

Prayer

The Purpose of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. There are many reasons we pray:

2. ADORATION

- A. EXPRESSING ADORATION...

1. God is certainly worthy of our praise, our adoration
 2. While we can praise God in song, we can also praise God in prayer

- B. EXAMPLES OF ADORATION IN PRAYER...

1. When Paul prayed for the Ephesians, he took time to praise God - Ephesians 3:20-21
 - a. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
 2. David provides an example of offering adoration and praise – 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

3. CONFESSION

- a. CONFESSING OUR SINS...

1. There is mercy to be found in confessing one's sins - Psalms 28:13
 2. The Christian enjoys cleansing of sin by the blood of Jesus – 1John 1:7-10
 - a. ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

- b. EXAMPLES OF CONFESSING SINS...

1. Jesus provided an example in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican - Luke 18:10-14
 2. Again, David provides an example with his confession of sin - Psalms 51:1-13

4. OFFERING THANKSGIVING

1. Being thankful is emphasized repeatedly in exhortations to pray - Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - a. ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
 - b. ² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of* thanksgiving;
 - c. ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

2. The antidote to anxiety is to pray for everything, with thanksgiving - Philippians 4:6
 - a. ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
 - b. EXAMPLES OF OFFERING THANKSGIVING
 1. Christ set an example of thanksgiving - Matthew 11:25; 26:27; John 6:11; 11:41
 2. Daniel had the custom to thank God three times a day - Daniel 6:10
5. SUPPLICATION
 - a. MAKING SUPPLICATION
 1. We are encouraged to let our requests be known to God - Philippians 4:6 (above)
 2. We are commanded to make supplications for all men – 1 Timothy 2:1
 - a. First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men
 - b. EXAMPLES OF MAKING SUPPLICATION
 1. Real widows are known for their supplication's night and day – 1 Timothy 5:5
 2. Solomon made supplication at dedication of the temple - 1 Kings 8:28-29
 3. Jesus made supplication as He was crucified; Stephen also, as he was being stoned - Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59-60

CONCLUSION – THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

1. The Purpose of Prayer
 - a. Adoration
 - b. Confession
 - c. Thanksgiving
 - d. Supplication

The Power of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus anticipated that people would become slack in their prayers...
 - a. Telling the parable of the persistent widow, that people might always pray - Luke 18:1-7
 - i. Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ² saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' ⁴ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by

continually coming she will wear me out.”⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge *said; ⁷ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

- b. Wondering if He would find faith on earth (i.e., people praying) when He returned - Luke 18:8
- 2. Paul frequently exhorted Christians to be diligent in their prayers...
 - a. Praying always with all prayer and supplication..." - Ephesians 6:18
 - b. "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" - Colossians 4:2
 - i. ² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;
 - c. "Pray without ceasing" – 1Thessalonians 5:17
- 3. If we have become slack in our prayers, might that be an indication that we do not appreciate - The Power of Prayer? Have we forgotten what a privilege it is to pray?

EXAMPLES OF THE POWER OF PRAYER

A. THERE IS FORGIVENESS FROM GOD

- 1. The Christian can find forgiveness through the blood of Christ – 1John 1:7-10
 - i. ⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
- 2. Thus, the erring Christian is told to repent and pray - Acts 8:22

THERE IS PEACE FROM GOD

- 3. The antidote to anxiety is to pray - Philippians 4:6
- 4. The Christian will find their hearts and minds guarded by the peace of God - Philippians 4:7
 - i. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

B. THERE IS STRENGTH FROM GOD...

- 1. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might be strengthened in the inner man - Ephesians 3:14-16
 - i. ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,
- 2. When we need to be strong, Christians can likewise pray for themselves!

