group and

again eight days later, and then to 500 brethren. It seems that out of the 10 appearances of the risen Lord Jesus only three are to single individuals. What is the lesson in all this? Jesus revealed Himself more to the corporate gatherings. Have you ever noticed that many false religions are based on a supposed private revelation of Christ to their leader. Beware of such claims that do not allow for confirmation by others. Sometimes we are too blind to see and too dull to understand how Jesus is revealed to His gathered people through the preaching of the Word and prayer. It is when His people gather together in consideration of the resurrected Savior that He manifests Himself among them.

Christ's resurrection and ascension was followed by prayer: Acts 1:8-14 "...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." We know the result of this is the first corporate prayer meeting: the birth of the Church and the conversion of thousands. The book of Acts is the story of a praying church. Would to God that we could be more like the churches in Acts and less like the churches in our day.

It took a resurrected Savior to send us the Holy Spirit "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you...But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you." Jn 16:7,13,14 The Holy Spirit has come because Jesus has been resurrected, ascended and glorified therefore we can pray in the Spirit. "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." Rom 8:11 26 "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Rom 8:26

The physical resurrection is the basis of our spiritual resurrection. Paul said "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:1,4-6 Spiritual death is just as dead as physical death. Christ's exaltation is our exaltation and when we follow him into the presence of God, it is with the same glory and dignity that He has. He is seated performing His meditorial and intercessory work. We are "seated with Him in the heavenly *places*" and this certainly must imply "heavenly functions" as well. "we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," Heb 8:1 "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Heb 7:25 The resurrection has placed us with Christ in His intercessory work and we follow His example when we pray and intercede for others.

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Prison Praying

"The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened." Acts 16:22-26

Note the striking resemblance to another prayer meeting recorded in Acts 4:31 “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Since there were two in attendance this was a corporate prayer meeting. Our meetings don’t have to be large to be effective. We all want to pray with such reality and power that it brings an earthquake but are we willing to live the life that prepares one for such praying? These kinds of results come from a life of total commitment, without counting the cost that is, reckless abandonment to God’s will. Jer 29:13 says “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” Less than full hearted searching for God will not find His blessings. If we hold back on seeking God, He will hold back on blessing us. Successful living and praying comes with fervency and total commitment.

Our lives and our praying are inseparably connected. The way we live effects the way we pray. The way we pray effects the way we live. Our lives must be a continuous prayer and our prayer life must be lived out into everyday life. Lives of holiness and commitment make good soil for our praying to produce results. In Act 16 Paul and Silas had taken a bold stand for truth and for Jesus, even to the point of persecution. They had rebuked Satan and challenged the livelihood of evil men. Satan does not loose ground without fighting back. In v 20 the merchants take Paul and Silas to the rulers for teaching contrary doctrine and multitudes rose up against them. No evidence here of them trying to build a “seeker friendly” church. They seemed to be operating on the principle “It is better to be divided by truth than united by error.” Our prayer life, individually or corporately, will be powerless if we are compromising truths like God’s holiness and sovereignty.

This church began in a prayer meeting, note verse 13; their first gathering was for prayer and verse 16 indicates that they were in the practice of meeting together for prayer. It is not surprising when we find Paul and Silas praying when they found themselves in prison. That was the atmosphere in which this church at Philippi functioned. The “earth quaking” results of their prayer was not from a single prayer but from a prayer life, especially the prayer life of the corporate body. We like to rejoice in Elijah’s prayer on Mt. Carmel when he prayed only 62 words (1 Ki 18:36,37) and the fire of God fell and consumed the wet offerings and the water in the trenches. A great prayer and a great victory for God and His people, but we forget that Elijah had been alone with God for over three years. It takes a lot of faithful “behind the scenes” praying to make visible victory like Elijah’s or Paul’s. A church that prays in the lonely nights will see the blessings on Sunday mornings. “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” Mat 6:6

I do not hear Paul asking Silas, “Brother Silas, please pray for my back it hurts so bad and I am afraid it going to get infected.” Neither do I hear Silas ask, “Brother Paul, these gashes on my head are giving me a migraine and I believe God wants to heal me. Please pray that I will have the faith to be healed.” God certainly can and does, in His sovereignty, heal our physical bodies. But these two were so busy praising and singing that they didn’t have any thought about their own physical condition. This is the kind of praying that we need. We need to be so absorbed with the things of the Kingdom that we have no care for our personal comforts.

Paul and Silas were experiencing the same thing that the other disciples had as recorded in Acts 5:41 “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.” Our text says they “were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.” What were they praising God for? Simply, “that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.”

If they can pray and praise in the stocks, then surely we can do no less in our air-conditioned churches. The earthquake gave liberty to the prisoners. This illustrates what happens to the church when God’s praying people gain the victory in prayer. They get the freedom and power to serve God. Note the three prominent conversions in this story: Lydia (and her household), the slave girl, and the jailor. When the corporate body of believers are praying, then we should not be surprised when sin is dealt with, sinners are saved, and the church grows.

Later Paul wrote back to the Philippians and assured them that “Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.” Phil 1:12

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The Church Was Born in a Prayer Meeting

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called the Mount of Olives (which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away). When they had entered Jerusalem, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James were there. All these continued together in prayer with one mind, together with the women, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” Acts 1:12-14

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4

The element something is born in is the element it is to live in. The seed is placed in the ground to grow and produce many more seeds. A fish is hatched in the water to swim and does not want it any other way. An animal born in the wild is designed to live in the wild. The monkey is in the tree to swing with ease and delight. An eagle is born for great heights and comfortably floats in the thin air.

Man was created in the image of God to commune with Him and if he doesn’t, he is the loneliest of all creatures. A child of God is so by birth. He is born confessing his sin and calling on the Lord for salvation. The first words Paul uttered were a prayer of submission. ““Who are You, Lord?”” Act 9:5 We began our spiritual life in praying for it and we must continue it in the same way. Our birth from above gives us a ““spiritual”” and a Godly nature. ““For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”” 2 Pet 1:4 We must then continue to partake of the Divine nature as we live in this world. ““If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”” John 16:7

The Church (the local and visible body of believers) was born in a prayer meeting. Yes, they existed as individuals before Acts 2, but as a functioning body of believer they began to exist in Acts 2, in a prayer meeting that had the manifest presence and power of God. The church began in the real presence of God and should continue in the experience thereof. Anything else is not the will of God. The church is to administer God’s Kingdom through prayer. It is to commission labors by means of prayer “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Acts 13:2,3 The church is to requisition all the supplies necessary to keep the kingdom functioning and advancing. It is said that an army marches on its stomach but God’s army marches on its knees. Our Lord teaches us in the model prayer to pray to the Father ““Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”” Mat 6:10 Implicit in this prayer is the request for everything that is needed in the administration of the Kingdom of God.

Peter teaches us that we are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God*’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” 1 Peter 2:9 “A royal priesthood” is body of priests that intercede for others with royal dignity. This is what we do when we pray for one another. The exercise of this priesthood is God’s will and way for the church to operate.

The church must continue in the atmosphere and function it was birthed in if it is to be effective spiritually. Most evangelical churches have little or no emphasis of prayer. Some have huge buildings and a staff of professional administrators but they are powerless in the spiritual dimension because they are not a praying people, “a body of priests.” Most would acknowledge that we begin the Christian life in and by the aid of the Holy Spirit but “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Gal 3:3

“A dynamic praying church must be built *from the inside out*, employing all four levels of prayer: the secret closet, the family altar, small group praying and finally, the congregational setting.” *Developing your Secret Closet of Prayer*, Richard Burr, p 19. The corporate prayer meeting is the most important meeting of the church. Jesus said “My Father’s house shall be a house of prayer----” He didn’t say it should be a house of preaching, or singing and a lot of other good and necessary things. It is to be primarily and fundamentally a place of prayer. This is not where our praying is done in proxy by “the priest,” we are all priests, we all must pray. The corporate prayer meeting is the

most important meeting of the church because it gives all the other meetings their effectiveness and creates an atmosphere of God's presence.

Examine the book of Acts and see how frequently and fervently the church is in prayer and how powerful it is. "These that have turned the world upside down." Acts 17:6 Prayer and power are inseparable.

The element something is born in is the element it is to live in.

A congregation without a prayer meeting is essentially defective in its organization, and so must be limited in its efficiency. *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

History confirms the truth that wherever evangelical and vital religion flourish, there lives the earnest gatherings for social prayer. *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

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Persistent Praying

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" Luk 18:1-6

The "lose heart" or "not faint" is translation of *ma ekkakeo* = not to be utterly spiritless, not to be wearied out, exhausted. It occurs 6 times in the NT. Two of those occurrences compliment our text.

Gal 6:9 "For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." It is encouraging to know that if we keep sowing our effort into the work of the Spirit we will reap the benefit in due time.

2 The 3:13 "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good." Prayer is the very best "good" that we can do, so for sure we should not let ourselves get weary of faint hearted in praying.

Matthew Henry reminds us "All God's people are praying people. Here, earnest steadiness in prayer for spiritual mercies is taught." This rebukes those who pray not at all or seldom or just when it is convenient. If we pray only when it is convenient we will not pray significantly or sufficiently. Powerful praying comes only with great sacrifice and expenditure of time and effort.

We are to pray in the good times and in the bad times; Seasons of health and sickness; Times of victory and temptation; Whether people desert us or support us. Even when it appears that God has deserted us and not answered our prayers, we exhorted to not loose heart and become exhausted.

This is not to be understood, that a man should be always actually engaged in the act of praying, at every moment in private devotion to God, or attending public prayer with the saints. There is much else for us to do, religious, personal, and civil. The meaning is, that a man should persevere in prayer, and quit, or be dejected, because he doesn't get an immediate answer.

Earlier in this gospel our Lord had taught persistence in prayer. "Then He said to them, Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him;' and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened." Luk 11:5-10

When did the interceding man stop asking—when he received what he needed. Not to lose heart means not to quit asking, not to quit seeking, not to quit knocking. Our Lord tells us, if we keep on asking, seeking, and knocking “it will be opened.”

God could answer our prayers speedy but many times He does not. Not because He doesn’t want to answer, but because we have not developed sufficiently to receive the blessing. God, Who is in sovereign control of all people and events, includes in His plan our asking for those things He wants to do. He moves us to begin our asking process at the right time so as to accomplish in us what He wants accomplished in perfect timing with when he wants to answer our prayer. “Men would pluck their mercies green, when the Lord would have them ripe.” God gives the answer in perfect timing with the asker.

“And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?’” Luk 18:6-8

We are to put our complete trust in our Loving God. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.” 1 Pet 5:6,7

Unanswered yet? The Prayer your lips have pleaded

In Agony of heart these many years?

Does faith begin to fail; is hope departing,

And think you all in vain those falling tears?

Say not the Father hath not heard your prayer;

You shall have your desire sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Though when you first presented

This petition at the Father’s throne,

It seemed you could not wait the time of asking,

So urgent was your heart to make it known.

Though years have passed since then, do not despair;

The Lord will answer you sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say unanswered,

Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done,

The work began when first your prayer was uttered,

And God will finish what He has begun.

Keep the incense burning at the shrine of prayer,

His glory you shall see sometime, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;

Here feet are firmly planted on the Rock;

Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,

Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.

She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,

And cries, “It shall be done sometime, somewhere.”

Ophelia Guyon Browning

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Sound and Sober Praying

“The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.”

1 Peter 4:7

Let’s look closely at the basis for Peter’s exhortation to prayer. “The end of all things.” The New English Translation has “For the culmination of all things is near.”

The Greek for “end” is *telos* and means termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be (always of the end of some act or state, but not of the end of a period of time), the last in any succession or series, that by which a thing is finished, its close, the aim, purpose. So the word “end” means either the cessation of something or the purpose of something.

When Peter says “The end of all things” he is not referring to the end of time but to one of the following:

1. Of the universe when all things will be burnt up. 2. Of one’s eminent death 3. Of the OT economy. 4. Of the end of the age when Jesus returns.

Before we decide which he is referring to we need to examine “is near” or “has drawn near” which is in the perfect tense in Greek and describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated but has continuing results. The same word in the same tense is in Mat 3:2 “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” John was preaching that the kingdom of heaven had already come and was there. Jesus’ last cry from the cross, *tetelestai* (“It is finished!”), is a good example of the perfect tense, namely “It (the atonement) has been accomplished, completely, once and for all time.”

Our conclusion of what this verse is saying is “The purpose of all things, that is the previous OT economy and the plan of God, has come to realization and is now with us. That purpose is the “Person of Jesus Christ,” he fulfilled the law and brought it to completion.” Now on the basis of all things have found their culmination in Jesus we are exhorted to “be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer”

The first exhortation refers to our mental state “of sound judgment.” The word *sophroneo* means to be of sound mind, to put a moderate estimate upon one’s self, think of one’s self soberly. Paul said it in another way in Rom 12:2 “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” This is fundamentally important in our prayer life. We must have the same mind as our Savior and pray in harmony with Him. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Jon 15:7

The second exhortation “be of...sober *spirit*” refers to our relationship to the world around us, *nepho* means to abstain from wine, to be calm and collected in spirit, temperate, dispassionate, circumspect, to exercise self control. “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” 1 Pet 5:8

Paul in Eph 6:18 gives us a sharp contrast “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” Wine represents two things: joy and control. It is not going to excess with either that we need to strive for. We can be intoxicated with other things besides wine such as pleasure, business, pride, envy, anger, family, etc. The church today is intoxicated on crowds, music, drama, personalities, even preaching in contrast to what Jesus said, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a robbers’ den.” Mar 11:17 A church can not be a “house of prayer” like Jesus said it should be and at the same time give allegiance to the methods and principles of the world.

We need to be of sound mind and sober spirit and watch for all opportunities for praying, both in private and in public. We need to be observant as to what we should be praying about for ourselves and for others, for such things as are agreeable to the revealed will of God, and watch for the Spirit of God to enlarge our hearts in prayer, and to

assist us both as to the matter and manner of praying. We should expect God to answer and return to Him thanks for the mercy given.

The conclusion is that we are to be rightly related to our Savior by abiding in Him and to the world by discipline ourselves to do only His will. He is the culmination, fulfillment and purpose of all things. "For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." Col. 1:16,17 In the understanding of Jesus as given these two verses which is the basis of our praying.

If the life is not one of self-denial--of fasting--that is, letting the world go; of prayer--that is, laying hold of God then prayer is neither spiritual or profitable.

Andrew Bonar defined fasting as abstaining from anything that hindered prayer.

Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the Invisible; fasting the other, with which we let loose and cast away the visible. Andrew Murray

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The Kind of Spirit In Which to Pray

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 'Give us this day our daily bread. 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'" **Matt 6:9-13**

What is often called "The Lord's Prayer" is really a pattern prayer for us to learn how to pray. It is inspired having come from our Lord and is infinite having come from our God. We can never exhaust its blessing for us, and we should endeavor to pray in the spirit of this prayer. By "spirit" we mean, the spiritual attitude in which we should pray.

1. A Unified Spirit.

"Our" Not "my" but "our." Jesus never prayed "our Father" here He is instructing us to say "our Father." Jesus' sonship or relation to the Father is different than ours. He is the unique son of God Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," "Only begotten means unique and unlike any other. But the children of God are all alike in the way we become the children of God and the way come to God. The prayer experience is on level ground. All of us have the same access and privilege. We should pray knowing that we not alone in our approach to God but that we come to God with others.

2. A Filial Spirit.

"Father who is in heaven" We can, and should at times, pray to the Son, Jesus Christ, and to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The primary direction of our prayers should be to the Father. We should look to Him as the one that gives us all things: life itself, substance for life, guidance in life, etc. We are to pray conscious of an intimate relationship with a loving Father.

3. A Reverent Spirit.

"Hallowed be Your name:" "Name" represents the person of the name and his reputation, his honor. It is of chief concern to the child of God that the honor of the Father be upheld. Some cultures put great significance on the family name and the dignity of the ancestors. We are to pray for God's name to be honored in all the issues of life.

4. A Loyal Spirit.

“Your kingdom come.” It is God’s will and rule and authority that is the deciding factor. In all the issues of life, whether it is the kingdoms and nations of the world or the decisions of daily work and play we must strive to experience the rule or kingdom of God. Here we are taught to pray for the extension of God’s rule in the world.

5. A Submissive Spirit”

“Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.” Paul’s exhortation “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Rom 12:1,2 It is not the “sweet by and by” (as in “Your kingdom come”) but the “nasty now and now” that requires our sacrifice. We are supposed to pray that we and others will experience God’s will.

6. A Dependent Spirit.

“Give us this day our daily bread”

Mat 6:30,31 “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’” We are to pray for today’s need and tomorrow we can pray for its needs.

7. A Penitent Spirit.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Effective prayer requires that we have a valid relationship vertically and horizontally. **Vertically with God.** We cannot approach God without our sin debt having been satisfied. The only satisfaction that God will accept is the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. **Horizontally with others.** To not forgive others that have wronged us is to prove that we do not know what this is. A person that has experienced the forgiveness of God will be generous to forgive others. We are to pray for forgiveness and show our appreciation by forgiving others.

8. A Trusting Spirit

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

Jam 4:14,15 “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, *you ought* to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” I do not know what tomorrow holds, but I know **Who** holds tomorrow. We are to pray that God will guide us away from sin and Satan.

Some of the outline taken from *Prayer Power Unlimited*, J. Oswald Sanders p 110

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Agonizing Prayer

As Paul closed his letter to the Romans he asked for their prayers. “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me in your prayers to God for me**, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” Rom 15:30-33

“Strive together with me” is the translation of the compound word *sunagonizomai*. It has the prefix *sun* which means with or together and *agonizomai* which means to enter a contest: contend in the gymnastic games, to contend with adversaries, to fight, to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, strive: to obtain something. We get our English word “agonize” from this Greek word.

Paul is asking the Roman Christians to join with him in agonizing prayer as He goes to Jerusalem. Paul must have had some idea of the possible problems facing him.

agonizomai with out the prefix occurs seven times in the New Testament; lets look at how this word is used and how we might learn how to pray.

Luk 13:24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” Jesus preached a different Gospel than what is commonly preached today. Today it is an easy gospel, “come down forward and make a decision.” The socially acceptable gospel is “God has a wonderful plan for your life that is free from pain and heartache.” But Jesus says for us to strive or agonize to enter a narrow door, and many will not be able to enter. There is a kind of praying that can only be realized by great struggle. We are to continue in our Christian life, especially in prayer, with the same fervor and zeal with which we came to know our Savior.

Joh 18:36 “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’” Our word here is translated “fighting.” Our praying is to agonize and contend, even fight, as we would strive for the safety of a friend of family. We should pray unselfishly and heroically for others.

1 Cor 9:25-27 “Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” Our word is here translated “competes in the games.” An athlete in training is very focused and committed to his training and uses self-control in all things. Here we see that prayer is something worthy of this degree of dedication. We are to agonize in prayer as the athlete does in his competition.

Col 1:28,29 “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” Paul’s experience of the power of God working in him resulted in a striving or agonizing to proclaim the glory of Jesus. There is a similar experience in agonizing prayer.

Col 4:12 “Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly (agonizing) for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.” This is agonizing intercessory prayer. Most Christians never get past the “now I lay me down to sleep” prayers, except when there is a crisis, like a sick child or terminal illness, facing us. We pray for our parents, children or friends, but to agonize in intercessory prayer for kingdom issues, well, that is another level of prayer that is seldom realized.

1 Tim 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” This could be translated “agonize the good agony of faith.” We are to strive and agonize as the good soldier does in battle. We need to pray as if it were a matter of life and death, because it is. There are souls that need to be plucked from the burning. If we prayed like a soldier fighting, we would see much greater answer to prayer.

2 Tim 4:6,7 “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;” No doubt that part of Paul’s success was agonizing prayer. We will not be considered as successful and having kept the faith, if we do not agonize in prayer.

If what we have discussed here is real prayer, then most of have never really prayed. The best example of this kind of praying is our Lord the night before His death. In Luke 22:44 another form of our word occurs “And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.” Here it is **agonia**, which is the noun meaning a struggle for victory, wrestling, of severe mental struggles and emotions, agony, anguish. When our Lord saw the contents of the cup from which he had to drink He experienced great agony in soul. Sometimes we have to pray as He did, in great agony as we experience the will of God.

“... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” Jam 5:16

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Corporate Boldness

“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” Heb 10:19-25

In his reference to “the holy place” the writer is thinking of public and corporate worship, not personal and private times of communion with God. The emphasis is that we don’t need the animal sacrifices nor the Levitical priesthood in our worship. The temple was probably still standing when this was written, so the writer is saying that we don’t need that temple and Levitical system. By now the gospel of Jesus’ accomplished work of salvation had spread into Europe and there were “churches” scattered in many cities, none of which needed to be concerned with the temple / Levitical system, it had past away for the new and living way. It is by the “blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.”

We are given five exhortations in v 22-25:

1. v 22 “let us draw near”
2. v 23 “Let us hold fast”
3. v 24 “and let us consider”
4. v 25 “not forsaking our own assembling together”
5. v 25 “encouraging *one another*”

Who is the “us” here? In this context the writer is contrasting the old way with the new way. The old way is that of an individual (in the OT economy) bringing his sacrifice to the place of sacrifice, the tabernacle or temple. The contrasting parallel is the Christian (in the NT economy) bringing his spiritual sacrifice (1 Pet: 5 “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.) The parallel is of two economies or societies of faith. The one trusting for that which was to come and the other in that which has come. In both societies it is the individual coming to the place of corporate interaction and manifestation of one’s relation with God. In both there is a public place to come and assemble. In the OT it was the tabernacle or temple, in the NT it is the church. Now it is our responsibility to direct our spiritual experience toward the visible assembly, the church. “...this drawing near contains all the holy worship of the church, both public and private, all the ways of our access unto God by Christ.” John Owen

But what is the relationship of this passage to personal prayer and communion with God? Is it just to be applied to the believer’s personal life? No, we think it is more than applicable. Corporate exercise is not something separate from the personal and individual. It is the individuals’ actions brought together that make the corporate action. So for us to come boldly to the throne of grace corporately, we must be coming individually with the same interaction with God.

The teaching of this passage is that we should “draw near and hold fast” to this new way of coming to God. As we come together we should consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Even though some have forsaken the assembling together, we should encourage ourselves to be faithful.

As we come to pray and worship our God, let’s be reminded of the great things our God has done for us and be faithful and not grow weary in prayer and praise.

“If we pray among a select society of Christians, we draw near to God with holy boldness, something like what we use in our duties of secret worship. We have reason to take more freedom among fellow saints and whose hearts have felt many of the same workings as our own.” *A Guide to Prayer*, Isaac Watts, p 58

Nothing is more calculated to beget a spirit of prayer than to unite in social prayer with one who has the Spirit himself. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel

[illegible]

III. Topical

1. Praying and the Persons of God

The Trinitarian Aspect of Prayer

“For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.” Rom 11:36

As we apply this verse to the experience of praying we can clearly see prayer's relation to the Trinity:

1. We pray because Jesus opened the way. “of (*ek*) him the Jesus”

Jesus is our example and our access. 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.” Jesus’s death opened the way for all His people. For generations the veil in the temple symbolized the unapproachableness of a Holy God, but when Jesus died “the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent.” Mt 27:51

The life, death and life again of our Savior Jesus is sufficient to dispel every hindrance to our coming to the Father. “Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Rom 5:1,2 We are persuaded that we have access to God and experience His unmerited benefits with great joy in the Glory of God now and yet to come.

