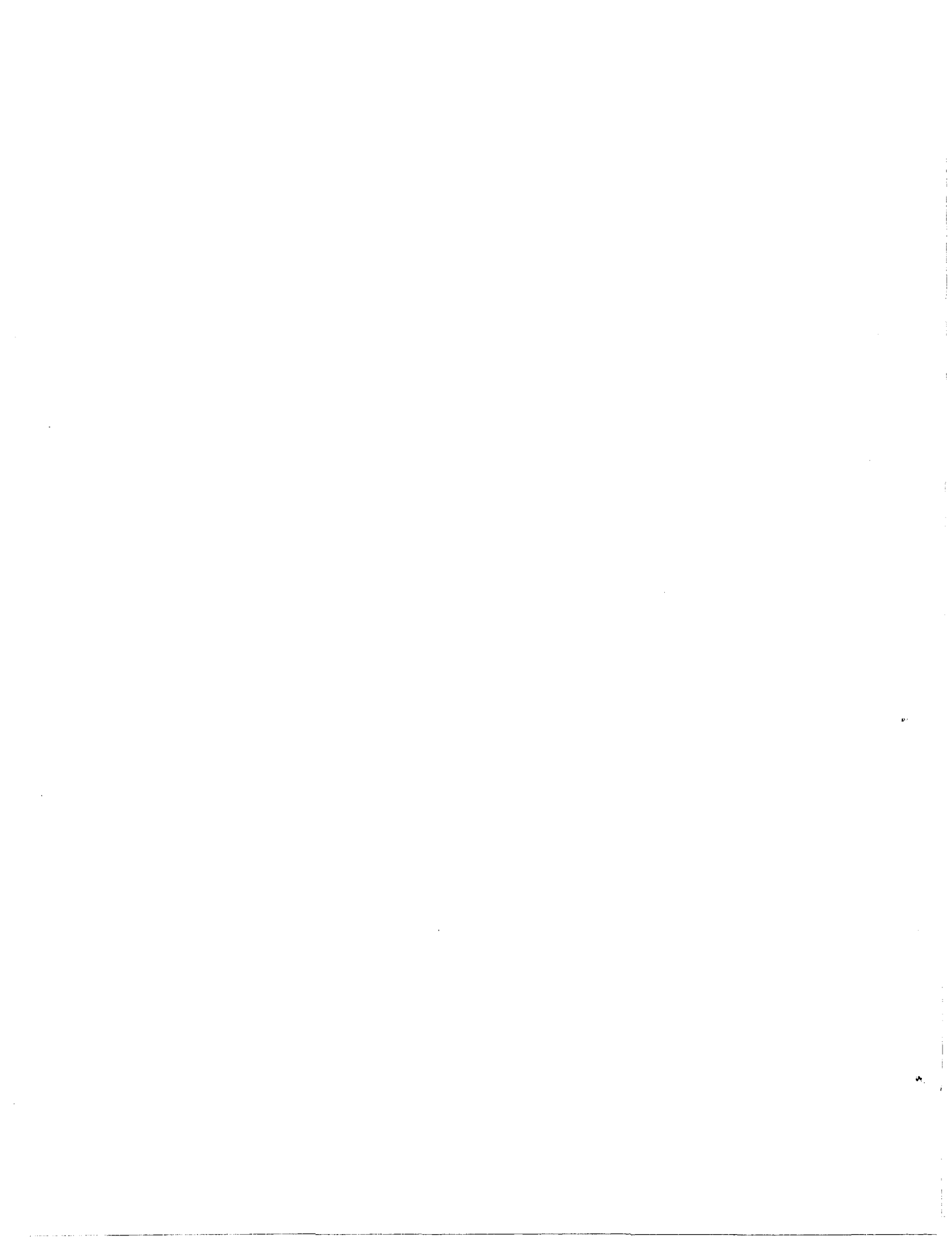


**Simple, Stimulating Studies  
about  
PRAYER**

**By  
Donald G. Hunt  
AND OTHERS**



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**VOICE OF EVANGELISM**  
**Box 431**  
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**A COMPILATION OF  
BIBLICAL TEACHING ABOUT  
THE ROYAL PRIVILEGE  
OF PRAYER**

The story is told of a minister who went to the usual prayer meeting only to find nobody present.

He began tolling the church bell.

Presently a dozen people came running to ask who was dead.

“The church,” replied the minister.

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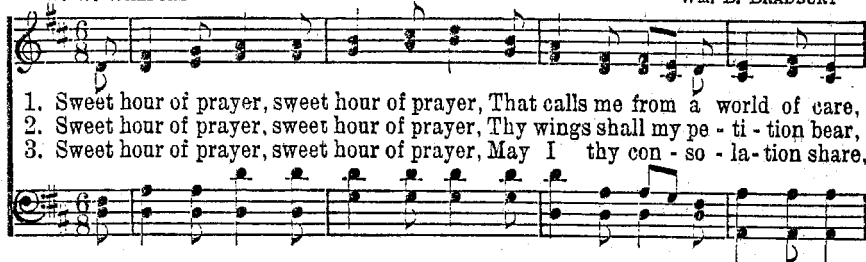
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# Sweet Hour of Prayer

W. W. WALFORD

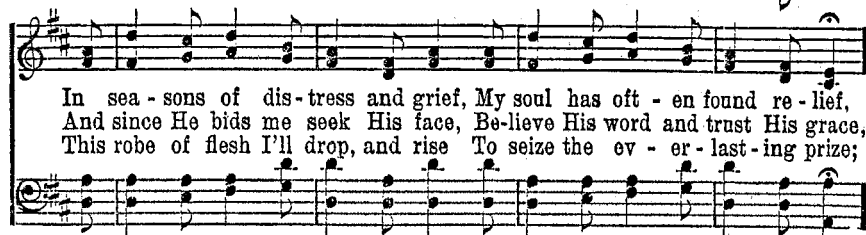
WM. B. BRADBURY



1. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, That calls me from a world of care,  
2. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, Thy wings shall my pe - ti - tion bear,  
3. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, May I thy con - so - la - tion share,



And bids me at my Fa - ther's throne Make all my wants and wish - es known,  
To Him whose truth and faith - ful - ness En - gage the wait - ing soul to bless;  
Till, from Mount Pisgah's loft - y height, I view my home, and take my flight:



In sea - sons of dis - tress and grief, My soul has oft - en found re - lief,  
And since He bids me seek His face, Be - lieve His word and trust His grace,  
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise To seize the ev - er - last - ing prize;



And oft es - caped the tempter's snare, By thy re - turn, sweet hour of prayer,  
I'll cast on Him my ev - 'ry care, And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.  
And shout, while passing thro' the air, Farewell, fare - well, sweet hour of prayer!

## INTRODUCTION

Your writer feels it such a responsibility to undertake writing on the great subject of prayer, for the field of thought is so vast. On the other hand he desires to do so because the need is so urgent and prayer's blessings so rich. It is a subject on which much has been said, but more needs to be preached to convict some of their prayerlessness and to improve the prayer lives of others.

About the time the "Voice of Evangelism", which your writer has edited over fifty years, began back in 1946, he had laid out a booklet entitled, "Powerful, Prevailing Prayer." At that time he had designed the booklet's cover, and selected the topics to be discussed in it, and had even written a number of them that appeared in the pages of that publication, but then he came to the realization that the subject was so important, so rich, and so needed that he felt it really needed a better treatment than at that time he was able to give it. And now many years later he still feels somewhat that same way, but he says, "With the Lord's good help, let us proceed into this wonderful subject."

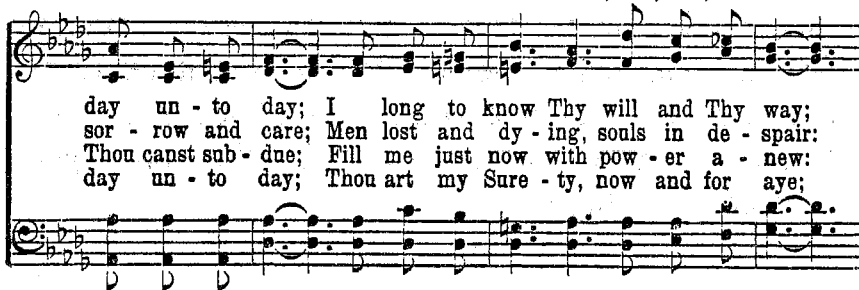
# Teach Me to Pray

A. S. R.

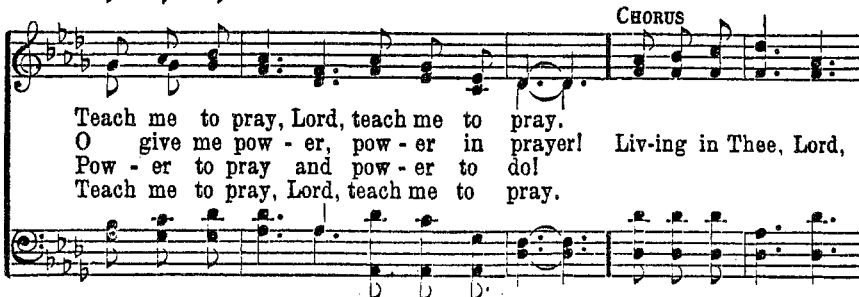
ALBERT SIMPSON REITZ



1. Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray; This is my heart-cry,  
2. Pow - er in prayer, Lord, pow - er in prayer, Here 'mid earth's sin and  
3. My weakened will, Lord, Thou canst re-new; My sin - ful na - ture  
4. Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray; Thou art my Pat - tern,

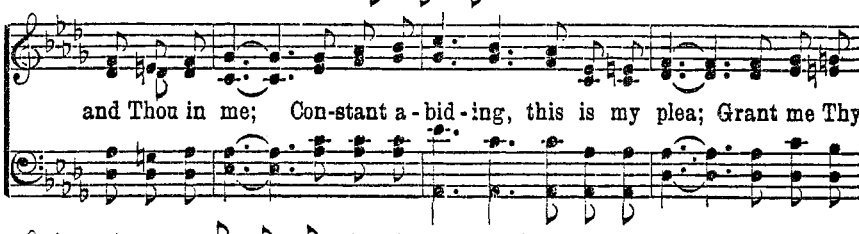


day un - to day; I long to know Thy will and Thy way;  
sor - row and care; Men lost and dy - ing, souls in de - spair:  
Thou canst sub - due; Fill me just now with pow - er a - new:  
day un - to day; Thou art my Sure - ty, now and for aye;

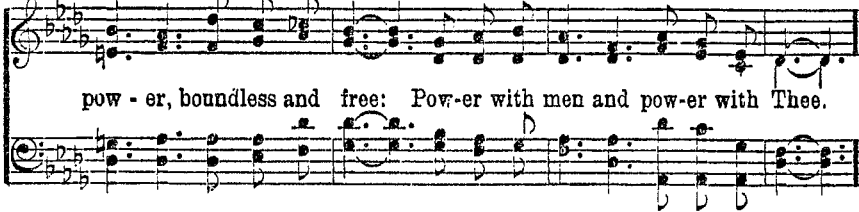


CHORUS

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.  
O give me pow - er, pow - er in prayer! Liv - ing in Thee, Lord,  
Pow - er to pray and pow - er to do!  
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.



and Thou in me; Con - stant a - bid - ing, this is my plea; Grant me Thy



pow - er, boundless and free: Pow - er with men and pow - er with Thee.



**PART ONE**

**BASIC STUDIES ABOUT PRAYER**

**(for everyone)**

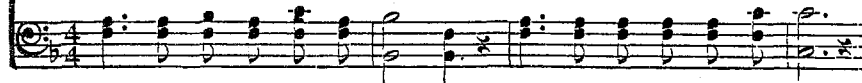
# What a Friend

JOSEPH SCRIVEN

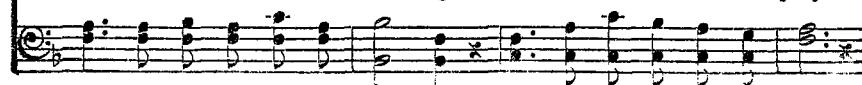
CHARLES C. CONVERSE



1. What a Friend we have in Je - sus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
2. Have we tri - als and temp - ta - tions? Is there trou - ble an - y - where?
3. Are we weak and heav - y - la - den, Cum - bered with a load of care?—



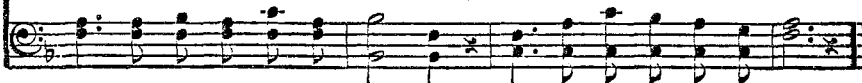
What a priv - i - lege to car - ry Ev - ery - thing to God in prayer!  
We should nev - er be dis - cour - aged, Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Pre - cious Sav - iour, still our ref - uge, — Take it to the Lord in prayer.



O what peace we of - ten for - feit, O what need - less pain we bear,  
Can we find a friend so faith - ful Who will all our sor - rows share?  
Do thy friends de - spise, for - sake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;



All be - cause we do not car - ry Ev - ery - thing to God in prayer!  
Je - sus knows our ev - ery weak - ness, Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a sol - ace there.



# The Great God to Whom We Pray

A consideration of the subject of prayer rightfully begins with God--the great God--to whom we pray. If there is no God, what a deception and false hope prayer is. But God is no myth. "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6) to which all Christians heartily agree. Yet some have difficulty praying. If the Sadducees erred because they knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matt. 22:29), the same too may be at the base of some of our modern-day prayer failure.

## 1. In Prayer We Must Realize We are Praying to a Personal God who is Really There.

Merely talking to hear oneself or to be listened to by people is not really prayer. Prayer is talking to God, our Heavenly Father, who is as much there listening as a friend is there when we are talking to him or her by telephone. How much talking on the phone would we do if we thought nobody was there listening? Our praying to God is somewhat like writing a friend--what we are writing, that friend will be reading and will be interested in. We understand this when doing the writing. So should we when praying.

Just as we address a person by name when talking on the phone or when writing a letter, this is the way it is with Bible praying. Jesus said, "After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). This is the way Jesus Himself prayed: "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father" (John 17:1); "And now, O Father" (v. 5); "O righteous Father" (v. 25); and "Holy Father" (v. 11).

## 2. Prayer is One of Life's Very Special Privileges.

When we consider the One to whom we pray, isn't this a great privilege? David thought it was really something to be son-in-law to the king (I Sam. 18:23), but this is nothing compared to having God as our Father and getting to talk to Him via prayer. The famous illustrator Norman Rockwell counted it such a great privilege to be an invited guest to a state dinner at the White House that he took a tranquilizer pill so he wouldn't be so nervous upon the occasion. Well,

getting to talk to God in prayer is really something greater than being a White House guest, as great as that might be.

Praying to a God who is living, who invites us to pray to Him, and who has promised to answer our prayers is far different from praying to a lifeless idol that stares off into space and doesn't even know we are there and cannot bless us in any way. In Isaiah's day God asked, "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble" (Isa. 46:5-7). Not so with our God! Our God is "the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17). He knows who we are, where we are, what we are doing, and what we are saying when we pray. "Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me" (John 2:1,2) "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Psa. 139:4).

A little girl asked her mother, "What would we do if God died?" We would be in a terrible situation, but we don't have to worry about God ever dying (He is eternal and immortal--I Tim. 1:17). We need to be more concerned about our becoming dead to Him and to the great privilege of prayer that we have.

## 3. Our God is Everywhere, both to Hear Our Prayers and to Work our Their Answers.

The heathen had gods that in their minds were limited to certain places. When the Syrians could not defeat the Israelites, they said Israel's God was "of the hills" and that if battled them in the valley, they would whip them (I Kings 20:23). But God is everywhere, and He can hear prayer everywhere. We don't have to go to Jerusalem nor to Mt. Gerizim like the Samaritans did, for God is a Spirit who is everywhere (John 4:20-24). People have literally prayed to God

“everywhere” (I Tim. 2:8); Paul and Silas in jail (Acts 16:25); Daniel in his own house (Dan. 6:10); the penitent publican in the temple (Luke 18:10); Paul and the Christians of Tyre on the seashore (Acts 21:5); Elijah on the mountain top (I Kings 18:36); Jesus when coming up out of the river after being baptized (Luke 3:21); Hannah at the tabernacle (I Sam. 1:9,10); Peter on the housetop (Acts 10:9); Cornelius in his house (Acts 10:30); Saul in the house of his host in Damascus (Acts 9:4); Lydia and the other women alongside the river (Acts 16:13); and Abraham’s servant on his way to get a wife for Isaac (Gen. 23:12). And don’t forget Matt. 6:6.

And as far as working out the answer to prayers, He can act anywhere to accomplish this. When Paul was in dire circumstances over in Asia, prayers offered in his behalf by Christians on a different continent (by the Corinthians in Europe) were honored by God (II Cor. 1:8-11). Writing clear from Rome to Philemon in far-away Colosse, Paul said, “Prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you” (Phm. 22).