C. THERE IS OPPORTUNITY FROM GOD

1. Paul realized that God provided him opportunity to teach others – 1 Corinthians 3:5
 2. He knew that the Lord often opened doors for such opportunities – 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12
 3. He therefore requested prayer that such opportunities would continue - Colossians 4:3
 - i. ³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;
- D. THERE IS BOLDNESS FROM GOD
1. When the apostles needed boldness, they prayed and God delivered - Acts 4:23-31
 2. When Paul needed boldness, he asked for prayers in his behalf - Ephesians 6:19-20
 - i. ¹⁹and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- E. THERE IS WISDOM FROM GOD
1. Wisdom is not knowledge, but insight that makes the best use of the knowledge one has
 2. The Christian is promised wisdom through prayer without doubt - James 1:5-6
 - i. ⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.
- F. THERE IS HEALING FROM GOD
1. Those who are sick should ask elders to pray for them - James 5:14-15
 - i. ¹³Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.
 2. Those who have sinned should confess, and we should pray for one another - James 5:16
 - i. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
- G. THERE IS TRANQUILITY FROM GOD

1. The Scriptures proclaim God has ultimate control over the nations - Daniel 4:17; Romans 13:1-2
 - i. Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves
2. Thus, we are commanded to pray for our rulers, that we may lead a quiet (tranquil, ASV) and peaceable life – 1Timothy 2:1-4
 - i. First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

CONCLUSION

1. The power of prayer can indeed be a blessing...
 - a. To the one who prays in faith
 - b. For those for whom prayers are offered
2. There is help in time of need from God...
 - a. We have a wonderful High Priest who understands our problems - Hebrews 4:14-15
 - b. ¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.
 - c. Thus, we can at any time approach God boldly in prayer, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need - Hebrews 4:16
 - d. ¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
3. Indeed, the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man (James 5:16)
 - i. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.
4. Do we believe in the power of prayer...?
 - a. Then let us pray always
 - b. Let us continue earnestly in prayer
5. Yes, let us "pray without ceasing" (1Thessalonians 5:17)!

The Privilege of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. The Privilege of Prayer is not available to all who pray; for some...
 - a. Their prayers will be an abomination to God
 - b. Their prayers will fall on deaf ears

- c. Their prayers will be hindered
 - d. Their prayers will not be answered favorably
- 2. We might be praying people, even pray fervently; but do we have the right to pray, to expect God to heed us when we pray?

I. FOR WHOM PRAYER IS NOT A PRIVILEGE

A. THOSE WHO WILL NOT HEED GOD'S WORD

- 1. Those who turn their ears from the law, their prayers are an abomination - Proverbs 28:9
- 2. Such is the case of those who will not endure sound doctrine - cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4
 - i. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

B. THOSE WHOSE SINS SEPARATE THEM FROM GOD

- 1. Sins can separate one from God so Hebrews will not hear - Isaiah 59:1-2
- 2. Such is the condition of those who will not seek God's forgiveness - Romans 6:23
 - i. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C. THOSE WHO FAIL TO TREAT OTHERS JUSTLY

- 1. Who fail to consider the poor - Psalms 41:1-3
- 2. Who fail to treat their wives as they should - Malachi 2:13-14; 1 Peter 3:7
 - i. ⁷You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.
- 3. Who fail to make things right with those they have offended - Matthew 5:23-24
 - i. ²³Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

4. Who fail to forgive those who sinned against them - Matthew 18:21-35 (Parable of the Talents)

D. THOSE WHO PRAY WITHOUT FAITH

- 1. Without faith it is impossible to please God - Hebrews 11:6
 - i. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- 2. Asking with doubt in our hearts ensures failure - James 1:7

- i. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

E. Thus, The Privilege of Prayer is not extended to everyone. It is a blessing graciously bestowed on those whose hearts are in a proper condition.

II. FOR WHOM PRAYER IS A PRIVILEGE

A. THE SINNER SEEKING TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. This we learn from the example of Cornelius

- i. He was a good man, but still in need of salvation - Acts 10:1-2; Acts 11:14

- a. Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, ² a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually.

- b. ¹⁴ and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.