Jesus made the way and the Spirit strengthens us that we may approach the Father in a personal and intimate relationship.

2. We pray by means of the Spirit's power within.“through (*dia*) him Spirit”

Jesus promised us an Advocate, or Helper (Greek is *paracletos*) “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:16-17 The world can not see the invisible but we can be like Moses, Heb 11:27.

Paul specifies that He will help us when we pray, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:” Rom 8:26 and also in Eph 2:18 “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” and again in Eph 6:18 “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” Jude says that we should be “building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.” Jude 1:20 Because we are sons of God, He has “sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Ga 4:6

Jesus made the way and the Spirit strengthens us that we may approach the Father in a personal and intimate relationship.

3. We pray to our Spiritual Father. “unto (*eis*) him The Father”

When Jesus taught us to pray He said, “When ye pray, say, Our Father.” Lk 11:2 Paul taught us that the Spirit enables us to be crying out to our Father. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Rom 8:15 We are to approach Him as our Daddy, whom we love and Who loves us dearly, just as an earthly Father love his little child.

We are not just servants, we are children and friends “No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known

unto you. Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” John 15:15-16

Jesus made the way and the Spirit strengthens us that we may approach the Father in a personal and intimate relationship.

John chapters 14 -16 teach that we have an interacting relationship with all three members of the Trinity. This is especially true in the exercise of prayer.

In the prayer meeting, as nowhere else, are Christian graces thus brought together with powerful reactionary and reflective forces.

The Prayer Meeting and Its History, J. B. Johnston

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are filled with mercies, and shall break
In blessings 'round thy head.

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The Attributes of God in Prayer

When we pray we need to keep in mind the nature of our God. He is infinite in all His attributes and for all eternity we will be exploring what He is really like. Following is a listing of some of the attributes of God. Perhaps we should thank and praise God for each of these and for being the God that He is. “We shall find every attribute of God Most High to be, as it were, a great battering-ram, with which we may open the gates of heaven.” C. H. Spurgeon

The Bounties of God Isa 64:4 “For from of old they have not heard nor perceived by ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.”

The Faithfulness of God Deut 7:9 “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;”

The Foreknowledge of God Rom 8:29 “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren;”

The Grace of God Rom 5:21 “...even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”

The Goodness of God Ps 25:8 “Good and upright is the Lord...”

The Holiness of God Rev 15:4 “Who, will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; For all the nations will come and worship before...”

The Immutability of God Mal 3:6 “For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

The Justice of God Ps 89:14 “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne...”

The Knowledge of God Ps 147:5 “His understanding is infinite”

The Love of God Rom 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

The Loving-Kindness of God Ps 36:7 “How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings.”

The Mercy of God Ps 119:156 “Great are Thy mercies, O Lord...”

The Omnipresence of God Ps 139: “Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?”

The Power of God Ps 62:11 “...power belongs to God”

The Solitariness of God Ex 15:11 “Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?”

The Sovereignty of God Is 46:10 “For I am God, and there is none other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”

The Wisdom of God Rom 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! ”

The Wrath of God Rom 1:18 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...”

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To Whom Should We Pray?

Answer: The Lord God of the Holy Scriptures is the only God to whom we should pray. The Scriptures are the 66 books of the Christian Bible, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation. If you agree with this answer then another question arises. Since the God of the Bible is revealed as a Triune God, that is a God of three persons: “The Father” “The Son” and “The Spirit;” we now have to ask, “Which of the persons in God do we pray to.” We need to remember that prayer is more than asking. It is asking for things inclusively but not exclusively. Prayer includes praise, worship, and expression of thankfulness.

The last verse in second Corinthians is “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” 2 Cor 13:14 Paul is giving his benediction in the form of a Trinitarian blessing. Each member of the Trinity has a unique relation to the believer and we should pray to each member of the Trinity in respect of His uniqueness

I. Prayer to the Father that loves us, “the love of God.” 2 Cor 13:14

Our Lord give us instruction to pray to the Father in Mat 6:9 “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’ We are to show honor and respect for our Father.

John identifies us as children in 1 Joh 3:1 “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are.” We really are children and should ask for the things that a child would ask of his Father.

“Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Gal 4:6 We are to pray to our Father with lively feelings and in an intimate relationship. We are to acknowledge His love for us and live our lives as an expression of our love for Him.

II. Prayer to the Son that gives us undeserved blessing, “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor 13:14

It wasn’t the Father that laid down His life for us. “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us.” 1 Joh 3:16 we must express our love and appreciation to Jesus for giving His life for us. We should never tire of saying to Jesus, that is, praying to Jesus “Thank you Jesus for dying for me.” If we can talk to the Father we can talk to Jesus.

We have been called into fellowship with Jesus. “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Co 1:9 Prayer is that fellowship. Fellowship is sharing what we have in common. When we talk with Jesus about what He has done for us and how much we appreciate it and love Him, we are in fellowship with Him.

Jesus is simultaneously our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. We have communion with him as our Prophet, He teaches us by his Spirit. We consider him as our High Priest who is our advocate and intercessor with the Father, and we put our petitions into His hands, to be offered up by Him, perfumed with the much incense of His mediation. We acknowledge Him as our King and submit to His government. We seek the coming of His kingdom in all its power and sovereignty.

Saints have such communion and fellowship with Christ in His offices, that we have in some sense a share in them; that is, we are made by Him prophets, priests, and kings; prophets to teach and instruct others, and kings and priests unto God and his Father. “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Rev 1:5,6 this gives us great need to pray to and fellowship with Jesus.

III. Prayer to the Spirit that has been sent to us, “and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” 2 Cor 13:14

True praying is in the power of the Holy Spirit. “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words.” Rom 8:26 it seems very reasonable to ask the Holy Spirit to do what He has come to do and what we must have Him to do for us.

When we need guidance we should claim the ministry of the Holy Spirit and ask for His guidance. “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.” Joh 16:13

The Holy Spirit was sent to be our helper, one who strengthens us. “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.” Joh 14:16 so we pray to Him for the strength we need to serve God.

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” Rom 12:6 We should pray to the Holy Spirit to help us know and use our gift.

In Galatians we have named the fruit of the Spirit, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Gal 5:22,23 These things should be objects of prayer and since they are produced by the Spirit we should ask the Spirit to produce them and cultivate them in us.

Since “the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words” Rom 8:26 it is entirely appropriate for us to ask the Spirit to help us in our prayer life.

Since He is the Spirit of adoption, we can pray to Him to make us to be good children. We “have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” Rom 8:15

Let’s not forget that we are praying to a tri-person God. We have not begun to understand the infinite and Divine riches we have in having a God like our God.

It might be good if we were to segment our prayer time (personal or corporate), isolating specified times to pray to and communion with each person of the Trinity.

What wond'rous grace! who knows its full extent?

A creature, dust and ashes, speaks with God--

Tells all his woes, enumerates his wants,

Yea, pleads with Deity, and gains relief.

'Tis prayer, yes, 'tis 'effectual, fervent prayer,'

Puts dignity on worms, proves life divine,

Makes demons tremble, breaks the darkest cloud,

And with a princely power prevails with God!

And shall this privilege become a task?

My God, forbid! Pour out thy Spirit's grace,

Draw me by love, and teach me how to pray.

Yea, let Thy holy unction from above

Beget, extend, maintain my intercourse

with Father, Son, and Spirit, Israel's God,

Until petitions are exchanged for praise

Irons.

us....'in my Name' has its own safeguard. It is a spiritual power which no one can use further than he obtains the capacity for, by his living and acting in that Name...O come, and let us learn to pray in the Name of Jesus...O awake, and use the name of Jesus to open the treasures of heaven for this perishing world ” *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Andrew Murray, p 191-2.

“To pray in the Name of Christ is to pray as one who is at one with Christ, whose mind is the mind of Christ, whose desires are the desires of Christ, and whose purpose is one with that of Christ...prayers offered in the name of Christ are scrutinized and sanctified by His nature, His purpose, and His will. Prayer is endorsed by the Name, when it is in harmony with the character, mind, desire, and purpose of the Name.” Samuel Chadwick

Prayer is going into the secret place of the Most High and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. Ps 91:1

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Jesus Teaching on Prayer

“He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceases, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples’” Luke 11:1 Some have said that prayer cannot be taught, it must be learned by experience. Jesus said nothing like this. When asked to teach prayer, He immediately began to do so in Luke 11:1-13.

Jesus is the Greatest Teacher

Jesus identified Himself as a “Teacher”. Today we hype the “Preacher,” “Pastor,” and “Evangelist” but seldom do we recognize the “Teacher.” Human nature goes for show more than know. Jesus was the greatest teacher. He taught both by lip and life. His life was one that frequently sent Him into seclusion. He was seen on His knees and He allowed Himself to be heard; for example, the intercessory prayer in John 17. He was qualified most by His Holy character. He knew His subject and His students completely and accurately. In the great commission Jesus said “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...” Ma 28:19,20 He commanded “...that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.” Luke 18:1 So we are expected to teach the subject of prayer. Parents teach children, pastors teach members, mature believers teach young believers.

Jesus taught the Greatest Lessons

We must be sincere, and not have vain motives. Mat 6:5 “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

We must be humble. Luke 18:9-14 “And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

We must abide in Him. Jn 15:7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

We must obey Him. Jn 14:14,15 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

We must have faith. Mark 11:24 “Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.”

We must be right with our brother. Mat 5:23,24 “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

We must have persistence. Luke 11:5-10 “ Then He said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.”

We must have privacy. Mat 6.6 “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

Prayer is the Greatest Experience

It has been said that “Theology is the Queen of the Sciences,” if that be so then “Prayer is the Queen of the Experiences.” What could be greater than a personal audience with the sovereign and holy creator of the universe.

What wond’rous grace! who knows its full extent?

A creature, dust and ashes, speaks with God--

Tells all his woes, enumerates his wants,

Yea, pleads with Deity, and gains relief.

’Tis prayer, yes, ’tis ‘effectual, fervent prayer,’

Puts dignity on worms, proves life divine,

Makes demons tremble, breaks the darkest cloud,

And with a princely power prevails with God!

And shall this privilege become a task?

My God, forbid! Pour out thy Spirit's grace,

Draw me by love, and teach me how to pray.

Yea, let Thy holy unction from above

Beget, extend, maintain my intercourse

with Father, Son, and Spirit, Israel's God,

Until petitions are exchanged for praise

Irons.

If Jesus, the perfect God - Man, felt the need of prayer, how much greater is our need for a prayer life.

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Jesus Teaches on Corporate and Answered Prayer

In Mark 11:15-25 our Lord gives some teaching on prayer: “Then they came to Jerusalem. Jesus entered the temple area and began to drive out those who were selling and buying in the temple courts. He turned over the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those selling doves, 16 and he would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 Then he began to teach them and said, ‘Is it not written: ***My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations***’? **But you have turned it into a den of robbers!** 18 The chief priests and the experts in the law heard it and they considered how they could assassinate him, for they feared him because

the whole crowd was amazed by his teaching. 19 When evening came, they went out of the city. 20 In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered.' 22 Jesus said to them, 'Have faith in God. 23 I tell you the truth, if someone says to this mountain, Be lifted up and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 For this reason I tell you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your sins.'"

1. Corporately -- A Rebuke v 17

Jesus rebukes the religious leaders for misusing God's house. They had made God's house an instrument for their own profit. He called them robbers and told them that God's house was to be a *house of prayer* for all peoples. The one word that should characterize the people of God is "prayer." The place where God's people gather is not to be called a "house of preaching" or "a house of singing" or "a house of fellowship" or a house of anything else. The will of our Lord Jesus must be honored in the way we do Church. It is not to be used as one sees fit or for a select group but *for all nations*. The plan for God's house, we know as the local church, is not limited to the Jews but has always been intended for all nations. We should not just have a prayer meeting but be a real prayer meeting that has God's presence manifested and that any genuine Christian can feel a part of.

Our Lord gives us two requirements for answered prayer.

2. Vertically -- Faith toward God. v 22- 24

Faith is conviction or persuasion that something is true. The only way we can know God and truth is for Him to reveal Himself to us. We need to reason backwards, from effect to cause: 1. Faith is necessary to answered prayer. 2. Faith comes from God. 3. We must first go to God for faith. 4. Faith determines what we pray for. Our basic prayer should be, "God show us Yourself and what we should pray for.

"Have faith in God" in v 22 is a present tense verb meaning to be having, we should be holding on to as our possession, faith in God. Peter refers to his reader as "those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, have been granted a faith just as precious as ours." 2 Pet 1:1

In v 24 we have four present tense verbs and one future tense verb "whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." This teaches us that a life of consistent and continuous believing prayer will result in having what we ask for. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Mat 21:22

3. Horizontally -- Forgiveness toward man. v 25

Forgiveness of our brother or neighbor is necessary for God to answer our prayer. Jesus said "Whenever you stand praying." Could this be a reference to corporate prayer when one stands to pray so the others can join in? If this is the case, then this exhortation is directed toward corporate prayer, the very thing He rebuked the people for not having. He continues in v 25 "If you have anything against anyone forgive him." Before the one praying can ask for forgiveness of his own sin against God, he must forgive the one that has sinned against him. Neither our private nor our corporate prayer life can prosper when we have an unforgiving spirit towards those that have done us wrong.

Yes, they don't deserve it but, then, neither do we deserve God's forgiveness. God wants us to follow His example or in Peter's words "partake of the Divine nature" 2 Peter 1:4 and forgive others that do not deserve to be forgiven as He has forgiven us. Not to do so has serious implications, even to the point of bringing the fact of our salvation into question. "So that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your sins." Anyone who understands the great need we have for forgiveness from an infinitely holy and sovereign God will not risk losing it by not forgiving others. A person that will not forgive his neighbor evidences that he does not understand forgiveness and does not possess God's forgiveness for himself. "Evidently God's willingness to forgive is limited by our willingness to forgive others. This is a solemn thought for all who pray. Recall the words of Jesus in Mat 6:12,14,15 "and forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors...14 For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you your sins." A.T. Robertson

Our relationship to others is important enough that we should make it a specific matter of prayer that we ask God to reveal to us any relationship or attitude that would hinder our praying, especially in relation to the corporate prayer meeting. We will not have the manifest presence of God in our meetings when we have unforgiving attitudes to our brothers.

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How the Spirit Enables Us to Pray

by Thomas Boston (revised)

It is by the help of the Holy Spirit that we are able to pray: Gal 4:6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" Rom 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

There Are Two Kinds of Prayers.

First, A prayer that is the result of one's own knowledge and gift of utterance. This is bestowed on many reprobates, and that gift may be useful to others, and to the church. But as it is merely of that sort, it is not accepted, nor does Christ put it in before the Father for acceptance.

Secondly, There is a prayer brought about in men by the work of the Holy Spirit, Zech. 12:10, "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication," and that is the only acceptable prayer to God. James 5:16, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." The word "effective" is from the Greek word "inwrought." Right praying is praying in the Spirit. It is a gale blowing from heaven, the breathing of the Spirit in the saints, that carries them out in the prayer, and which comes the length to the throne of God Himself.

Spirit Helps Us to Pray Two Ways

1. As a teaching and instructing Spirit, furnishing proper matter of prayer, causing us to know what we pray for, Rom. 8:26, enlightening the mind to understand our needs, and those of others that we should pray for. The Spirit brings to our remembrance these things, suggesting them to us according to the Word, together with the promises of God, on which prayer is grounded, John 14:26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." It is normal for the Spirit to lead the saints to pray for things they had known of but sometimes the saints are carried out in prayer for things which they had no view of before.

2. As a quickening, exciting Spirit, Rom. 8:26, "...the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses." or enables or qualifies the soul with praying graces and affections, working in the praying person a sense of needs, faith, fervency, humility, urgency etc. Psa 10:17, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear," God helps us bring to Him the prayer He can answer.

The man may go to his knees in a very unprepared attitude for prayer, yet the Spirit blows and he is helped. It is for this reason the Spirit is said to make intercession for us, namely, in so far as he teaches and quickens, puts us in a praying frame of mind, and draws out our petitions, as it were, putting them into the language which the Mediator presents.

Special Giftedness in Prayer?

This praying with the help of the Spirit is particular to the saints, yet they do not have that help at all times, nor always in the same measure; for sometimes the Spirit, being grieved, departs, and they are left in a withered condition. So there is great need for a breathing and filling of the Spirit, when we are to go to the duty of prayer. If there isn't a gale blowing in the sails, we will tug at the oars but heartlessly and with little result.

Let no man think that a readiness and flowing of expression in prayer, is always the effect of the Spirit's assistance. For that may be the product of a gift, and of the common operations of the Spirit, removing the

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How does the Spirit Help us in Prayer

Jesus said “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, ...But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.” John 14:16 , 26

The word “comforter” means “a helper, succourer, aider, assistant” There isn’t any place where we need help more than in the place of prayer. This is true both in our closet prayer life and in our corporate or group prayer experience. When Jesus answered the disciples request “Lord, teach us to pray,” He climaxed His answer with “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” The Holy Spirit us a variety of way to help us in our prayer life.

1. He introduces us to the Presence of the Father.

Eph 2:14-18 “For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.”

2. He overcomes our reluctance, working in us the desire to pray.

Zech 12:9-10 “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

3. He imparts a sense of sonship and acceptance that creates freedom and confidence in the presence of God. Gal 4:6 “And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”

Rom 8:14-16 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God:”

4. He helps us in the ignorance of our minds and infirmities of our bodies so that we can pray as we ought. Rom 8:26 “And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;”

5. He takes our imperfect prayers and puts them in a form acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

Rom 8:27 “and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

6. He lays special burdens of prayer on the believer who is walking in fellowship with Him.

Dan 9:1-3 “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.”

Principles and Practice of Prayer, Ivan French p 99.

Phil 2:13 “for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good **pleasure.**”

O watch and fight, and pray.
 The battle ne'er give o'er.
 Renew it boldly every day,
 And help divine implore.
 Ne'er think the victory won,
 Nor lay thine armor down;
 The work of faith will not be done,
 Till thou obtain thy crown.
 Fight on, my soul.....
 George Heath

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The Cry of the Spirit: Abba Father

Gal 4:4-7 “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”

There are only two other occurrences of “Abba Father” in the N.T. The parallel passage in Rom 8:15 “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” and in Mk 14:36 “And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

The word adoption (*whuiothesia*) as sons is a compound word of *whuios* son and *thesis* a placing and refers to a man's giving the status of sonship to someone who is not his natural child. In the Roman world adoption was an honored custom that gave special dignity and family membership to those who were not born into a family. Often a wealthy, childless man would adopt a young slave, who would trade his slavery for sonship, with all its privileges. God confirms believers as His adopted sons by giving the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of His Son. A human Father cannot give his own nature to an adopted child, but God can and does by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell within the hearts of believers.

The word translated “cry” is *krazo* occurs 59 times and means: 1) to croak, of the cry of a raven, hence, to cry out, cry aloud, vociferate 2) to cry out aloud, speak with a loud voice. All 59 occurrences refer to a verbal and sometimes an unpleasant outcry. This verse is not referring to an attitude or feeling of sonship, but vocal and energetic expression of our heart's feeling to God. This has special significance to both our secret praying and corporate praying. In both we should be verbal and audible.

Like the term “In Jesus Name” which is not a formula that we say at the end of our prayer to make them more answerable, so the term “Abba, Father” is not a term that we begin our prayers with that sanctions what we are about to pray. “In Jesus Name” refers to the authority in which we pray and “Abba, Father” refers to the relationship in which we pray.

“Exhaustive research by biblical scholars-particularly I. Jeremias W. Marchel-has demonstrated that in all the huge literature of ancient Judaism there is not one instance of God being addressed in prayer with the word *abba*. He was called ‘The Lord Almighty,’ ‘The Holy One,’ ‘Sovereign of the World’ and many other exalted titles, but a word like *abba* was too personal, too familiar and intimate to be appropriate. The Lord was high and lifted up, the incomparable One. He was to be approached with reverence and awe. To call him ‘Daddy’ was unthinkable blasphemy. Yet Jesus prayed like this all the time.” *The God Who Hears*, W. Bingham Hunter, p 97

Prayer is the exercise of a relationship. When a child 3 years of age wants to talk to his parents, he simply talks in his own childlike way. The child does not reason within himself, since I can not talk like my parents or as good as

my older brother or sister I will not talk until I am able to talk in a proper way. It is the relationship that motivates the child to talk and then it is experience that produces the ability. Do parents encourage the child to wait until he has sufficient ability to talk? Not a chance of that, the parent is greatly blest by the childlike efforts to communicate. This is one of the most memorable things of childhood. So it is in our relationship with God.

The Holy Spirit works in this crying, Abba Father, in two ways:

1. By inclining our wills and stirring our affections of love, faith, and delight. Phil 2:13 “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.”

2. By enabling us to exercise these affections in vocal prayer, that is speaking out of the abundance of the heart. We need both aspects of this ministry of the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26 “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;”

He is acting in us, and we are acting by him. The act of “crying”, is caused by the Holy Spirit though realized in the believers vocal praying. He excites, encourages, and assists us to call God our Father. This we experience in the secret internal crying of our soul and of an open outward invocation of Him as our Father with much confidence, freedom, and boldness.

“Abba represents the essentials of the new relationship with God which Jesus offered men and women who believe on his name.

From the Father’s side, abba implies many things:

- (1) his mercy, compassion and love for the child;
- (2) his personal interest and consistent concern for its good;
- (3) his willingness to provide the needs of and give protection to the child; and
- (4) the use of his mature knowledge, judgment and wisdom in guiding and caring for the child.

On the child’s lips, abba signifies:

- (1) an implicit willingness to love, honor, and respect the Father;
- (2) an awareness of dependency on the Father;
- (3) a sense of confidence in the Father’s judgment and trust in his integrity and abilities; and
- (4) ready obedience to the Father’s desires and will, with corresponding acceptance of the Father’s right and responsibility to discipline for the child’s good,

In short, abba signifies the essence of what it means to have a personal relationship with God.” *The God Who Hears*, W. Bingham Hunter, p 98

This helps us understand the reason that our Lord in Lk 11:13 said “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

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“The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with Groanings”

Rom 8:22-27 “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches

the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. The ultimate prayer experience to have the Holy Spirit pray through us.”

To “groan” here is “to express grief by inarticulate or semi-articulate sounds” Note the three groanings in this context. Look at them as three concentric circles. **1.** v. 22 “the whole creation groans” All parts of creation and especially humans, saint and sinner, feel the effect of sin. **2.** v 23 “even we ourselves groan within ourselves” The child of God feels with greater intensity the ravages of sin. **3.** v 26 “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” Seeing the first two groans explains the phrase “in the same way” The creation groans, the believer groans, and thirdly the join with us and groans. The praying child of God has companionship and help in this groaning that characterizes life in this world. A groan comes not from the lips but from the heart. When we are praying in and with the Spirit it is from our heart with great passion. The psalmist said “I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart.” Ps 38:8

“The entire structure of the passage in the original shows that the ‘intercession’ of the Spirit is not aside from us, as that of our High Priest; but that it is within us, mingling his energies with our own, and thus bearing with us the burdens too heavy to be borne alone. His work is entirely subjective, bringing the intercession of our Lord above into the desires and petitions of the Christian below; whereby they become the intercessions of the Spirit, who thus blends his Advocacy with that of Christ himself.” *Theology of Prayer*, B.M. Palmer, p 320

It is not that God needs us but that he desires to use us and our praying. He is the first cause of all things and He also uses secondary causes and means to accomplish His plan. In His praying through us He quickens and uses our individual powers of will, intellect, and affection. These are God’s infinitely loving desires finding expression through finite and human channels.