This understanding helps us pray for people and activities in other places.

#### **4. The One to Whom We Pray has Many Means for Answering.**

Yes, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28), and we also know Who makes them work together for that purpose.

God can use people in answering our prayers as He did with Ezra’s prayers. Ezra 7:6 says, “The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.” Now listen to Ezra himself about it: “Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king’s heart” (Ezra 7:27).

God also uses angels in this way. Jesus really didn’t need Peter and his sword if He wished deliverance. He said to Peter, “Put up again thy sword...Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:52,53). Heb. 1:14

says of the angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Since He has innumerable angels (Heb. 12:22), no wonder we cannot pray too great or too many prayers for Him to answer!

God also uses circumstances when He chooses to do so as He did in delivering the Jews from Haman’s hatred. Think especially when Haman was first of all intending to hang Mordecai (Esth. 5:9-14) only to fall fate to God’s using the circumstance recorded in Esth. 6:1-11.

#### **5. Nor is Our God Limited in His Power.**

Sometimes friends want to help us but are not able because they do not have the means to do so. Not so with our God. He is not only willing but able to answer. How able is He? Listen: He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). The aged Sarah laughed when God sent messengers to tell her she would have a child even though elderly. The Lord said to Abraham, “Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:13,14). Luke 1:37 says, “With God nothing shall be impossible.” This is where the power of God is important.

At times we may be like the man crawling across a frozen river on hands and knees, fearful that he might break through at any time, only to hear a great noise behind him--a big team of horses pulling a loaded coal wagon across that very ice. How sheepish he felt--the same way we should feel if we think God cannot do whatever He chooses to do.

#### **6. Our Father Wants Us to Pray to Him.**

Since we have considered how great a God we have, One who is also willing to answer our prayers, isn’t it good news that He really wants us to pray to Him?

Jesus said, “Ask, and you will receive” (Matt. 7:7). Paul wrote, “Let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). And Prov. 15:8 says, “The prayer of the upright is his delight.” And listen to Rom. 8:32: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him

also freely give us all things?"

When we think of the great God to whom we pray, let us think on the other hand of how small we, the petitioners, are. Abraham said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). The Psalmist said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou are mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psa. 8:3,4). It is much like Psa. 34:6 says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles."

The facts are: we are weak, He is strong; we are poor, He is rich; we are ignorant, He is wise; we are small, He is great; we are finite, He is infinite; we are temporal, He is eternal; we are dependent, he is independent; we need Him, He can get along without us.

The first encouragement, then, to pray is really

the God to whom we pray!

## QUESTIONS

1. In what 2 matters did the Sadducees fail?
2. In what sense was prayer compared to talking to a friend by telephone?
3. In what sense was it like writing to a friend?
4. How is prayer to our God different from praying to an idol?
5. Why is it important to our praying that God is everywhere?
6. Why is it important to the answer of our prayers that He is everywhere?
7. What were some of the means God has for answering our prayers?
8. What did the messengers say when Sara laughed about having a baby?
9. Contrast us who pray with the One to whom we pray?

# Prayer in Old Testament Times

Now that we have considered the great God to whom we pray, let us look at prayer in Old Testament times.

Most preaching on prayer is done from the New Testament. But was prayer new with Jesus and the New Testament?

## 1. The First Mention of Prayer.

The first mention of prayer is in Gen. 4:25,26: "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. And to Seth, to him also, there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: THEN BEGAN MEN TO CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD."

Earlier than this we read of Cain and Abel bringing their offerings of the fruit of the ground and of the flock to God, but evidently they offered them silently without saying a word to God.

If men began to call on God in the third generation, then Adam and Eve did not pray, then Abel did not pray, then Seth did not pray.

We might wonder why they didn't. Probably because God had not revealed to them that they could. Surely those earlier generations were made to feel the great chasm that sin had created between God and man.

## 2. Priests Prayed In the Old Testament.

Jer. 1:1 indicates that Jeremiah was a priest of Anathoth, a town very near Jerusalem. In his days King Zedekiah called on him to pray for the dangerous situation Jerusalem was in: "Enquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up for us" (Jer. 21:2). There were actually times in the book of Jer. when God told him not to pray for his people: "Pray not thou for this people,

neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee” (Jer. 7:16); “Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offerings and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence” (Jer. 14:10-12).

In Judah’s post-exile period Ezra was a priest (Ezra 7:11). When he learned of the mixed marriages into which some of his fellow-Jews had fallen, listen: “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” (Ezra 9:5,6), and for many additional verses he continued his priestly prayer in behalf of the people.

The aged priest Samuel knew Israel had greatly displeased God in asking for a king. In the time of wheat harvest it does not rain in that land, but Samuel said to Israel, “It is not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king” (I Sam. 12:17-19). Then the godly priest assured them, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you” (v. 23).

### **3. But Prayer was also the Privilege of the People in Old Testament Times.**

This is evident from many verses in the Old Testament. Here are some: “For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou

mayest be found” (Psa. 32:6); “Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer” (Psa. 4:1); “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psa. 5:3); “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come” (Psa. 65:2); “The prayer of the upright is his delight” (Prov. 15:8); and, “The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Prov. 15:29).

It was just such a verse as this last one that caused the healed blind man to affirm the necessary righteousness of Jesus to Jesus’ critics: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of the one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (John 9:31-33).

So we see that prayer in Old Testament times was not only for the priests but also for the people. This is further brought out by some very well known Old Testament verses. Listen to the following and see if you have not heard them many times: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6); “Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:7); “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1,2); “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14); and, “And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore” (I Sam. 1:10). That was the woman Hannah. After God gave her the child Samuel, she later told the priest Eli, “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him” (v. 27).

### **4. Yes, there was Prayer in Jesus’ Day.**

Jesus said, “When thou prayest, thou shalt not

be as the hypocrites are” (Matt. 6:5), and then He proceeded to teach them how to pray. In Luke 18:10 He tells us the “two men went up to the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican”.

With this much Biblical evidence that prayer was a part of the religious life of God’s Old Testament people we are made to wonder why Jesus had to teach His Jewish listeners such a simple prayer as He did in His Sermon on the Mount: “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen” (Matt. 6:9-13). We are also made to wonder why it was necessary for John the Baptist to teach his disciples to pray since they were Old Testament Jews (Luke 11:1). And why would Jesus’ apostles rather late in His ministry--after they had heard His teaching on prayer and the model prayer of the Sermon of the Mount on top of all that was taught in the Old Testament--why would they have said in Luke 11:1, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” Evidently this was a self-confession that they had not been praying even though they had been with Jesus, had seen Him in prayer often, and were His chosen apostles. Think how sheepish they must have felt when He responded with that same simple prayer of the Sermon on the Mount: “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins;

for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil” (Luke 11:2-4).

Now the above leads me to wonder and to ask, with all the teaching on prayer that we today have in our Bible, is it possible that we could be as poor and as delinquent about prayer as were the Jews of Jesus’ day--and even the men who were going to fill the leadership role as the apostles in the coming church? Yes, it is possible that many today who go to church and consider themselves Christians are as neglectful of prayer in their daily lives while still others, doing somewhat better in the matter, are still in great need of improving their communication with God. It is with this thought in mind that we are pursuing this series of needed Biblical considerations on prayer.

## QUESTIONS

1. What was the first mention of prayer in the Bible?
2. What king called on Jeremiah to pray?
3. Why call on Jeremiah rather than somebody else?
4. What priest of the Post-Exile period prayed when he learned of the people’s mixed marriages?
5. Prove from the Bible that prayer in Old Testament times was for the people as well as priests.
6. Give evidence that there was prayer among the people during Jesus’ early life.
7. Give proof from John’s disciples that people then were neglecting prayer.
8. Give proof from Jesus’ disciples that they had been neglecting prayer.
9. Is it, therefore, likely that even today prayer is being neglected among the followers of Christ?

# Great People of the Bible Prayed

Some Biblical matters are dispensational, meaning they belong to a particular dispensation but not to others. Not so with prayer. Prayer has been in all dispensations (Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian) because man's need of divine help is not limited to any dispensation nor is God's willingness to be asked for His help. Therefore, we can study prayer throughout the entire Bible and gain spiritual insights about prayer and our prayer-answering God.

Our title talks about "Great People", and we shall see that great people of the Bible prayed. One way to be great with God is to be a person of prayer. Heb. 11:6 assures us that in order to please God, we must not only believe He exists, but that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Notice that Heb. 11:6 talks about pleasing God, and it follows the verse about Enoch of whom it says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." What is particularly said about Enoch back in Gen. 5:24? It says he walked with God--this is what pleased God. And if you and I, even today, walk with God as Enoch did, and if we diligently seek Him as Heb. 11:6 says, we too will please Him, and all who please God are great in His sight.

Let us then look at some of the great people of the Bible who prayed.

## 1. Daniel was Great, and He Prayed.

Surely Daniel was an unusually godly person, just as we can be, and he was one of the great characters of the Bible. As a Jewish young man he was taken to Babylon as a result of King Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judea. He was a brilliant young man--no physical blemish, well favored, skillful in wisdom, cunning in knowledge, understanding science, had ability to stand in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace, and capable of learning the Chaldean language (Dan. 1:3-6). A crisis arose because the king was about to slay all his wise men for not being able to recall to his mind the impressive

dream he had had (Dan. 2:1-13). When Daniel leaned of it, he asked the king for time, then went to the house of his Jewish companions, and they prayed, for Dan. 2:18 says they "desired mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret". The next verse says, "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

When we are in danger, in some crisis, then we too should pray, God will hear, and we should not forget to thank Him for sending needed help.

Much later in Daniel's life he had an even closer brush with death. Nebuchadnezzar's great kingdom had one hundred twenty districts, each with its own ruler. Over these one hundred twenty princes Nebuchadnezzar placed three presidents. Daniel had done such a successful job that the king was thinking of promoting him over the whole realm (Dan. 6:1-3). The other two presidents were jealous and wanted to get rid of him, so they flattered the king into signing a decree that no one should pray to any god or make a request of any person for the next thirty days except of the king himself (Dan. 6:4-9). They knew Daniel was a man of regular prayer. In spite of the penalty for praying (being cast into the den of lions), "when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem (see I Kings 8:44-52), he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10). He would not give up his praying to God. Yes, he was reported, yes he was cast into the lions' den, and yes God delivered him from the mouths of the hungry lions.

Shouldn't we who run no such risk of being eaten alive by lions for praying have and maintain a regular prayer life that nothing can interfere with? If Daniel believed that a death-sentence law by the government was not an excuse for not praying to God, then we should believe that nothing less than that would be an excuse for our not praying.

Another special reference to Daniel and prayer is found in Dan. 9:20-23.



## 2. Hannah was Great, and She Prayed.

A desire to be a mother in Israel was as native to Hannah as to other women in her land. Adding to her desire for motherhood was her being one of two wives of the man Elkanah, and his other wife "provoked her sore" because she could not bear. So she did what we are taught to do: she took her burden to the Lord. Listen to her earnestness: "O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life" (I Sam. 1:11). When the priest Eli got straightened out about her case, he said to her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition" (I Sam. 1:17). With this assurance she "went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (v. 18).

She is an example to us to take our burden to the Lord and leave it there--not carry it home with us. When we pray, we do not have an on-the-spot priest to tell us God is going to answer, but we do have Christ's own promise: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). Let us then always "ask in faith, nothing doubting" (Jas. 1:6).

In due time her baby was born, and when her son was weaned, she brought him to the priest at the tabernacle and said, "I am the woman who stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (I Sam. 1:26-28). She called her son Samuel. Do you know why? "Samuel" means "asked of God."

We too should recognize when God has answered our prayers, and any promises we made at the time of praying should be carried out as promised.

What prayer lessons can we learn from this incident? That women can pray as well as men, that physical blessings can be asked for as well as spiritual blessings, and that our prayers should represent the earnest desires of our hearts.

## 3. Elijah was Great, and He Prayed.

He lived in the terrible days of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Because of the wickedness and its consequent influence on the nation of Israel, God was willing to bring a terrible drouth upon their land--just as He promised in Deut. 11:16,17 that He would do. Elijah, who lived across the Jordan from Samaria, the capital, appeared in Ahab's presence and said, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). Either before he said this or immediately after, "he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (Jas. 5:17). With no rain for such a period of time the nation was desperate. Then came the showdown: Elijah representing Jehovah and the false prophets Baal in a contest on Mt. Carmel--won, of course, by Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God" (I Kings 18:39), and the prophets of Baal are slain (v. 40). Elijah "prayed again, and the heaven gave rain" (Jas. 5:18). This illustrates for us the great lesson that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

## 4. Nehemiah was Great, and He Prayed.

To desire and envision the rebuilding of a city wall as Nehemiah did is to desire and envision something that can only be realized if God leads and helps. And God did in answer to Nehemiah's prayers for rebuilding Jerusalem's walls.

When in Persia he first learned of the situation back at Jerusalem, this cupbearer to the king of Persia "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed" (Neh. 1:4). He knew he had to have the king's permission even to be gone from the project, so he prayed, "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (Neh. 1:11).

Burdened as he was about this matter, his countenance showed it one day when he was before the king. When the king asked him about his sadness, he told him of his burden, and when the king said, "For what dost thou make request?" (Neh. 2:4), before expressing his request, notice what he did: "I

prayed to the God of heaven". He then made his request, and "the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (Neh. 2:8).

This became the pattern of Nehemiah's life. When mocked by the project's enemies, he said, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head" (Neh. 4:4). When he settled a matter troubling some of his workers, he said, "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people" (Neh. 5:19). When the enemies were reproaching them again, Nehemiah reported, "They all make us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands" (Neh. 6:9). After each of his reform works in Neh. 13, he talked to God: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof" (13:14); "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy" (13:22); and, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (the closing statement in the book).

God heard his prayers and helped him, enabling them to complete rewalling the city in a record fifty-two days (Neh. 6:15)! Can't you see that such would not have been possible without God's special blessings? And why did those blessings come? In answer to this godly man's prayers--just as is open to us today when we work at God's work and pray.

### **5. Hezekiah was Great, and He Prayed.**

Assyria was the great world-power before Babylon. Its enormous capital city was Nineveh. The strength of the Assyrian empire was vividly portrayed in the huge stone human-headed bulls guarding its palace's entrance. (You can see them today in the British Museum in London.) Their rulers Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Sargon II were involved in conquering and destroying the Northern Kingdom of ten tribes. Later came their ruler Sennacherib of King Hezekiah's day. In the Assyrian portion of the British Museum there are walls of stone inscriptions taken from Sennacherib's palace by the archaeologists. They impress you with the military greatness of this ruler who came against Judah when

the godly Hezekiah was on the throne.

Isa. 36:1 says that this powerful king came against all of Judah's defense cities and took them. Jerusalem would be next. He sent messengers to scare them into surrender. Next he sent a letter. In such an hour "Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord," and he prayed (Isa. 37:14,15). Sometime during that threatening period Hezekiah became deathly sick, and God told him to set his house in order because he would not live (Isa. 38:1). At thirty-nine years of age this king "turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord" (v. 2). Did this man's earnest prayers bring about any changes? Listen: "Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria." Hezekiah did recover through divinely ordered medical means (v. 21), and listen to what happened to the mighty king Sennacherib: "It came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and...they were all dead corpses" (II Kings 19:35). So much did Hezekiah rely on the Lord's help that II Kings 18:5 says of him, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."

Then there is a difference between how much people actually trust in the Lord. Why can't you and I choose to be among those who really trust in God--and that includes believing prayer. We can, and we should.

### **6. The Apostles were Great, and They Prayed.**

As we saw in our previous study, the apostles did not distinguish themselves for their prayers while Jesus was with them, but after He left them, they really learned to pray. In fact, they prayed so much that they had to get other men to care for the Grecian widows in the church's daily benevolent program, and they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). In making the above arrangements the apostles were not just getting out of a job but were spending so much

time in prayer and preaching that they could not take care of the widow-responsibility too. Does this not show that much prayer should characterize those of us who preach? Instead of neglecting prayer to take care of other things, we should delegate others to take care of many things so we can spend more needed time in prayer.

You ask, "Should it really take that much time to pray?" The Biblical answer is "yes". If we who lead do not know what all there is to pray about, you can see where the church's prayer breakdown begins. A praying church must begin with praying leaders. A later study will show what all there is to pray about. Then we shall see what we should be praying about, and then it will be a matter of devoting ourselves in a major way to prayer.

### **7. The Apostle Paul was Great, and He Prayed.**

Paul was such a Christian man, such a preacher of the gospel, such an evangelist for Christ, and such a worker that there are far more chapters of Acts devoted to him than to all the other apostles combined, and God inspired him to write about one-half of the books of the New Testament. Was he a man of prayer?