- ii. His prayers and alms had been noticed by God - Acts 10:4,31

- iii. Thus, God saw to it that he had an opportunity to hear the words whereby he could be saved (i.e., the gospel of Christ) - Acts 11:14

2. Note well: he was not saved by praying per se!

- i. He needed to hear "words" by which he would be saved - Acts 11:14

- ii. I.e. the gospel of Christ, which is God's power to salvation - Romans 1:16

- a. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- iii. Just as Saul of Tarsus was still in his sins, despite praying - cf. Acts 9:11; 22:16

- a. ¹¹ And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,

3. Yet God heard the prayer of a sinner like Cornelius

- i. Who was hungering and thirsting for righteousness - Matthew 5:6

- ii. Who was asking, seeking, knocking - Matthew 7:7-8

- iii. Providing an opportunity to one day hear and obey the gospel of Christ

B. THE CHRISTIAN WITH JESUS AS THEIR HIGH PRIEST

1. Jesus has become our High Priest

- i. He is now a merciful and faithful high priest, able to aid His brethren - Hebrews 2:17-18

- a. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.
- ii. Making it possible to approach God's throne boldly - Hebrews 4:14-16
 - a. ¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
 - iii. Able to save to the uttermost, since He ever lives to intercede - Hebrews 7:25
 - a. ²⁵ 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.
2. Jesus has now become our Advocate and Mediator
- i. Our advocate with the Father - 1 John 2:1
 - a. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;
 - ii. The one mediator between God and man - 1 Timothy 2:5
 - a. ⁵ For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ
 - iii. Who makes intercession for us at the right hand of God - Romans 8:34
 - a. ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
3. Such is the blessing of those who have put on Christ in baptism and become children of God through faith (Galatians 3:26-27)

CONCLUSION

- 1. The ears of the Lord are open to the prayer of the righteous... - 1 Peter 3:12
 - a. "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous,
And His ears attend to their prayer,
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."
 - b. We must submit to the righteousness of God offering in Christ - Romans 10:1-4
 - c. Meaning, we must respond to the gospel of Christ - Romans 1:16-17
- 2. If we desire "The Privilege of Prayer", then we must be either...
 - a. A faithful child of God through obedience to Jesus Christ
 - b. A sinner with a good and noble heart, seeking after truth and righteousness

The Principles of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. The full benefit of prayer comes only as The Principles of Prayer are observed
 - a. Principles laid down by Jesus and His inspired apostles
 - b. Principles that determine the final outcome of our prayers
2. What are "The Principles of Prayer" that must govern our praying?

I. WE MUST PRAY IN FAITH

A. PRAYER REQUIRES FAITH

1. "And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." - Matthew 21:22
 - a. ²² And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."
2. Otherwise, prayer will not be answered - James 1:5-8
 - a. ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

B. FAITH IN GOD...

1. That He is, and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him - Hebrews 11:6
2. Such faith comes from the Word of God - Romans 10:17
 - a. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

C. With the aid of His Word, we can have the kind of faith that pleases God, and ensures an answer to our prayers.

II. WE MUST PRAY WITH HUMILITY

A. HUMILITY IN PRAYER

1. Exemplified in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector - Luke 18:9-14
2. Humility leads to exaltation by God - Luke 18:14; James 4:10
 - a. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you

B. With faith and humility before God, we are prepared to pray with the proper disposition

III. WE MUST PRAY IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S WILL

A. GOD'S WILL AND OUR PRAYERS

1. Prayers are answered favorably if we ask "according to His will" – 1John 5:14
 - a. ¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

2. Prayers more concerned with our will than God's are turned down - James 4:3
 - a. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

B. HIS WILL BE DONE

1. So, Jesus taught us to pray - Matthew 6:10
 - a. 'Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
2. So, He prayed in the garden at Gethsemane - Luke 22:42
 - a. ⁴² saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
3. Such praying made easier when our will is to do God's will - John 4:34

C. With faith in God and humility toward Him, we will gladly yield to His will for us.

IV. WE MUST PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING

A. PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING

1. "giving thanks always for all things... to God" - Ephesians 5:20
2. "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" - Philippians 4:6
3. "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;" - Colossians 4:2
4. "pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" – 1Thessalonians 5:17-18

B. THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

1. God's people were always to be thankful - Psalms 100:4; Colossians 3:15
 - a. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.
2. Ingratitude an indication of apostasy - Romans 1:21; 2Timothy 3:2
 - a. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
 - b. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

C. Do we seriously think God will help us with our present burdens if don't take the time to thank Him for past blessings?