In this process of groaning there will be leading out in prayer for objects and person that otherwise would have been neglected, such spirit of prayer will come upon us just as there is need, and may sometimes even seem to be at the most unlikely time and place. How limitless are the possibilities of prayer when we have such a mighty, loving Helper! How certain we may be of the answer when He breathes the prayer through us! What wonderful fellowship this kind of prayer gives! We can only realize His ideal for our prayer-life by abiding in Him, and trusting Him moment by moment to pray through us with His own mighty intercessions. C.H. Spurgeon

“Though the infirmities of Christians are many and great, so that they would be overpowered if left to themselves, yet the Holy Spirit supports them. The Spirit, as an enlightening Spirit, teaches us what to pray for; as a sanctifying Spirit, works and stirs up praying graces; as a comforting Spirit, silences our fears, and helps us over all discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the spring of all desires toward God, which are often more than words can utter. The Spirit who searches the hearts, can perceive the mind and will of the spirit, the renewed mind, and advocates his cause. The Spirit makes intercession to God, and the enemy prevails not.” Matthew Henry

Even as Solomon built the temple he did not himself cut the timbers and carve the stone. He caused others to do the work. So the Holy Spirit causes us to pray. It is Him and it is us at the same time. When Solomon built the temple the stones were cut out far away from the temple structure. “The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built.” 1 Kings 6:7 While our house or life of prayer is being built, by the Holy Spirit, we do not recognize the work as it is done quite and in secret. This is the way of the Spirit. He does great and powerful things in mysterious and subtle ways.

The Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us, by causing us to intercede; He indites our prayers for us, not in a book, but in our hearts; He shows us our need, He stirs us up to prayer, He supplies us with arguments, puts words into our mouths, enlarges our hearts, makes faith strong in prayer, He enables us to come to God as our Father; and gives us liberty and boldness in His presence. This is done “with groanings too deep for words;” not that the Spirit of God groans, but He stirs up groans in the saints; which suppose a burden on us, and our sense of it: and these are said to be “unutterable;” saints, under his influence, praying silently, without a voice, as Hannah did in 1 Sam 1:13 “As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard.”

It is the working of the Holy Spirit that makes our praying successful. We can never be successful in our own energies. God must do the work and He will do it through us. The prayer that comes from Heaven will succeed in reaching back to Heaven.

Surely our Lord had this work of the Holy Spirit in mind when He climaxed His teaching on prayer with “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” Lk 11:13

He is in us to inspire our desires and longings, to quicken our minds and hearts, and giving us prayers, to pray them through us. All effectual prayer is that which the Holy Sprit prays through us.

If the Spirit prays in us, shall we not share His “groanings” in prayer? *The Kneeling Christian*

In all states of dilemma or of difficulty, prayer is an available source. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the throne of God; and though she may be outward bound with only griefs, and groans, and sighs, she shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings! C. H. Spurgeon

You who never know what a groan is, or a falling tear, are destitute of vital godliness.

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2. Miscellaneous

The A.C.T.S. of Prayer

“Pray??” “I don’t know what to say.” “Talk to God?” “I don’t know what to talk about.” If we haven’t said this we surely have felt it. The following is a topical outline for the content of our prayers, whether public or private. Knowing what to talk about can not only help us get started in praying but also can us have the right content and balance in our praying. The order is very important. Don’t miss the message in the order of the points of the outline. “Supplication” or requesting from God is the last thing not the first thing and surely not the only thing in our prayers. God is not a cosmic bell hop to supply our desires. We are to first “adore” Him for Who He is and then “confess” that we are unworthy and then “thank” Him for what He has done, is doing, and has promised to do. Then if we have something that we desire, as we abide in Christ, we ask or “supplicate” our loving and generous God for those things in the will of God. This acrostic is easily remember, even when we are praying with our eyes shut.

Adoration

“Adoration may be defined the homage rendered to God in the immediate view of his majesty, blessedness and glory, filling ;the soul with corresponding emotions of veneration and awe.” Palmer

Ex 15:11-- “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

Ps 104:1,2-- “Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. 2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:”

“Oh, the selfishness of the thought which restricts prayer to mere petition! Shall nothing drive us to God but the pressure of want? Shall we think of him only when we are hungry, and forget him when we are full?...Is there nothing attractive in the character of Jehovah Himself to draw us with the power of a magnet?” Palmer

Confession

Confession means “speaking together”-- relating to sin, it means that we agree with God about our sin. To confess our sins is to acknowledge the Sovereignty of God. A true Christian will be grieved when he sees sin in his life and will agree with God that it is sin ;and he will turn from it.

Ps 51:4--“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”

Lk 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.”

Ja 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.”

Ac 19:18--“And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.”

Thanksgiving

To give thanks is to acknowledge benefit received and express gratitude.

Co. 4:2-- "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"

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

1 Co 1:4-- "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.."

2 Co 9:15-- "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Ro 1:21-- "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Supplication

Supplication is prayer as the expression of need. Sometimes our need is an indication of what God wants to do us.

Ps 55:1--"Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication."

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

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."

(Each of the above could be the subject making four sessions of prayer)

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Adoring God

Sometimes we use the acrostic "A.C.T.S." as an outline to help us in prayer. A = adore, C = confession, T = thanksgiving, S = supplication. Let's consider the first, Adoring God. A dictionary defines "adore" 1. To worship as divine, 2. To love or revere deeply. "Adoration may be defined as the homage rendered to God in the immediate view of his majesty, blessedness and glory, filling the soul with corresponding emotions of veneration and awe." Palmer

When Jesus was asked "which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" Mat 22:36.37 John follows this with "The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love." 1 Jn 4:8 The true child of God has a love for Him but if it does not express itself in verbal communication is not a very passionate love.

Adoring God should be the easy but sometimes it is hard to express our love to Him. The problem is not because God is lacking in adorable qualities, but that our depraved nature can not appreciate the character of God. Even though we are saved from the awful and eternal judgment of God, and even saved from the sorrow and consequences of sin here in the nasty now and now, still, our nature is dull and slow to receive an understanding and appreciation of the character of God. Sometime it is hard to express our love for God when great and unexplained tragedy has occurred in our lives. Job said "If he slays me, I will hope in him." 13:15. It is wiser to bow in submission and adoration of God than to try to judge him.

To adore God involves both our understanding and our emotions. As we come to understand that God is "omnipresent (is in all places at all times), omniscient (knows everything whether past, present, future, or potential), omnipotent (is all powerful whether directly or through means), immutable (can not change, is always the same), infinitely holy and completely just, glorious in all His manifestation, self-existent and eternal, sovereign, faithful, wise, loving, graceful, merciful, long-suffering, gentle, kind, and the list goes on and on. Who is a more loveable person than God? There is none other. "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Ex 15:11 Who most deserves to be loved and adored? It is the God of our salvation.

God is to be approached in both awe and adoration. When we pray we should tell God that we love Him because of who He is and what He has done for us. "Oh, the selfishness of the thought which restricts prayer to mere petition! Shall nothing drive us to God but the pressure of want? Shall we think of him only when we are hungry, and forget him when we are full?..Is there nothing attractive in the character of Jehovah Himself to draw us with the power of a magnet?" Palmer

If we abide in adoration for our God sin not will capture our affections. "If you love me, you will obey my commandments." Jn 14:15 Obedience is a response of devotion and adoration of the Redeemer who set us free.

God has not saved us without respect to our emotions, they are a vital part of our relation and communication with Him. Our counselors tell us that is important for husband and wife to express their love for one another in both actions and words. It is important that we tell our spouse "***I Love You***" but is more important that we tell God "***I Love You***" and Jesus "***I Love You***." We need to tell God that we love him. It does not fulfill a need in Him, but it does please Him and glorify him. We have a genuine need to express our love and adoration to God personally (secretly and corporately). This process gets our emotions out where we can recognize and confirm them and have a stronger and more intimate relationship with our God.

Our Lord ranks love for Him as of more importance than love for our family, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Mat 10:37 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Lk 14:26 Our Lord is using the term "hate" in a figurative sense, which is operating on a relative scale. God is to be loved more than family or self.. Our love for God should make our love for a spouse, a parent or a child seem like hate, relatively. Our service for God is hindered if of our love for Him is not of the right quality.

Since "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Rom 5:5 shouldn't we pour out our love to God. Privately for sure and publicly for His glory. As we pray we should express our love to Jesus. Surely we are not ashamed of Him, especially after He has done so much for us.

"Lips cry 'God be merciful' That ne'er cry 'God be praised.' O come let us adore Him!" *The Kneeling Christian*

"The most healthy state of a Christian is to be always empty in self and constantly depending upon the Lord for supplies; to be always poor in self and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally, but mighty through God to do great exploits; and hence the use of prayer, because, while it adores God, it lays the creature where it should be, in the very dust." CHS

More Love to Thee, O Christ

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More love to thee, O Christ,

More love to thee!

Hear thou the prayer I make

On bended knee;

This is my earnest plea,

More love, O Christ, to thee,

More love to Thee

More love Thee

Once earthly joy I craved,

Sought peace and rest;

Now Thee alone I seek'

Give what is best;
 This all my prayer shall be,
 More love, O Christ to thee,
 More love to Thee,
 More love to Thee
 Let sorrow do its work,
 Send grief and pain;
 Sweet are the messengers,
 Sweet their refrain,
 When they can sing with me,
 More love, O Christ, to Thee,
 More love to Thee,
 More love to Thee
 Then shall my latest breath
 Whisper thy praise;
 This be the parting cry,
 My heart shall raise,
 This still its prayer shall be,
 More love, O Christ to Thee,
 More love to Thee,
 More love to Thee.

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Confession in Prayer

Sometimes we use the acrostic "A.C.T.S." to help us in prayer. A = adore, C = confession, T = thanksgiving, S = supplication. Let us look at confession in prayer. Confession means "speaking together"-- relating to sin, it means that we agree with God about our sin. "...God and ourselves, unite in a concurrent declaration in regard to sin. God...declares it the abominable thing which his soul hateth. The sinner...feels the terribleness of it in his own experience; and running upon this line, unites with God in declaring it that abominable thing which every soul ought to hate." (*Theology of Prayer*, B.M. Palmer) A true Christian will be grieved when he sees sin in his life and will agree with God that it is sin and he will turn from it. Confessing our sin clears God of our wrong doing and protects His name. Confession is necessary in order to pray: 1. Because God is offended. 2. Because We are guilty, therefore, disqualified to pray. 3. Because the essence of prayer is honestly communicating with God.

We need to confess that our basic nature is to sin.

That we are far from God and not naturally in submission to God's law and will. The theologians call this original sin. "Look, I was prone to do wrong from birth; I was a sinner the moment my mother conceived me." Ps 51:5 We are not sinners because of bad examples around us. We were willing and eager student to learn sin. "If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes, how much less man, who is abominable and corrupt, who drinks in evil like water!" Job 15:15,16

We need to confess actual sins that we have committed.

Privately committed sins need to be confessed privately. Publicly committed sins need to be confessed publicly. We can sin in act, word, and thought. Our sin may not get out of our thoughts but it is still actual sin. We need to recognize that we are guilty and that it separates us from God and His blessings. We need to confess our personal sins “The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!’” Lk 18:13

We need to confess our corporate sins.

Ezra confessed the corporate sin of Israel. “I prayed, ‘O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed, my God, to lift my face to you. For our iniquities have climbed higher than our head, and our guilt extends to the heavens.’” Ezra 9:6

We need to confess that our sin is basically against God.

Even though sin hurts other, it is basically sin against God and must always be dwelt with in our relationship with God. “Against you, especially you, I have sinned; I have done what is sinful in your sight. So you are just when you confront me; you are right when you condemn me.” Ps 51:4

We need to confess to one another.

“So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.” Jam 5:16 This keeps us humble, makes us accountable and helps us discipline ourselves to prevent it happening again.

We need to confess our sins so God will hear us.

“ If I had harbored sin in my heart, the sovereign Master would not have listened. However, God heard; he listened to my prayer. God deserves praise, for he did not reject my prayer or abandon his love for me!” Ps 66:18-20

It is not a matter of “If we have sinned, we should confess.” The Bible tells us plainly that we have sinned and we are to confess it. “If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.” 1 Jn 1:8-10 The basic definition for sin in the NT is “to miss the mark,” this definition alone give us abundant opportunity for confession because we have all missed very badly the standard that God’s holiness requires.

How do we discover the sin in our life to confess? To compare ourselves to others will not reveal our sin to us. On the contrary, it will increase our sin by hiding the sin we have and feeding our pride. We must put ourselves before God and give Him time to show us ourselves. This can be done personally and corporately. The Psalmist said “Examine me, and probe my thoughts! Test me, and know my concerns! See if there is any idolatrous tendency in me, and lead me in the reliable ancient path!” Ps 139:23-24 The most mature saints have not matured past the need for confession but have learned how to detect sin in their lives and deal with it quickly. “The one who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and abandons them will find mercy.” Prov 28:13

"Prayer has often been compared to breathing; we have only to carry out the comparison fully to see how wonderful the place is which the holy spirit occupies. With every breath we expel the impure air which would soon cause our death, and inhale again the fresh air to which we owe our life. So we give out from us, in confession the sins, in prayer the needs and the desires of our heart. And in drawing in our breath again, we inhale the fresh air of the promises, and the love, and the life of God in Christ. We do this through the holy spirit, who is the breath of our life..." A. Murray

What better can we do, than to the place

Repairing, where He judged us, prostrate fall

Before Him reverent; and there confess

Humbly our faults, and pardon beg; with tears

(John Milton has Adam saying to Eve)

[illegible]

Corporate Prayer: What Is It

The word “corporate” is an adjective meaning **1.** Of or being a corporation. **2.** Combined into one body: joint or ***corporate action***. The term “corporate prayer” would mean two or more children of God praying the same prayer at the same time. When one person is verbalizing the prayer we call it “leading in prayer.” If more than one person is verbalizing the prayer, we call it “praying in unison.” If all are praying the same prayer in mind and spirit then we are experiencing true “Corporate prayer.” “Corporate prayer” is not just several people in the same room taking turns praying, but each one experiencing union of soul with the one leading and all becoming one in communion with God. This union of mind and spirit is the result of the work of the Spirit.

Paul make two concluding statements about tongues in the church service: 1 Cor 14:15-17 “What is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit *only*, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.” and in verse 26 “What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” The thrust of Paul’s teaching is that when someone speaks, sings, or prays it must be with understanding so others can participate and agree and say “Amen” which means “so be it.”

It is normal that not every one gets to pray audibly in the prayer meeting. Some think that they have wasted their time in coming to the meeting since they did not get to participate and they may have done so if that is all they came to do. But that should not and need not be the case. We that are silent need to join our spirits with the one speaking to God. “Even though we may not take part audibly in the action, yet if we are there in a right spirit - there really to wait upon God, we marvelously help the tone of a meeting.” C.H. Mackintosh

It is not always necessary that we take prayer requests, we can lead one another to the throne to pray with the “corporate support” of the entire group. If one Jacob can prevail over the angel, then what could several Jacobs accomplish? “While it is true that one man who knows how to pray and make intercession in the Spirit has far more power with God than a host of half-hearted ones, it is nevertheless a glorious fact that the prayers of a sanctified host, when of one heart and soul, become irresistible.” –Thomas Payne

Our Lord Jesus teaches us about agreeing together, “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” Mat 18:19-20 This lesson of our Lord involves more than just agreeing in prayer, but it is fundamental to His teaching and to effectual corporate prayer.

“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Compare a machine in working order with a box of the same parts. “What we cannot obtain by solitary prayer we may by social...because where our individual strength fails, there union and concord are effectual.” Chrysostom 400 AD

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three *strands* is not quickly torn apart.”

Lev 26:6-9 “I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making *you* tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. ‘But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will

chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you.” A ratio of effectiveness of 1/20 increases to 1/100 by an increase in corporate size. “There is a power in conferring and covenanting, on the part of kindred spirits, to come before God, and plead together some special promise.” *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

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“The prayer that God particularly delights to answer is united prayer. There is power in the prayer of a single individual, and the prayer of individuals has wrought great things, but there is far greater power in united prayer.”
The Power of Prayer, R.A. Torrey

"It is a tremendous responsibility to lead God's people to God's throne and into God's presence in public prayer. God can so strongly anoint the one who leads in prayer that all present are brought into consciousness of God's presence until the one praying is forgotten and the people as one in heart and soul unite and agree in the prayer." *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel, p 129

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Corporate Prayer: The Open Secret

By “open secret” we mean something that is common knowledge but everyone’s actions make it look like it is a secret. Concerning the apostolical history of meetings for prayer Spurgeon said, “these meetings must have been very common indeed. They were, doubtless, every-day things...” Let’s look at the N.T. passages that refer to the “corporate prayer meeting.”

Matt 6:5,6 “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” The Jews practice was that everywhere there were ten men they should build a house for prayer, this they called the Synagogue.

Mark 11:17 “And He began to teach and say to them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a robbers’ den.” (Lk 19:46)

Lk 1:8-10 “Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.”

Lk 18:10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”

Act 1:13,14 “When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” One of the first uses of the prayer-meeting, then, is to encourage a discouraged people.

Ac 2:41-43 “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.” If we are to understand the functions of “teaching” “fellowship”, “breaking of bread” as corporate functions why would we think of this reference to “prayer” as anything else? Just look at the results.

Ac 3:1-7 “Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. When he

saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, Look at us! And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk! And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.” Today the Church in America has the silver and gold but not the power to change peoples lives.

Ac 4:31 “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.” The prayer-meeting is the comfort and resource of a persecuted church.

Ac 6:4 “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” If “ministry of the word” is corporate why not “prayer”?

Ac 12:5 “So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.”

This prayer meeting may have been in a home but still it was the church praying in a prayer meeting(s) that prevailed.

Ac 13:2,3 “While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” The early Christians had an atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit could speak and here He give instruction for missionary operations.

Ac 14:22,23 “Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In the midst of persecution we must commend each other to the Lord by prayer.

Ac 16:12,13 “and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.”

A prayer-meeting became the first foothold of the gospel in Europe just as it is for any work of God.

1 Cor 11:4,5 “Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.” 14:15 “What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.” Paul was so concerned about “corporate prayer” in the Corinthian church that he gave detailed instruction for it.

1 Thess 5:17 “pray without ceasing;” This is given in a context of exhortation to the corporate church body.

1 Tim 2:1,8 “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men....Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.” When Paul gave instruction to Timothy he included corporate prayer.

“How could we expect a blessing if we were too idle to ask for it? How could we look for a Pentecost if we never met with one accord, in one place, to wait upon the Lord? Brethren, we shall never see much change for the better in our churches in general till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians.” *Only a Prayer Meeting*, p 13. We like to glory in Spurgeon’s success but we fail to strive for a Monday night service which he said “scarcely ever numbers less than from a thousand to twelve hundred attendants...” p 27

“The prayer-meeting is an institution which ought to be very precious to us, and to be cherished very much by us as a Church, for to it we owe everything. When our comparatively little chapel was all but empty, was it not a well-known fact that the prayer-meeting was always full? And when the Church increased, and the place was scarce large enough, it was the prayer meeting that did it all. When we went to Exeter Hall, we were a praying people, indeed; and when we entered on the larger speculation, as it seemed, of the Surrey Music-hall, what cries and tears went up to heaven for our success! And so it has been ever since. It is in the spirit of prayer that our strength lies; and if we lose this, the locks will be shorn from Samson, and the Church of God will become weak as water and though we, as

Samson did, go and try to shake ourselves as at other times, we shall hear the cry, The Philistines be upon thee, and our eyes will be put out, and our glory will depart, unless we continue mighty and earnest in prayer.”

What Should Be the Great Object of the Prayer-meeting,

1. First, it must be the glory of God, or else the petition is not sufficiently put up.
2. And then, in subservience to that, let us pray for a blessing on the Church.
3. Then we should also pray for the conversion of the ungodly.

“History confirms the truth that wherever evangelical and vital religion flourish, there lives the earnest gatherings for social prayer.” *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

A church is never more like the New Testament church than when it is praying.

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Corporate Prayer: How to Have the Manifest Presence of God

The basic assumption of James 4:8 “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” is that there is a something more than the omnipresence of God. God can draw nearer than the presence that He has at all times in all places. Before the fall God came in special visitation to Adam and Eve. “They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” Gen 3:8 That presence must have been something more than His omnipresence. When they fell they hid from that presence. In our salvation God has restored our relationship with Him but we are still struggling with His special presence. What is the manifest presence of God? It is not the presence of God as He is all present or omnipresence. It is not His providence that is ever waiting on us. It is when He becomes undeniably real, irresistibly and powerfully changing saint and sinner, when He gloriously glorifies Himself among His people. The presence of God is unquestionably Sovereign and irresistible, nothing stands in His way. When He revealed Himself to us in our initial salvation experience it was His sovereign prerogative to do so and likewise with His manifest presence.

In Jn 14:21 our Lord teaches us about His and His Father’s relation to us, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.” The word “disclose” is *emphanizo* meaning to manifest, exhibit to view, to show one’s self, come to view, appear, be manifest, to indicate, disclose, declare, make known. Too often we read into the Scriptures what is norm in our experience. There is much more for us in our relation to God than we know.

Paul said to the Corinthians “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. 1 Cor 2:3-5 Demonstration here is a making manifest, showing forth, a demonstration, proof. May God help us to experience the “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” personally and corporately.

The question then is “How can we have this special and manifest presence of God?”

The answer may be simple in principle but difficult to acquire. In Matt 6:5,6 Jesus give us instruction in praying, “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” We are not told not to pray in the synagogue or assembly, but that we are not to do it “like the hypocrites.” Public praying is good but it requires a counterpart “private praying.” “The term translated room refers to the inner room of a house, normally without any windows opening outside, the most private location possible.”

Paul's Exhortation to Corporate Prayer

"First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people." 1 Timothy 2:1

Paul begins this letter by exhorting Timothy concerning doctrine (1:3-7) and continues talking about the law (1:8-11), and how all this related to him (1:12-17), and again exhorts Timothy to fight the good fight (1:18-20). The two main parts of public worship are the ministry of the word and prayer and Paul is dealing with these as two areas of concern. Now, Paul moves from the doctrinal to the practical, especially as it relates to their corporate conduct.

The word for "first" means "first in time or place or first in rank," here the latter definition applies. "The exhortation here is not addressed particularly to Timothy, but relates to all who were called to lead public prayer." (*Barnes' Notes on the NT*, p 1133) Paul is referring to "Timothy and the congregations; Timothy is to direct them, and the congregations are to follow his directions. Few commentators will entertain the thought that Paul's directions are intended only for individuals and not for congregations. Timothy should not be regarded as being the pastor of the church in Ephesus, the elders were the pastors. Timothy was Paul's representative who directed pastors and churches in the entire province; hence, Paul also puts these directions into writing in case somebody raised objection." (*Interpretation of First Timothy*, R.C.H. Lenski, p 538) That Paul is referring to corporate conduct is further evidenced when he begins chapter 3 by dealing with "the office of overseer" which is a church body issues.