When Christ stunned this great persecutor on his way to Damascus and even blinded him, he sent him into the city to await instruction. While he waited, he was so broken up with guilt and remorse that he neither ate nor drank but prayed for three days--until Christ's messenger came (Acts 9:9,11). Knowing how wrong he had been as a Jew, following his conversion he spent much time in prayer for his Jewish brethren: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

When he had that "thorn in the flesh" that bothered him so much, he continued to ask God to remove it--until he found it was God's will for him to be saddled with it (II Cor. 12:7-9). When he and Silas were cast into the jail at Philippi, even with their backs bloody from the lashes given them and their feet secured in stocks, they "prayed, and sang praises to God," and they weren't ashamed that the tough men who were there in the prison heard them (Acts 16:23-25).

When writing his various epistles to

congregations, Paul assured them of his constant prayers for them: "Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Rom. 1:9); "I thank God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Phil. 1:3,4); "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (Col. 1:3); "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" (I Thess. 1:2). It is not conceivable that Paul wrote these things when he was not doing them, and since he did them, he surely did spend much time in prayer. If he did, we can. If he did, we should. If this brought God's blessings to him and upon those for whom he prayed, the same will be true in our case if we pray as we should.

Can't we see from these several Biblical examples that great people in the Bible prayed? Can we who want to be genuine Christians today be great with our heavenly Father if we do not pray? People who depend too much on themselves are proud in their own minds ("We can handle it"), so basically they don't do much praying. Let us all heed I Pet. 5:5-7: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him: for he careth for you."

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Why can we study prayer material from any dispensation?
2. How did Daniel's prayer save his life in Dan. 2?
3. When might Daniel have had a human excuse for not praying?
4. What burden did Hannah bear in life for sometime?
5. What did she do about it?
6. What does the name "Samuel" mean?
7. What 2 prayers did Elijah pray that affected the weather?
8. What does the Bible say about the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man"?
9. Cite several times in Nehemiah's life when he prayed.
10. What great accomplishment did he realize because of God's help?

11. What powerful Assyrian ruler came against Judah in the days of Hezekiah?
12. What further personal calamity befell Hezekiah?
13. How did he compare with other kings of Judah in trusting Jehovah to answer his prayers?
14. How much do we see the apostles praying

in the early chapters of Acts?

15. What did Paul do concerning Israel's salvation besides preach to them?
16. What did Paul do about his thorn in the flesh?
17. What were some congregations we know Paul prayed for?

## Prayer in Jesus' Life

When the book of Hebrews was written, Jesus' earthly life had been over for several years. But looking back at His time on earth, Heb. 5:7 says, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." This is probably referring to His praying in Gethsemane. It was "in the days of His flesh" that He prayed--when He was a dependent being, when He had specific needs, and when He trusted the One to whom He prayed to supply those needs about which He prayed.

And it is in the days of our flesh that we are to pray, for while here we too are dependent on God, we have many needs that only He can supply, and we trust Him to answer our prayers for those needs. In heaven we won't need to pray, for we will be where there will be no needs or unfulfilled wants. The precious privilege of prayer is for the here and now, and this is brought out in the last stanza of our song, "Sweet Hour of Prayer." Listen to it: "Sweet hour of prayer, Sweet hour of prayer, May I thy consolation share, Till, from Mt. Pisgah's lofty height, I view my home, and take my flight. This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise to seize the everlasting prize, And shout, while passing through the air, FAREWELL, FAREWELL, SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER!"

Since prayer is for our here and now, how are we doing? Let us take a look at prayer in the life of Jesus.

There is no doubt but what He prayed much. The specific mentions of His praying no doubt are mentioned because of something special at that time, so we will look at those times and see if we can figure

out what the various settings were. We will consider twenty-four recorded instances.

**1. Luke 3:21:** *"It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven were opened."*

He was thirty years of age and about to embark upon His public ministry. He was now leaving obscurity to enter the public years of His life. What a time to pray! Besides, He was about to face that bitter period of severe temptations recorded in the next chapter. What an example for every Christian young person who is graduating from high school, who is leaving home, and who is beginning life on his or her own! God will be with you if you ask Him. Life will be rich with meaning as we sing, "He leadeth me; oh, blessed thought!"

**2. Mark 1:35:** *"In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."*

The day before He had cast a demon out of a man in the synagogue, He had healed Peter's mother-in-law, and He had healed all the sick of the town that had been brought to the door of the house. He was the center of attention. He was in the public eye. Such was a time to pray. And when things are going our way, or when circumstances have pushed us into the limelight, then is the time to pray and not become proud.

The very day He went out to pray was the day the townspeople would beg Him to remain with them,

but it was the day that He would begin His first preaching tour of Galilee. Before beginning a big project, we should always pray, for its success will depend on God's blessing.

Notice that it was more important to go out and pray than it was to sleep in that morning. He was doing what others were not then doing. We too should pursue our spiritual life regardless of whether others do theirs or not. Notice too that it was early morning--prayer is a good way to begin our days. Notice also that He went out to a solitary place to pray--a place where He would not be disturbed, a place where He could be alone with God in His praying.

**3. Luke 5:16:** *"He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."*

Just what the setting was that called for this mention of Jesus' praying is not as obvious as most recorded instances of His praying. He is on His first Galilean tour, and His healing the leper in previous verses was the first recorded event on that tour. This tour would be the first real exposure that many places in Galilee would have of Jesus. Such an opportunity and the responsibilities connected therewith would provide an important occasion for special prayer.

**4. Luke 6:12:** *"It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."*

The next morning Jesus would come down from this all-night prayer to choose the twelve apostles and to preach the great Sermon on the Mount. How important to have God's blessing and guidance! People from many places would hear the sermon, and it would become the world's best known sermon. These apostles would become His chosen witnesses. They would be significant in establishing the church and in spreading the faith, and some of them would write various books of the New Testament.

Sometimes people ask, "If Jesus prayed before choosing the twelve, why did God let Him choose Judas? Let us not think that Jesus didn't know what was going on when He chose Judas. About two years

later and about a year before the betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). John, the author, explains: "He spake of Judas Iscariot" (v. 71). A few verses before, Jesus said, "There are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him" (v. 64). Jesus, then, had a purpose in choosing Judas. I think I understand why, but the Bible itself never explains.

**5. Matt. 14:19:** *"He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."*

This was in conjunction with His feeding the 5,000. By having them sit down, all could witness the miracle. By His praying, the people could see that the multiplication of the loaves and fishes was by the direct power of God. Besides, Jesus always blessed food before eating.

**6. Matt. 14:23:** *"When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone."*

This took place immediately after feeding the 5,000. Jesus evidently prayed because He knew the thought of the people, the attitude of the twelve, and what was coming up in a few hours at Capernaum. They had been preaching the coming of the kingdom, and the Jews were thinking He was going to set up an earthly kingdom and overthrow Rome, and they were ready for it. After His feeding them, Jesus "perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make Him a king", so He departed into the mountain to pray (John 6:15). From what we read in Mark's account, the twelve evidently were peeved at Jesus for not accepting the crown, for when that very night after Jesus had prayed He came to them on the Sea and stopped the storm that was about to capsize them, "they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened"

(Mark 6:51,52). And when later that day He preached the sermon recorded in John 6:26-58, "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66), and realizing the twelve might be under pressure to desert Him also (John 6:67), can't you see why Jesus spent many hours of that night in prayer? The earnestness with which we pray, and the amount of time spent in prayer will be in direct ratio to how much we grasp the seriousness of a situation. As the songs says, there will be times when we will realize "Where could I go but to the Lord?"

**7. Matt. 15:36:** *"He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."*

The prayer situation was the same here in connection with His feeding the 4,000 as was present when He fed the 5,000.

**8. Luke 9:18:** *"It came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him; and He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?"*

If you read on a few more verses (especially in Matthew's coverage--see Matt. 16:13-21), you will see He was about to evoke a statement of faith about Himself from the lips of Peter. He was also about to tell them of His going to establish the church and to break the news to them of His coming death. At such a crucial hour Jesus prayed. He prayed because He could not handle it alone, and this will be so true of us many times.

**9. Luke 9:28:** *"He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray."*

As He prayed, what happened? "And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening" (v. 29). The transfiguration! His talking with Moses (the lawgiver) and Elijah (the great prophet) about His coming death at Jerusalem! This event was not only reassuring to Jesus but impressive to the disciples (see II Pet. 1:16-18). Now they ought to understand that His

death was according to the plan of God.

**10. Mark 10:16:** *"He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."*

Here Jesus was asking God to bless the little children. We too should pray for our little ones. Their lives will be important, and their lives will likely survive ours.

**11. Luke 10:21:** *"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."*

The same is recorded in Matt. 11:25,26, which may be a different time and setting.

The setting in Luke 10 (above) is the return of the 70 whom He had sent out. They were happy with the results. They had been chosen from among the common people, and Jesus could use them whereas the "wise and prudent" leaders with their pride and preconceived notions did not grasp the truth of Jesus' message nor the mission of His coming. We too should pause on various occasions as Jesus did just to thank the Father for what we are rejoicing over.

**12. Luke 11:1:** *"It came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He was ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray."*

People may come to us and ask us to help them with their finances, with Bible study, with calling, etc. This is fine, but Jesus' prayer life so impressed the disciples that they asked Him to teach them to pray. What a testimony to the constancy of His praying!

**13. John 11:41,42:** *"Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."*

This was at the tomb of Lazarus. Jesus had just told them to roll back the stone from the grave. He has just asked, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" It was with the stone rolled back that He prayed. The people had known Jesus to perform many miracles, and here it would appear they were going to get to see Him raise a man to life. But Jesus wanted them to connect what they were about to see with God, the One to whom Jesus prayed, and to the glory that belonged to God. We too should be careful that the emphasis is not on what we pray but on God who is answering.

**14. Matt. 26:26:** *"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body."*

This was at the institution of the Lord's supper. We too do the same at each Sunday's Lord's supper, for I Cor. 10:16 speaks of our blessing the cup. At the Lord's table the prayer(s) should focus on the bread and cup; what they represent, the death of Christ, our shortcomings, asking for mercy, etc. and not on all the things we would normally pray about at other times.

**15. Luke 22:31,32:** *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee...but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."*

On that terrible night Jesus had sorrows aplenty of His own, yet He thought of and prayed for Peter. What an example for us that no matter how bad our situation might be, we should not forget to pray for others who also have needs.

It was important that Peter would not do as Judas--end it all. He would be needed for Pentecost and for years thereafter. Jesus' prayer had much to do with Peter repenting and coming back.

**16. John 17:** *The whole chapter (read it).*

This has been called Jesus' great intercessory prayer, and indeed it was. After praying about

personal matters (vs. 1-5), He did much praying for the apostles and for those who would later believe on Him through their preaching. This was Jesus' longest recorded prayer. It was a big prayer, for it was a prayer concerning many people and for very important matters. It was almost like a person praying for His children and then for their children. Christ, who was about to die to give Himself for the church, was concerned about the purity, about the unity, and about the outreach of the church down through the ages of time, and He was concerned about the apostles to whom He was entrusting the beginning of the church and its spread. If you don't think prayer is important and efficacious, don't tell Jesus, for He knew and acted otherwise.

**17. Matt. 26:39:** *"He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."*

This was His first prayer in Gethsemane. The vicious parade of unlawful events leading to the cross was about to begin, and it would begin right there in the garden. If we were to go through such an ordeal, it would be hard on us, and it was just as hard on Jesus. Earlier that week He had said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour," yet He recognized it was for that purpose that He came to that hour (John 12:27). He knew it was God's will that He die for the sins of the world. He knew He was to lay down His life (John 10:17,18). So in Gethsemane He prayed His will into subjection to God's will and went on to become obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8). What a model for us in our times of trial and temptation!

**18. Matt. 26:42:** *"He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."*

The temptation not to go through with the coming ordeal came back to Jesus, and He needed God's help again. Jesus always depended on the Word of God and prayer when temptations came, and so should we. In ourselves we are no match for the

devil's power, but with the whole armor of God on, we are able to stand in that day (Eph. 6:11,12).

**19. Matt. 26:44:** *"He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."*

It was of this third prayer that Luke 22:44 says, "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

He prayed the same words, but they were not "vain repetition". He meant every word of it even if He had prayed the same thing twice before. And we at times will be so burdened about a matter that we too will ask and ask the same thing and maybe in the same words.

We sing, "Oh, how He agonized there in my place!" Thank God, He was heard (Heb. 5:7), and though it was not possible to save Him from death and at the same time save the world, God did send an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). God will always stand by those committed to doing His will.

**20. Luke 23:34:** *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."*

This was Jesus' first prayer from the cross, and it was for His crucifiers. In the Sermon on the Mount He had taught His listeners to "pray for them which despitefully use you" (Matt. 5:44) and to forgive others (Matt. 6:14,15). On the cross He lived what He had taught. It takes a real Christian today to do as Jesus did in this prayer.

**21. Matt. 27:46:** *"About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

Of all the things that hurt Jesus most, probably this was the worst. On the cross God had laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6), making Him who knew no sin to become sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). This is why God had to treat Jesus as if He were a sinner, and this broke Jesus' heart, resulting in the above agonizing exclamation.

**22. Luke 23:46:** *"When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."*

This was Jesus' dying statement. He was conscious clear to the end. Oh, that we might be conscious to the very end so that the last thing we do on this earth will be to pray! Can you think of any greater way for a Christian to pass from this life than right after he or she had concluded life with a prayer?

**23. Luke 24:30:** *"As He sat at meat with them, He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them."*

This was in the home of one of the men of Emmaus with whom He had walked. It was meal time, and as Jesus' custom was, he prayed before they ate--just as we should always do.

**24. Luke 24:50,51:** *"He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."*

Jesus' days of incarnation were now ended, and He would return to heaven. As He was blessing and praying for the apostles, He began to rise into the cloud that would receive Him out of their sight. For the remaining years of their lives they would be able to recall that the last thing they saw or heard Jesus do was PRAY FOR THEM! This surely had to mean much to them, and so they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God (Luke 24:52,53) and waiting for the promised Holy Spirit to come upon them.

Thus, we have gone through the life of Jesus chronologically noting the numerous times His praying was mentioned. What have you gotten from this treatment of His life? Surely this: God is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, a human being needs to recognize that life's demands are too great to be borne without God's special and available help, and that time spent in prayer is important and will be rewarded.



The disciples wanted Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1), and surely by His wonderful example He has taught us to pray!

## QUESTIONS

1. What well known song points out the fact that prayer is only for this life?
2. Why do you think Jesus was praying as He emerged from the waters of baptism?
3. What had taken place the day before, and what was coming up in the immediate future that caused Jesus to rise early at Capernaum to pray?
4. How long did Jesus pray before choosing the apostles and preaching the Sermon on the Mount?

5. Why do you think Jesus spent much of the night in solitary prayer after feeding the 5,000?
6. At what precise moment did the transfiguration begin?
7. For which disciple did Jesus pray that his faith would not fail?
8. In what chapter of John is Jesus' great intercessory prayer?
9. Where did Jesus pray that the cup might pass from Him?
10. What prayer for those bringing about His death did Jesus pray from the cross?
11. What was Jesus doing when He was parted from the apostles at the ascension?

# God's Gracious Prayer Promises

It was Walter Scott who first said the Bible contains four kinds of statements: facts, commands, promises, and warnings, necessarily indicating that there are many of each. This is surely true of promises--including promises of answered prayer.

We could call this message, "God's GREAT Prayer Promises," and that would be true, or, "God's BELIEVABLE Prayer Promises," and they are. But we have decided on "God's GRACIOUS Prayer Promises," for they are indeed gracious on God's part.

When God promises, we should believe--not even doubt or question. We need to follow the Biblical example of Abraham. When God promised him the birth of a son and much offspring. Rom. 4:18 states that he "believed in hope" when from a physical standpoint there was no hope. Since he was "not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (verses 18:21). So when we open the Bible and read God's prayer promises, let us believe that what He has promised, He is able to perform, and that His integrity will cause it to be performed.

## 1. Biblical Prayer Promises.

First, one from the Old Testament: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chron. 7:14).

Now let us notice some New Testament prayer promises. Let us begin with some in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "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" (Matt. 6:6); "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:7-11). These verses contain unmistakable promises--promises of needs (a son wanting food) and other "good things". Do not pray and wonder if God

will answer your prayer. Count on His many promises to answer prayer.