V. WE MUST PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS

A. PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS

1. Taught by Jesus Himself to His disciples - John 14:13-14; 16:23
 - a. ¹³ Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

- b. ²³ 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.
 - 2. Commanded by Paul to the Christians at Ephesus - Ephesians 5:20
 - a. ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
- B. THE NAME OF JESUS AND PRAYER
 - 1. Means more than simply adding "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayers
 - 2. We acknowledge Jesus as the only way by which we can approach God - John 14:6
 - a. ⁶ Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.
 - 3. We recognize Him as our "high priest" who intercedes for us - Hebrews 7:24-25; John 14:13
 - a. ¹³ Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

CONCLUSION

- 1. In summary, "The Principles of Prayer" we have examined are these:
 - a. We must pray in faith
 - b. We must pray with humility
 - c. We must pray in harmony with the will of God
 - d. We must pray with thanksgiving
 - e. We must pray in the name of Jesus
- 2. We cannot overestimate the value of the Word of God in regards to these principles...
 - a. Faith comes from the Word of God
 - b. Humility is learned by reading the Word of God
 - c. Knowing the will of God is impossible without the Word of God
 - d. Thanksgiving is made easier when we read of our blessings in the Word of God
 - e. The importance of having Jesus as our High Priest is revealed in the Word of God

The Persistence of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

- 1. There is another principle of prayer worthy of careful consideration
 - a. We must pray with persistence
 - b. A principle of prayer that was very important to Jesus
- 2. The importance of "The Persistence of Prayer" can be gleaned from the attention given to it in the Scriptures.

I. TEACHINGS OF PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

A. THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT FRIEND – Luke 11:1-8

- a. It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." ² And He said to

them, "When you pray, say:
 'Father, hallowed be Your name.
 Your kingdom come.
³ 'Give us each day our daily bread.
⁴ 'And forgive us our sins,
 For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
 And lead us not into temptation.'"

⁵ 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; ⁶ for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ 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*.' ⁸ 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.

1. Told in connection with a request for teaching on prayer - Luke 11:1
2. Following instruction providing a model for prayer - Luke 11:2-4
3. The parable itself, easy enough to understand - Luke 11:5-8
4. Followed with an emphasis on being persistent in asking, seeking, knocking - Luke 11:9-10

B. THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW – Luke 18:1-8

- a. Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ² saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' ⁴ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" ⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge *said*; ⁷ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? ⁸ 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?"

2. Told that men always ought to pray and not lose heart - Luke 18:1
3. The parable itself, illustrating the value of persistent requests - Luke 18:2-5
4. Adding that God will certainly heed His chosen who cry out day and night - Luke 18:6-8a

5. Followed by concern for whether such faith will be found when He returns - Luke 18:8b

C. THE TEACHING OF PAUL

1. "... continuing steadfastly in prayer" - Romans 12:12
 - a. ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
2. "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" - Ephesians 6:18
 - a. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,
3. "² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;" - Colossians 4:2
4. "pray without ceasing" – 1Thessalonians 5:17
5. Persistence in prayer must be very important to be stressed so often. Yet we find more than simply teaching on persistence

II. EXAMPLES OF PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

A. JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE – Matthew 26:36-46

1. When deeply distressed over His impending suffering - Matthew 26:36-39
2. While His closest disciples slept, he prayed three times - Matthew 26:40-44
3. In which He received the necessary help to face what lay ahead - Matthew 26:45-47
 - a. Strengthened by an angel; cf. Luke 22:41-44
 - b. Heard by God, though His actual request was not answered - cf. Hebrews 5:7

B. PAUL AND HIS THORN IN THE FLESH

1. Paul endured the infirmity of persecution – 2Corinthians 11:30-33; Judges 2:3
 - a. ⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!
 - b. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
2. He prayed three times that it might be removed – 2 Corinthians 12:8-10
 - a. ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions,

with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

3. It was not removed, but the Lord provided what he needed
 - a. Sufficient grace and the strength of Christ to endure - 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - b. Enabling him to even take pleasure in his infirmities - 2 Corinthians 12:10