Paul is compassionate in his dealing with Timothy. When he says, "I urge" he is using the word that means to call to one's side, to admonish, exhort. The noun form of this word, *parakletos*, is used to refer to the Holy Spirit, the comforter or the one that comes along side to help and strengthen. This word also occurs in 1:3, there it is in the aorist tense where it has a sense of finality to it to as he deals with doctrine and here it is present tense indicating that the exhortation to prayer is ongoing and continual. These two occurrences indicate that these two sections are to be considered in comparison to each other, the one doctrinal and the other practical.

Paul proceeds to give us four things that ought to be included in corporate prayer.

1. "Requests" as seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty to God. "The picture behind the word is that of a beggar sitting at the side of the road, begging for the help of the king as he passes by. It expresses destitution and inadequacy, inability to meet one's own needs, and total dependence on another. It is need expressed in a cry... a definite need keenly felt." (*Prayer Power Unlimited*, J. Oswald Sanders, p 29)

2. "Prayers" as addressed to God or a place set apart or suited for the offering of prayer. "As used here the word for prayers means prayer-wishes that are expressed in the presence and by the side of another...it is the word that refers to needs that are always present, in contrast to petitions (requests) which have specific situations in view." (*Prayer Power Unlimited*, J. Oswald Sanders, p 29)

3. "Intercessions" means a falling in with, meeting with, an interview, that for which an interview is held, a conference or conversation, a petition, supplication. "In intercession, we are concerned about the needs and interests of others. Intercession is the unselfish and altruistic aspect of prayer...in intercessions the believer is acting as an intermediary between God and other people. We forget ourselves and our own needs in our identification with the needs of the one for whom we pray." (*Prayer Power Unlimited*, J. Oswald Sanders, p 30)

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Thanksgiving in Prayer

"Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving" Col 4:2

"First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people."

1 Tim 2:1

Sometimes we use the acrostic "A.C.T.S." as an outline to help us in prayer. A = adore, C = confession, T = thanksgiving, S = supplication. Let us consider thanksgiving in prayer. Thanksgiving is defined as, "To give thanks is to acknowledge the bounty of that hand from which we receive our blessings, and to ascribe honour and praise to the power, the wisdom and the goodness of God upon that account." *A Guide to Prayer*, Isaac Watts p 29

“Thanksgiving is the act of expressing specific gratitude to God for blessings He has bestowed upon us.” *The Hour that Changes the World*, Dick Eastman p 95

There are two types of things we are to give God thanks for:

1. Those things He has given us.

Those things He has given us without our asking. God has included us in His great plan of redemption. “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” 2 Cor 9:15 We are to thank God for being a just God. We are to thank God for revealing Himself to us sinful creatures. For His protecting us from harm and suffering that others endure.

Those things He has given us in answer to our prayer. “The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.” James 5:16 For our forgiveness of sins and our hope of eternal life. For delivering us from dangers and evils that we face. The ten lepers could pray for mercy and healing but only one returned to express thankfulness. How soon we forget where our blessings come from.

For all the mercies of life; for things spiritual, for Christ Himself, and for all spiritual blessings in him; for electing, redeeming, sanctifying, adopting, pardoning, and justifying grace; for the work of sanctification in our lives, and for eternal life itself; for the Gospel that we have heard and that we hear preached, promises of God, truths that the Holy Spirit has helped us to see, the privilege of public worship without persecution.

2. Those things that He will do for us, both that which we will not ask for and that which we will ask for. When our Lord was about to raise Lazarus from the dead He said “Father, I thank you that you have listened to me.” Jn 11:41 Obviously Jesus had already prayed about this situation and received the answer and was now thanking His Father for what He was about to do. In Mt 15:36 Jesus thanked His Father for the seven loaves knowing what His Father was about to do. It honors God for us to thank Him for what He has not yet done but what we expect Him to do in the future.

The giving of thanks is not something reserved for private prayer. I Chron 16:8 says “Give thanks to the LORD! Call on his name! Make known his accomplishments among the nations!” In Eph 5:19,20 we are told “speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” The “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody” are things done in the meeting of the saints, the corporate meeting. So should we “Give thanks” in the corporate prayer meeting. The prayer meeting is a place of His special presence and we ought to “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give him thanks! Praise his name!” Ps 100:4 “Always rejoice, constantly pray, in everything give thanks. For this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” I Th 5:16-18 The context of this passage is the body life of the local church, this is probably a reference to the prayer meeting.

We give God extra glory when we thank Him in circumstance that are not convent, in times of adversity, desertion, temptation, affliction, and persecution, as well as in prosperity. “Let them present thank offerings, and loudly proclaim what he has done!” Ps 107:22 A sacrifice offering of thanksgiving is to express thankfulness when we are hurting, being reproached, suffering for His name, depressed, discouraged, in doubt, defeated. It is associated with pain and giving up something of value to us.

The world is searching for peace, internationally and personally but peace can only come from a right relationship with God that includes thankfulness. “Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, tell your requests to God in your every prayer and petition—with thanksgiving. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Ph 4:6,7 “If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing.” William Law

We are to be full and overflowing with thankfulness. “Therefore, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and firm in your faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” Col 2:6,7

Just as we are saved through the work of Jesus Christ so we are to give our thanks back to God through Him. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father through him.” Col 3:17

“Praise and thanksgiving not only open the gates of heaven for me to approach God, but also ‘prepare a way’ for God to bless me.” *The Kneeling Christian*

Thanks, O God, for boundless mercy from Thy gracious throne above;
Thanks for ev'ry need provided from the fulness of thy Love!
Thanks for daily toil and labor and for rest when shadows fall;
Thanks for love of friend and neighbor and Thy goodness unto all!
Thanks for thorns as well as roses; thanks for weakness and for health;
Thanks for clouds as well as sunshine; thanks for poverty and wealth!
Thanks for pain as well as pleasure – all thou sendest day by day;
And Thy Word, our dearest treasure, shedding light upon our way.
Thanks, O God, for home and fireside, here we share our daily bread;
Thanks for hours of sweet communion, when by Thee our souls are fed!
Thanks for grace in time of sorrow and for joy and peace in Thee;
Thanks for hope today, tomorrow, and for all eternity!

*Thanks to God by August Ludvig Storm, 1862-1914,
translated by Carel E. Backstrom, 1901-*

Supplication in Prayer

Sometimes we use the acrostic “A.C.T.S.” to help us in prayer. A = adore, c = confession, t = thanksgiving, s = supplication. Let’s consider the fourth, “Supplication in Prayer.” Supplication is prayer as the expression of need, its asking for something desired. Sometimes our need is an indication of what God wants to do for us. He wants us to enter into what He is doing in our lives by learning what our need is, asking for it and trusting Him for it.

“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation.” Lk 11:2-4 Jesus now becomes a teacher of prayer. He did not think like some people that say that prayer can not be taught. “Everything that is legitimate to pray about can be found in the Lord’s Prayer.” (*And When you Pray*, Ray Pritchard p 23). If you can’t find it in this model prayer you shouldn’t pray for it. Sometimes we struggle with exactly what to pray for but Jesus specified five categories of petition or supplication:

1. Glorification of God. “Hallowed be thy name.” There is no problem here to know what to pray for. We are to pray that everything glorify our God. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen.” Rom 11:36 We have authority to pray only for those things that Glorify God. “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” 1 Cor 10:31 What ever the circumstance, need or crisis we are to pray that it will bring glory to our God.

2. Kingdom business. “Thy kingdom come.” Let’s not miss the fact that “the kingdom of God” is something we are to pray about. We don’t think that this is limited to the Second Coming of our Lord as described in 2 Thess 1:4 “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.” Rom 14:17 tells us what our kingdom business is “For the kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” The next category deals with food and drink but first we are to pray about spiritual and practical things that will glorify God. It is not just to pray for the kingdom but pray for the kingdom **first**. A big responsibility in this area is intercession for others. Paul was very desirous for the Christians to pray for him. “Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may make it known as I should.” Col 4:2-4 “Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Phil 1:18,19

3. Daily need. “Give us day by day our daily bread.” God could and many times does supply our need, without our asking. So why ask at all? Answer: Jesus said to, that is why. Our needs are great and varied. We need a lot more than food; we need the health to eat and use its energy for God. We should include in this category the needs of others. Our needs are spiritual as well as physical. We need for God to work in our hearts to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. Let’s not miss the fact that the needs here referenced are “daily” not “monthly” or “yearly.” A large bank account balance is not a “daily need.” Sometimes God in His super abundant grace allows us to have savings and retirement accounts but it is daily needs that we have authority to pray for.

4. Forgiveness of sin. “And forgive us our sins;” If we are truly Christian we are saved, justified and forgiven for all our sins, past, present and future then; why ask for forgiveness? There is a difference between our legal position and our life performance. Part of our sanctification is coming to understand what sin is, to identify our sins and deal with them. Asking for forgiveness acknowledges the fact of our sin, and agrees with God that it is wrong and is an effort to move away from that sin. In this category we have the authority to deal directly with God; no middle person is needed. “If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.” 1 Jn 1:8,9

5. Predeliverance from sin. “And bring us not into temptation.” A genuine Christian does not want to sin; he knows that he is weak in himself and cannot keep himself from sin. He doesn’t trust himself and does not want to be tested. To ask that God deliver us from the opportunity to sin is a safe and healthy attitude to have. “The meaning is, that God would not suffer us to be overcome by temptation; that we may not be given up to the power of temptation, and be drawn into sin.” (*The Lord’s Prayer*, Thomas Watson, p 187) This is the opposite of Peter’s attitude when He said “Even if I must die with you, I will never deny you.” And all the disciples said the same thing.” Matt 26:35 The wise Christian knows he is liable to fall and wants to avoid it.

I CANNOT PRAY

I cannot say **OUR** if my religion has no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say **FATHER** if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily living.

I cannot say **WHO ART IN HEAVEN** if all my interests and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say **HALLOWED BY MY NAME** if I, who am called to bear His Name, am not holy.

I cannot say **THY KINGDOM COME** if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN** unless I am truly ready to give myself to His service here and now.

I cannot say **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD** without expending honest effort for it, or by ignoring the genuine needs of others.

I cannot say **FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US** if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION** if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.

I cannot say **DELIVER US FROM EVIL** if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE KINGDOM** if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE POWER** if I fear what my neighbors and friends may say or do.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE GLORY** if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say **FOREVER** if I am too anxious about each day's events.

I cannot say **AMEN** unless I honestly say "Cost what it may, This is my prayer."

Source unknown

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The Act of Prayer has its own Benefit

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." —Lamentations 3:41

The act of prayer teaches us our unworthiness, which is a very salutary lesson for such proud beings as we are. If God gave us favours without constraining us to pray for them we should never know how poor we are, but a true prayer is an inventory of wants, a catalogue of necessities, a revelation of hidden poverty. While it is an application to divine wealth, it is a confession of human emptiness. The most healthy state of a Christian is to be always empty in self and constantly depending upon the Lord for supplies; to be always poor in self and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally, but mighty through God to do great exploits; and hence the use of prayer, because, while it adores God, it lays the creature where it should be, in the very dust.

Prayer is in itself, apart from the answer which it brings, a great benefit to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life we acquire energy by the hallowed labour of prayer. Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets, that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer girds the loins of God's warriors, and sends them forth to combat with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. An earnest pleader cometh out of his closet, even as the sun ariseth from the chambers of the east, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race.

Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses which routs the Amalekites more than the sword of Joshua; (Ex 17:12 "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; And his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.")

It is the arrow shot from the chamber of the prophet foreboding defeat to the Syrians (2 Ki 13:18 "16 And he said to the king of Israel, Put thy hand upon the bow; and he put his hand upon it. And Elisha laid his hands upon the king's hands. 17 And he said, Open the window eastward; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot; and he shot. And he said, Jehovah's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. 18 And he said, Take the arrows; and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground; and he smote thrice, and stayed. 19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times: then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.").

Mr 10:21 "And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

Php 3:10 "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death;"

Gal 2: 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."

Every converted sinner is a soul revived to prayer. Every saint restored from backsliding, is a soul returned to the life and power of prayer. Every congregation enjoying an outpouring of the Spirit, is a congregation revived and alive to the prayer meeting. *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

No time to pray!

No time to pray!

O, who so fraught with earthly care

As not to give a humble prayer

Some part of day!

No time to pray!

What heart so clean, so pure within,

That needeth not some check from sin.

Needs not to pray?

No time to pray?

'Mid each day's dangers, what retreat

More needful than the mercy seat?

Who need not pray?

No time to pray!

Must care or business' urgent call

So press us as to take it all,

Each passing day?

What thought more drear

Than that our God His face should hide,

And say, through all life's swelling tide,

No time to hear!

Anonymous

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Boring and Blasting, Ours and His

From: *Prayer*, by Ole. Hallesby, p 75

"pray without ceasing;" 1 Thess 5:17

"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Gal 6:9

We notice, too, that God now and then sends us an awakening. Nevertheless there is something in this connection which we should think about, especially with reference to our prayers. In the first place, I would point out the fact that awakenings occur very seldom. As a rule decades elapse between revivals in our cities and rural communities. In the next place, I would make mention of the fact that the revivals which do take place are usually not very great, being limited to a single locality. Finally, I would say that they are often representative of but very little spiritual power. By this I do not mean that there are no powers at work. There are often tremendous, almost brutal powers at work. But it becomes apparent, often during a revival, and especially afterwards, that there was much human power and but little divine power in the work that was done.

The reason for all this is that we fail to labor in prayer. We long for revivals; we speak of revivals; we work for revivals; and we even pray a little for them. But we do not enter upon that labor in prayer which is the essential preparation for every revival.

Many of us misunderstand the work of the Spirit in the unconverted. We think that this work is limited essentially to the time when the awakenings are taking place. We seem to think that the unconverted are not subject to divine influence between times. This is a complete misunderstanding. The Spirit works without interruption, during awakenings and between awakenings, even though He works differently, and the effect therefore also is different in the hearts of men.

The work of the Spirit can be compared to mining. The Spirit's work is to blast to pieces the sinner's hardness of heart and his frivolous opposition to God. The period of the awakening can be likened to the time when the blasts are fired. The time between the awakenings corresponds, on the other hand, to the time when the deep holes are being bored with great effort into the hard rock.

To bore these holes is hard and difficult and a task which tries one's patience. To light the fuse and fire the shot is not only easy but also very interesting work. One sees "results" from such work. It creates interest, too; shots resound, and pieces fly in every direction!

It takes trained workmen to do the boring. Anybody can light a fuse. This fact sheds a great deal of light upon the history of revivals, a history which is often strange and incomprehensible.

There are many people who would like to light the fuse. Many would like to be evangelistic preachers. And some preachers are even so zealous that they light a fuse before the hole has been bored and explosive matter put in place. The resulting revival becomes, therefore, nothing but a little display of fireworks!

During a revival our zeal for souls is so great that we are all active. Some are so active that they are almost dangerous during an after-meeting. When, on the other hand, the awakening has subsided, and everyday conditions, perhaps even dry seasons, return, then most of us lose our zeal and cease our activity.

But that is just when the Spirit calls us to do the quiet, difficult, trying work of boring holy explosive material into the souls of the unconverted by daily and unceasing prayer. This is the real preparatory work for the next awakening. The reason why such a long period of time elapses between awakenings is simply that the Spirit cannot find believers who are willing to do the heavy part of the mining work.

Everybody desires awakenings; but we prefer to let others do the boring into the hard rock. There are, God be praised, in every community some who take up this work which tries one's patience so sorely. The Lord reward you, brother and sister, and, above all, give you grace to persevere in the holy work you have taken up!

Let us be faithful to prepare the way with persistent praying.

Let us be faithful to wait on the Spirit to give wondrous workings of His power.

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Fervent Praying

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."

The words “effectual” and “fervent” are the translation of one Greek word **energeo** meaning to be operative, be at work, put forth power, to effect, show one's self operative. It has the prefix **en** which means “In” “inside” or “within” so the emphasis is what is going on within our own soul.

Also, **energeo** is present tense and middle voice. This kind of praying is ongoing or continuous and is done personally and with much involvement. It is doing something in and to the one praying. After all God is not the one that needs to be changed, it is us that needs to be conformed to Him. From the Divine perspective, this may be the main benefit of praying, i.e. the change it brings in us. This kind of praying is not cold or even lukewarm, not formal but personal, not indifferent but importunate. This quality of praying “avails much.” Here the word means to be strong, to have power as shown by extraordinary deeds.

“Some translate the word ‘**inspired**,’ the Spirit of God breathes into men the breath of spiritual life, and they live, and being quickened by him, they breathe; and prayer is the breath of the spiritual man, and is no other than the reverberation of the Spirit of God in him; and such prayer cannot fail of success: it may be rendered ‘**inwrought**.’ True prayer is not what is written in a book, but what is wrought in the heart, by the Spirit of God; who is the enditer of prayer, who impresses the minds of his people with a sense of their wants, and fills their mouths with arguments, and puts strength into them to plead with God, and makes intercession for them according to the will of God; such prayer is always heard, and regarded by him: this has great power with God; whatever is asked, believing, is received; God can deny nothing prayed for in this manner.” John Gill

This quality of praying was manifested when:

1. Elijah prayed earnestly Ja 5:17 “Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months.”

2. Moses prayed pleadingly Ex 32: 11-13 “And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.”

3. Daniel prayed intensely Dan 9:17-19 “Now therefore, O our God, hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 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' sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”

4. Paul prayed agonizingly Rom 15:30 “Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;”

5. Jesus prayed persistently Mat 26:39-44 “And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words.”

Outline from *Principles and Practice of Prayer*, p 119, by Ivan French.

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How to Pray

“How to do anything is the secret and soul of its accomplishment.” F.E. Marsh

1. Pray **Secretly** in the closet of **communion**. Ma 6:6 “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Lk 9:18

2. Pray **Watchfully** in the alertness of **wakefulness**. Ma 24:42 “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” Mat 26:41 “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

3. Pray **Believingly** in the simplicity of **faith**. Ma 21:22 “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

4. Pray **Unceasingly** in the continuance of **well-doing**. 1 Thes 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”

5. Pray **Abidingly** in the will of God and in **Christ**. Jn 15:7,8 “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

6. Pray **Directly** in the pointedness of **definite petition**. Jam 5:17,18 “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.”

7. Pray **Effectually** in the power of the **Spirit**. Jude 20 “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,” Rom 8:26 “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

We often speak of the “Secret of Success.” Prayer is the secret to spiritual life, growth and service.

If prayer is the secret to Christian service then the secret to praying is “praying in secret.”

It is a necessity for our prayer meetings, that each person attending the corporate prayer meeting be praying in secret so when they come to the prayer meeting they will bring with them the presence of God the Spirit.

To know the secret and not to use it is worse than not knowing it at all. Jam 4:17 “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

One of the main objects of prayer is our “prayer life.” We should be constantly be praying that we will grow in our communion with our Savior and our God.

Nothing is more calculated to begat a spirit of prayer than to unite in social prayer with one who has the Spirit himself. *Mighty Prevailing Prayer*, Wesley Duewel

Be not afraid to pray; to pray is right;
Pray if thou canst with hope, but ever pray,
Though hope be weak or sick with long delay;
Pray in the darkness if there be no light;
And if for any wish thou dare not pray
Then pray to God to cast that wish away.

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In Praying We Should

Claim His attributes - Plead His justice, His mercy, His faithfulness, His wisdom, His longsuffering, His tenderness. Abraham pleaded for God's justice when he prayed for the city of Sodom. He asked for the city to be saved and at the closing of his prayer he said, **"Shall not the judge of all earth do right?"**

Ge 18:25 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?

I. Claim His promises.

When Jacob was waiting on the other side of the brook, when his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to destroy the mother and children, but the main reason he used for pleading in this prayer was: **"And thou said, surely I will do thee good."**

Ge 32:12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

III. Claim the Great Name of God. Moses did this in his prayer on one occasion when he was praying for Israel. **"What will thou do for thy great name? The Egyptians will say, Because the Lord could not bring them into the land, therefore he slew them in the wilderness."**

IV. Claim mercy for our unworthiness - David prayed, **"Lord, have mercy upon mine iniquity, for it is very great."** Ps 25:16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.

V. Claim the sufferings, death, merit and intercession of Christ Jesus.

Jesus himself said, "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to me; go and use my name."

Col 1:12-14 "giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:"

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Intercessory Prayer: Some Biblical Examples

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men;"

1 Tim 2:1

If we are really interested in others we will pray for them. But, the fact of the matter is that, most of our praying is for ourselves. Even when we pray for our family and friends it is, in part, a form of praying for ourselves. Intercession means "to go to or meet a person, especially for the purpose of conversation, consultation, or supplication, to pray, entreat." To "intercede" is to go to God for someone and ask for their benefit. The highest form of prayer is intercession for others, and the most effective ministry is that which we exercise for other's benefit. The following are a few cases of noble intercessors who prayed for blessing upon others.

1. Moses, the self-abnegator, who was willing to be blotted out from the Lord's book so long as Israel was spared. Exod 32:30-32 "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto Jehovah; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto Jehovah, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-- and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

2. Samuel, the faithful prophet, pleaded for Israel. 1 Sam 7:8,9 "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto Jehovah our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto Jehovah: and Samuel cried unto Jehovah for Israel; and Jehovah answered him."

The Lord Jesus Jn 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever." Jn 16:26 "In that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you;" Jn 17:9,15,20 "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine... I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one...Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word;"

Ro 8:34 "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Jesus prayed for Peter Lk 22:31 "Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb 7:25

The Holy Spirit Rom 8:26,27 "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

The believer 1 Tim 2:1,2 "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, is interceding for Lot and a wicked city in Gen 18:23 "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?"

Intercessory Prayer is praying for the kingdom of God: Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom. Lk 11:2 "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." Lk 10:2 "And he said unto them, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest." Ps 122:6 "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee."

Intercessory Prayer is desired by a true seeker for salvation: Ac 8:24 "And Simon answered and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me."

Intercessory Prayer is for other's holiness: 2 Co 13:7 "Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate." 2 Co 13:9 "For we rejoice, when we are weak, and ye are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfecting."

Intercessory Prayer is for others spiritual maturity: Php 1:9 "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment;" Col 1:9 "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,"

Intercessory Prayer is praying for those who treat us wrongfully: Mt 5:44 "pray for them that persecute you." Lu 6:28 "bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Job 41:8 "my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath."

Intercessory Prayer is getting for others what God wants to give: 3 Jn 1:2 "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

Intercessory Prayer is what we ask of one another: 1 Th 5:25 "Brethren, pray for us." Jas 5:16 "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another."

Intercessory Prayer is the preaching of the Word of God: 2 Th 3:1 "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also it is with you."

In introducing his book *The Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray says, "The present volume owes its existence to the desire to enforce two truths, of which formerly I had no such impression as now. The one is--that Christ actually meant prayer to be the great power by which His Church should do its work, and that the neglect of prayer is the great reason the Church has not greater power over the masses in Christian and in heathen countries...The second truth...we have far too little conception of the place that intercession, as distinguished from prayer for ourselves, ought to have in the Church and the Christian life." *The Ministry of Intercession*, p 4.

"The power of the Church truly to bless rests on intercession--asking and receiving heavenly gifts to carry to men." *The Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray, p 5.

“In intercession our King upon the throne finds His highest glory; in it we shall find our highest glory too.” *The Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray, p 5.