Next notice the promise in Mark 11:24: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Remember these words: "Ye shall have them!" Is that what you think after you have prayed? In our prayer attitude we should be like I was as a third grader. Before Christmas vacation our teacher had all of us write a letter to Santa Claus telling what we wanted. I had noticed the high school boys skating on the snow-packed streets that were as hard as ice, and I had included in my letter a request for ice skates. After the vacation when we were back in class, I raised my hand right in the middle of the teacher's teaching. "What is it, Donald?" I said, "When is Santa going to answer our letters?" "What do you mean?" she asked. I said, "I asked him for a pair of ice skates, and I didn't get them." She went on to explain that we wrote these letters merely in fun. Let me ask, "When God has so promised to answer our prayers, why can't we watch and expect the answer just as I did as a grade school boy?" Or is prayer something we say, and that's as far as it goes with our thinking? If it has been that way, let us change our faith to match God's promises.

Did you notice the "What things soever" in Mark 11:24? Notice the "whatsoever" again as we read John 14:13: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." You can see that God has not restricted us to only a few things that He will grant in answer to prayer. Listen again: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). And again: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:22).

Yes, God has committed Himself that He will answer the prayers of His children.

If we say, "It depends on who is promising something whether I believe it. And is the one promising able to fulfill it?" Well, we know there are people who promise things they can't fulfill, and some who don't intend to carry out what they promise, and that people sometimes forget what they promise. But none of these fits God. What He has promised, He is able to perform (Rom. 4:21), He cannot lie (Tit. 1:2),

and He does not forget what He is to remember (Heb. 6:10). As He promised Paul when there was no human hope that anybody would be saved from that terrible storm on the Mediterranean, God was able to save every person aboard even though the ship was lost (Acts 27:22-25,41-44). As to God's integrity concerning what He has promised, "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). One windy spring afternoon a bonfire got away from a poor family and burned out into our field. A neighbor brought his tractor and plowed several furrows to contain the fire. When the man of the house arrived on the scene, he promised, "Albert will turn every one of the furrows over again," but his son Albert never did it--the difference between God promising and some people promising. And when God promised Hannah she would have a son in answer to her prayer, I Sam. 1:19 says, "Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord REMEMBERED her," and she bore the son Samuel. And the God who remembered Hannah's prayer will also remember our prayers.

## 2. Biblical Conditions of the Promises.

If the only statements we had were, "Ask, and it shall be given you...for every one that asketh receiveth" (Matt. 7:7,8), we would suppose God's promise to be unconditional. But a study of other verses indicates His promises are with certain understandable conditions. His promise to answer prayers is like His promise of salvation. He is the author of eternal salvation--but to whom? To "all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). Yes, "the gift of God is eternal life" given us "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23), but what is a necessary condition for receiving heavenly inheritance? Rom. 8:17 says, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

What are some of these Biblical conditions of His answering our prayers?

We must listen to Him if He will listen to us; we must answer His call if He will answer us when we call. At Lazarus's tomb "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always" (John 11:41,42). Why? Jesus said, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). And you remember that God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"

(Matt. 3:17; Matt. 17:5). Other passages that show we must be serving God if day-by-day we expect Him to answer our prayers: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12); "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16); "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). After we become Christians, we must abide in Christ to have our prayers answered.

But we can't "abide in Christ" until we have first gotten "into Christ", which we do when we become Christians through conversion (faith, repentance, and confession that culminate in baptism--Gal. 3:27). Incense in the Old Testament is taken to be a type of prayer in the New. Only priests were allowed to burn incense on the altar of incense (II Chron. 26:16-18), and it was situated in the holy place into which only priests could enter. Let us not be guilty of taking the altar of incense from the holy place (typical of the church) and relocating it out in the outer court (typical of the world).

Living in sin nullifies God's promise to answer prayer: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18); "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2); "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:15). It is "if our heart condemn us not" that we have "confidence toward God" so that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:21,22). Peter wrote how wives are to treat their husbands and how husbands are to treat their wives-- "so that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet. 3:7).

Another condition of answered prayer is that we are not asking God to do something contrary to His will: "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14). Paul said that three times he had asked God to remove the thorn from his flesh, but he didn't ask that after he learned it was not God's will to do so but rather to give him grace to bear it (II Cor. 12:7-9). Naturally we should not expect God to do something contrary to His will.

In praying we must also go to God in Jesus'

name if we expect our prayers to be answered: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do...If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13,14); "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16). The same is said in John 16:23. This reflects the fact that of ourselves we have no merit with God, but Jesus is our Saviour, and we are His. Having claimed Him before men, He will claim us before the Father (Matt. 10:32). Jesus is the mediator between us and God (I Tim. 2:5). He is the way, the truth, and the life, and nobody can go to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). This is why we pray in Jesus' name.

God will forgive our sins against Him when we ask, provided we have been forgiving people's trespasses against us: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:12,14,15). So Jesus taught, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25). God holds the precious gift of forgiveness in His hands, but it will not be ours if we lack the forgiving spirit ourselves.

To be heard of God and answered we must really desire that for which we ask: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). If something doesn't really matter to you, then don't bother God with it. Pray about the things you really desire to see come to pass. This is what Paul prayed for: "Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

If we really desire something, it will show up in the fervency with which we ask for it, which is another condition of answered prayer: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16). Didn't Jesus pray fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44)? Jesus offered up prayers with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7). Epaphras of Colosse was with Paul at Rome, and when Paul wrote the Colossians, he said Epaphras was "always laboring fervently for you in prayers" (Col. 4:12). Notice he prayed "fervently", and he LABORED in prayer. It was important--He worked at prayers. The

Greek word for "laboring" is "agonidzo" from which "agonize" comes. As humans we regard urgent appeals for help much more than formal appeals and so does God.

Some things are not going to be answered immediately. God has many things to keep in mind when answering prayers. Some circumstances have to develop before the answer will come about. So persistence in prayer is another condition for the answer to some prayers: "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" (Luke 18:7); We "ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). In the parable a man kept knocking until the three loaves of bread he sought were given him (Luke 11:5-8), so Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (v. 9)--persistence in prayer. When the angel told Zacharias that his prayers for a son were about to be answered, they were likely prayers that had been prayed when he and his wife Elizabeth were much younger.

Humility before God is another important condition. Do you remember the parable of the two men who went up to the temple to pray--one a proud Pharisee and the other a humble publican (Luke 18:9-13)? Jesus said the humble publican went to his house justified rather than the proud Pharisee, "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (v. 14). This explains why people in Bible times (like Daniel in Dan. 6:10 and Paul and others in Acts 21:5) at times knelt before God in prayer.

It is true we sometimes have not because we ask not, but we can ask and still not receive if we ask with the wrong motive. Jas. 4:3 brings this out: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." God may not bless you with a better job if you are going to squander the larger income on yourself. He may not help you preach better or sing better if you are doing it for your own aggrandizement. He will be no party to our sinfulness.

And let us not forget to express thanks for what God has already given us when we come to ask Him for additional blessings. Phil. 4:6 says, "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto

God." Notice how closely connected thanksgiving is with prayer: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2); "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:17,18). If we are not thankful, we are like spoiled children who "get" and "get" but never "give" thanksgiving. God is not going to spoil His children--He will wisely cut off the special blessings until we recognize the Source from which all blessings flow.

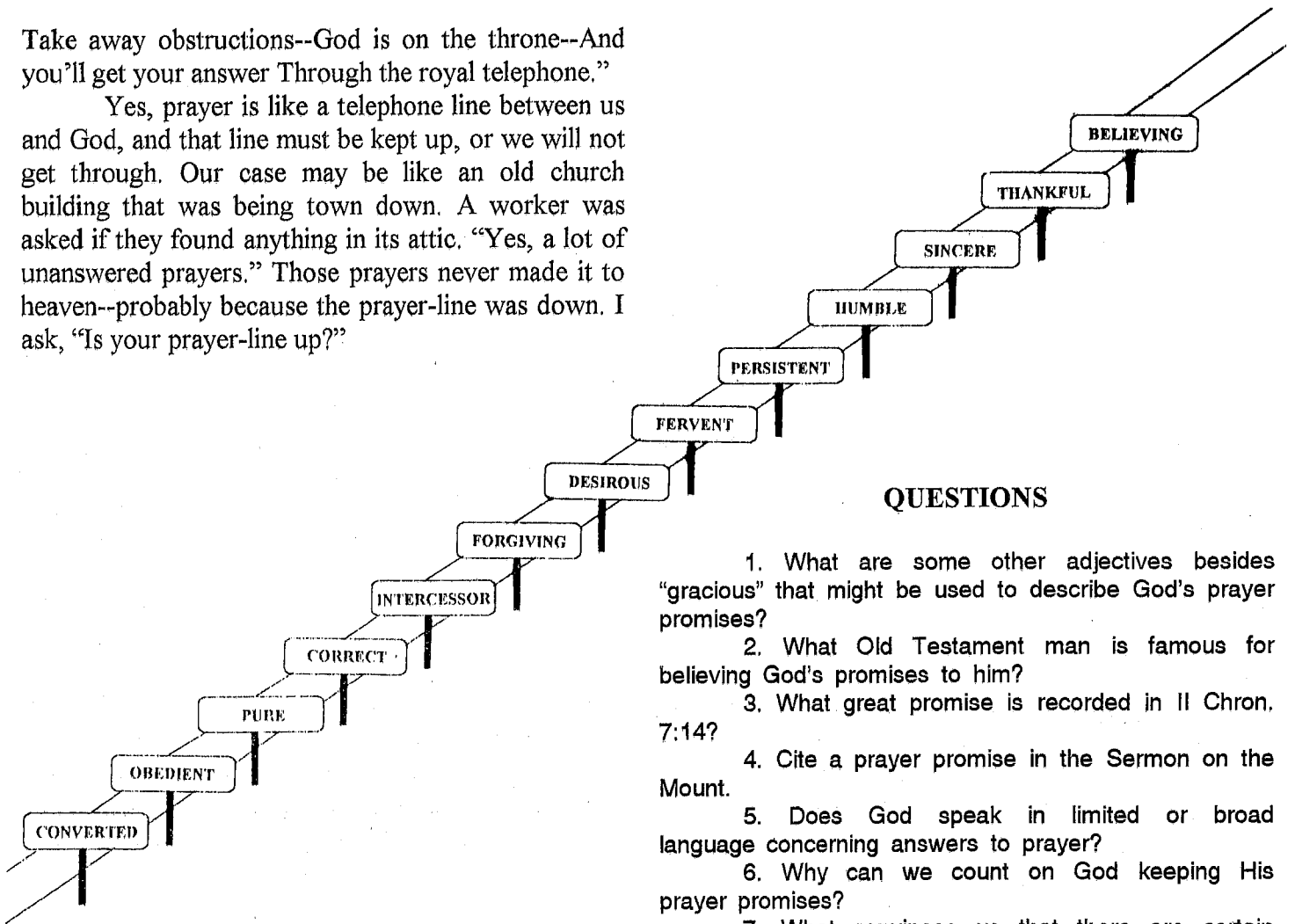
Finally in this particular study, and probably the most emphasized condition of answered prayer, is faith. Heb. 11 shows how much faith really pleases God. It is faith in HIM, faith in His POWER to do what we ask, faith in His WILLINGNESS to help us, and faith in His TRUTHFULNESS since He has promised. Listen to these verses: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24); "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (Jas. 1:5-7). When two blind men wanted Jesus to heal them, He questioned them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" When they said, "Yea, Lord," He said, "According to your faith be it unto you." They must have indeed believed, for "their eyes were opened" (Matt. 9:27-30).

God had promised Israel the land of Canaan. When they did not believe, they so displeased God that He made an oath that they would not enter that land (Heb. 3:18,19). A lack of faith, then, is a lot more serious than most of us think. Why is God so against unbelief? Because it questions HIM, His TRUTHFULNESS, His POWER.

In our songbooks of yesteryear there was a song that compared talking to God in prayer with talking on a telephone. It said, "Central's never 'busy', Always on the line; You may hear from heaven Almost any time. 'Tis a royal service Free for one and all; When you get in trouble Give this royal line a call...Fail to get your answer? Satan's crossed your wire By some strong delusion Or some base desire;

Take away obstructions--God is on the throne--And you'll get your answer Through the royal telephone."

Yes, prayer is like a telephone line between us and God, and that line must be kept up, or we will not get through. Our case may be like an old church building that was being town down. A worker was asked if they found anything in its attic. "Yes, a lot of unanswered prayers." Those prayers never made it to heaven--probably because the prayer-line was down. I ask, "Is your prayer-line up?"



## QUESTIONS

1. What are some other adjectives besides "gracious" that might be used to describe God's prayer promises?
2. What Old Testament man is famous for believing God's promises to him?
3. What great promise is recorded in II Chron. 7:14?
4. Cite a prayer promise in the Sermon on the Mount.
5. Does God speak in limited or broad language concerning answers to prayer?
6. Why can we count on God keeping His prayer promises?
7. What convinces us that there are certain conditions to God's answering prayers?
8. Of the 13 conditions portrayed on the drawing and discussed in the material, list 8 of them.

# The Biblical Scope of Prayer

Years ago I heard two different preachers tell of their prayer sermon outlines from two well known verses. The first was from Jas. 5:16: (1) The effectual, fervent prayer (not just any prayer) (2) of a righteous man (not just any man) (3) availeth much (prayer won't do everything). The other preacher's outline was from Phil. 4:6 that says, "Be fearful ('anxious' ASV) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." He said, (1) Be anxious for nothing, (2) be prayerful for everything, and (3) be thankful for anything. Not bad!

The "everything" of Phil. 4:6 surely makes prayer a wide open field for our requests--there is much that can and should be prayed for. And it goes along with the "whatsoever" in both Mark 11:24 ("What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them") and I John 3:22 ("Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him"). This study from the Scriptures will show that we are too restrictive in our prayers.

Let us notice for whom and for what we are to pray.

## 1. For Both Ourselves and Others.

Let your petitions be both for yourself and for others. Paul prayed about his own thorn in the flesh (II Cor. 12:8), but he also prayed for the Ephesian church (Eph. 1:16). Jesus prayed about the burdens upon His own heart (Luke 22:42), but He also prayed for Peter (Luke 22:32). He not only prayed for Peter in the matter, but He urged Peter to pray for himself (Matt. 26:40,41). Peter commanded Simon to pray for his forgiveness (Acts 8:22), but Simon desired that Peter would also pray for him (Acts 8:24). Paul prayed for the Thessalonian church (I Thess. 1:2), and he asked them to pray for him (II Thess. 3:2).

Nobody knows your needs as you do; therefore, you can do the best job of anybody praying for your own needs. In fact, if you don't pray for yourself, there will be some needs of your life that will never get prayed for. Do not neglect, therefore, to

pray for yourself. Pray for the wisdom you need, the courage, the health, the overcoming power, the ability, the safety, the guidance of the Lord, and the many other things you realize you need for your day-by-day living and for various problems and projects of your own. Appreciate the prayers of others for you, but do not depend wholly on them. Pray for yourself.

But don't forget to pray for others. They need your prayers. You need to think of others' needs as well as your own. Such praying is called "intercessions" in the Bible (I Tim. 2:1). If you pray for others as well as yourself, you will indeed have plenty to pray for. Prayer in no way is to be selfish on our part. At the throne of grace we should "do for others as we would have them do for us"--we should pray for them.

We have frequent guests in our home. During a preaching rally several years ago when we had many different people in our home, many of them asked God's blessing on us, and I will never forget what a wonderful season of blessings those prayers ushered in for us! Yes, we should pray for others also.

## 2. For Individuals and Groups.

Pray for individuals ("Simon...I have prayed for thee," Luke 22:31,32), and pray for groups ("The men which thou gavest me out of the world...I pray for them," John 17:6,9). There are needs of an individual nature, and there are needs of a group nature. Thus, pray for the individuals in the congregation where you attend, but don't fail to pray for the congregation as a unit--its spirituality, its doctrinal loyalty, its evangelistic outreach, its unity, and its faithfulness.

## 3. For Spiritual and Material Matters.

Be assured that God is pleased to hear your petitions concerning both spiritual and material things. We should pray much concerning the matters that pertain to the kingdom of God, the souls of men, and the spiritual side of life. God is God over the spiritual

realm of things, and we should make many petitions to Him concerning the spiritual. When Jesus said, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36), He was teaching us to pray about spiritual things. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Why should we? Our spirit may be willing to do God's will, but our flesh may be weak--weaker than it ought to be (see Matt. 26:41). Paul mentions this fact about himself (see Rom. 7:18,19). So many times people seem to pray more about physical matters than they do spiritual. "Lord, give people a safe trip to the rally" may be heard much more than "Lord, help each of us to receive something good for our souls".