C. THE PRAYERS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

1. The church in Jerusalem continued steadfastly in prayer - Acts 2:42
 - a. ⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
2. When Peter was imprisoned, constant prayer was offered for him - Acts 12:5,12
 - a. ⁵ So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.
 - b. ¹² And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.
3. Epaphras labored fervently in prayer for his brethren at Colosse - Colossians 4:12
4. Widows were assumed to be devoted to prayer – 1 Timothy 5:5 (like Anna, Luke 2:36-37)
 - a. ⁵ Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.

CONCLUSION

1. With such examples and teaching on persistence in prayer
 - a. The importance of persistence cannot be overemphasized
 - b. Persistence in general (keep praying!); persistence in particular (don't ask just once!)
2. Note well: persistence does not ensure God answers what we desire
 - a. Jesus still had to drink the cup of suffering by going to the cross
 - b. Paul still had to bear his thorn in the flesh by enduring persecution for Christ
3. Yet persistence in prayer is key to receiving answers we need
 - a. Grace and mercy to help in time of need
 - b. Strength to endure whatever it is we must face

The Practice of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

I. HOW TO PRAY

A. THE MODEL PRAYER

1. Jesus was asked by His disciples how to pray - Luke 11:1
 - i. It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him,

“Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.”

- b. They had just witnessed Jesus praying
 - c. They knew John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray
 - d. While they had prayed as Jews, they recognized a need to learn more
2. In response, Jesus offered a model, a guide for learning to pray - Luke 11:2-4
- a. Commonly called "The Lord's Prayer", also found in Matthew 6:7-13
 - i. 7 "And 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. 8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. ⁹"Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰'Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹'Give us this day our daily bread.
¹²'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³'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.]
 - b. It was intended to serve as a model ("In this manner...") - Matthew 6:9

B. THE PROPER PRAYER

- 1. Addresses God the Father ("Our Father in heaven") - Matthew 6:9
- 2. Expresses reverence toward God ("Hallowed be Your Name") - Matthew 6:9
- 3. Includes supplication for such things as:
 - a. God's purposes ("Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.") - Matthew 6:10
 - b. Our physical needs ("Give us this day our daily bread.") - Matthew 6:11
 - c. Our spiritual needs ("And forgive us our debts...") - Matthew 6:12
 - d. The spiritual needs of others ("...as we forgive our debtors.") - Matthew 6:12

- e. Guidance and help in our struggle against sin and Satan ("And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.") - Matthew 6:13
- 4. Praises God ("For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.") - Matthew 6:13
- 5. In teaching on prayer, Jesus stressed the importance of:
 - a. Simplicity in prayers - Matthew 6:7-8
 - b. Forgiving others - Matthew 6:14-15
 - i. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

II. WHEN TO PRAY

A. SCHEDULED PRAYERS

- 1. Having set times to pray can help develop a habit of prayer
- 2. Consider the practice of two great men of God
 - a. David, whom God described as "a man after My own heart" - Psalms 55:17
 - i. Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.
 - b. Daniel, whom the angel of God described as "O man greatly beloved" - Daniel 6:10
 - c. ¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.
- 3. They made it a habit to pray at set times during the day
 - a. It would not hurt to imitate them
 - b. Praying three times daily: morning, noon, and evening

B. SPONTANEOUS PRAYERS

- 1. Prayers should not be limited to set times
- 2. Jesus spent all night in prayer before selecting His apostles - Luke 6:12
 - a. ¹² It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.
- 3. Paul and Silas prayed when faced with trying circumstances - Acts 16:25
 - a. ²⁵ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;
- 4. The Israelites prayed to God in the heat of battle – 1Chronicles 5:20
 - a. ²⁰ They were helped against them, and the Hagrites and all who *were* with them were given into their hand; for they cried out to God in the battle, and He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him.

C. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

1. The goal is to "pray without ceasing" – 1Thessalonians 5:17
2. Having scheduled times to pray will develop experience in prayer
3. Praying spontaneously will develop a disposition to pray in every circumstance

III. WITH WHOM TO PRAY

A. PRAYING ALONE

1. Jesus encouraged the practice of praying in secret - Matthew 6:5-6
 - a. 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. 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.
2. Private prayer cultivates our spiritual nature through regular exercise
3. Private prayer forms a close union and fellowship with our Heavenly Father
 - a. It is just you and Him
 - b. Time spent together strengthens the bond of fellowship
4. Private prayer is a true test of your sincerity and devotion
 - a. You certainly are not doing it to please men (they cannot see you)
 - b. You can't be trying to falsely impress God (He will see right through you)
5. Private prayer will be rewarded "openly" - Matthew 6:6
 - a. The answers to our prayer will be seen by others
 - b. Both here and in the hereafter

B. PRAYING WITH OTHERS

1. Jesus also spoke of praying with others - Matthew 18:19-20
 - a. ¹⁹“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. ²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”
 - b. Where the requests of two or three are answered by our Father in heaven
2. Early Christians prayed together often...
 - a. In times of trouble - Acts 12:5,12; 16:25
 - i. ⁵ So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.
 - ii. ¹² And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

- iii. ²⁵ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;
 - b. In times of departure - Acts 20:36; 21:5
 - i. ³⁶ When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And they *began* to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, ³⁸ grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.
 - ii. When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until *we were* out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another.
- 3. Immediate blessings when God's people pray together
 - a. A sweetness of fellowship
 - b. A sense of strength
- 4. Praying with others should be done whenever possible
- 5. In the "Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-14) we find what sort of things we should pray about. Elsewhere in the Scriptures, we find there are many things for which we can pray as we consider.

IV. FOR WHAT TO PRAY

A. AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE

- 1. Self
 - a. For physical daily needs - Matthew 6:11
 - b. For personal growth in Christ-likeness and devotion to God - Colossians 1:9-12
 - i. ⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.
- 2. Family
 - a. For spouse, children, parents, siblings, etc.
 - b. For their nurture and growth in the teaching of the Lord - Ephesians 6:4

- i. ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- 3. Community
 - a. For peace to prevail E.g., Jeremiah 29:7
 - i. ⁷ Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'
- 4. Church
 - a. For love and unity to prevail - John 17:20-21
 - i. ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.
 - b. For the spiritual growth of each member - Philippians 1:9-11
 - i. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
 - c. For the gospel to have free course – 2 Thessalonians 3:1
 - i. Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;
- 5. Nation
 - a. For national repentance and consciousness of who God is - Psalms 33:12
 - i. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.
 - b. For leaders to rule wisely – 1 Timothy 2:2
 - i. First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.
- 6. Nonbelievers
 - a. For their salvation - Romans 10:1
 - i. Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.
 - b. For the effort of those involved in teaching them - Ephesians 6:18-20

- i. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- 7. The sick
 - a. For their restoration to health - James 5:14-15
 - i. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵ and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him
 - b. For spiritual strength and peace of mind - James 5:16
- 8. The poor and oppressed
 - a. Such as the homeless, fatherless, unborn children - Proverbs 34:6
 - i. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him
And saved him out of all his troubles.
 - b. Those in other nations oppressed by their own rulers or outside influences

CONCLUSION

1. In regards to "The Practice of Prayer", we have considered
 - a. How to pray, with the aid of the Lord's prayer
 - b. When to pray, suggesting both set times and spontaneous prayers
2. As we develop both the experience and disposition to pray, we should also consider
 - a. With whom to pray, alone or with others
 - b. For what to pray, besides what has already been suggested
3. Such strategies are simply suggestions to provide some direction in prayer
 - a. Develop one that suits you
 - b. One might also keep a list or journal of those for whom you are praying
4. The important thing is to PRAY, and to do so:
 - a. "always"
 - b. "in everything"
 - c. "earnestly"
 - d. "being vigilant"
 - e. "without ceasing"
5. ² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*;- Colossians 4:2

How God Answers Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. Why don't people pray more often?
 - a. Perhaps they don't believe their prayers are being answered
 - b. Not knowing how God answers, they may have lost faith in prayer
2. Lest we begin to think that God does not hear us when we pray, we should remember that there are at least four ways that God answers prayer.