What an awesome privilege and responsibility it is to be an intercessor.

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Intercessory Prayer: The Test of our Praying

“If Petition is prayer relative to our personal need, Intercession is prayer relative to the need of others, for we can never intercede on our own behalf. In all intercession at least three persons must always be concerned: the one **who speaks**, the one **spoken to**, and the one **spoken for** or against. And at least three things must always be presumed: **need** on the part of the one spoken of; **power**, on the part of the one spoken to and **contact** with both these persons, on the part of the one who speaks. In worship, confession, and petition there need only be two persons involved, but, let me repeat, in intercession there can never be less than three.” *Method in Prayer*, W. Graham Scroggie p 73

Intercessory Prayer:

Obeys the command of our Lord.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34,35 To love means “to choose the object to love and sacrificially dedicate oneself to its well being.” Our Lord “commands” this, it is not optional for us to love each other. “This I command you, that you love one another.” Jn15:17 It is a sin not to obey His command. Praying for each other may be the easiest way to exercise the love we are to have for one another. If this is the case, then, not to pray for one another is the greatest way to sin against our brothers and to disobey our Lord. “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you.” 1 Sam 12:23

Follows the example of our Lord.

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;” Heb 3:1 A priest is one that goes between two parties, or intercedes. “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Heb 7:25 No one could pray more genuinely than our Lord as He prays in Jn 17. In v 1-8 He prays for Himself, in 9-19 He prays for His own, in 20-26 He prays for the world. “In intercession our King upon the throne finds His highest glory: in it we shall find our highest glory too.” (*Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray p 5) “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Heb 2:17 If Jesus has condescended to be made like us, how much more should we be made like Him. We need to join with Him in His intercessory work.

Evidences the validity of our profession.

To say we love the brethren and not to pray for them puts a question on our profession. But the Scripture goes further, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet 2:5 Believers are a priesthood, and priest are to be intercessors. If we are not doing the work of a priest, then our priesthood is in question. The principle of Mat 12.34 “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” applies to prayer. Most of our praying is for ourselves. Even when we pray for our friends and family, it is a form of praying for ourselves. The content of our prayers reveals where the care of our heart is. “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” Jn 14:15 To not love our brothers and pray for them is to evidence that we do not love our Lord.

Exercises our relationship to the world.

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to

come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" 1 Tim 2:1-5 Here the Scripture commands us to intercede for the unsaved and even wicked rulers of the world. Sometimes God wants to change the way governments are being run and He want us to have a part in that by seeing and feeling the need and asking Him for that change.

Advances the Kingdom of God.

“And He was saying to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Luke 10:2 We are to pray for labors. Advancing the Kingdom of God is hard labor and it has eternal results. Our Lord said “labors” not hired professionals. God will give the wisdom and provisions, that is not to concern us. It is laborers with warm hearts and flexible wills that get the job done. Paul ask “Brethren, pray for us.” 1 The 5:25 Paul was always asking for the Christians to be praying for his missionary efforts. “The power of the Church truly to bless rests on intercession--asking and receiving heavenly gifts to carry to men.” (*Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray p 5)

“Let us all unite in praying to God that He would visit our souls and fit us for that work of intercession, which is at this moment the greatest need of the Church and the world. It is only by intercession that power can be brought down from Heaven which will enable the Church to conquer the world. Let us stir up the slumbering gift that is lying unused, and seek to gather and train and band together as many as we can, to be God's remembrancers, and to give Him no rest till He makes His Church a joy in the earth. Nothing but intense believing prayer can meet the intense spirit of worldliness, of which complaint is everywhere made.” *Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray p 19

“Intercession is the noblest work God entrusts to us humans.” T.W. Hunt

The heartbeat of intercession is servanthood. (*Love On Its Knees*, Dick Eastman p 6)

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Joy in Prayer

Prayer can be and should be the most joyous experience this side of Heaven. When we think of Heaven, we have to think of a place of infinite joy. If, as Peter says of our Lord Jesus “whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory:” 1 Pet 1:8

When we are in prayer, we are in a special presence of the most joyous person there is or can be. Nothing can diminish His joy. God is perfect and infinite in His joy. Just as we cannot expose ourselves to the bright rays of the sun and be unaffected by it, so we can not expose our souls to the glory of the “Son” of God and not be affected and changed by it. “But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.” 2 Co 3:18 So as we encounter the infinitely joyous one, we take on an unspeakable joy. Jesus connected “prayer” and “joy” when He said in John 16:24 “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full.”

But why is it that our prayer meetings are so dull and depressing, instead of exciting and joyous. It is expected that a prayer meeting is the least exciting meeting that a church has. Many pastors and churches have given up the prayer meeting and wonder why their churches are dead and powerless. It appears to us that our churches have become self-centered and complacent and that has made them spiritual cadavers.

We experience “Joy” in praying when we properly order our relationships. All persons can be grouped into one of three groups: 1. God, 2. Others, 3. Ourselves. The order in which we prioritize these three groups determines our joy in prayer.

J Jesus

O Others

Y Yourself

J Jesus Communion

We are made social beings. We are to socialize horizontally with other humans and we are to socialize vertically with God. Prayer should be first and foremost an active relationship and fellowship in a social sense. Not a rehearsing of a list of wants. Our priority should be our socially experiencing our God. It is common with the most spiritual saints of God that they give priority to their relationship with God, even to the point of engaging in that vertical relationship before (that is early in the morning) they relate to others horizontally. “Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy; In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Ps 16:11 A local church should give priority to the prayer meeting as a personal encounter with God.

O Others Intercession

Most answered prayer is prayer for others. Intercession is a test as to the genuineness of our motive in prayer. Are we most interested in getting blessings for ourselves or for others? Do we pray for those outside of our natural family and church family? Paul’s testimony was “always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy,” Phip 1:4 “Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved.” Phip 4:1 If we seek our own joy we will miss it, but if we seek the joy and good of others, then we will have ours. “Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for in faith ye stand fast.” 2 Cor 1:24

Y Yourself Supplication

“There is nothing wrong with asking for ourselves, if we ask last.” Remember the principle, “So the last shall be first, and the first last.” Mt 20:16 The Bible commands us “draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.” Heb 4:16 Jesus commands us to “ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full.” John 16:24 How can we refuse to do what will give us full joy. It seems that our needs are a gift from God for our prayer life. We are to come “with boldness,” which means with free speaking. As we abide in Him we can approach God with openness and without reservation about what we pray about. “Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying on your behalf: I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction.” 2 Co 7:4

“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Ro 14:17 Our prayer meetings can be the most joyous and exciting of all of our church services as well as the power source for its ministry.

Prayer is not given us as a burden to be borne, or an irksome duty to fulfil, but to be a joy and power to which there is no limit. *The Kneeling Christian*

The reason we do not pray as we ought is because we do not enjoy prayer as we ought.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour

Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!

What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,

What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;

We rise, and all the distant and the near

Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.

We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!

Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,

Or others, that we are not always strong,

That we are ever overborne with care,

That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?

R. C. Trench

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Kneeology 101

The apostle Paul said “..I bow my knees unto the Father.” Eph 3:14 When praying we need to kneel in:

1. Reverence Phi 2:10 “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;”

2. Dedication 2 Chr 6:12,13 “And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands: For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,”

3. Worship Ps 95:6 “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”

4. Continuance Dan 6:10 “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

5. Confession Ezr 9:5,6 “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. 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.”

6. Submission Isa 45:22,23 “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

7. Forgiveness Ac 7:59,60 “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 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.”

8. Privacy Ac 9:40 “But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

9. Public Ac 21:5 “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.”

10. Fellowship Ac 20:36,37 “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,”

11. Intercession Ma 17:14,15 “And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son...”

12. Sincerity Mk 10:17 “And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?... and he went away sorrowful...”

While bodily posture is secondary to the attitude of the soul, it is instructive to note that at times Jesus prayed while standing, just where He happened to be at the moment. At another time, He knelt while on yet another occasion it is recorded that He fell on His face. If the Son of God got down upon His knees, yes upon His face before God, what attitude should we ordinary mortals assume as we go into His presence? While posture is not everything, it is something. *Principles and Practice of Prayer*, Ivan French

Advantages of kneeling:

<>It follows Biblical examples and principles cited above.

<>It promotes humility. Sometimes a proud person kneels but it is not his kneeling that made him proud.

<>Some say that body language is 80% of our communication. If this is true, what does our kneeling or refusing to kneel say to God. Making excuses for not kneeling is dangerous.

E. M. Bounds said of Edward Payson "He prayed without ceasing and felt safe nowhere but at the throne of grace. He may be said to have studied theology on his knees. Much of his time he spent literally prostrated with his Bible open before him pleading the promise...The scars on his bedroom floor testify to this fact. Next to Payson's bed where deep grooves in the hardwood floor where his knees had pressed repeatedly in times of travail."

Remember: "God's Army Marches on It's Knees"

How dare we work for Christ without being much on our knees? *The Kneeling Christian*

Lord, what a change within us one short hour

Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!

What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,

What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;

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Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,

And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?

R. C. Trench

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"Let us lift up our heart"

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." Lam 3:41 The act of prayer teaches us our unworthiness, which is a very healthy lesson for such proud beings as we are. If God gave us favors without constraining us to pray for them, we should never know how poor we are; but a true prayer is an inventory of wants, a catalogue of necessities, a revelation of hidden poverty. While it is an application to divine wealth, it is a confession of human emptiness. The most healthy state of a Christian is to be always empty in self and constantly depending upon the Lord for supplies; to be always poor in self and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally, but mighty through God to do great exploits; and hence, the use of prayer, because, while it adores God, it lays the creature where it should be, in the very dust. Prayer is in itself, apart from the answer which it brings, a great benefit to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life, we acquire energy by the hallowed labor of prayer. Prayer prepares the wings of God's young eaglets, that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer girds the loins of God's warriors, and sends them forth to combat with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. An earnest pleader comes out of his closet, even as the sun arises from the chambers of the east, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race. Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses which routs the

Amalekites more than the sword of Joshua; it is the arrow shot from the chamber of the prophet foreboding defeat to the Syrians. Prayer girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives to troubled mortals the peace of God. We know not what prayer cannot do! We thank thee, great God, for the mercy-seat, a choice proof of thy marvellous lovingkindness. Help us to use it aright throughout this day!

C.H. Spurgeon Morning & Evening, October 11 AM (Revised)

What the Church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use --men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. *Power Through Prayer*, E. M. Bounds

Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare.

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare:

Jesus loves to answer prayer;

He himself has bide thee pray,

Therefore will not say thee nay;

Therefore will not say thee nay.

Thou art coming to a King,

large petitions with thee bring;

for his grace and power are such,

none can ever ask too much;

none can ever ask too much.

With my burden I begin:

“Lord, remove this load of sin;

let thy blood, for sinners spilt,

set my conscience free of guilt;

set my conscience free of guilt.

Lord, I come to thee for rest,

take possession of my breast;

there thy blood-bought right maintain,

and without a rival reign;

and without a rival reign.

While I am a pilgrim here,

let thy love my spirit cheer;

as my Guide, my Guard, my Friend,

lead me to my journey's end;

lead me to my journey's end.

Show me what I have to do,

ev'ry hour my strength renew:

let me live a life of faith,

let me die thy people's death;

let me die thy people's death.

John Newton, 1779; HENDON 7.7.7.7.rep; Henri A Cesar Marlan, 1827

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Missionary Praying

When you ask a missionary what is their greatest need, they most often say “Pray for Us.” We usually take that request too lightly. The Scriptures teach us to pray for missionaries. Paul consistently asked for prayer for his missionary work; he was an Apostle by office and a Missionary by function.

There is much debate over whether the great commission was given to individuals or to the church. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Mat 28:19 Jesus was speaking to individual believers that were in a body of believers. We think it is was both. The church can not do anything except through its individual members, the fulfilling of the great commission can only be done as a team effort.

There are three ways to fulfill the Great Commission:

1. In Person
2. In Provision
3. In Prayer

It may take years for a person to get to the field and with much provision. Prayer is instantaneous in its reaching our Father in Heaven and can be instantaneous in His answering back to earth. The global positions of the prayor and the prayee have no significance in the prayer process.

In lands where the Gospel has been preached, demonical activity is minimized. In lands where the Gospel has not been preached demonical activity is maximized. The essence of being a missionary is the going to an unevangelized people and driving out the demons of darkness with the light of the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why should we pray for missionaries?

1. Because of the nature of missionary activity.

Eph 6:12f “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” In Dan 10 names of various princes are named which were the powers of those localities.

2. Because prayer based on God's Word is the only weapon man can use to touch the invisible foe.

Paul continues in Eph 6 “With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints. Pray for me, that I may be given the message when I begin to speak—that I may confidently make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak.” We can of ourselves do nothing. Jn 5:30

3. Because God has designed that the missionary on the field not do his work alone.

Ex 17:8-13 “Amalek came and attacked Israel in Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” So Joshua fought against Amalek just as Moses had instructed him; and Moses and Aaron and Her went up to the top of the hill. And whenever Moses would raise his hands, then Israel prevailed; but whenever he would rest his hands, then Malek prevailed. When the hands of Moses became heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and Aaron and Her held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other, and so his hands were steady until the sun went

down. So Joshua destroyed Malek and his army with the edge of the sword.” When the intercessor’s hands fall, Malek prevails on the mission field.

“Experience has repeatedly shown that the believing prayer of one humble intercessor at home can bring about a revival on the foreign field and save thousands. The experience of one missionary was that, as far as man can see results, he was able to do more for the heathen toiling as an intercessor in America than while he was among the heathen without intercessors pleading for him.” (*Principles and Practice of Prayer*, Ivan H. French)

What should we pray in praying for the missionaries?

It is hard for some of us to believe but many church fellowships do not have any missionaries that they know and are personally are involved with. Some things that churches should pray are:

1. For some of its members to be called to the mission field.
2. For God to bring some of His laborers to them for their provisional and prayer support.
3. For God to bring to their fellowship a foreign national for Him to use them to convert and prepare to send to his home people.
4. For individual missionaries. Specific individuals in the church could have responsibility for specific missionaries.
5. For specific nationals, by name, that God would save them.
6. For God to raise up nationals to evangelize their own people.
7. For the language ability and cultural interaction of the missionary.
8. For fresh fillings of the Holy Spirit of those on the field.
9. For the health of the missionaries in adverse environments, being under severe strain and burden for the work.
10. For the loneliness that comes to all missionaries. They can’t go to a friend’s house for fellowship and encouragement. Missionaries normally separate themselves from their natural families but no amount of distance can separate them from their Spiritual family, their brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Lord Jesus prayed all night for the first 12 missionaries. Isn’t that example a mandate for us. “It is a significant fact that there is no distinct command for man to send forth missionaries. That work was done by Christ Himself and then by His Spirit when He chose Paul and Barnabas.” (*Principles and Practice of Prayer*, Ivan H. French) Our responsibility is to pray. Mat 9:37,38 “Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”

Hudson Taylor wrote back to England from China to request ten prayer warriors for ten struggling mission stations. Later he wrote and informed them that seven of those ten mission stations had miraculously revived. Someone in England, who had read both letters, sent the letter back and told Taylor that they had been able to find only seven prayer warriors to pray.

The missionary leaves by taking ship or plane; the intercessor leaves by shutting the door of his closet. *Principles and Practice of Prayer*, Ivan French

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Perseverance in Prayer

1 Thess. 5:17 - "Pray without ceasing"

(From Works of Ezekiel Hopkins, 1874, Vol. 3, pp 579-581)

1. That may be said to be done without ceasing, which **is done constantly, and at set times and seasons**. So we have the word used, Gen. 8:22: “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease:” that is, they shall not cease, in their courses and appointed times. So,

2. To pray without ceasing, **is to pray with all importunity and vehemence.** So, in Acts 12:5, “the Church” is said to pray for Peter “without ceasing;” that is, they were very earnest and importunate, and would give God no rest until he heard them. So, also, in the parable of the unjust steward, which our Saviour spake on purpose to show how prevalent with God importunity is, Luke 18:1, it is said, that the Lord would teach them that they “ought always to pray:” that is, that they ought to pray earnestly and importunity is not giving over till they were heard. So, also, I Sam. 7:7,8 the children of Israel entreated Samuel not to cease crying to the Lord for them: that is, that he would improve all his interest at the throne of grace to the utmost in their behalf. So we are bid to “pray without ceasing:” that is, to be earnest and vehement, resolving to take no denial at the hands of God. But yet we must do other duties also, though we are vehement in this. We may learn how to demean ourselves in this case towards God, by beggars who betimes come to your doors and bring their work along with them: they beg importunately, and yet they work betwixt whiles: so also should we do: we should beg as importunately of God, as if we depended merely upon his charity; and yet, betwixt whiles, we should work as industriously as if we were ourselves to get our livings with our own hands.

4. There is yet something more in this praying "without ceasing." And that is this: we may then be said to "pray without ceasing" **when we keep our hearts in such a frame, as that we are fit at all times to pour out our souls before God in prayer.** When we keep alive and cherish a praying spirit; and can, upon all opportunities, draw near to God, with full souls and with lively and vigorous affections: this is to "pray without ceasing." And this I take to be the most genuine, natural sense of the words, and the true scope of the Apostle here; to have the habit of prayer, inclining them always freely and sweetly to breathe out their requests unto God, and to take all occasions to prostrate themselves before his throne of grace.

Pray **Big** for God's Glory

Winter 2001

Jn 14:13,14 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”

Regards the Work of Jesus

Heb 10:19-22 “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Abides in the Person of Jesus

Jn 15:4-11 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

Yields to the Will of Jesus

1 Jn 5:14,15 “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

Expects Fulfillment of Promise

2 Cor 1:18-20 “But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

Remembers the Conditions

2 Cor 7:1 “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

No time to pray!

No time to pray!

O, who so fraught with earthly care

As not to give a humble prayer

Some part of day!

No time to pray!

What heart so clean, so pure within,

That needeth not some check from sin.

Needs not to pray?

No time to pray?

'Mid each day's dangers, what retreat
More needful than the mercy seat?
Who need not pray?
No time to pray!
Must care or business' urgent call
So press us as to take it all,
Each passing day?
What thought more drear
Than that our God His face should hide,
And say, through all life's swelling tide,
No time to hear!

Anonymous

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Praying for Preaching

We speak to God in prayer and God speaks to us in and through the Word of God.

I. God's Method

Our Lord commanded us to preach, "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" Mk 16:15 Paul understood this "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...For since in the wisdom of God, the world by its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the foolishness of preaching...but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor 1:18-25

Sometimes it is difficult to know God's will and how to pray, but when it comes to preaching there is no doubt about what God wants. His revealed will is for us to carry out His method of advancing His kingdom, preaching the Word. Jesus said "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." Jn 15:16 Here our Lord connects prayer and preaching with "whatsoever you ask." If one man says to another man "whatsoever" that is generous enough, but when God says "whatsoever" it is truly unlimited.

Paul told the Romans "Thus I am eager also to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Rom 1:15-16 Do we really want to see the unsaved converted? God says that the Gospel preached is His power to salvation. Then what should we do? Answer: Pray for preaching and those who preach. We thank God that we still have the freedom to preach the Word of God. We should pray for specific preaching opportunities, for God to call men to preach, for people to come to preaching. For the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the preaching of the Word.

II. God's Messenger

Paul repeatedly asked for others to pray for his preaching. "That the true apostolic preacher must have the prayers of other good people to give to his ministry its full quota of success. Paul is a preeminent example. He asks, he covets, he pleads in an impassioned way for the help of all God's saints. He knew that in the spiritual realm, as elsewhere, in union there is strength; that the concentration and aggregation of faith, desire, and prayer increased the volume of spiritual force until it became overwhelming and irresistible in its power. Units of prayer combined, like drops of water, make an ocean which defies resistance. So Paul, with his clear and full apprehension of spiritual dynamics, determined to make his ministry as impressive, as eternal, as irresistible as the ocean, by gathering all the

Prayer must be in humility.

No one has the inherent right to enter into the presence of God and petition Him. That right was forfeited by sin and reclaimed for us at the great price of the death of Jesus Christ. Correct views of our own depravity, the graces extended to us and the sinfulness of our hearts (Jer. 17:9) will remove all arrogance and enable us to approach God boldly (Heb. 4:16), yet humbly (Luke 18:13).

Prayer must be in submission.

Prayer that pleases the Father is that which is offered to Him in the spirit of His own Son, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42, NASB). But God, for great and wise reasons, denied requests of Moses, Elijah, and Paul. In every case, His denial issued in greater blessing. The logic of submission is simply God's wisdom. He knows me, the way ahead and the thing that is best. Therefore, I rest in Him (Phil. 4:6, 7).

Prayer must be in fervency.

Too much of our praying is perfunctory, even lackadaisical. It lacks real seriousness, genuine desire and fervent longing: Elijah prayed earnestly James 5:16, 17, Moses prayed pleadingly Ex. 32:11-13, 31,32; 33:12-16, Daniel prayed intensely Dan. 9:17-19, Paul prayed agonizingly Rom. 15:30; Gal. 4:19, Jesus prayed persistently Matt. 26:39-44.

We should give all diligence to develop these attitudes in our prayer

Revised from *Principles and Practice of Prayer*, Ivan French chapter 12 Attitudes and Approaches in Prayer

"A great part of my time is spent in getting my heart in tune for prayer."

Robert Murray McCheyne

Teach Me to Pray, Lord

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.
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, teach me to pray;
My sinful nature Thou canst subdue;
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 art my surety, now and for aye;
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.
Refrain:
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 with power with Thee.

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Pray the Lord of the Harvest

Matt 9:35-38 “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is he plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

We are to pray for laborers. “The power of the Church truly to bless rests on intercession—asking and receiving heavenly gifts to carry to men.” (*Ministry of Intercession*, Andrew Murray, p 5) Advancing the Kingdom of God is hard labor and it has eternal consequences. Our Lord said “laborers” not hired professionals. God will give the wisdom and provisions, that is not to concern us. It is laborers with warm hearts and flexible wills that get the job done.

Laborers are simply to do what they are told when they are told. Sometimes without explanations or understanding. They are not managers or executives. The employer or Lord of the harvest is responsible to know what they should do and what to do with the results of the laborer. Laborers many times are not professionals. They have basic skills that they develop with experience and use to their Master’s benefit. Paul was always asking for the Christians to be praying for his missionary efforts. “Brethren, pray for us.” 1 Thess 5:25 Paul considered himself to be sent out into the harvest.

The word here for “send out” is the same word to casting out demons. It means to cast or send out. Sometimes it is used to refer to being deprived of the power and influence one exercises in the world or to expel a person from a society: to banish from a family, to draw out with force, tear out with implication of force overcoming opposite force; to cause a thing to move straight on its intended goal; to reject with contempt, to cast off or away, to lead one forth or away somewhere with a force which he cannot resist. This language is many times an accurate description of how God puts His people to work in His kingdom and some of the circumstances and reactions encountered in that process.

The church, its members and leaders, is to pray for laborers in two areas:

1. For itself. The local church needs a variety of gifts and graces to be manifested in its weekly and daily life. There needs to be continual prayer that the Lord of the harvest would raise up and send forth individuals in the body to “do the work of the ministry.” The pastor is not to do some of everything or all of anything. A healthy and spiritual body life involves everyone, each according to his giftedness laboring where the Master wants them. When God gives the laborers, it is the responsibility of the rest of the church to recognize and support them in their God ordained tasks.