But prayer is also about material things. Zech. 10:1 says, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." God is God of our whole person (physical as well as spiritual), and He is willing to hear prayer about anything that concerns any part of us. Deliverance from prison, ability to conceive children, and many other matters found in Bible prayers were material in nature. Food is important. We are to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). God wants to bless us with our earthly necessities. If we seek His kingdom and its righteousness, He will see that our earthly needs are cared for (Matt. 6:33). If you are out of a job, ask God to lead you to one. Do you think Lot prayed when he selfishly chose the well watered plain of the Jordan? I'm afraid not, and look how he ended up as a result. Ask God to prosper your business and then don't forget to be an even greater giver to Him and to others as a result.

We can also pray about matters of physical health. In the latter years of his reign, King Asa of Judah was diseased in his feet, and the Bible reports that in his disease he did not seek the Lord--only human physicians (II Chron. 16:12). It is not wrong for the sick to consult a physician, for Jesus said the sick need such (Matt. 9:12), but we should not seek a physician instead of the Lord. III John 2 is an example of praying about physical matters: "I wish ('pray' ASV) above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Health is so

important and sickness so hindering. Pray for good health for yourself and for others.

We can also pray about decisions that need to be made: "If any of you lack wisdom" (and who doesn't from time to time?), let him ask of God," Jas. 1:5 says. Isn't that what young King Solomon did? "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore...And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom" (I Kings 4:29,34). What a Source to turn to when we don't know what to do or how to do it or when to do it or even whether to do it! Don't hesitate to ask God's leadership in your decisions concerning the person to marry, the vocation to choose, the house to purchase, and a multitude of other decisions.

#### 4. For Needs and Wants.

We should make our petitions for both our needs and our wants. That we can and should pray to God for our needs is evident to anyone knowing anything at all about the Bible and prayer. But one thing many do not understand is that God is also pleased for His children to bring their desires to Him in prayer. He wants them to have no desires they would be ashamed to bring to Him, and He is glad to show His love for His children by hearing their desires. Notice these passages that show we should take our desires ("our wants and wishes," the song says) to God in prayer: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1); "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). Learn to express your desires to God. This will help you have only righteous desires. This will prove your trust in the love of God for your righteous wishes. This will bring many blessings into your life. This will make prayer very natural to you. Too many people are saying petitions for things which they have no real desire for when all the while they may have hearts full of righteous desires but have never thought to pray to God about them.

## 5. For Little Things and Big Things.

A well known song says to take “everything” to God in prayer, and Phil. 4:6 says precisely the same thing; “In every thing by prayer and supplication...let your requests be made known unto God.” If we pray about “everything”, we will pray to God about the little things of life, and we will pray about the big things too. We will not think the little things are too insignificant, for many things we think to be little have bigger involvements than we realize. Nor will we hesitate to pray to God about big matters as if God were unable to do anything about them. You will have big matters of life come your way. Be glad you can pray to God about them. He is able to do great things. Bible characters prayed big prayers, and they received big answers. It has been said that between the big things we think God will not give and the little things we don't need to bother Him with, the trouble is we don't pray about much of anything.

## 6. For Rulers and National Peace.

We are to pray for kings and for all who are in authority (I Tim. 2:1-3). God's Old Testament people were taught to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psa. 122:6). Years later when they found themselves in Babylon where they were going to live many years, Jeremiah told them to pray for the peace of Babylon, “for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer. 29:7). Yes, we need to pray for those who are governmentally over us. If things go on in our land that shouldn't and we have prayed about them, we really have no right to do much complaining about them, do we?

## 7. About Problems--Ours and Others'.

King Herod had killed the apostle James (Acts 12:1,2) and intended to do the same to Peter (v. 3). While Peter was kept in prison, “prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5). In fact on the night before Herod was going to kill him, “many were gathered together praying” in the house of Mary, Mark's mother (Acts 12:12). Oh, how King Hezekiah prayed when the powerful Sennacherib and his Assyrian army were

threatening his Jerusalem (II Kings 19:14-18). He prayed, “Save thou us out of his hand” (v. 19), and He did (v. 35,36).

We are to cast all our care upon the Lord, for He cares for us (I Pet. 5:7). This is why we can be free from anxiety as set forth in Phil. 4:6. As a child at church I can remember the older people singing, “God will take care of you, Through ev'ry day, O'er all the way,” so “be not dismayed whate'er betide.” And He will. God will make a “tunnel” out of a “cave”, showing us light at its other end and leading us forth to it. But we must pray.

## 8. For Forgiveness--Ours and Others'.

Do we really have any need greater than this? In the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, we have this petition: “Forgive us our debts” (Matt. 6:12). When Simon of Samaria tried to purchase the gift of God with money, he was told, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22). The pleading prayer in Psa. 51 is taken to be David's after his sin with Bathsheba. Oh, how he did pray for forgiveness: “Have mercy upon me, O God...blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin...Purge me with hyssop...Wash me...Make me to hear joy and gladness...Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities...Deliver me from bloodguiltiness” (vs. 1-14). You and I may not have taken another man's wife and had him killed in an attempt to cover our sin, but we all have sins that God only can forgive. Here is a fact: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8), and here is the good news: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9). Let us try more to understand our unworthiness before God and really realize how important it is that we have His merciful forgiveness. Here is another blessing for which we are to ask:

We should also pray for the forgiveness of others. Paul prayed that God would forgive those who should have stood with him when he was on trial but didn't (II Tim. 4:16).

“What is thy petition?” There are so many



things to pray about as you can see. If you would receive, be sure to ask. God has promised to answer prayers, but He does not answer prayers that are not prayed nor grant petitions that are not made to Him any more than we answer letters that are never written to us.

## QUESTIONS

1. Cite 2 Biblical examples of people praying for themselves.
2. Cite 2 Biblical examples of people praying for somebody besides themselves.
3. What is an argument for praying for yourself?
4. What is praying for others called?

5. Give a Biblical example of praying for something spiritual.
6. Show from the Bible it is all right to pray for material blessings.
7. Who in the Bible was blessed with wisdom because he asked for it?
8. Show from the Bible that we may pray for wants as well as needs.
9. What keeps some people from praying for big things?
10. What keeps some people from praying for little things?
11. Which will help our governmental situation more, praying or complaining?
12. Show a Biblical example of praying about a serious problem.
13. Show a Biblical example of praying for forgiveness.

# How Should We Pray?

Is prayer formal or informal? Should it be simple or elaborate? Should it be direct or the long way to the point? Should it be general or specific? We shall consider these questions.

## 1. Formal or Informal?

There are two figures of speech that come to mind with reference to whether prayer should be formal or informal: that of coming before God's throne (Heb. 4:16) and that of a child asking his father for earthly desires (Matt. 7:7-9). When one comes before the throne of a king, he does not do so without forethought and propriety. To have come before a king in Bible times in a haphazard manner would have been unthinkable. Also, the priest serving in the tabernacle in all of his duties (including burning incense--the type of prayer) exercised due formality in doing so. And so we too as we come before God need to realize we are coming before the great, almighty, eternal, majestic God of Heaven, and only those who are thoughtless or irreverent would think it acceptable to God to come before Him without proper and befitting dignity. Do not frown on proper formality in prayer. Just be free from empty formality. On the

other hand, don't forget the child asking his father for bread. He may not know big words, and he may not approach his father as other people do, but he knows what he needs and knows his father loves him, so he goes to His father in a plain, informal way concerning his needs. And so does the humble child of God in prayer. When we do not know how to word our thoughts, we don't have to worry about it--God will understand, and He wants us to pray. So we may say there are both formal and informal sides to prayer, but in both instances there is an earnestness and a sincerity. The formal aspect emphasizes the respect due God and the informal the love we share with Him.

## 2. Simple or Elaborate?

Next, should prayer be simple or elaborate? The prayer Jesus taught His disciples was very simple (Matt. 6:6-13). It is short and is composed of common words. Many prayers in the Bible were of the simple sort, and we would likely do well to make most of ours the same way. However, we need to be on guard against simplicity getting us into a rut, for such prayers can be said without much freshness of thought and can degenerate into unintentioned disrespect. But

the Bible does contain the elaborate prayers also--there are many notable examples; David's prayer in I Chron. 29:10-19; Solomon's in I Kings 8:23-53; Daniel's in Dan. 9:3-19; Ezra's in Ezra 9:5-15; and Jesus' in John 17. Study each of these prayers, and you will be able to criticize your own prayers in places. Simplicity in prayer likely fits the figure of a child asking his father for earthly needs while the elaborate seems to fit the figure of approaching the throne of a king.

### 3. Direct or Indirect?

Should prayer be direct or the long way to the point? Usually the elaborate prayers (see the above references) were not directly to the point. Time seemed to be no factor in them. Words were easy to come by. There was much to say in getting to the point. Jesus' all-night prayers must have had fulness of thought and expression. Yet in the Bible we also have some of the most direct, to the point prayers--such as: "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (II Sam. 15:31); "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee" (Num. 12:13); "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes" (Judg. 16:28); "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (II Kings 6:17); "Lord save us: we perish" (Matt. 8:25); "Lord, save me" (Matt. 14:30); "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). In most of these instances it is evident why the individual came directly to the point--such as when Peter was beginning to sink, such as the sinful man who could not think of anything before God but his own sinfulness, etc.

### 4. General or Specific?

Some pray, "Lord, bless the sick everywhere," and yet not pray specifically for the sick ones whom they know. Or, "Lord, bless all your preachers everywhere," but not pray for the ones whom they know. Probably the most general of all prayers prayed is, "Lord, bless all those for whom it is our duty to pray." You have heard this prayed, haven't you?

Well, there are general petitions like the one in Matt. 6:10: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in

heaven," and like Jesus' petition in John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these (the apostles--D.H.) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." But some pray only in generalities--covering a lot of ground but landing nowhere. Two blind men at Jericho cried out as they heard that Jesus was passing by, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David" (Matt. 20:30). Jesus stopped and asked them, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" (v. 32). And when they got out of the general ("Have mercy on us") and into the specific ("That our eyes may be opened"--v. 33), Jesus immediately responded (v. 34).

We wouldn't go into a restaurant, and when asked what we wanted, say, "Food." On the witness stand when asked, "What did the man do?" We wouldn't say, "He did something bad." When ordering from a mail order catalog, we wouldn't say, "Send me some merchandise." No, in all these things we would be specific because we can be, and we are expected to be. The same is true in prayer.

If we ask for specific things, then when they come to pass, we will know they are answers to prayer, and we will thank God for them. If we pray only in generalities, we will never know when or if the prayer was answered. And yet there are some things so beyond us that we must not altogether abandon some praying in the general. Pray about world conditions. Pray about the corrupting influences at work in our world. Pray for the stand of the church. Pray for evangelism at home and abroad. Wouldn't you like God to answer prayers beyond your ability to know or to specify what or where? So while we are to pray in the specific, there is still a place to pray in the general.

This lesson in prayer has shown it is not so much an either/or matter but a both/and matter--at times one way is in order and at other times the other way fits better. The main thing is to be on praying ground and praying terms with God, to see the many needs that only God can supply, to go to God with proper respect for Him, to go with the utmost sincerity, to be earnest and persistent in one's petition, to be thankful for all He has already given in answer to former prayers and out of plain providence over our lives beyond what we have even asked, to go regularly as did Daniel and yet to go to Him in between times as

needs arise, and to be willing to accept God's answer to our needs and our prayers. This is prayer indeed, prayer that pleases God, prayer that blesses the soul, prayer that gets divine results.

Aren't you impressed that whatever you as a Christian are interested in, so is God? He wants to hear you ask. He wants to bless you by answering your prayers. He wants you to thank Him for the answers He sends. Such a life of prayer will help bring us closer to Him and will secure for us blessings that will come in no other way. "Oh, what peace we often forfeit; Oh, what needless pain we bear!" Why? "All because we do not carry, EVERYTHING to God in prayer." Yes, everything--the big and the little, the spiritual and the material, for ourselves and for others, and for the general and the specific. May God help us see the wide scope of Biblical praying, and may He help us sense the need to change our prayer habits to fit a greater life of prayer as set forth in the Bible!

## QUESTIONS

1. What shows that prayers should be prayed with proper dignity?
2. What shows that sometimes prayer may be more informal?
3. Show an example of simplicity in a Biblical prayer.
4. Show an example of an elaborate prayer in the Bible.
5. Show 2 Biblical examples of prayers to-the-point.
6. How do we know that other prayers were sometimes more wordy?
7. Give a Biblical example of praying in a generality.
8. Give a Biblical example of praying specifically.

# The Ministry of Intercessory Prayer

Timothy had many instructions from Paul for teaching the saints in many places. In I Tim. 2:1 Paul wrote, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." "Intercessions" means going to God in behalf of others. If we pray for others as the Bible teaches us to do, we will have much to pray about, as we shall see.

## 1. There are Many People to Pray For.

First of all, we should pray for lost people. Paul did. He wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). When we add this field to our praying, don't we have a lot to pray for? All of us have numerous friends, neighbors, relatives, work associates, new acquaintances, and backsliders whom we know. All of these need Christ. All need salvation. All need to know God. What can we do besides talk

to them? Besides preach to them? We can pray for them, and we need to. Since great things come to pass in answer to prayer, we can be sure that something will take place that will open the door to some of them. Pray, and you will see.

Then there are fellow-saints to pray for. Listen to Eph. 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." "For all saints!" That encompasses a lot of people. There are the local saints with whom we gather for public worship. How often do you pray for each of them by families and by individuals? Then there are saints elsewhere whom you know; saints in neighboring towns, saints who have moved elsewhere, saints whom you have met at rallies, saints we have met in traveling, etc. And you may have some relatives who are Christians. Some of the saints are young people, and you know they need our prayers, growing up in this age. Some are older people nearing the end of the

way. They need our prayers for finishing their courses. Then there are middle-age adults who have the responsibility of their families and the church. Let us pray for them.

In the opening verses of Paul's epistles he has taught us to pray for congregations elsewhere. He wrote the Colossian church, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (Col. 1:3). To the church at Thessalonica, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" (I Thess. 1:2). And to the church at Philippi, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Phil. 1:3,4). Besides your home congregation, how about other congregations of the Lord's people in your area? Have you been praying for other congregations in your state? in other states? in other parts of the world? It is wonderful to know of works elsewhere. We should thank God for them, and we should pray for their spiritual welfare, for them to maintain their stand for Christ, that souls will be added there, and that the work will go forward.

How about praying for the preachers you know? Those who preach to you and those who preach elsewhere? As great a Christian and as great a preacher as Paul was, he sought the prayers of God's people. Listen: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith" (II Thess. 3:1,2); "Withal praying also for us, that God would open a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Col. 4:3,4); pray "for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19,20). Preachers are human. They live in the same world you do. They face the same temptations. Some would be better Christians if you prayed for them. Some would have more courage to preach the Word with needed boldness and strength. All of them could do a greater work with more prayers prayed for them. When you have known of some preacher who gave up the

ministry, did you even stop to consider whether you had really ever prayed for him?

And don't you remember that Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37,38)? The same is true today. Oh, the need for more laborers! How can this situation be remedied? Prayer will help. Pray for laborers in general to be multiplied, and then if you know somebody who ought to be making a decision in this way, pray for that one in particular.

Do you pray for your loved ones as you should? Listen to what it says about Job and his children: "His sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually" (Job 1:4,5). What an example of concern for his children! And shouldn't we have that same concern for each of our loved ones--our parents, our brothers and our sisters, our children, our grandparents, our aunts and our uncles, and our cousins? Don't leave your loved ones out of your prayers!

I Tim. 2:2 says we should also pray for rulers and those who are in governmental authority. Frankly it is more common to hear complaining about rulers than prayers for them. Complaining doesn't do much good, and it has no Biblical promise connected with it, but prayer will do good, and it does have a Biblical promise. God is greater than rulers (ask Nebuchadnezzar), and He has overpowered them at times. Let us pray, then, more often for those charged with governing our land.

Most instances of praying for others is likely for friends and loved ones, but we must also be pleased to pray for those who have wronged or harmed us. You will remember that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount even to pray for one's enemies (Matt. 5:43,44). Some say, "I'm praying for them all right; I'm praying they will repent." Well, that is good, but that is not in the context of Jesus' Sermon on the

Mount material. Listen to it: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Have you prayed this way for them? This is the way Jesus prayed on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). And Stephen concerning those stoning him: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). The Holy Spirit dwelling within the heart of the Christian will help him pray this kind of prayer from his heart. The natural man would not thus pray. Do you find it within your heart to pray sincerely for your enemies? If so, you are a maturing Christian.

## 2. Reflections on Intercessory Prayer.

The above is quite an array of individuals for whom we are to pray. Obviously we do not spend enough time in prayer. We probably don't pray for all of whom we should pray, and we probably don't pray often enough for them. What do you think?