I. REQUEST GRANTED

A. GOD MAY ANSWER - YES

1. God often grants the petitions we ask of Him - Psalms 118:5
 - a. From *my* distress I called upon the Lord;
The Lord answered me *and set me* in a large place
2. Especially when we put Him first in our lives - Matthew 6:33; Proverbs 3:5-10
 - a. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
 - b. Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.

B. FOR GOD TO ANSWER - YES

1. We must ask according to His will – 1John 5:14
 - a. ¹⁴ This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
2. We must be doing His will in our lives – 1John 3:22
 - a. ²² and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

C. Naturally we rejoice when God grants our request.

II. REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT YET

A. GOD MAY ANSWER - YES, BUT WAIT

1. God may grant our request, but in time and according to His purpose - cf. Ecclesiastes 3:1,11
 - a. There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven
 - b. He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.
2. So, we may think God is saying "No", when He is really saying - Yes, but wait - Luke 18:7
 - a. ⁷ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

B. WHEN THE ANSWER SEEMS TO BE - WAIT

1. We need to have patience - Hebrews 6:10-12

- a. ¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. ¹¹And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
- 2. We need to keep asking, seeking, knocking - Luke 11:9-10
 - a. ⁹"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. ¹⁰For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.
- 3. We need to remember God's promise - Romans 8:24
 - a. ²⁴For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?
- C. When God seems to be saying "yes, but wait", it is a time for patience and trust in His providence.

III. REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT AS EXPECTED

- A. GOD MAY ANSWER - YES, BUT NOT AS YOU THINK
 - 1. Sometimes God answers in a way differently than we may anticipate
 - 2. Remember, His thoughts and methods are much different than ours - Isaiah 55:8-9
 - a. ⁸"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. ⁹"For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.
 - 3. For example, asking God for strength and perseverance
 - a. He may give us trials to bear - e.g., Philippians 1:29-30
 - i. ²⁹For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.
 - b. Which in turn develops the virtues we prayed for! - Romans 5:3-4
 - i. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;
- B. WE MUST NOT LIMIT GOD'S OPTIONS
 - 1. We should be careful and not dictate to God how to answer our prayers
 - a. There are forces at work beyond what we can imagine - Ephesians 3:20
 - i. ²⁰Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

- b. Plus, we do not always know what to pray for as we ought - Romans 8:26
 - i. 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;
- 2. Limit the how and we might limit the result; e.g., when praying for the sick.
 - a. Do we pray simply that God bless the use of natural means (doctors, medicine, etc.)?
 - b. If so, might we limit God as to how He might restore them? (in ways beyond what we are able to imagine)?
 - c. Is it not better to simply ask God to restore the sick, and leave the methods to Him?
 - d. As we pray, our trust in God should allow Him latitude to answer however He deems best.

IV. REQUEST DENIED

A. GOD MAY ANSWER - NO

- 1. There may be times when God denies our requests - James 4:3
 - a. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.
- 2. We must trust that God, who knows what is best, would do so only if granting our request might not be for our good - Hebrews 12:7-8
 - a. ⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons

B. WHEN GOD SEEMS TO SAY - NO

- 1. We may not fully understand, but we can still fully trust Him! - Habakkuk 3:17-19
 - a.

¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom
 And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail
 And the fields produce no food,
 Though the flock should be cut off from the fold
 And there be no cattle in the stalls,
¹⁸ Yet I will exult in the Lord,
 I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
- 2. Especially in light of the promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - a. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

3. God will provide the grace and mercy to do without - 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
 - a. ⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

CONCLUSION

1. In at least four ways, then, God answers our prayers...
 - a. Request granted
 - b. Request granted, but not yet
 - c. Request granted, but not as expected
 - d. Request denied
2. However, God may choose to answer our prayers...
 - a. We can have confidence that it will be for our good
 - b. We should never grow weary in praying to God

⁹ The Lord has heard my supplication, The Lord receives my prayer. - Psalms 6:9