2. For the fulfillment of the great commission. Fulfilling the great commission “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have you.” (Mat 28:19,20) is our great responsibility. “All nations” include our own not just those across the ocean. This charge includes all the organizational and support functions necessary to fulfill it. Laborers are needed for every part of this endeavor and we are charged to pray for them to be sent and sustained in the work. We can not muster the work force, only God can do that, but He has commanded us to pray and in this way be part of the cause of making it happen.

We are hypocrites if we pray for others to go and are not willing to go ourselves. If we rejoice when the children others are going out and are glad when our children are staying close to us, then we are double-minded and

grieve the Holy Spirit. A laborer is a laborer regardless of where he is laboring. The Master of the harvest wants us to be faithful to the task He assigns us. Note the last words of our text, “ into his harvest.” It is His work and it cannot fail. It is our privilege to have a part. Our function is two-fold. 1. Execute the task assigned us to His glory. 2. Requisition a multitude of additional laborers to carry the work on for His unlimited glory.

Hudson Taylor wrote back to England from China requesting ten prayer warriors for ten struggling mission stations. Later he wrote and informed them that seven of those ten mission stations had miraculously revived. Someone in England, who had read both letters, sent the letter back and told Taylor that they had been able to find only seven prayer warriors to pray.

In 1860 while in England, recovering from sickness, Taylor wrote “I had a growing conviction that God would have me seek from Him the needed workers and go forth with them ... In the study of the divine Word, I learned that to obtain successful workers, not elaborate appeals for help, but first earnest prayer to God to thrust forth laborers, and second the deepening of the spiritual life of the Church, so that men should be unable to stay at home, were what was needed...I had no doubt but that if I prayed for fellow-workers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they would be given. I had no doubt but that, in answer to such prayer, the means for our going forth would be provided, and that doors would be opened before us in unreached parts of the Empire.” *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*, p 110

Send Thou, O Lord, to every place
Swift messengers before Thy face,
The heralds of Thy wondrous grace,
Where Thou, Thyself, wilt come.
Send men whose eyes have seen the King,
Men in whose ears His sweet words ring,
Send such Thy lost ones home to bring:
Send them where Thou wilt come—
To bring good news to souls in sin,
The bruised and broken hearts to win,
In every place to bring them in,
Where Thou, Thyself, wilt come.
Gird each one with the Spirit’s sword,
The sword of Thine own deathless Word,
And make them conquerors, conquering Lord,
Where Thou, Thyself, wilt come.
Raise up, O Lord the Holy Ghost,
From this broad land a mighty host,
Their war cry—We will seek the lost,
Where Thou, O Christ, wilt come!
A Member of the China Inland Mission, *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*, p 251

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The Empty Hand Of Need

The Cry Of Despair

he delivered them from their troubles. 20 He sent them an assuring word and healed them; he rescued them from the pits where they were trapped. 21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his loyal love, and for the amazing things he has done for people! 22 Let them present thank offerings, and loudly proclaim what he has done! 23 Some traveled on the sea in ships, and carried cargo over the vast waters. 24 They witnessed the acts of the LORD, his amazing feats on the deep water. 25 He gave the order for a windstorm, and it stirred up the waves of the sea. 26 They reached up to the sky, then dropped into the depths. The sailors' strength left them because the danger was so great. 27 They swayed and staggered like a drunk, and all their skill proved ineffective. 28 They cried out to the LORD in their distress; he delivered them from their troubles."

The Hedge Of Protection

The Sap Of Fruitfulness

The Companion Of Praise

NET

[illegible]

Prevenient Praying

The word “prevenient” means to go before, to prepare the way. Sometimes an army will make a “pre-emptive strike” to get the advantage over the enemy. Some times they will send “special forces” in ahead of the regular soldiers to prepare the way. Another term to describe this kind of action is “pro-active.” “Prevenient praying” then, is to go before and prepare the way by praying. We don’t wait until something happens but we seek God’s will and pray and work to bring it about. In the hussels and hassels of life we sometimes let ourselves live under the “tyranny of the urgent.” Always reacting to one emergency and then another.

Sometimes our prayer life becomes one of praying for one trouble then another, after they have become troublesome. Certainly we should pray concerning our troubles, this is one of the reasons we have trouble, to make us pray. But if we are always on the defensive, we won’t be gaining much ground. Someone has said the life is over 90% reaction to our circumstances and less than 10% action that we initiate ourselves. There is something here for us to consider in relation to praying. We certainly have the responsibility to pray for the unsaved, the sick and afflicted, believers in sin, etc. But, the well rounded prayer life (individually and corporately) will go beyond the pressing problems of the moment and carry us into the future with an eye for God’s glory. Some Biblical examples of prevenient or proactive praying are:

1.

Our Lord taught us to pray saying, to our Father “your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Mat 6:9-13 Much of what He mentions here is not a reaction to a problem but deals with things that are not but ought to be, “kingdom come,” “daily bread” seems to be a reference to the coming day, but especially, “do not lead us into temptation.” Jesus is teaching us to pray “Preveniently,” before the fact, that we should not be taken into tempting, trying, and testing times that might hinder our service for God. What is the greatest danger to need protection from? It can be none other than sin. Each of us has the cancer of sin within us. Jesus is teaching us to pray for protection from temptation. We should be praying that God, in His providence, will not allow us to be drawn away by our own sinful nature from Him into sin. Every Christian needs to pray this prayer.

2.

When we pray for the Lord of the harvest to send labours we are praying pro-actively and preveniently. Ma 9:37, 38 “Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.” We know there is much to be done so we pray for God to call and prepare believers to get the job done.

3.

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Mat 16:18 Jesus said that the gates of Hell will not prevail against the church; this implies that we are attacking the gates of Hell, that is being on the offensive. This involves praying before the fact. Isn’t this what we are doing when we send missionaries into heathen lands?

4.

When Jesus was praying the night before His crucifixion, He prayed; “I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world.” Jn 17:15,16 Jesus knew that Satan would try to destroy us so He prayed before the fact that we would be safe. We should take great comfort in our Lord’s praying for us and pray for one another in this way.

5.

When Paul was telling the Roman Christians what he was praying about, he said “and I always ask in my prayers, if perhaps now at last I may succeed in visiting you in the will of God.” Rom 1:10 He was praying for safe travel and the opportunity to see them and be a spiritual help to them.

6.

Act 12:1-25 tells of how Peter was put in prison, “4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.” The church prayed and the angel was sent to deliver Peter. The application of this principle to a praying church is both individual and corporate. Individually each believer is to pray to God personally and privately. He is to maintain his own prayer life. At the same time he is to maintain corporate or partner praying with his fellow believers. Just as each organ in a physical body performs its function, so each believer fulfills his responsibility and joins in prayer as they commune with God. This could be in pairs, in small groups, or in the entire corporate body prayer meeting.

When we pray in unity, we need to: 1. Recognize that our life comes only from our Father and thank Him for giving us that life. Joh 1:13 “who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ” 2. Recognize our dependence upon him. We must be in agreement that we can do nothing without Him

The great day of Pentecost was realized in an atmosphere of unity in prayer. “When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. 14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Acts 1:13,14

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling.” Eph 4:1-4

[illegible]

As the disciples made the above request so should we. Some have said that prayer can not be taught, it must be “caught” or learned by experience. But this was not Jesus’ answer. He immediately began to teach them. The following is from Ole Hallesby’s book on *Prayer*, 161f.

“So few of us become sanctified and skilled petitioners because we do not continue in the school of prayer...There is something about this school which tries our patience sorely. Jesus Himself alludes to it on several occasions, especially in Luke 18:1-8, where He says ‘that they ought always to pray and not faint...’

“It is the Spirit of prayer who superintends the instruction in the school of prayer. He does not offer a variety of subjects, but concentrates purposely on a few central things. It is not necessary to master a large variety of subjects in order to become skilled in prayer...

“In the first place, the Spirit must be given an opportunity to reveal Christ to us every day. This is absolutely essential. Christ is such that we need only ‘see’ Him, and prayer will rise from our hearts. Voluntary prayer, confident prayer. We know that Christ can answer prayer. We know also that it gives Him joy to do so. Prayer and intercession have become a delightful and fascinating means of co-operation between Christ and the praying soul. The instruction which the Spirit imparts has as its aim the removal of everything which hinders Him from revealing Christ in our hearts...

“In the second place, the instruction which the Spirit imparts, aims at making us earnestly solicitous. Intercessory prayer is like an ellipse, which rotates about two definite points: Christ and our need. The work of the Spirit in connection with prayer is to show us both, not merely theoretically, but practically, making them vital to us from day to day. Comfort yourself with the thought that it is the Spirit who is working these things in your heart every day. It is not necessary for you to strive in your own strength to keep your eyes open to Christ and the needs of the world. No, all you need to do is to listen to the Spirit as He speaks to you every day in the Word and through prayer about Christ and your need, and you will soon notice yourself making progress both in prayer and in intercession.

“In the third place, the Spirit teaches us the necessity of self-denial in connection with prayer. There is something about prayer and intercession which calls for more self-denial than any other work to which the Spirit calls us. The greater part of the work of intercession is, of course, done in secret; and work of this kind requires the expenditure of greater effort than work which can be seen of men. It is astonishing to see how much it means to us to have others see what we do. It is not only that we all have a great weakness for the praise of others, but the fact that our work is appreciated and valued is a remarkable stimulant to us.

“Furthermore, we all love to see results from our labors. But the work of prayer is of such a nature that it is impossible for us always to know definitely whether what happens is a fruit of our own intercession or that of others.

“Both of these facts call for a great deal of self-denial in connection with prayer...

“In the fine and difficult art of prayer, intercession is undoubtedly the most difficult of accomplishment. As far as my understanding of these things goes, intercessory prayer is the finest and most exacting kind of work that it is possible for men to perform.”

The request “Lord teach us to pray” is itself a prayer. Our Lord began immediately to answer that prayer in the following verses. We need to ask our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, to teach us to pray and be ready for Him to do so. Our Lord’s lesson on “Praying” included three things: **1.** an outline for the contents of prayer in verses 2-4, **2.** the need for persistence, in verses 5-10, and **3.** encouragement that the Father will give us the one thing needed in verses 11-13.

“Jesus taught his disciples that the highest exercise of prayer was in obtaining God’s divinest bestowment, the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Lk 11:13 William Patton

“Prayer is an art which only the Spirit can teach us. He is the giver of all prayer.” C. H. Spurgeon

“The biggest thing God ever did for me was to teach me to pray in the Spirit.” Samuel Chadwick

O Lord, by Whom ye come to God,

The Life, the Truth, the Way,

The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;

Lord, teach us now to pray.

Teach Me to Pray, Lord

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.
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, teach me to pray;
My sinful nature Thou canst subdue;
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 art my surety, now and for aye;
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.

REFRAIN

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 with power with Thee.

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The School of Prayer Part 2:The Content of Prayer

The request “Lord teach us to pray,” in Lk 11:1 is itself a prayer. Our Lord immediately answered that prayer in the following verses. He gives three lessons on “Praying”: **1.** An outline for the contents of prayer in verses 2-4, **2.** The need for persistence, in verses 5-10, and **3.** Encouragement that the Father will give us the one thing needed in verses 11-13.

Let us look at the first lesson in our Lord's teaching on praying. "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation." These words are repeated in corporate worship thousands of times each Lord's day. We feel that the greatest value in this prayer is not the saying of the words but in what it suggests for content in our prayers; either public, corporate, or private. The first part centers around the person of God. The Second part concerns our need.

The Person of God: “Father, Hallowed be thy name.” The most basic thing about prayer is that, is a conversation between two persons, a child and a Father. Our prayer must be addressed to God alone Who is our Father in creation, election, and sanctifying grace. The first thing we should talk about in prayer is God Himself. We should “hallow” or sanctify His name, meaning “to separate from profane things and dedicate to God.”

Sanctifying His name is not making Him holy but is acknowledging, and declaring Him to be holy, and glorifying Him, and all His perfections. Isa 12:4 “And in that day shall ye say, Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted.” Eph 1:3 “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

The Plan of God: “Thy kingdom come.” The kingdom is essentially the “rule of God”. We are to pray for God’s will to be realized. Where? In our society, church, family, and personal life. There is an underlining issue of authority here. God has the “right” to rule in all areas of everyone’s life. To pray this we must be in submission to God, lest we be hypocrites. Ps 47:7,8 “For God is the King of all the earth: Sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the nations: God sitteth upon his holy throne.” The kingdom of God does not come with observation and is within us, Lk 17:20,21, but it is also something to be seen, Jn 3:3.

The Provision of God: “Give us day by day our daily bread.” This subject of our praying too often becomes the main thrust of our prayer and even the only concern in our prayer. But in its proper place it is a necessary part of prayer. The reference is to “daily bread” not “daily caviar.” Php 4:19 “God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Jam 4:2 “...ye have not, because ye ask not.”

The Pardon of God : “And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” Pardon or forgiveness is necessary to prayer in three ways: **1.** The fact of our being pardoned, or forgiven for our sin, **2.** The realization of that fact in our consciences and **3.** Practicing forgiveness in our relationships with others. Jesus is linking our forgiveness from God with our forgiveness to others. Mat 18:21-35

The Protection of God: “And bring us not into temptation.” What is the greatest danger to need protection from? It can be none other than sin. Each of us has the cancer of sin within us. Jesus is teaching us to pray for protection from temptation. This might be called “preemptive praying.” “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.” Jam 1:13,14 We should be praying that God, in His providence, will not allow us to be drawn away by our own sinful nature from Him into sin. Every Christian needs to pray this prayer. The psalmist said, “...I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.” Ps 23:4

The words of verses 2-4 is a “pattern prayer;” it is not the real prayer. The real prayer is that which we pray following this example. The difference is like the difference between a “cookie cutter” and a “cookie.” Just as a “cookie cutter” is not acceptable food, neither is the mere repetition of these words acceptable to God as real prayer. The cutter gives design and development to the cookie as this model prayer does to our prayers. What may be most important in this model prayer is the order of these ideas. That is, making God’s glory and will come before our needs. When we are praying (privately or corporately), it would be good to follow these topics in the order that Jesus has given them.

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The School of Prayer Part 3: Importunity

The request “Lord teach us to pray,” in Luk 11:1 is itself a prayer. Our Lord immediately answered that prayer in the following verses. He gives three lessons on “Praying”: **1.** An outline for the *contents* of prayer in verses 2-4, **2.** A lesson by *comparison* showing the need for persistence in verses 5-10, and **3.** A lesson by *contrast* showing that the Father will give us the one thing needed in verses 11-13.

Let us look at the second lesson in our Lord’s teaching on praying, The need for persistence. “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth. 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.”

There are three friends in this story: the needing friend, the interceding friend, and the supplying friend. The lesson is about the intercessory prayer, but it is about something more: it is about persistence in intercessory prayer. To many this sounds inappropriate and even irreverent, but it can not be that because the Lord Jesus is doing the teaching.

Christ Jesus encourages us to be fervent and persistent in our prayer for others. We must come for the needs of those that God has brought into our lives, as a man does to his neighbor or friend. We must come for bread; for that which is needful and we all have many people in our lives that have much need. If God does not answer our prayers speedily, He will in due time, if we continue to pray. Heb 4:16 "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." The word for "boldly" here means "free speakingly;" that is for any and all needs. God gives us needs for us to pray about and He promises that He will meet that need or give us mercy and grace to bear it, either way the need is removed.

The implication, here, and in Lk 8:1-8, is that God is reluctant to answer prayer. But-- "The lesson is that lukewarmness in prayer, as in everything else, is nauseating to God and comes away empty-handed. On the other hand, shameless persistence, the importunity that will not be denied, returns with the answer in its hands...There may be other reasons why the divine response tarries and importunity is needed...

1. We may be asking without caring greatly about the issue. If we are not in earnest, why should God bestir Himself? We shall find Him when we seek with all our hearts.

2. We may be asking for selfish reasons, and the discipline of delay is necessary to purge us of this. Selfish motivation is self-defeating in prayer.

3. We may unconsciously be unwilling to pay the price involved in the answering of our prayers, and our Father desires us to face up to this fact.

4. We may be misinterpreting what God is doing in our lives in answer to our prayers....

5. ...apparent delay or denial of an answer...secures our humble dependence on God. If He bestowed our desires as gifts of nature and did not want our solicitations, we would tend to become independent of Him."

Prayer Power Unlimited, J. Oswald Sanders, p 84,86

Every unanswered prayer is a clarion call to search the heart to see what is wrong there; for the promise is unmistakably clear: "If ye shall ask anything in My name, that will I do" John 14:14 Adoniram Judson said, "God loves importunate prayer so much that He will not give us much blessing without it. And the reason He loves such prayer is that He loves us, and knows that it is a necessary preparation for our receiving the richest blessing He is waiting and longing to bestow."

Our Lord concludes this lesson with triple emphasis: "Ask--Seek--Knock" and He re-emphasizes it again by saying, "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." This teaching is from Jesus the Son of God; it has to be true.

Which "friend" are you "the needing friend," or "the interceding friend?" It is God's will that we grow spiritually and become the intercessor that can be good stewards in the business of the kingdom.

"God delays in answering our prayers because men would pluck their mercies green; God would have them ripe."

Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say unanswered,

Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done,

The work began when first your prayer was uttered,

And God will finish what He has begun.

Keep incense burning at the shrine of prayer,

And glory shall descend sometime, somewhere.
Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;
Here feet are firmly planted on the Rock;
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, "It shall be done sometime, somewhere."
Ophelia Guyon Browning

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The School of Prayer Part 4: A Package Deal

The request "Lord teach us to pray," in Lk 11:1 is itself a prayer. Our Lord immediately answered that prayer in the following verses. He gives three lessons on "Praying": **1.** An outline for the contents of prayer in verses 2-4, **2.** The need for persistence, in verses 5-10, and **3.** Encouragement that the Father will give us the one thing needed in verses 11-13.

Let us look at the third lesson in our Lord's teaching on praying, The praying for the Holy Spirit. "And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Sometimes a father is asked for basic and necessary things that he does not have to give. A human father is limited and many times unable to do what he wants. Never is it such with God. God gives more than we ask. More than we can imagine. "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." Eph 3:20

God's children are to ask for the Holy Spirit; they are to receive Him and God is sure to give Him when we ask persistently. Nothing could be more obvious from our text.

Our relationship with the other members of the Trinity is not as personal as it is with the "Holy Spirit." In comparing our text with Ma 7:11 we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is equivalent to all "good things." The sum total of all of our needs is the presence of God liberated in our lives. The best prayer is the most important prayer and the one of which Jesus says "how much more shall your Heavenly Father give you." Only here Jesus adds the Holy Spirit (*pneuma hagion*) as the great gift (the *summum bonum*) that the Father is ready to bestow.

Jesus tells us in Jn 14:16,17, 26 "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you... But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." The word "comforter" is a translation of *paracletos* also translated Advocate or Helper. It means properly "one who is summoned to the side of another" to help him in a court of justice by defending him, Anyone who is summoned to plead a cause. "Advocate" is the proper rendering of the word in every case where it occurs. It is worthy of notice that although Paul nowhere uses the word *paracletos*, but he presents the idea when he speaks of the "intercession" both of Christ and the Spirit Ro 8:27,34.

If any of us are living a meager Christian life of coolness, prayerlessness and uselessness, it is because we do not have the Spirit. We do not have the Spirit because we do not seek him importunately and with a deep sense of our need of him.

We might think of the Holy Spirit here as a “Package.” When we buy a car, we don’t buy just a motor and gears and wheels. We buy a package which includes all the things that make up a car, even some things like a radio, air conditioner, even a service warranty to make sure the car continues to function as intended. When we buy a computer we usually get many more things along with it to support it and make it practical, like tech support, web access, and a printer. When we get the Holy Spirit, He comes with all that is necessary for our lives to be fully functional and glorifying to Jesus Christ. One of the primary parts of this “Holy Spirit” package are “gifts.” The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers to indicate how they are to function in the Body of Christ.

Jesus taught his disciples that the highest exercise of prayer was in obtaining God's divinest bestowment, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Lk 11:13 William Patton

All true prayer is exercised in the sphere of the Holy Spirit, motivated and empowered by Him. Eph 6:18

Edwin Hatch 1835-1889

Unrealized Wealth is illustrated in The Kneeling Christian Ch 8 “The owners of Mount Morgan, in Queensland, toiled arduously for years on its barren slopes, eking out a miserable existence, never knowing that under their feet was one of the richest sources of gold the world has ever known. There was wealth, vast, undreamt of, yet unimagined and unrealized. It was ‘theirs,’ yet ‘not theirs.’ The Word of God is telling the Christian of the riches we have in Christ Jesus, but we do not seem to know how to possess them.” Jesus said Jn 14:12-14 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do;

because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” This text reveals both the potential and the problem. The potential is that we can do greater works that our Lord Jesus did. Hard to believe it, but He said it and it is true. With the statement comes the question, “Why am I not doing these works?” The solution to the problem is in the text, v 14 “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” Here is the solution, “asking in Jesus name.” If we don’t know how to “ask in Jesus Name” then we have our first prayer objective. We must begin to beg God to show us what it is to “ask in Jesus Name.”

God told Jeremiah “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” (33:3) God has blessings for us that we don’t know about, that our eye has not seen, our ear not heard, nor our heart desired. The way to know, see, hear, and desire is to ask. Ask for desire, vision, courage, and the ability to ask.

There are two men in the O.T. that set us a good example. Joshua 14:6-14 gives us the story of Caleb. Caleb was forty years old when he and the other spies went out to spy out the land for Israel to possess. Because the other spies did not believe that God was able to do what He said, the nation of Israel had to wander in the wilderness. Forty five years later, after the wilderness wandering and the initial battles for the land had been fought, Caleb asks “Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.” This is a man that “wholly followed the Lord,” with patient persistence in asking for what God had for Him. His possession did not go unpossessed.

The other man is Jabez. We only hear of him once in Scripture 1 Chr 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 wanted more land, more responsibility, more opportunity but not just of the temporal type but spiritual blessings, covenant blessings, the sure mercies of David, which are the real as opposed to the unreal physical things. He was willing to deal with any problems, like the Canaanites, that might be there. He was looking at the increase of his borders as a spiritual enlargement. A deliverance from spiritual enemies, with the grace and spiritual ability to use the blessings for God’s glory. He asked God for more and “God granted him that which he requested.”

Ps 119:32 “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

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 hears us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

God can not grant us our request if we don’t “request.”

God help us to possess all our possessions.

Lord, Listen to Your Children

Lord, listen to your children praying,

Lord, send your Spirit in this place;

Lord, listen to your children praying,

Send us love, send us pow’r, send us grace.

Some-thing’s gonna happen like the world has never known,

When the people of the Lord get down to pray;

A door’s gon-na swing open, and the walls come a tumbling down,

When the people of the Lord get down to pray.

He’s gon-na take over, He’s gon-na take control,

When the people of the Lord get down to pray;

He's gon-na move the mountain He's gon-na make the waters roll,
When the people of the Lord get down to pray.
You're gon-na know it when the Lord stretches out His hand,
When the people of the Lord get down to pray;
There's gon'na be a brand new song of vic-try in this land,
When the people of the Lord get down to pray.