We are taught to pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17) and to continue in prayer (Col. 4:2). On one occasion Jesus prayed all night (Luke 6:12). After feeding the 5,000 He spent about three-fourths of the night in prayer (Matt. 14:23-25). Daniel's prayer life included three sessions daily (Dan. 6:10). And the apostles spent enough time in prayer along with their preaching that to minister to the neglected widows in the daily ministrations would have robbed them of needed prayer and preaching time. They said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:3,4). A full ministry of intercessory praying will help us fulfill a life of prayer such as we have been studying about in the Bible.

Are you aware that Jesus Himself makes intercession for us? Heb. 7:25 says, "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us. When we sin, I John 2:1 says He is our Advocate with the Father. He pleads our case before God. Say, do you want Jesus to quit interceding for you? Do you want Him to neglect interceding? Do you want Him to forget to intercede? Then we should not quit praying for others. We

should not neglect it. We should not forget to intercede for people.

Intercessory praying keeps us from being concerned only with ourselves. A Christian is unselfish. Phil. 2:4 says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." The NIV gives for that verse, "Look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." This we do when we not only pray for ourselves but for others. Here is something we can do for others, others near us and other away from us, for people we know and even for those we don't know.

Truly intercessory praying is a manifestation of our love for other people, and it is a manifestation of our faith in God's promises to answer prayer.

Our title speaks of intercessory praying as a "ministry". It is. It is something we should do regularly and responsibly. Surely such praying will develop a real prayer life in us--something some have never had, something that will take time and thought, but time and thought spent with God. Will you start doing such today and continue thereafter as long as you live, adding more and more people to your "prayer list" as time rolls on? Your life will be enriched--and so will theirs!

## QUESTIONS

1. What does "intercession" mean?
2. What apostle prayed for the salvation of his nation?
3. For what saints should each of us pray?
4. For what congregations should each of us pray?
5. Show that we should pray for preachers.
6. Show that we should pray for more laborers to be raised up.
7. Who was concerned about his children every day?
8. Cite an example of praying for one's enemies.
9. In what way will intercessory prayer help us fulfill a prayer life?
10. What does intercessory praying manifest?

# Living the Rewarding Life of Prayer

Prayer--like many other things--is based on certain decisions. In order to live the life of prayer we must make certain right decisions. Be sure you answer the following questions correctly.

Is prayer for New Testament days as well as Old Testament?

Is prayer for us today as well as for people in Bible days?

Is prayer essential to a Christian life, or is it optional?

Has God made definite prayer promises?

Is God able to fulfill the prayer promises He has made?

Will He keep His prayer promises?

Has God specified the conditions on which He will answer one's prayers?

Do you plan to continue to pray as you have been doing, or do you plan to improve?

If you plan to improve, do you know at this time just how you are going to make that improvement?

In order to improve, will you draw up some helpful plan of improvement, or will you just do a better job of praying spasmodically as you have been?

Proper answers to the above will go far in helping you to a greater life of prayer.

## 1. Arguments for Drawing up Some Plan or Prayer Schedule.

You have a work schedule whether you work for yourself or for somebody else.

You also have a schedule for church attendance.

You know how frequently you are to partake of the Lord's supper.

You have a schedule or plan for eating.

You also have a time for sleeping.

If you don't have plans for the above, you will have no job, you will be off-and-on in your church attendance, the Lord's supper really won't matter to

you, etc. Don't say you don't eat, and you don't sleep. We know you do. If you don't, you won't be around very long.

Having the above plans doesn't mean that occasionally you don't miss a day of work. Sickness may keep you from a church service. You may occasionally miss a meal, and some night you may not get to sleep your usual number of hours. But when the above happens, you don't junk your plans. No! Rather you go ahead with them with an occasional irregularity. The same would be true with your prayer plans and schedule.

What can be Biblically said for a prayer schedule? What about the busy government worker Daniel? Even after prayer was legally condemned for a month, Dan. 6:10 says, "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." When were those three times each day? Probably morning, noon, and night. Next we note a similar plan by the Psalmist in Psa. 55:17: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice."

The prayer life of the early church was such that Acts 2:42 says, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in PRAYERS." How much did the apostles pray? So much that they could not add caring for the Grecian widows material needs. They would have had to neglect prayer as well as teaching to have done so. Listen: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4).

What, then, did the apostles expect out of the members by way of prayer when they wrote, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17); and "Continue in

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

Surely, then, there is a need for each of us to have some plan or schedule in our prayer lives.

## **2. There Must be Some Time Set Aside for Prayer, or There Won't be Much Prayer.**

We have a time to eat, to sleep, to go to work, to attend church, etc. Why shouldn't we also have a time to pray?

You may say, “We always pray before eating.” That's fine, but is that all the praying you do? While such prayers are meaningful, they are usually short and do not include all the categories of prayer that we Biblically considered in the preceding study.

Yes, pray at mealtimes but also pray with your family. Fathers are taught to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Why not have a time for getting the Bible out and read and teach it to the family and then pray? Find a daily time for this--preferably in the morning before the family members go their separate ways for the day. If morning doesn't work out for you and your family, then have it some other time in your day. But don't neglect to pray also when it is just you and God--private prayer. Also have some time for this. And, of course, you will want to pray before you go to bed for the night--thanking the Lord for the blessings of the day and praying for His care while you sleep.

Then at any time during the day you might find yourself praying as things come to your mind or attention to pray about--as you walk or drive or do other things alone.

What we are saying here is seen in the song we all sing, “Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord.” “Take time to be holy, the world rushes on; Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.” If we don't take this time, we won't do much praying, we won't spend much time with God, and we won't pray for many of the things and people we ought to be praying for.

## **3. Two Things You will Need to Do.**

After you have decided just when would be

your best daily prayer times, here are two things you need to do.

1. Get a notebook and on separate sheets in it draw up different groups of people whom you know for whom you should pray. Of course, there will be your family members (parents, brothers, sisters, mate, children, and your married children's family members). Then have a sheet for each of the following groups: the sick, the terminally ill, the shut-ins, those who have recently lost loved ones, church activities now in progress or soon to be, your relatives, your mate's relatives, preachers, those preparing to be preachers, training programs, publishing efforts, overseas workers, neighbors, prospects, backsliders, widows, widowers, aged couples, sectarian acquaintances, local members, area congregations, congregations elsewhere, isolated members, enemies, rulers, world conditions, church conditions, and maybe others--the groups in your life. As you compile the names under each category, I am sure you will observe this fact: “Most of these I have not been praying for, and some of them I have never prayed for.” This is why such a notebook can prompt you to pray for more people and more cases.

2. If you have two prayer sessions daily (if this best fits your day), then I would suggest that in the morning you pray for the following: yourself, your family members, your activities for the day, any meetings or rallies or church activities in session, those who have recently lost loved ones, and those who are sick. Then for your other session that day select one or more groups from your notebook and pray for those in those groups.

Be sure to revise your listings from time to time as new people enter your life, as people themselves move into a group (like a woman becoming a widow over the loss of her husband), and as individuals pass away. Keep your notebook up to date.

I do think the above suggestions will make your prayer life a more rewarding experience, more people will be blessed because you have prayed for them, and you will probably be spending more time with God in prayer.

Years ago a preacher said in a sermon that two woodsmen were eating breakfast together. They had a big day of wood chopping before them. After

breakfast the one took time to sharpen his ax. The other said he didn't have time to sharpen his--he had to get going. At the end of the day, guess which had chopped the most wood. No, we do not lose time nor accomplishment by praying. Rather we gain and do much better. Prayer, then, is like taking time to sharpen your ax!

Won't you make some important decisions now about your future prayer life--decisions you ought to make, decisions that will help you do a better job of praying, decisions that God will be pleased with, decisions that will bless you with a better spiritual life and a greater spiritual accomplishment? God will help you, and you will be glad you did.

## QUESTIONS

1. What are some questions you must answer properly if you are going to have a good prayer life?
2. What are some logical arguments for drawing up some plan or prayer schedule?
3. What can be said Biblically for having a prayer plan?
4. What are some categories of prayer that you should have?
5. In time should you pray for all the categories and the people in them?
6. How was sharpening one's ax before beginning a day of wood chopping compared to taking some time for prayer before beginning each day of life?

# The Tragedy and Some Causes of Prayer Failure

The title suggests that there are prayer failures among God's people. With most Christians there is some prayer failure and in many cases a lot. Even the Bible indicates this.

When Paul was showing the universality of sin in Rom. 3, he included, "There is none that seeketh after God" (v. 11). Consider this statement in the light of Paul's other statements in that section: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (v. 10). What does that mean in this setting? There is none ABSOLUTELY righteous. Again, "There is none that understandeth" (v. 11). None of us understands AS WE OUGHT. "There is none that seeketh after God" (v. 11). None of us really seeks after God AS WE OUGHT. For sure all the above statements are true as regards the unconverted, but aren't they also true of us who are Christians? None of us is absolutely righteous; none of us understands as we ought, and none of us really seeks after God as we should. What a shame, but it is the truth. In Isaiah's day he lamented as follows: "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee" (Isa. 64:7). And to

some extent the same is still true today. Didn't Jesus have to teach His disciples to pray (Luke 11:1-13) even though they were Jews with their Old Testament that taught them to pray? This is why we are having this concentrated study on prayer--so we can do better in our prayer lives.

## 1. The Tragedy of Prayer Failure.

For one thing, we cheat ourselves out of many blessings that we could otherwise have. Jas. 4:2 says, "Ye have not because ye ask not." Preceding that statement James shows that people desire things and go to great lengths to obtain them, but he frankly says there are some things we will not obtain through human strivings--they must be asked for! When will we ever learn this? "Oh what peace we often forfeit! Oh what needless pain we bear!" Why? "All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer."

Hasn't the truth of Jas. 4:2 and the words of the above song ever come home to you at some time? There are things you wanted and worked for, and yet



they didn't come--because you did not pray for them. That's what the Bible says! When we stop to think about it, no doubt we have all robbed ourselves of many great and wonderful and needed things simply because we have not really made them matters of earnest, seeking prayer.

We can't bring back lost blessings and lost opportunities of the past--they are gone forever--but we can make an important change in the matter of prayer so we do not continue such losses. Let me illustrate. In a remote part of your basement you happen onto a faucet that is running a small stream of water because it won't completely shut off. Obviously you have been paying a higher water bill because of this faulty faucet. You can't help what has already happened, but you can get it fixed so you won't continue to pay an inflated water bill. Shouldn't we do the same about blessings we have been losing through prayer failure?

But we also sin against others when we fail to pray for them. They don't receive what they would if we prayed for them as we should. Think of the lost people you have not been praying for, the Christians you haven't, the congregations you haven't, the preachers you haven't, and others you haven't. God has made promises to answer our prayers for them. But if we haven't been praying for them, they haven't been receiving the blessings they would because we have not asked for them.

If we don't realize that prayerlessness for others is actually a sin, let us consider the language in I Sam. 12. In that chapter Samuel pointed out the people's sin in asking for a king. He said to the people, "Is it not wheat harvest today? (Palestine gets no rain during wheat harvest--D.H.) I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king" (v. 17). That chapter goes on to say, "So Samuel called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king" (v. 18,19). Now hear Samuel's exact words in v. 23: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for

you."

In failing to spend enough time in prayer, we also rob God of praise that rightfully belongs to Him, of fellowship-time with Him, and of His getting to do things for us that He would delight to do. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name" (Psa. 29:2). We do this when we pray. "In all thy ways acknowledge him" (Prov. 3:6). Prayer is an acknowledgement of God. John 4:23 says God seeks us to worship Him. When we don't pray, we don't worship Him. "The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8). So in our prayer failures, we actually rob our good Father of the time and acknowledgement and glory that are due to Him.

## 2. Some Common Causes of Prayer Failure.

Full schedules and not including prayer time in them leave many without much of a prayer life. Though we today have many labor-saving devices (cars to get there quickly, automatic washers and dryers and dishwashers, milking machines, corn pickers, etc.), most people seem to have little time left to do things they ought to do (like praying). Prayer is hurried through in a matter of minutes to rush out the door to do what are treated as the necessary things to do. Yes, everybody's busy, but we must take time to pray. "Take time to be holy--speak oft with thy Lord. Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone. Take time to be holy--the world rushes on." Unless we reserve time and schedule time for prayer (like Daniel did in Dan. 6:10 and the Psalmist did in Psa. 55:17), we will know nothing but prayer failure--failing to pray like we should.

Another cause is living in a time when real prayer doesn't seem to be all that important. A little prayer--yes, but much prayer--no. You can be a Christian and in stride with the church of today and not pray much--this is the prevailing practice and idea. But this is dangerous. This is not the way it is taught in the New Testament. Oh, how we need to change this and rise above this! Friend, in the matter of prayer (as well as other spiritual matters) we need to work out our spiritual life with more fear and trembling (see Phil. 2:12).

Not thinking that prayerlessness is actually a sin also contributes to prayer failure. But

prayerlessness is a sin. Sin is transgressing God's law or will, and prayer is a command: "Ask" (Matt. 7:7) is in the imperative mood. So is "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). Sins of omission are just as much sin as sins of commission. Let us face our prayerlessness, then, as a sin that is displeasing to God.

Another reason we do not pray about enough things is we tend to trust ourselves in too many ways instead of trusting God. Prov. 3:5 says we should trust in God with all our hearts and not lean to our own understanding. Joshua was a great man and a great leader, but he followed his own judgement concerning the Gibeonites and their made-up story instead of consulting the Lord about them (see Josh. 9:3-10). Peter was too confident of himself and did not watch and pray as Jesus told him to do (Matt. 26:41). The rich have money, and they tend to trust in it rather than in God who has enabled them to have it. Listen what Paul told Timothy to tell them: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in the uncertain riched, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17). We need God's help in all things, and we can have it if we pray for it. But if we feel self-sufficient, we will not lean on His everlasting arms. The arm of flesh will fail us--we dare not trust our own! But don't we too much? This is prayer failure--failure to pray when we should.

Some people don't pray because they know they have some sin in their lives that is a barrier between them and God. When Adam sinned, where was he when God came down in the cool of the day? He was hiding--he didn't want to talk with God. We need to realize that sin wars against the soul (I Pet. 2:11). Notice how sin hinders praying: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence 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" (I John 3:20-22).

Not being as spiritually minded as we should

be affects people's prayer efforts. Paul was urging the spirituality we need when he wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3). If we are not as spiritually minded as we ought to be, naturally we will not pray as we ought to pray.

Normal human beings do not want to fail in school, do not want to fail and get fired from their job, do not want their team to be a losing team, do not want to fail in business, do not want to fail in marriage, and in many other ways. Well, we shouldn't want to fail in the all important matter of prayer either. And we don't need to, for it is in the power of each one of us to walk and talk with God. Let us then see that we do not fail in prayer but abound in it. Make the change, and you will see a great difference in yourself--and you will like it, and so will God.

## QUESTIONS

1. List some Scriptures that indicate there are some prayer failures among God's people.
2. Show that we cheat ourselves out of blessings we would receive if we prayed.
3. What lesson was taught by a leaking faucet?
4. Why do our prayer failures rob others of blessings?
5. What Old Testament priest realized it would acutally be sin if he ceased to pray for others?
6. What must busy people do if they are to have time for prayer?
7. Is the importance of prayer emphasized or deemphasized today?
8. Do most church people who are not living a real life of prayer think of themselves as sinning thereby?
9. How can being too self-reliant affect our prayer lives?
10. Why should it be natural for us not to want to be prayer failures?

# Just What is Prayer?

There is much teaching in the Bible on the subject of prayer just as there are numerous instances of prayer recorded in the Bible. In this series of studies about prayer we have considered much of this material. As we come now to the final study (in Part One) it is our purpose to tie all of this together and bring each of us to the point of decision to improve our prayer lives in needed ways.

By our asking and discussing, "Just What is Prayer?" it is to cause us to realize as never before what prayer really is, believing that a better realization of what prayer is will encourage us toward a greater prayer life.

Before considering what prayer is, let us note what prayer is not. Prayer is not something customarily done at church but not elsewhere. Prayer is not something that leaders do in our place. Prayer is not something we do simply because we have been called on to pray. Prayer is not something we do only when in company with others who pray. Prayer is not something ritualistic and formal. And prayer is not oratory. My father used to tell of when a school teacher was called on to dismiss a service. He backed out, remarking, "I'm not good at oratory."

## 1. The Meaning of the Word "Prayer" is Asking.

Prayer is more than just saying words, even right words. Prayer is the heart asking God for specific things. An example: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (Jas. 1:5). It is like a child asking a parent for bread or fish or an egg (Luke 11:11,12).

The angel told Zacharias, "Thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son" (Luke 1:13). Oh, how many times he had asked God for a son, and now after so many, many years his petition is to be granted.