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Violent Praying

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and forceful people lay hold of it." Mat 11:12

Prayer is a duty which keeps the business of religion flowing. When we either join in prayer with others or pray alone, we must use **holy violence**; not eloquence but violence in prayer makes it effective. Theodorus, speaking of Luther, once said, "I overheard him in prayer, but, good God, with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence, as if he had been speaking to his friend."

There must be a stirring up of the heart, first, **to prayer**, and secondly, **in prayer**. First, a stirring up of the heart **to prayer**: "As for you, if you prove faithful, and if you stretch out your hands toward him," Job 11:13. This preparing of our heart is accomplished by holy thoughts and ejaculations. The musician first tunes his instrument before he plays. Secondly, there must be a stirring up of the heart **in prayer**. Prayer is a lifting up of the mind and soul to God, which cannot be done rightly without offering violence to one's self. The names given to prayer imply violence. It is called wrestling in Gen 32:24, and a pouring out of the soul in 1 Sam 1:15, both of which imply vehemency. Affection is required as well as invention. The apostle speaks of an effectual, fervent prayer, which is a parallel phrase to offering violence. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Ja 5:16

Far from offering violent prayer are they who give God a dead, **heartless** prayer. God would not have the blind offered Mat 1:8; to offer the blind is as offering the dead. Some are half asleep when they pray and will a sleepy prayer ever awaken God? The prayers that God likes best come seething hot from the heart.

Far are they from offering violent prayer who give God **distracted** prayer. While praying, they are thinking of their jobs and business. How can one shoot straight who doesn't keep his eye on the target? Will a king tolerate his subject delivering a petition and speaking to him while he is playing with a toy? When we send our hearts on an errand to Heaven, how often do they loiter and play by the way?

Prayer without fervency and violence is no prayer; it is **speaking, not praying**. Lifeless prayer is no more prayer than the picture of a man is a man. To say a prayer is not to pray; Aschanus taught his parrot the Lord's Prayer. Ambrose said it well, "It is the life and affection in a duty that baptizeth it, and gives it a name." It is the violence and wrestling of the affections that make it a prayer, else it is no prayer.

The zeal and violence of the affections in prayer best suits God's nature. He is a Spirit, Jn 4:24, and surely that prayer which is full of life and spirit is the savory meat He loves, "you yourselves as living stones are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood and to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" 1 Pet 2:5. It is not the stretching of the lungs, but the vehemency of the desire, that makes music in God's ears. 1 Tim 4:8

It is only violence and intenseness of spirit in prayer that has the promise of mercy affixed to it, "Knock, and it shall be opened" Mat 7:7. Knocking is a violent motion. It is violence in prayer that makes heaven's gates fly open and fetches in whatever mercies we stand in need of.

When we pray with a sense of our wants, we become the more violent in prayer. A beggar pinched with want will be earnest in craving alms. Christian, review your wants; you want a humble, spiritual frame of heart; you want the light of God's countenance; the sense of want will quicken prayer. A man can never pray fervently who does not pray feelingly. How earnest was Samson for water when he was ready to die! "I die of thirst" Judg 15:18.

If we would be violent in prayer, let us beg for a violent wind. The Spirit of God is resembled to "a violent wind" in Acts 2:1,2; "Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a violent wind blowing came from heaven and filled the entire house where they were sitting." We are violent when this blessed wind fills our sails, when we are "But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith, by praying in the Holy Spirit" Jude 20. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings." Rom 8:26

(Condensed and revised from Heaven Taken by Storm, by Thomas Watson, Chapter 5 Offering Violence by Prayer)

Prayer does not consist in gifted expressions and a volubility of speech; but in a brokenness of heart.

Prayer does not consist in the elegance of the phrase, but in the strength of the affection.

John Mason (1646-1694)

I often say my prayers, but do I ever pray?

And do the wishes of my heart, go with the words I say?

I might as well kneel down, and worship gods of stone,

As offer to the living God, a prayer of words alone.

O watch and fight, and pray.

The battle ne'er give o'er.

Renew it boldly every day,

And help divine implore.

Ne'er think the victory won,

Nor lay thine armor down;

The work of faith will not be done,

Till thou obtain thy crown.

Fight on, my soul...

George Heath

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What Prayer Is Part 1

John Bunyan

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

In this description are these seven things. First, It is a sincere; Second, A sensible; Third, An affectionate, pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ; Fourth, By the strength or assistance of the Spirit; Fifth, For such things as God hath promised, or, according to his word; Sixth, For the good of the church; Seventh, With submission in faith to the will of God.

And why must sincerity be one of the essentials of prayer which is accepted of God, but because sincerity carries the soul in all simplicity to open its heart to God, and to tell him the case plainly, without equivocation; to condemn itself plainly, without dissembling; to cry to God heartily, without complimenting. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou has chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jer 31:18). Sincerity is the same in a corner alone, as it is before the face of the world. It knows not how to wear two vizards, one for an appearance before men, and another for a short snatch in a corner; but it must have God, and be with him in the duty of prayer. It is not lip-labour that it doth regard, for it is the heart that God looks at, and that which sincerity looks at, and that which prayer comes from, if it be that prayer which is accompanied with sincerity.

What Prayer Is Part 2

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

1. A sense of the want of mercy, by reason of the danger of sin. The soul, I say, feels, and from feeling sighs, groans, and breaks at the heart. For right prayer bubbleth out of the heart when it is overpressed with grief and bitterness, as blood is forced out of the flesh by reason of some heavy burden that lieth upon it (I Sam 1:10; Psa 69:3). David roars, cries, weeps, faints at heart, fails at the eyes, loseth his moisture, &c., (Psa 38:8-10). Hezekiah mourns like a dove (Isa 38:14). Ephraim bemoans himself (Jer 31:18). Peter weeps bitterly (Matt 26:75). Christ hath strong cryings and tears (Heb 5:7). And all this from a sense of the justice of God, the guilt of sin, the pains of hell and destruction. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." Then cried I unto the Lord (Psa 116:3,4). And in another place, "My sore ran in the night" (Psa 77:2). Again, "I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long" (Psa 38:6). In all these instances, and in hundreds more that might be named, you may see that prayer carrieth in it a sensible feeling disposition, and that first from a sense of sin.

2. Sometimes there is a sweet sense of mercy received; encouraging, comforting, strengthening, enlivening, enlightening mercy, &c. Thus David pours out his soul, to bless, and praise, and admire the great God for his loving-kindness to such poor vile wretches. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.⁶ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psa 103:1-5). And thus is the prayer of saints sometimes turned into praise and thanksgiving, and yet are prayers still. This is a mystery; God's

people pray with their praises, as it is written, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God" (Phil 4:6). A sensible thanksgiving, for mercies received, is a mighty prayer in the sight of God; it prevails with him unspeakably.

3. In prayer there is sometimes in the soul a sense of mercy to be received. This again sets the soul all on a flame. "Thou, O lord of hosts," saith David, "hast revealed to thy servant, saying I will build thee an house; therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray - unto thee" (II Sam 7:27). This provoked Jacob, David, Daniel, with others even a sense of mercies to be received which caused them, not by fits and starts, nor yet in a foolish frothy way, to babble over a few words written in a paper; but mightily, fervently, and continually, to groan out their conditions before the Lord, as being sensible, I say, of their wants, their misery, and the willingness of God to show mercy (Gen 32:10,11; Dan 9:3,4).

A good sense of sin, and the wrath of God, with some encouragement from God to come unto him, is a better Common-prayer-book than that which is taken out of the Papistical mass-book, being the scraps and fragments of the devices of some popes, some friars, and I wot not what.

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What Prayer Is Part 3

John Bunyan

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, and an Affectionate pouring out of the soul to God. O! the heat, strength, life, vigour, and affection, that is in right prayer! "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psa 42:1). "I have longed after thy precepts" (Psa 119:40). "I have longed for thy salvation" (ver 174). "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psa 84:2). "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times" (Psa 119:20). Mark ye here, "My soul longeth," it longeth, it longeth, &c. O what affection is here discovered in prayer! The like you have in Daniel. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God" (Dan 9:19). Every syllable carrieth a mighty vehemency in it. This is called the fervent, or the working prayer, by James. And so again, "And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44). Or had his affections more and more drawn out after God for his helping hand. O! How wide are the most of men with their prayers from this prayer, that is, PRAYER in God's account! Alas! The greatest part of men make no conscience at all of the duty; and as for them that do, it is to be feared that many of them are very great strangers to a sincere, sensible, and affectionate pouring out their hearts or souls to God; but even content themselves with a little lip-labour and bodily exercise, mumbling over a few imaginary prayers. When the affections are indeed engaged in prayer, then, then the whole man is engaged, and that in such sort, that the soul will spend itself to nothing, as it were, rather than it will go without that good desired, even communion and solace with Christ. And hence it is that the saints have spent their strengths, and lost their lives, rather than go without the blessing (Psa 69:3; 38:9,10; Gen 32:24,26).

All this is too, too evident by the ignorance, profaneness, and spirit of envy, that reign in the hearts of those men that are so hot for the forms, and not the power of praying. Scarce one of forty among them know what it is to be born again, to have communion with the Father through the Son; to feel the power of grace sanctifying their hearts: but for all their prayers, they still live cursed, drunken, whorish, and abominable lives, full of malice, envy, deceit, persecuting of the dear children of God. O what a dreadful after-clap is coming upon them! which all their hypocritical assembling themselves together, with all their prayers, shall never be able to help them against, or shelter them from.

Again, It is a pouring out of the heart or soul. There is in prayer an unbosoming of a man's self, an opening of the heart to God, an affectionate pouring out of the soul in requests, sighs, and groans. "All my desire is before thee," saith David, "and my groaning is not hid from thee" (Psa 38:9). And again, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me" (Psa 42:2,4). Mark, "I pour out my soul." It is an expression signifying, that in prayer there goeth the very life and

Again, It is a pouring out of the heart or soul TO GOD. This sheweth also the excellency of the spirit of prayer. It is the great God to which it retires. "When shall I come and appear before God?" And it argueth, that the soul that thus prayeth indeed, sees an emptiness in all things under heaven; that in God alone there is rest and satisfaction for the soul. "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God" (I Tim 5:5). So saith David, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear to me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: - for thou art my rock and my fortress; deliver me, O my God, - out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth" (Psa 71:1-5). Many in a wording way speak of God; but right prayer makes God his hope, stay, and all. Right prayer sees nothing substantial, and worth the looking after, but God. And that, as I said before, it doth in a sincere, sensible, and affectionate way.

Christ is the way through whom the soul hath admittance to God, and without whom it is impossible that so much as one desire should come into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (John 14:6). "If ye shall ask anything in my name"; "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13,14). This was Daniel's way in praying for the people of God; he did it in the name of Christ. "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" (Dan 9:17). And so David, "For thy name's sake," that is, for thy Christ's sake, "pardon mine iniquity, for it is great" (Psa 25:11). But now, it is not every one that maketh mention of Christ's name in prayer, that doth indeed, and in truth, effectually pray to God in the name of Christ, or through him. This coming to God through Christ is the hardest part that is found in prayer. A man may more easily be sensible of his works, ay, and sincerely too desire mercy, and yet not be able to come to God by Christ. That man that comes to God by Christ, he must first have the knowledge of him; "for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is" (Heb 11:6). And so he that comes to God through Christ, must be enabled to know Christ. Lord, saith Moses, "show me now thy way, that I may know thee" (Ex 33:13).

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Winter 2001

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate, pouring out OT the heart or soul to God through Christ, by the strength or **Assistance of the Spirit**. For these things do so depend one upon another, that it is impossible that it should be prayer, without there be a joint concurrence of them; for though it be never so famous, yet without these things, it is only such prayer as is rejected of God. For without a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart to God, it is but lip-labour; and if it be not through Christ, it falleth far short of ever sounding well in the ears of God. So also, if it be not in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, it is but like the sons of Aaron, offering with strange fire (Lev 10:1,2). But I shall speak more to this under the second head; and therefore in the meantime, that which is not petitioned through the teaching and assistance of the Spirit, it is not possible that it should be "according to the will of God (Rom 8:26,27).

Joh 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

1 Corth 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

[illegible]

John Bunyan

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart, or soul, to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, **for Such Things as God Hath Promised**, &c., (Matt 6:6-8). Prayer it is, when it is within the compass of God's Word; and it is blasphemy, or at best vain babbling, when the petition is beside the book. David therefore still in his prayer kept his eye on the Word of God. "My soul," saith he, "cleaveth to the dust; quicken me according to thy word." And again, "My soul melteth for heaviness, strengthen thou me according unto thy word" (Psa 119:25-28; see also 41, 42, 58, 65, 74, 81, 82, 107, 147, 154, 169, 170). And, "remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope" (ver 49). And indeed the Holy Ghost doth not immediately quicken and stir up the heart of the Christian without, but by, with, and through the Word, by bringing that to the heart, and by opening of that, whereby the man is provoked to go to the Lord, and to tell him how it is with him, and also to argue, and supplicate, according to the Word; thus it was with Daniel, that mighty prophet of the Lord. He understanding by books the captivity of the children of Israel was hard at an end; then, according unto that word, he maketh his prayer to God. "I Daniel," saith he, "understood by books," viz., the writings of Jeremiah, "the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, - that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face to the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan 9:2,3). So that I say, as the Spirit is the helper and the governor of the soul, when it prayeth according to the will of God; so it guideth by and according to, the Word of God and his promise. Hence it is that our Lord Jesus Christ himself did make a stop, although his life lay at stake for

it. I could now pray to my Father, and he should give me more than twelve legions of angels; but how then must the scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be? (Matt 26:53,54). As who should say, Were there but a word for it in the scripture, I should soon be out of the hands of mine enemies, I should be helped by angels; but the scripture will not warrant this kind of praying, for that saith otherwise. It is a praying then according to the Word and promise. The Spirit by the Word must direct, as well in the manner, as in the matter of prayer. "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (I Cor 14:15). But there is no understanding without the Word. For if they reject the word of the Lord, "what wisdom is in them?" (Jer 8:9).

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What Prayer Is Part 6

John Bunyan

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

For the Good of the Church. This clause reacheth in whatsoever tendeth either to the honour of God, Christ's advancement, or his people's benefit. For God, and Christ, and his people are so linked together that if the good of the one be prayed for, to wit, the church, the glory of God, and advancement of Christ, must needs be included. For as Christ is in the Father, so the saints are in Christ; and he that toucheth the saints, toucheth the apple of God's eye; and therefore pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and you pray for all that is required of you. For Jerusalem will never be in perfect peace until she be in heaven; and there is nothing that Christ doth more desire than to have her there. That also is the place that God through Christ hath given to her. He then that prayeth for the peace and good of Zion, or the church, doth ask that in prayer which Christ hath purchased with his blood; and also that which the Father hath given to him as the price thereof. Now he that prayeth for this, must pray for abundance of grace for the church, for help against all its temptations; that God would let nothing be too hard for it; and that all things might work together for its good, that God would keep them blameless and harmless, the sons of God, to his glory, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. And this is the substance of Christ's own prayer in John 17. And all Paul's prayers did run that way, as one of his prayers doth eminently show. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:9-11). But a short prayer, you see, and yet full of good desires for the church, from the beginning to the end; that it may stand and go on, and that in the most excellent frame of spirit, even without blame, sincere, and without offence, until the day of Christ, let its temptations or persecutions be what they will (Eph 1:16-21; 3:14-19; Col 1:9-13).

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What Prayer Is Part 7

John Bunyan

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

And because, as I said, prayer doth **Submit to the Will of God**, and say, Thy will be done, as Christ hath taught us (Matt 6:10); therefore the people of the Lord in humility are to lay themselves and their prayers, and all that they have, at the foot of their God, to be disposed of by him as he in his heavenly wisdom seeth best. Yet not doubting but God will answer the desire of his people that way that shall be most for their advantage and his glory. When the saints therefore do pray with submission to the will of God, it doth not argue that they are to doubt or question God's love and kindness to them. But because they at all times are not so wise, but that sometimes Satan may get that advantage of them, as to tempt them to pray for that which, if they had it, would neither prove to God's glory nor his people's good. "Yet this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he

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And by His love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.
Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.
Yes more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.
Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Will You pursue Your worm to death?
"This in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith."
"These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set you free;
And break your schemes of earthly joy,
That you may seek your all in Me."

5. Incomplete Dependence on God

As we react to God's delays with importunate praying we realize how completely we are dependent on Him. "It secures our humble dependence on God." D.M. McIntyre "Except Jehovah build the house, They labor in vain that build it: Except Jehovah keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain." Ps 127:1 "Not until we are shut up to a difficulty which we can in no way touch, may we rely on prayer alone."

6. Immaturity in our Relationship with God

Intimacy with God, in long and serious interaction with Him will make us spiritually mature. We must learn to abide in Him whether we have quick answers or long delays. "The promises to hear prayer are not made to the mere form, but to the appropriate spirit." "Importunate perseverance is a pre-requisite to success in prayer, because it has an intimate connection with the preparation of a right spiritual condition in us." The round-the-clock prayer meeting begun in Count Zinzendorf's community in 1727 continued for 100 years! The community was called Herrnhut, 'the Lord's Watch' (Isa 62:6-7)." (*Teach us To Pray*, Carson) Imagine that, a prayer meeting that lasts 876,000 hours. That kind of persistence and importunity did and still can have world wide impact.

Pray, though the gifts you ask for
May never comfort your fears,
May never repay your pleading:
Yet pray, and with hopeful tears,
An answer --not that you sought for,
But diviner--will come one day:
Yet strive and wait and pray.
Adelaide A. Procter

(Quotes from: *Prayer and its Remarkable Answers*, William Patton p 72)

It can easily be shown that all want of success, and all failure in the spiritual life and in Christian work, is due to defective or insufficient prayer. *The Kneeling Christian*

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The Principle Business Of The Church Is Prayer

“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he said to them, ‘it is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a robbers’ den’” Mat 21:12,13

The following was written in 1936 and is still true for us today.

A careful study of the Church in the Acts will reveal how very much time the early church spent in prayer. It seems that when any problem, difficulty, or persecution arose, the Church resorted to prayer-not argument, controversy or reasoning, not even preaching, important as was and is, but to prayer.

Perhaps it is not amiss to say that, comparatively, too much emphasis is placed on preaching and too little on prayer in the modern church. Oft times we find the preacher’s general prayer from the pulpit to be of the nature of a short sermon. Jesus called the temple “a house of prayer” we have made it a house of preaching. Jesus never taught his disciples to preach--so far as the record goes--but He did teach them to pray.

It has been said that the Sunday morning service of a church advertises the popularity of that church--you are able to tell the standing of the church by the class of people attending the morning service, and the make of automobiles parked outside the church. The evening is said to advertise the popularity of the preacher--that is where he gets his chance to speak on striking, popular, sensational themes or to review the latest popular novel thus affording him an opportunity to display his native powers and ability. The midweek meeting is said to advertise the popularity of the Lord, and, alas what a small number of people attend that meeting as compared with the Sunday morning and evening meetings! The mid-week meeting is, or rather should be, a meeting for prayer, but, actually, prayer has a very subordinate place in it. It would seem as if, God’s people can be gathered together for anything--but prayer.

Let us not forget, then, that prayer is the business of the Church, a business which cannot be neglected without serious spiritual loss. Suppose the business of any large city should suspend operations for one week, no telephone communication, no railroads running, no street cars operating, no ledger or desk opened, no bank handing out money, no office open to transact business, can you imagine what would happen? You say that such a thing is absolutely out of the question nowadays; that it is unthinkable and you begin to enumerate the awful consequences following such a supposed suspension of business. You say that “babies would perish for want of milk; adults die for want of food; people freeze for want adults die for want of food; people freeze for want of fuel; well,” you say, “it is just impossible, that’s all.” But have you ever thought on what the result would be if the church suspends her business of praying? “If a man see his brother sin . . . he shall pray, and God shall give life for those that sin...” Yes, but suppose we do not pray! Then that soul is not forgiven, shall we say Oh, the fearful spiritual disaster following in the wake of the neglect of prayer by the Church! Churchly organizations and activities without prayer are as useless as a telephone or radio without electricity.

The more time we spend in prayer the more we show our dependence upon God; the less time we devote to pleading with God the more conscious we are of our own ability. Less of prayer, more of self; more of prayer, more of God.

A praying church is an invincible church. The gates of Hades shall ne’er prevail against it, and the powers of evil shall tremble in its presence.

Any man or church that is to busy to pray is busier than God ever expected any church or human being to be. **Why Pray?** by William Evans, 1937 p 31,32

“Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king’s palace, and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the LORD and in his palace. Then the LORD appeared to Solomon at night and

said to him, “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. “If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chr 7: 11-14

History confirms the truth that wherever evangelical and vital religion flourish, there lives the earnest gatherings for social prayer. *The Prayer Meeting and Its History*, J. B. Johnston

“If we pray among a select society of Christians, we draw near to God with holy boldness, something like what we use in our duties of secret worship. We have reason to take more freedom among fellow saints and whose hearts have felt many of the same workings as our own.” *A Guide to Prayer*, Isaac Watts, p 58

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True Grounds for Prayer

“The pagan idea was that there is something in a prayer--a mysterious power or a hidden value--which if brought to bear upon God may attract Him, propitiate Him, or in some way cause Him to change His mind, and come to the help of the supplicant....the popular notion to-day is that the thing which attracts God is not the prayer itself, but the faith that is behind it and that runs through it.... the ground upon which it rests is always something outside of God. The pagan prays because he has faith it's the power or virtue of his prayers and the paganized Christian (or, more accurately, the Christianized pagan) prays because he has faith in the power of faith.” *What Did Jesus Really Teach About Prayer?* Edward Pell, p 83 Pell wrote those words in 1921 but we still see the errors today.

The two errors are:

1. Trusting in the mechanics of prayer. Jesus rebuked this, “when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.” Mat 6: 7

When the Lord answered the disciples’ request to teach them to pray, Luk 11:1-13, He did not mean for them to mechanically repeat the words that He gave, but to have dialogue, interaction with their Father. There is nothing magical about the words of the Lord’s Prayer. Neither is there anything magical about closing a prayer with the phrase, “In Jesus name.” It is not the saying of the words but the living of the meaning of them that gives prayer reality and connection with God.

Prayer does not have its ground in the saying of words, in form or contents. It matters not how much a man prays for forgiveness he will not receive it if he is unforgiving to his brother. “Forgive us as we forgive others...” Jesus taught.

2. Trusting in our faith in our prayers. It is said that if we just have sufficient faith our prayers will be answered. That is, if we really believe. And then when our prayers are not answered in the way we want we are told that it is because we don’t have sufficient faith. Jesus said that with a small amount of faith, “the size of a grain of mustard seed” you could command a mountain to move. “And He said to them, Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” Mat 17:20

Both of these errors focus on man and his assumed ability. The Scripture clearly says. “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should” Rom 8:26

We would counter these two errors with two grounds for praying are:

1. The fact that God is our Father.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, “He said to them, when you pray, say: **Father...**” Luk 11:2 He was teaching us to come to God as a father, that is on the grounds of a father child relationship. Jesus goes on in the lesson to reinforce the reasonableness of treating God as our Father. We can safely expect that God will be a better,

more loving, kind, and gentle Heavenly Father than any earthly father. Our Heavenly Father is not limited in the good that He can do for us.

Jesus did not put His faith in His prayers or in the faith of his prayers. His strength came from the relationship that he had with His Father.

We can claim the Fatherhood of God but our praying will be fruitless if we don't ground our praying in a second foundation.

2. The exercise of abiding in Him, i.e. an obedient relationship.

Joh 15:4,7 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." What is it that is not included in "whatever?" Anything and everything can be and is ours when we truly abide in Him.

As we pray, privately or corporately, let's not concern ourselves with the method, manner, and even the matter of our prayers. Not the loudness or the length of them. Let's just be children of our Heavenly Father and fellowship with Him and seek His will.

Sweet Hour of Prayer

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne,
Make all my wants and wishes known!
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
The joys I feel, the bliss I share
of those whose anxious spirits burn
with strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place
Where God, my Saviour, shows his face,
and gladly take my station there,
and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him, whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless:
And since he bids me seek his face,
Believe his word, and trust his grace,
I'll cast on him my every care, and wait for thee,
Sweet hour of prayer.

By William W. Walford 1842

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3. Revival

Never a Revival Without Mighty Praying

By R.A. Torrey

Prayer will do more to bring a deep and lasting and sweeping revival, a revival that is real and lasting and altogether of the right sort, than all the organizations that were ever devised by man.

The history of the Church of Jesus Christ on earth has been largely a history of revivals. When you read many of the Church histories that have been written, the impression that you naturally get is that the history of the Church of Jesus Christ here on earth has been very largely a history of misunderstandings, disputes, doctrinal differences and bitter conflicts. But if you will study the history of the living Church, you will find it has been very largely a history of revivals. Humanly speaking the Church of Jesus Christ owes its very existence today to revivals. many times the Church has seemed to be on the verge of utter shipwreck, but just then God has sent a great revival and saved it.

Every real revival in the Church has been the child of prayer. There have been revivals without much preaching; there have been revivals with absolutely no organization; but there has never been a mighty revival without mighty praying.

What we need more than anything else today in our own land and in all lands, is a real, mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God. The most fundamental trouble with most of our present-day so-called revivals is, that they are man-made and not God-sent. They are worked up by man's cunningly devised machinery-not prayed down.

Oh, for an old-time revival, a revival that is really and not spuriously of the Pentecostal pattern, for that revival was born of a fourteen days' prayer-meeting. But let us not merely sigh for it. Let us cry for it, cry to God, cry long and cry loud if need be, and then it will surely come!...

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Prayer and Revival

What is a “Real Prayer Meeting?” It is united prayer. “The prayer that God particularly delights to answer is united prayer. There is power in the prayer of a single individual, and the prayer of individuals has wrought great things, but there is far greater power in united prayer.” (R.A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer*)

What wond'rous grace! who knows its full extent?

A creature, dust and ashes, speaks with God--

Tells all his woes, enumerates his wants,

Yea, pleads with Deity, and gains relief.

'Tis prayer, yes, 'tis 'effectual, fervent prayer,'

Puts dignity on worms, proves life divine,

Makes demons tremble, breaks the darkest cloud,

And with a princely power prevails with God!

And shall this privilege become a task?

My God, forbid! Pour out thy Spirit's grace,

“At one quarterly meeting held at Mabry’s Chapel in Brunswick circuit, on the 25th and 26th of July, the power of God was among the people in an extraordinary manner: some hundreds were awakened; and it was supposed that above one hundred souls were converted at that meeting, which continued for two days, i.e., on Thursday and Friday. Some thousands of people attended meeting at that place on that occasion.

“The next quarterly meeting was held at Jones’s Chapel, in Sussex county, on Saturday and Sunday, the 27th and 28th of July. This meeting was favored with more of the divine presence than any other that had been known before . . .

“The great revival of religion in 1776, which spread extensively through the south part of Virginia, exceeded any thing of the kind that had ever been known before in that part of the country. But the revival this year far exceeded it.

“It was thought that in the course of that summer there were so many as sixteen hundred souls converted in Sussex circuit; in Brunswick circuit about eighteen hundred; and in Amelia circuit about eight hundred. In these three circuits we had the greatest revival of religion; but in many other circuits there was a gracious work, and hundreds were brought to God in the course of that year.

“. . . the work was not confined to meetings for preaching; at prayer meetings the work prospered and many souls were born again . . . It was common to hear of souls being brought to God while at work in their houses or in their fields. It was often the case that the people in their corn-fields, white people, or black, and sometimes both together, would begin to sing, and being affected would begin to pray, and others would join with them, and they would continue their cries till some of them would find peace to their souls.”

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4. Testimonial

A Call for National Repentance

The United States of America is in the midst of a moral crisis. The outrages against God are so many that I will not begin to list them here. Society has tried educating these problems away (sex education, drug education), throwing new technology and money at these problems (schools need more funding or more computers), and analysing ourselves to death (i.e. pop psychology). God is calling us to repent for our sins and pray for the healing of our nation.

A Case of Repentance

After the American Revolution, there was a moral and spiritual crisis in America. Drunkenness was epidemic. 6% of the population were confirmed drunkards. 15,000 deaths annually were a result of alcohol. Shocking profanity was become a fashionable movement. Assault against America women was increasing so that women fear leaving their homes. Churches were at an all time low in attendance. US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall wrote "The church is too far gone ever to be redeemed." Voltaire said that Christianity would be forgotten in 30 years time. Kentucky had all but become a criminal state.

In 1794, Isaac Backus, a Baptist pastor, made a plea for repentant prayer. The first Monday evening of each month a small number (about 30) ministers prayed for revival.

Within 5 years the following effects were seen: 1800, the Great Kentucky revival (with over 11,000 saved in one service); 600 colleges were founded by revivalist; the US missionary movement started; the impetus for the abolition of slavery; Yale, in a little over a year, went from an institution of infidelity to a student body represented by approximately 50% strongly professed Christians; the foundation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; and the foundation of the American Bible Society.

A Plan for Repentance

Starting April 7, 1997 and every first Monday evening from 7PM - 9PM EST I will be devoting myself to prayer for a revival in the United States. I will, of course, be recruiting people locally to pray with me.

“Thrilled that someone would go anywhere ‘just to pray,’ I asked Mark to be sure to send me a copy of his itinerary so our ministry could be praying with him before I joined him in Warsaw. The itinerary arrived and I thought little of the specifics until a few days before my departure. Suddenly, Mark’s presence in the Soviet Union praying for God to shake that nation held unusual significance. Just before my departure at the end of April 1986, headlines shouted the story of a shocking incident that occurred there at a nuclear power plant in a small city named Chernobyl. Chernobyl, the papers said, was just a short distance from the sprawling Soviet city of Kiev. Wasn’t Kiev on Mark’s itinerary? In fact, if memory served me, wasn’t Kiev the final place God told him to visit?

“I immediately got out the letter Mark sent me listing the places God told him to visit. My recollection had been accurate. Mark’s mission was to end that very weekend in Kiev with a train trip to Poland that would take him right through the area of disaster. I had been on a train trip with Mark before, in China. To Mark a train is just a long prayer meeting on tracks, moving from one place of prayer to another.

“Checking the itinerary more carefully, I noted that Mark had planned to leave Kiev late on the evening of April 25, 1986, and would be passing close to Chernobyl early the next morning. That happened to be the exact time of the explosion of Chernobyl’s nuclear power plant.

“Only later would analysts see that Chernobyl played a major role in the events of glasnost, the Russian word for openness. Under normal circumstances the Soviets would have kept secret the news of such a disaster. But this was not possible with Chernobyl. In a matter of hours after the nuclear accident, scientists spotted a sudden elevation of radiation in Sweden. The source could be traced with absolute accuracy to the Soviet Ukraine.

“So in the case of Chernobyl, glasnost was forced onto the Soviets. Being secretive was not an option. Suddenly, whether they wanted to or not, they were forced to be open. I couldn’t wait to see Mark in Warsaw. Had he kept his itinerary? If so, how had God asked him to pray?

“We had hardly checked into our hotel in Warsaw before I was asking my questions. Mark indeed had kept his schedule, exactly as the Lord directed. It included four days of prayer in Kiev, ending on Friday, April 25. That day was to be the culmination of his mission of intercession. And now I was more anxious than ever to hear how directed Mark to pray.

“‘Well,’ said Mark, settling back in his chair in our hotel room, ‘I went to the square in the center of Kiev and sat down under a huge statue of Lenin. Every fifteen minutes I changed the focus of my intercession for believers in Russia. I could tell when a fifteen-minute period passed because there was a gigantic clock in the square that let out a bong each quarter hour.’

“I asked Mark if he felt anything unusual during this prayer. ‘Only at the end,’ Mark responded. ‘It was on the last day, the day I made my final prayer visit to the city square. Just before noon I was suddenly convinced God had heard and that even then something was happening. Something that would shake the Soviet Union. Something God would use to bring more freedom.’

“With excitement Mark continued, ‘I began to lift my voice in praise, sitting there underneath the statue of the founder of Communism in Russia. But at the same time I needed a confirmation that God had heard me, so I cried out to Him: ‘O God, give me a sign, even a little sign.’ I waited, wondering what might happen next. And just then in the distance the hands of the huge clock moved into the twelve o’clock position.’

“Mark laughed as he continued, ‘And you know what, Brother Dick? It didn’t gong. Every hour, for each of the four days I had been praying, the clock had chimed on the hour. So I waited for twelve chimes, but they never came. It was as if God was saying an old pattern was over. The very next day I began hearing about Chernobyl.’

“Weeks later, after reading volumes on the significance of Chernobyl, I came across fascinating information detailing events surrounding the disaster. Scientists pinpointed the first major mistake as happening twelve hours before the actual meltdown. This would have been within minutes of Mark’s declaration of praise, when he knew in his spirit that events were occurring that the Lord would turn into a blessing.

“Later still I heard a television commentator discussing the long-term impact of the Chernobyl disaster. ‘Chernobyl,’ he said, ‘means Wormwood in the Russian language. Wouldn’t it be interesting if a decade from today we were to discover that the despotic Soviet system had disappeared from the scene, replaced by a more open society, and that this change came about as the result of a simple mistake at a nuclear facility in a small Ukrainian community called . . . Chernobyl?’

On April 23, 1808, Edward Payson wrote, "My heart seemed ready to break with its longings after holiness." Such longings for heart purity, revival power and the person of Jesus are the marks of a healthy and normal Christian life. The lack of these precious things in the modern Church reveal a nominal* Christian life. Too much of what is called the Church today is not fit to live or die. The nominal* Christian is unfit to deal with our demon possessed age or the coming judgment seat of Christ. Truly the Church's greatest need is for men and women, mighty in prayer. We need men and women who will pray and crave for revival. The choice is ours, either to pray or to perish.

[illegible]

The Homeless Piled In; Missionary Pioneers Poured Out.

Something like that is what happened to a 22-year-old German nobleman in 1722. His name was Niklaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. His estate was in East Germany. He was heir to one of Europe's leading royal families. As you might expect, the neighbors were not too pleased with his offering the "riff-raff" asylum near them. But there was no stopping the influx. The first group of ten arrived in December, 1722. By May of 1725 there were ninety. And by late 1726 over 300. The place was known as "Herrnhut" meaning "The Lord's Watch." It soon developed into a small city of grateful and motivated Christian craftsmen and laypeople.

Winter 2001

Zinzendorf Was a Rich Young Ruler Who Said Yes

Zinzendorf was born on May 26, 1700, in Dresden, Germany and brought up under strong Christian influence. Even as a child he showed a deep spiritual awareness. Invading Swedish soldiers broke into the castle where he lived when he was six years old and were astounded to observe the child's prayers. Zinzendorf later trained at Halle under the Pietist movement leader August Francke. At age twenty the young nobleman was overcome while observing a painting of Christ crowned with thorns. An inscription below the painting said: "I have done this for you; what have you done for me?" Zinzendorf responded that day: "I have loved him for a long time, but I have never actually done anything for him. From now on I will do whatever he leads me to do." No doubt at that moment he had no idea that within two years he would have his estate swarming with homeless people from Moravia. Nor could he have imagined the role that would be his in bringing the message of Christ to the whole world. There followed a rapid succession of events. Some of the highlights:

<> The community rapidly organized into an efficient and productive little society.

<> But then jealousy, divisions and discord set in and threatened to undermine them.

<> Zinzendorf organized everyone into "bands." These were small groups who met together regularly to discuss their spiritual growth, study Scripture, pray together, reprove and encourage each other.

<> The Moravian community was moved to repentance for its divisions, and on August 13, 1727 they experienced a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

<> They began to pray fervently and seek the purposes for which God had brought them together under Zinzendorf. What did he want them to do?

<> A twenty-four-hour-a-day prayer chain was organized. At least two people were at prayer every hour of the day. This prayer meeting would last over 100 years.

<> They became known by the nickname "God's Happy People."

<> Anthony, a former slave, came to speak at Herrnhut of the deplorable conditions of the slaves in the West Indies. The night he spoke, two of their young Moravians could not sleep as they struggled with a sense that God was moving their hearts to offer themselves to go and minister to those slaves. When they were told that perhaps the only way they could do this was to become slaves themselves, they said they were willing if that is what it would take.

<> Their first two missionaries, Leonard Dober and David Nitschmann, left Herrnhut on August 25, 1732 to sail for St. Thomas.

<> Thereafter, other lands were studied and more missionaries were sent. They went to the toughest places under the most severe conditions. Many of them quickly died. For example, of 18 who went to St. Thomas as reinforcements for the work begun by Dober and Nitschmann, half died within the first nine months. But, the more that died, the more that volunteered to go to replace them. Within 25 years more than 200 had gone out as missionaries from this small community to every continent of the world.

<> Their influence spread far beyond their own efforts. Consider two notable examples. Moravians played the key role in the profound religious experience of John Wesley. Wesley went on to lead the Methodist movement. William Carey is popularly hailed as the "Father of Modern Protestant Missions." But William Carey sailed 60 years after the first Moravian missionaries went to the West Indies. Carey would probably insist that the real father of modern missions was Zinzendorf and the Moravians. In Carey's classic "Enquiry Regarding the Obligation of Christians" he used the Moravian experience as a model. In his letters and journal he often referred to them and drew inspiration from their example, and in his "Serampore Compact" -- a covenant for Christian missionary community living -- he again appealed to Moravian precedents.

<> Their influence extended to North America. The Moravians founded two communities in Eastern Pennsylvania -- Bethlehem and Nazareth. Zinzendorf personally came to the colonies. Not far from the offices of Christian History Institute, and long before the word "Ecumenism" was in vogue, Zinzendorf pled unsuccessfully with the various religious communities in Eastern Pennsylvania to transcend their European denominational backgrounds and witness and work together as one Body of Christ.

<> While in America, Zinzendorf legally renounced his titles because he found them an impediment among the colonists. Benjamin Franklin was present at the ceremony, which was conducted in Latin in front of the Governor of Pennsylvania. Zinzendorf was said to be the only European nobleman who went among the Indians, visiting their leaders as equals.

<> Though Zinzendorf did not promote the abolition of slavery, inside the Moravian Church slaves were truly equal. In Bethlehem, PA, at the Single Sisters' House you could find a German noblewoman, a Delaware Indian, and an African slave sleeping side by side in the same dormitory room. Where else in the world at that time might that occur?

<> Zinzendorf endured much criticism for allowing women to preach and to hold roles of leadership in the church.

A New Phenomenon

Think of what it would mean if everyone in your church thought of themselves as missionaries. They did at Herrnhut, and this represented a significant development in the history of Christian missions. Eminent Yale University historian, Dr. Kenneth Scott Latourette, in his classic *History of the Expansion of Christianity* commented, "Here was a new phenomenon in the expansion of Christianity, an entire community, of families as well as of the unmarried, devoted to the propagation of the faith. In its singleness of aim it resembled some of the monastic orders of the earlier centuries, but these were made up of celibates. Here was a fellowship of Christians, of laity and clergy, of men and women, marrying and rearing families, with much of the quietism of the monastery and of Pietism but with the spread of the Christian message as a major objective, not of a minority of the membership, but of the group as a whole."

Christian History Institute's Debt to Count Zinzendorf

Twenty years ago our sister company Gateway Films/Vision Video was approached to make a dramatic film on the 250th anniversary of the launch of the Moravian missionary movement under Count Zinzendorf to be celebrated in 1982. We had already put out a film on the life of the 15th century pre-Reformation martyr John Hus, and we had also been requested by Wycliffe Bible Translators to make a film on John Wycliffe for the 600th anniversary of his death. Although these three films treated subjects that occurred over close to four hundred years, we were struck by the amazing connection among them. Wycliffe's movement and his memory were condemned in England, but his plea for reform was carried to Bohemia and advanced there by John Hus. The followers of Hus formed the *Unitas Fratrum*, The Unity of the Brethren. They somehow managed to survive three centuries of persecution and became the major core of the Moravian refugees who settled on the estate of Count Zinzendorf beginning in 1722. Christian History Institute was founded to provide educational print support materials for such films. Our first project was *Christian History* magazine with the first issue devoted to Zinzendorf. Incidentally, the magazine soon demonstrated that it deserved a life of its own and we are pleased to have it now published by Christianity Today Inc. The film we made on Zinzendorf was a drama titled *First Fruits*. That was the catalyst that led us to recognize that our primary calling in both film and publishing was the telling of the stories from our Christian history for lay audiences.

On May 12, 1727, Zinzendorf addressed the community for three hours on the blessedness of Christian unity. The people sorrowfully confessed their past quarreling and promised to live in love and simplicity. Herrnhut became a living congregation of Christ. The entire summer of 1727 was a golden one at Herrnhut as the community worked together in peace and love. There was eager anticipation that more was to come.

A turning point On August 5, Zinzendorf and fourteen of the Brethren spent the entire night in conversation and prayer. On August 10th, Pastor Rothe was so overcome by God's nearness during an afternoon service at Herrnhut, that he threw himself on the ground during prayer and called to God with words of repentance as he had never done before. The congregation was moved to tears and continued until midnight, praising God and singing.

The next morning, Pastor Rothe invited the Herrnhut community to a joint communion with his nearby congregation at Bethelsdorf on Wednesday evening, August 13. Count Zinzendorf visited every house in Herrnhut in preparation for this Lord's Supper. The exiles, gathered at Herrnhut, had come to a conviction of their own sinfulness, need, and helplessness. During the service, they made many painful prayers for themselves, for fellow Christians still under persecution, and for their continued unity. Count Zinzendorf made a penitential confession in the name of the congregation. The community united in fellowship. Count Zinzendorf looked upon that August 13th as "a day of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation; it was its Pentecost."

For over 100 years, members of the Moravian church continued nonstop in this "Hourly Intercession." All Moravian adventures were begun, surrounded, and consummated in prayer. They became known as "God's Happy People." They launched a missionary society in a time when Protestant missions were unknown. The first missionaries, two young men, declared their willingness to become slaves if necessary to reach the slaves in the West Indies with the Gospel. Within fifteen years of the revival, the Moravians at Herrnhut had established missions in the Virgin Islands, Greenland, Turkey, the Gold Coast of Africa, South Africa, and North America. They endured unspeakable hardships. Many died in difficult circumstances. But as fast as they died, others came forth to take their places.

A new phenomenon The noted historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, said of the Moravians: Here was a new phenomenon in the expansion of Christianity, an entire community, of families as well as of the unmarried, devoted to the propagation of the faith. In its singleness of aim it resembled some of the monastic orders of earlier centuries, but these were made up of celibates. Here was a fellowship of Christians, of laity and clergy, of men and women, marrying and rearing families, with much of the quietism of the monastery and of Pietism but the spread of the Christian message as a major objective, not of a minority of the membership, but of the group as a whole.

<http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps037.shtml>

When Spurgeon arrived at The New Park Street Church, in 1854, the congregation had 232 members. By the end of his pastorate, 38 years later, that number had increased to 5,311. Altogether, 14,460 people were added to the church during Spurgeon's tenure.) The church was the largest independent congregation in the world. Spurgeon began a pastors' college that trained nearly 900 students during his lifetime-and it continues today. In 1865,

Spurgeon's sermons sold 25,000 copies every week. They were translated into more than 20 languages. At least 3 of Spurgeon's works (including the multi-volume Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit series) have sold more than 1,000,000 copies.

Occasionally Spurgeon asked members of his congregation not to attend the next Sunday's service, so that newcomers might find a seat. During one 1879 service, the regular congregation left so that newcomers waiting outside might get in; the building immediately filled again.

Mr. Spurgeon once wrote in "The Sword and the Trowel":--"A Wesleyan minister lately said that he was never more surprised in his life than when he dropped into the Tabernacle, and found the ground-floor and part of the gallery filled at a Prayer-meeting. He believed that such a thing was almost without a parallel in London, and that it accounted for the success of the ministry. We concur in his impartial judgment. Will not all the churches try the power of prayer?" (*Only a Prayer Meeting*, C. H. Spurgeon, introduction, page v.)

"How are the prayer-meetings almost universally neglected?" says Spurgeon. "Our own church stands out like an almost solitary green islet in the midst of a dark, dark, sea; one bright pearl in the depths of an ocean of discord and confusion. Look at the neighboring churches. Step into the vestry, and see a smaller band of people than you would like to think of, assembled around the pastor, whose heart is dull and heavy. Hear one brother after another pour out the dull, monotonous prayer that he has said by heart these fifty years; and then go away and say: 'Where is the spirit of prayer, where the life of devotion?' Is it not almost extinct? Are not our churches 'fallen, fallen, fallen from their high estate?' God wake them up, and send them more earnest and praying men!" (*The Prayer-Meeting*, Lewis O. Thompson, 1874, page 190)

Note that Spurgeon agrees with the Wesleyan brother that the "Prayer-meeting" was that which "accounted for the success of the ministry." Maybe Spurgeon could give us some advice about conducting the prayer-meeting.

"Our brethren will excuse our offering them advice, and must take it only for what it is worth; but having to superintend a large church and to conduct a prayer-meeting which scarcely numbers less than from a thousand to twelve hundred attendants, we will simply give our own notions as to the most efficient method of promoting and sustaining these holy gatherings.

1. Let the minister himself set a very high value upon this means of grace. A warm-hearted address of ten minutes, with a few lively words interposed between the prayers, will do much, with God's blessing, to foster a love for the prayer-meeting....

2. Let the brethren labour after brevity. If each person will offer the petition most laid upon his heart by the Holy Spirit, and then make room for another, the evening will be far more profitable, and the prayers incomparably more fervent than if each brother ran round the whole circle of petition without dwelling upon any one point. As a general rule, meetings in which no prayer exceeds ten minutes, and the most are under five, will exhibit the most fervour and life.... When we have had ten prayers in the hour, varied with the singing of single verses, we have far oftener been in the Spirit, than when only four persons have engaged in supplication....

3. Persuade all the brethren to pray aloud. If the younger and less-instructed members shrink from the privilege, tell them they are not to speak to man, but to God. If a child may not talk at all till it can speak fluent English, will it ever learn to speak well?...

4. Encourage the attendants to send in special request for prayer as often as they feel constrained to do so. These little scraps of paper, in themselves most truly prayers, may be used as kindling to the fire in the whole assemble....

5. Suffer neither hymn, nor chapter, nor address, to supplant prayer. Remember that we meet for prayer, and let it be prayer; and, oh, that it may be that genuine, familiar converse with God which shall drive out the formality and pomposity which so much mar our public supplications!...

6. It is not at all amiss to let two or even three competent brethren succeed each other without a pause, but this must be done judiciously; and if one of the three should become prolix (gabby or long-winded), let the pause come in