Secular uses of the word "pray" in the Bible (when a person is asking something of another human being) show that "pray" means "ask". Some examples: The Ethiopian said to Philip, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other

man?" (Acts 8:34). He was "asking" Philip. Again, listen to two men in Luke 14 as they asked to be excused from attending the special supper: "The first said, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused" (vs. 18,19).

Really, then, if we don't really ask, we have not really prayed.

## 2. Prayer is Taking Our Burdens to the Lord.

God knows we are human and have burdens too heavy to bear. The Father who invites us to pray is wonderfully described in our behalf in Psa. 103:13,14: "Life as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Jas. 5:13 shows that God wants to enter into our lives whether it is our joys or our sorrows, for that verse says, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." And I Pet. 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

At times we all have afflictions, burdens, and problems bigger than we are. How well several of our songs state it: "Where could I go but to the Lord?," "I cannot bear these burdens alone," so "I must tell Jesus...Jesus can help me--Jesus alone." Did you notice the contrast ("I cannot...Jesus can")? Two more songs: "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there" and "Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

In our earthly, human anxieties Phil. 4:6,7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be known unto God. And the peace of God that passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

So in our day of adversity when in our weakness we would faint (Prov. 24:10), Jesus gave instruction "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

### 3. Prayer is Depending on God for All Our Needs.

In the days of Gideon the Midianites and the Amalekites were a great burden to Israel: "They destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come into Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord" (Judg. 6:4-6). Later in that chapter when God called Gideon to military leadership to go against this great horde, Gideon felt so incapable. In the next chapter when he had assembled a modest sized army, "the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judg. 7:2). So in two consecutive phases God reduced his army from 32,000 down to only 300. Gideon didn't know how, but God said to him, "By the three hundred...will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand" (Judg. 7:7), and He did, and Gideon and his men knew they had not depended on the Lord in vain.

The young king Abijah of Judah with an army of 400,000 depended on the Lord when he met the veteran Jeroboam of Israel with an army of 800,000 (II Chron. 13:13,14), and God regarded that trust (v. 15,16).

We may have knowledge, we may have money, and we may have attained a measure of righteousness, but we are to trust God and not ourselves nor what we have. Timothy was to "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17). We are told in Prov. 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." We trust in the Lord instead in ourselves when we pray about matters rather than leaving the Lord out and going it on our own. Our song says, "The arm of flesh will fail you--you dare not trust your own."

Prov. 3:6 says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." We acknowledge

God when we pray--at mealtimes, at the beginning of our day, the beginning of a job, at bedtime, at the start of a trip, concerning decisions, etc.

### 4. Prayer is Thanking God for Blessings Received.

One year our garden hadn't done so well, and when we were at some friends' house one evening they loaded us with tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet corn, muskmelons, watermelons, and I don't remember what all out of their abundant garden, and God similarly lavishes His blessings on us--only He does so daily: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits" (Psa. 68:19). Upon the tither He opens the windows of heaven and pours out blessings so that we do not have room enough for all them (Mal. 3:10).

When we pray concerning matters on our hearts, we are told to remember the blessings God has already given us: "In everything by prayer and supplication WITH THANKSGIVING let your requests be known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). We are taught to "continue in prayer and watch in the same WITH THANKSGIVING" (Col. 4:2). When we say thanks, it is not paying for blessings received like we do when we pay C.O.D. charges for goods being delivered. No, thanksgiving is acknowledging the Source of our blessings--God (Jas. 1:17).

I was just beginning to teach a man in his 70's who had recently lost his wife to death. He had not been in church since he was 4 years of age, so I began to tell him some things about God. Among them I told him God was full of goodness and, like us, appreciated being thanked. From that teaching session my family stopped at a Target store. Since it was raining, I let Mrs. Hunt and our son Richard out at the door of the store before parking the car out in the parking lot. As I approached the store's entrance, out came two men marking down the price of some evergreens in front of the store from \$9.97 to \$2.97 (end of the season). At Midwestern School we had already removed some old evergreens that had outgrown their beauty in order to relandscape. Immediately I took thirty-two evergreens (all that were good) for the project. \$94.14 for what would have cost \$319.04 just a few minutes before. I had just praised God's goodness to an unsaved man, and look at what a blessing He immediately gave!

## 5. Prayer is a Ministry in Behalf of Others.

We live in a world of people: our immediate family members, our relatives, our neighbors, our work associates, the people with whom we do business, our fellow-Christians, spiritual leaders, etc. Oh, what an array of people we all know! Do they have needs? What are their spiritual conditions? Do we love them and want God's best for them? Are some of them living at distances from us so that we see them only occasionally?

Taking all the above into consideration we need to devise a prayer life so that we bring all of them and their needs before the throne of grace with some regularity. This is intercessory prayer, and the regularity of its performance is a ministry (a service we render before God in their behalf).

Paul said "intercessions" are to "be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). He said, "Praying always...for all saints" (Eph. 6:18). When Jesus knew Peter faced a time of serious temptation, He told him, "I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22:32). In Acts, when Peter was in jail and about to be brought out to the people, "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5).

Consecrating ourselves to earnest, regular praying for others is truly the basis of a real prayer life. If you want one of the secrets to having a fulfilling prayer life, this is one of the greatest.

## 6. Prayer is Actually Spending Time with God.

When we pray, we are talking to God. We are taking time for Him. Those who believe in God realize the importance of spending time with Him. Those who love God want to spend time with Him. Those who are expecting to be in Heaven with Him eternally find it desirable and natural to enjoy the wonderful privilege of prayer beforehand.

In prayer we call on God. In the days of Enoch, Seth's son, Gen. 4:26 says, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." From the time of Adam and Eve's sin and through the generation of their children, it would seem from this verse that people approached God only with their offerings offered silently. Oh, how much better to be allowed to speak to God! Psa. 4:3 says, "The Lord will hear

when I call unto him." Psa. 145:18 notes that "the Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him."

About the time I left home at 20 to go to Bible college, I had a pet cat, Tommy. He would often follow me to the barn or to the chicken house. If I sat down, he joined me. He was a beautiful solid steel-gray cat. One day he was sitting down looking off into the distance--just around the corner from me. He didn't know I was close by. I mused, "If he knew I was here, he would come right where I am." And I thought, "The more we realize the presence of God, the more we will be minded to pray." And that's true. How then we need to think on God, to know He is near, and to call on Him!

At the end of these studies it would be appropriate for each of us to think of ways we can improve our prayer lives, dedicate ourselves to those improving changes, and then conscientiously carry them out. As a Christian meaningfully sings, "I am Thine, O Lord; I have heard Thy voice, And it told Thy love to me, But I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer drawn to Thee. Oh, the pure delight of a single hour That before Thy throne I spend! When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with Friend. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died; draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, To Thy precious, bleeding side." Prayer will have an important part in this.

## QUESTIONS

1. List 2 things prayer is not.
2. What does the word "pray" mean?
3. To pray, then, we must \_\_\_\_\_ God for things.
4. What does God want us to do about burdens we cannot handle?
5. Prayer is actually an act of \_\_\_\_\_ on God.
6. Prayer also includes \_\_\_\_\_ for blessings already received.
7. To live a real life of prayer we must also pray in behalf of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Prayer is spending \_\_\_\_\_ with God.

**PART TWO**  
**ADDITIONAL STUDIES ABOUT**  
**PRAYER**

**(for those who want more)**

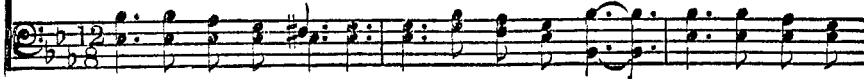
# My Prayer

P. P. B.

P. P. BLESS



1. More ho - li - ness give me, More striv - ing with - in; More pa - tience in
2. More grat - i - tude give me, More trust in the Lord; More pride in His
3. More pu - ri - ty give me, More strength to o'ercome; More freedom from



suf - f'ring, More sor - row for sin; More faith in my Sav - ior,  
glo - ry, More hope in His word; More tears for His sor - rows,  
earth - stains, More long - ings for home; More fit for the king - dom,



More sense of His care; More joy in His serv - ice, More pur - pose in prayer.  
More pain at His grief; More meekness in tri - al, More praise for re - lief.  
More used would I be; More bless - ed and ho - ly, More, Sav - ior, like Thee.



# Addressing God in Prayer

All prayers may not be alike. Some may be short and some long. Some may be private prayers and some public. Some may be beginners' prayers and some long-time saints'. But regardless of the various prayers, all begin by addressing God, the One to whom prayer is made. Let us give some consideration to addressing God in prayer.

## 1. Avoid Needless Repetition.

It is your writer's thought that too many times people "say words" instead of really "pray prayers". In prayer we are not merely to repeat thoughts and sentiments like saying our A,B,C's but to realize we are actually TALKING TO GOD, and this spiritual communication with God should not be engaged in with an empty head and meaningless lips but with a full heart. For instance, in even a short prayer some people will say "God" or "Lord" or "Father" maybe as many as TEN TIMES. When we call on the name of God, we do not have to keep saying His name over and over and over again as if He were not continuing to pay attention to us. It reminds me of a habit I had apparently picked up at an early stage of my preaching to inject the word "Listen" too frequently when trying to emphasize something. A good lady called it to my attention and said, "We are all listening very attentively, but you continue to say, "Listen!" It was a habit, a rut, into which I had fallen, and that is what I am afraid has happened to our prayers when we begin each line of petition or each statement of thanksgiving with the word "Father". We wouldn't do that in holding a conversation with a person. If your name was Henry Best, wouldn't you think it odd if a person talking to you would call your name "Henry" in beginning every sentence, and then for a little variety occasionally say "Henry Best" instead? Must that not be the way it sounds to God when we say "Father" to begin each line of our prayers except when we occasionally say "Heavenly Father" to break the monotony? Nor would we write a letter to someone that way. Why, then, pray that way? Remember that prayer is communication between us and God, and it too should be intelligently carried on.

When we go to the Bible prayers, such as the

prayer that Jesus taught His disciples in Matt. 6, we find it began with "Our Father which art in heaven", and it was not constantly repeated throughout the prayer. Seemingly only when there was extra urgency concerning some petition was the name of the Lord brought in again--much like we do in a conversation or in a letter. It was in this manner that David used some name of God five times in his chapter long prayer for mercy in Psa. 51. I fear that just as some preachers use "Praise the Lord" or "Hallelujah" or "Amen" throughout their sermons, at times at least it seems more or less to fill in gaps while they think of what they are going to say next, it may be possible that such is what happens when people use and reuse the name of God here and there throughout their prayers.

But such is not an easy habit to overcome. Prayer-ruts are hard to get out of unless one consciously works at them. For instance, have you ever tried to have a strict "praise service", a service in which instead of asking God for anything that each one simply thanks the Lord for various blessings already received? Well, the few times I have personally been in such services, the people found it hard to do what they set out to do--only thank God. The customary, "Help us to...;" and, "Lord, give us...;" etc. inevitably tried to get back into what people said.

## 2. Use Fitting Expressions.

What about the practice of starting out one's prayer with just the word "God"? Some people pray this way all the time. I am not saying that such can never be done, but I will say that such is seldom found in the Bible prayers. True, both the Pharisee and the publican of Luke 18 began their prayers that way (the Pharisee said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are," the publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner"), but such was the exception and not the rule. Occasionally we find, "O God" (Num. 12:13; Psa. 51:1,10,17), an expression of deep feeling, and more often such fuller forms as, "O God of my father" (Gen. 32:9), "O Lord God" (Gen. 24:12; Deut. 3:24; Josh. 7:7; I Kings 8:53), "O God of Israel" (I Kings



8:26), "O Our God (II Chron. 20:12), and others, but habitually just saying "God" seems to lack the thought and sentiment we should show in coming before God.

Let me illustrate. When our boys were small, we had a 5 year old neighbor boy who was a bit mentally retarded. Even though he lived by us for several years, he never learned to use my name. He never called me Mr. Hunt nor even Donald. He would just call me "Man". When he came up to play, he would say, "Man, can the boys come out and play?" And any time he had something to say to me, it would just be "Man, this" or "Man, that". Personally I can see why our heavenly Father, who is called by various names ("Lord," "Jehovah," "Lord God," "Lord of hosts," "Father," "Lord of heaven and earth," and others) might get a little tired of our saying nothing but "God" all the time. And this variety of expression we find in the Scripture. When Solomon was leading Israel in the dedication of the new temple, he began his prayer, "Lord God of Israel" (I Kings 8:23). When David prayed for God to forgive him for his sin with Bathsheba, he said, "O God, thou God of my salvation" (Psa. 51:14). When Elijah stood on Mt. Carmel to call the nation back to the God of their fathers, he began his prayer, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel" (I Kings 18:36). When Jonah prayed from the belly of the whale, he said, "O Lord my God" (Jonah 2:6). When Hezekiah took the Assyrian King's threatening letter to God in prayer, he began, "O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth" (II Kings 19:15). Possibly in being sure not to pray to be heard of men, some have made their prayers too plain, too artless, and too unembellished before God.

### 3. A Noticeable Change.

After studying through the Old Testament

prayers where various forms of expression embodying "God" or "Lord" or "Jehovah" are to be found, we are faced with an abrupt change when we come to the New Testament. Some form of "Father" is used almost entirely; often just "Father" itself (John 11:41; Luke 22:42; Luke 23:34; Luke 23:46); "Our Father, which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9); and, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Matt. 11:25,26). It is particularly interesting to note the changes of expression used by Jesus in His great John 17 prayer. Note the following verses and try to determine for yourself in each case why He probably used each expression that He did: "FATHER, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (verse 1); "And now, O FATHER, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (verse 5); "HOLY FATHER, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (verse 11); "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, FATHER, art in me, and I in thee" (verses 20,21); "O RIGHTEOUS FATHER, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee" (verse 25).

Beginning with the first expression of our prayers, the way God is addressed, let us at least intelligently address Him instead of not knowing nor not caring how we speak to Him.

### QUESTIONS

1. What prayer rut was pointed out under the heading, "Avoid needless repetition"?
2. What were some ways people began their prayers in the Bible besides just beginning with, "God"?
3. What abrupt change in addressing God do we come to when we come to the New Testament?

# Praising God in Our Prayers

In yesteryear more than at present it seems, people praised God for His various virtues as they prayed. Possibly our prayers could be improved in this feature.

## 1. Biblical Examples.

Heb. 13:15 says, "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." We "praise" God when we tell others of His excellencies. We also "praise" Him when we thank Him for what he has done for us. And we "praise" Him when we extol His own matchless qualities in prayer. It is concerning this latter matter that we conduct the present consideration.

When men in Bible days praised God in their prayers, that about which they praised Him had a direct connection with that for which they were praying. Let us observe that, realizing God is pleased when our faith in His divine characteristics causes us to ask the petitions that we do. For instance, in Matt. 9 we have the story of two blind men of Jericho who followed Jesus, crying, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." He entered into the house, and they followed Him inside. Before granting their request, Jesus tested them out with this question: "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (verse 28). When they said, "Yea, Lord," He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it unto you."

When Moses was about to request God to change His verdict and let him enter the Promised Land, he prefaced his petition with these words: "O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?" (Deut. 3:24).

When King Asa of Jerusalem was faced by 1,000,000 Ethiopians, he had but 580,000 men with which to offset their charge. He reminded himself and he praised God that numbers in reality did not bother God. He said, "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not men prevail against thee" (II

Chron. 14:11). When Jehoshaphat's enemies threatened him, he did similarly (II Chron. 20:6-13). Wouldn't our prayers have more meaning if we thus praised God concerning His power to grant that for which we are making request? Don't just "say words" or "vain repetitions" when you pray--THINK and pray! Pray coherent prayers.

When Daniel was confessing to God the sins of the nation he ascribed "righteousness" to God: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces" (Dan. 9:7). When he prayed for their forgiveness, he made mention of God's "mercies": "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him" (verse 9).

When Solomon dedicated the temple, it was a fulfillment of a divine promise made to his father David. Notice how he praised God: "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day" (I Kings 8:23,24). And he went on to pray, "Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel: so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me. And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father" (verses 25,26). As he was about to ask concerning the unique place that the temple he had just built would occupy in the future prayers of Israel, he said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to day: that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken

unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive" (verses 27-30).

On the day when Israel presented their abundant offering for the building of the temple, King David blessed the Lord before all the congregation with these words; "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name" (I Chron. 29:10-13). And he went on with more praise like it.

## 2. What About Our Prayers?

I ask, how long has it been since you have heard a prayer containing such wonderful praise? Have you ever so injected the element of praise into

your prayers? The fact of the matter is, people are afraid their prayers will be criticized today if they include such praise. Some would charge them with praying "formal" prayers. Some would say they are praying to be heard of men. But in guarding against formality and in being sure we do not pray to be heard of men, let us not forget that God deserves to be praised. The command in Psa. 29:2 is: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." Let us believe that true, sincere, befitting praise of God enriches our prayers, makes them more acceptable to God, and displays a greater depth of spiritual thinking on our part. Let us get away from cheap, "tinny" prayers that do not glorify God nor reflect any depth of spirituality upon our part.

## QUESTIONS

1. Heb. 13 says we are to offer what sacrifice continually?
2. We praise God both when we \_\_\_\_\_ others of His excellencies and when we \_\_\_\_\_ Him for what He has done for us.
3. Cite various examples in Biblical prayers of people praising God.
4. Should we incorporate more praise into most of our prayers?

# Expressing Thanks in Our Prayers

Thanksgiving is not something that comes once a year, nor is it something you do according to the calendar. True thanksgiving is the heart overflowing itself with joy, gratitude, and praise to the one who has done great things for us.

## 1. Jesus' Joy was Expressed Thankfully.

We see this in Jesus at the happy return of the Seventy. As He saw them rejoicing, He rejoiced, and as He envisioned God's power asserting itself so ably over Satan's power, Luke 10:21 says, "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it

seemed good in thy sight." And turning to His disciples He said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (verses 23,24). Jesus' heart was overflowing in that hour, and He thanked God. Two other occasions of Jesus' saying, "I thank thee," to His heavenly Father were Matt. 11:25 and John 11:41. In the Luke 10 passage above can you not catch the happy attitude of Jesus and His expressing that happiness and gratitude to the actual source of His joy--God?

## 2. God Deserves Much Thanksgiving.

God is the source of all the good blessings

which we enjoy (Jas. 1:17), and we should “praise God from whom all blessings flow”. As if we are ones for whom He cannot do too much, our heavenly Father every day “loadeth us with benefits” (Psa. 68:19), and as if to keep us from just “saying” an habitual thanks over and over again for the regular blessings of life, He sends us new mercies “every morning” (Lam. 3:22,23). Oh, how God does open the windows of heaven upon our lives and fills our lives with good things! How He does make our hearts skip with joy time and again! In view of the fact that all His dealings with us are for our good, the last thing that should be upon our lips is murmuring or complaining. Such so often defiled the Israelites of old to God’s rightful displeasure (Num. 14:27). Failure to glorify Him as God which was involved in a failure to be thankful led to man’s turning from God to idolatry and the shameful, degraded living recorded in Rom. 1:21-32. But how often God has to hear the murmurings of people today! If it isn’t the weather, it’s the times; if it isn’t their afflictions, it’s their circumstances; if it isn’t their income, it’s their expenses. All of us enjoy doing things for those who appreciate what we do, but even God, who is regularly “kind unto the unthankful” (Luke 6:35), punished murmuring so severely (Num. 14:26-37). With so much of God’s goodness evident and so much murmuring by people, let every spokesman for God hit this sin with sledge hammer blows!

### **3. Approaching God With Thanksgiving.**

Do you know how a good God desires to be approached? True, He wants us to cast all our care upon Him (I Pet. 5:7). But He also wants us to “serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing” (Psa. 100:2). He wants us to recognize it is He who has made us and takes care of us: “Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (verse 3). Therefore, ‘enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (verse 4). How long has it been since the Lord has beheld your gladness? How long has it been since He has heard your singing? How long has it been since He has seen your recognition of His care? How long has it been since He has witnessed your serving Him? Oh, repent of this wickedness!

### **4. A Specially Appointed Group.**

To be sure that God would be praised, David appointed certain Levites to thank and praise the God who had been so good to the nation (I Chron. 16:4). At the same time, David himself was ever so thankful to God for the rich personal blessings he had received. Listen to his expressions of heartfelt gratitude: “And David the king came and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God. What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant?” (I Chron. 17:16-18). Later when David sinned, God reminded him of His great goodness to him (II Sam. 12:7,8) and His rightful displeasure with him over this sin (verse 9) and told him that some of his blessings would necessarily be replaced with severe hardships (verses 10-12).

### **5. People in the Bible Thanked God.**

People of the Bible often expressed their gratitude to their divine Benefactor: Jonah for being delivered from the sea monster (Jon. 2:9); Daniel for the gift of interpretation of dreams that saved his life when Nebuchadnezzar was about to destroy all his wise men (Dan. 2:23); Jesus when instituting the Lord’s supper (Matt. 26:27); Paul when writing to the churches (I Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; I Thess. 2:13); before they ate their food (Mark 8:6; Acts 27:35); the aged Anna when she saw the Christ child (Luke 2:38); Paul who had spent a long winter on his way to Rome amid a shipload of prisoners when brethren heard he was nearing Rome and came out to greet him (Acts 28:15); and many, many others.

### **6. Let Us Express Our Thanks.**

As we pray, therefore, for new blessings, let us not forget to thank God for those blessings already received: “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2); “With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). And let us not overlook the fact that Daniel not only prayed three times a day but also thanked his God

each time he prayed; "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

If you would please God, be thankful to Him. If you would be fair with God, recognize His goodness to your life. And when you come before Him, do so as much to express your gratitude as to ask Him for blessings. Otherwise you are acting like a spoiled child who thinks only in terms of what you can get and never in terms of showing your appreciation. Ingratitude is one of the cardinal sins of mankind. Let us take measures to be sure it is not one of ours! "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done;" yes, "and you will be singing as the days go by."

My godly mother is now gone, but I shall never forget a statement she often made in prayer

when living with us in her late 80's: "Father, I can't thank you enough for " this or that. And wasn't she correct? We can't.

## QUESTIONS

1. Tell of times when Jesus' heart overflowed with joy that He expressed in thanksgiving to God?
2. Comment on God being the source of all our many blessings.
3. What are some things people often complain about?
4. We are to enter God's courts with \_\_\_\_\_.
5. What king set apart a special group just to praise God?
6. Cite some Biblical examples of people thanking God for various blessings.

# Confession of Sin in Prayer

While God wants us to come before His presence with thanksgiving and with praise, it is also important that we come humbly before Him because of the fact of human sinfulness. Any prayer-right we have with God is not based on our merit but on the mediatorship of Christ. Therefore, to acknowledge our sinfulness, our shortcomings, and our demerit as we come before God is absolutely in order.

Of course, if we are deliberately doing wrong, or if we take an impenitent attitude toward some failure that has come to our attention, it will do us no good just to confess that sin to God. That would be to place us in that group whose "prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9) and to whose prayers God's ears are not open (I Pet. 3:12). Confession does not replace repentance--it must be preceded by it.

Some of the great prayers of the Bible contained strong confessions of guilt before God.

## 1. David's Personal Confessions.

During David's reign Satan had entered into his heart, causing him to want Israel numbered. Somehow Joab sensed that some aspect of the matter was not right, and he sought to dissuade David. However, the king was not to be turned from his

intention. After the numbering David's heart smote him, and he humbly confessed, "I have sinned greatly...I have done very foolishly" (I Chron. 21:8). And when God began to mete out the punishment for his sin, David was made to realize more than ever the seriousness of his sin in the sight of God so that he again confessed, "I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed" (verse 17).

On another occasion, when praying for forgiveness concerning his sin with Bathsheba and the other transgressions that grew out of it, David confessed, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psa. 51:3). And even though others had suffered because of his sin (Uriah had died; the baby born of the sin died), David realized that worst feature of his sin was that he had sinned against God, for it was His law that had been broken, God's will that had been disregarded and trampled underfoot, for he stated, "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" (verse 4). Observe also the many confessions of his guilt in the various parts of his prayer in this same chapter: "my transgressions" twice (verses 1,3); "my sin" twice (verses 2,3); "my sins" (verse 9); "mine iniquity" (verse 2); "all mine iniquities" (verse 9); and

“bloodguiltiness” (verse 14). The following petitions in the chapter also demonstrate his feeling of guilt: “Have mercy upon me...blot out my transgressions” (verse 1); “Wash me thoroughly...cleanse me” (verse 2); “Purge me...and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (verse 7); “Hide thy face from my sins” (verse 9); “Create in me a clean heart...renew a right spirit within me” (verse 10); “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me” (verse 11). His heartfelt confession of sin and petition for mercy remind one of the publican’s prayer of Luke 18:13: “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Oh that we all might realize it is this humbling of ourselves before God that enables us to go to our house “justified” (Luke 18:14), and that it was that proud, self-satisfied attitude of the Pharisee that God deplored and that caused Jesus to say, “Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luke 18:14).

## 2. Confession in Behalf of the Nation.

During the captivity years of Israel in Babylon, the prophet Daniel confessed the sins of the nation. First of all, he acknowledged that the nation had not obeyed the law God had given them: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments” (Dan. 9:5). Next he confessed they had also sinned in not repenting when God’s prophets were sent to them: “Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land” (verse 6). Daniel, that great man of prayer, knew confession of sin was so important with God, and so should we realize the same today.

So did Nehemiah realize it. See his confession in Neh. 1:6,7. And in the 9th chapter of Neh. the priests interceded in behalf of the nation in which the matter of confessing the nation’s sins was very prominent. Read Neh. 9:16-35.

One of the greatest priestly confessions in all the Bible is that of Ezra: “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. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto

this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day” (Ezra 9:6,7). And he went on to narrate the constant goodness of God to them and their continual transgressions against Him. At the time of his confession, the nation was in the midst of another epidemic of sin--that of intermarrying with the heathen in violation of the will of God. He closed his confession with these words: “O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this” (verse 15). Since space does not permit the carrying of all he said on that occasion, please read Ezra 9:1-15.

It is this willingness to admit our shortcomings in contrast to those who will not that prompted John to write, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:8,9).

It may be the tendency of many to conceal rather than confess their sins, but if we want the Lord’s blessing, that is the wrong policy to follow. Prov. 28:13 says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

## QUESTIONS

1. Our prayer-right is not based on \_\_\_\_\_ merit but on the mediatorship of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Is confession without repentance achieving before God?
3. What are some of David’s expression of confession in the 51st Psalm?
4. Why did the publican rather than the Pharisee go to his house justified?
5. Tell of Daniel’s confessing of Israel’s sins in his prayer.
6. Do the same for Ezra’s confessions in his prayer.
7. What does the apostle John promise Christians who acknowledge their sins?
8. What does the book of Proverbs say about covering and confessing one’s sins?

# Sometimes Prayer is Just Talking to God

“Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before Thy throne I spend; When I kneel in prayer and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend!”

## 1. Conversing With God.

These words of a familiar song remind us that prayer is communing with God, communing as friend with Friend! Prayer is not just saying words into the air--prayer is conversing with God about life, about whatever is on one's heart. This is what gives prayer its naturalness to the Christian. A Christian does not have to send to a publishing house to buy a book of prayers--God permits him to talk to Him about whatever is on his heart. A Christian doesn't have to borrow his expressions and petitions and thoughts from others' prayers--he can pray to God in his own way of expressing himself. But prayer is so traditional in form and expression that many people have lost the naturalness of their own personal expression to God. Instead of uttering their own petitions and talking to God in their own personal way, they must conform their prayers to everybody else's. Hence, there is little freshness about people's prayers. And the audience has come to think in the same way, for if a person opens his heart up too much before God in a public prayer, an utterance in which he gets off the "hard, beaten path," people think it is a "little different". Now prayer may be said to be a lot of other things, but don't overlook the fact that when you study Bible prayers, many of them could well be classified as holy conversations with God. Let us see.

## 2. Moses and Joshua Did.

When the Israelites received the report of the spies and refused to follow Moses' leadership to enter Canaan, God was ready to destroy them. In Num. 14:11,12 He revealed this thought to Moses. But Moses said to the Lord (notice this "holy conversation"--prayer), "Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell it to the

inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now" (verses 13-19). And the Lord replied in His part of the conversation in verses 20-25.

Space is not available to print several other examples in full as we would like to do, but you who are studying these considerations on prayer, take your Bibles and notice the same type of communication between Joshua and God in Josh. 7:6-15.

## 3. Hezekiah Did.

In the above two instances (Moses and Joshua), God answered them back directly. But in Hezekiah's case (II Kings 19:14-34), which read in full from your Bible, God did not answer him directly but sent His answer to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah. Notice, though, that Hezekiah also conversed with God in his prayer--he just opened his heart and mind and TALKED TO GOD. If you don't do this, your prayers aren't really worth much to you, to God, or to the situation. Don't be afraid to go to God and tell Him all your heart. Be like a son going to his father and asking him for bread or for an egg or for fish. This is the way Jesus pictured prayer (Luke 11:11-13). Be like a man going to his friend and

asking to borrow some bread to set before an unexpected visitor. This again is the way Jesus pictured prayer (Luke 11:5-9).

#### 4. Others Did.

Notice Jacob's earnest conversation with God concerning his coming meeting with Esau from whom he had fled so many years before (Gen. 32:9-12). Notice in it that Jacob reminded God that in returning he was just doing what God had commanded him to do, and that He had promised to do him good in it (verse 9).

Jesus' great prayer in John 17:1-26 is fully conversational in nature--it was not all thanks and petition, but He talked things over with God. Read it. And notice, too, that His prayer was like ours in that He did all the talking that was done--God did not reply back in words as He did to Moses and Joshua.

Sometimes somebody's public prayer will be criticized because it contains Scripture, as if that would be totally wrong. Oh, how people need to get their Bibles down and do more studying and less criticizing! The words found in the Levites' talk to

God in Neh. 9:6-38 is more a narration of what is recorded in the history written by Moses than it is anything else--God knew every fact contained in it, yet it was in order to say every bit of it. Why? They had a purpose--a sacred purpose--for saying it. And so long as everything we say before God is sincere, is said for the right purpose, and expresses one's thought to God, there is nothing wrong with saying it.

Restudy the above six prayers (and others like them, such as Ezra 9:5-15), and you will see that Bible prayers were actually a commingling of thanksgiving, petition, praise, confession, and holy conversation with God. Let us do more of it ourselves!

#### QUESTIONS

1. Why does a Christian not need a book of publishing-house prayers?
2. Tell of Moses' talk with God when He was about ready to destroy Israel?
3. At times prayer is like a \_\_\_\_\_ asking his father for food.
4. Jesus likened prayer to man going to his \_\_\_\_\_ at midnight to borrow some bread to set before his guest.

## Being Definite in Our Petitions

Having discussed praising God for His wonderful attributes and unlimited power, earnest thanksgiving to God for His many benefits, holy conversation to God, and the confession of our sins before God, we now come to the aspect of prayer from which the word "prayer" itself comes--that of asking, beseeching, petitioning God for blessings.

#### 1. Asking Nothing in Prayer.

Though we do all the above things mentioned, if we ask God for nothing, we have hardly "prayed" in the true sense of that word. Oh yes, we are aware of the Pharisee's "prayer" that asked nothing, contained no petition (Luke 18:10,11). In his so-called attempt at prayer it violated about every law and thought of true prayer: he compared himself with fallen man rather than the holiness of God; he made no acknowledgment of his sinfulness before God such as is always in order; and he asked no benefit from God,

nor did he seem to feel such a need. He was a small package all wrapped up in himself--a poor specimen of one praying.

By way of contrast to him and in support of our proposition that prayer is built around "petition", we read that Daniel made his "petition" three times a day (Dan. 6:13), and that we have the "petitions" that we desired of him (I John 5:15). The word "petition" is an apt word for prayer. Our English word "pray" comes from the Latin word "precari" (from which "precarious" comes), and it means to "ask, beg, pray". The dictionary says of "pray": "To make earnest request or petition." And what is a "petition"? Notice this fitting dictionary definition: "Request made for something desired, especially respectful or humble request, as to a superior or to one or those in authority." Is this not exactly what we do when we pray?

Groups of citizens sometimes draw up a request, sign it, and send it to the president or to the



governor or to their congressman, and what do they call it? A "petition". And thus are our prayers much like inferiors calling on our Superior. In this there is the acknowledgment of His capabilities to give, of our need of His giving, and of our faith in His willingness to give. The idea of "petitioning" also reveals an attitude toward God and toward ourselves, and it likewise determines the attitude we have in prayer.

## 2. A Biblical Illustration of Definiteness in Prayer.

Let us notice how true this comparison is. When Esther came before the king, he asked her, "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee" (Esth. 5:6). In fact, this word "petition" is used several times in the book of Esth. (5:7; 5:8; 7:2; 7:3; and 9:12) concerning her request to an earthly superior. And the same Hebrew word ("shelah" or "sheelah") is used concerning Hannah's requests to God in I Sam. 1:17 ("the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him") and I Sam. 1:27 ("For this child I prayed: and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him"). Notice the definiteness of her petition: "For this child I prayed." And notice the definiteness of the Lord's answer: "The Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him." It was this definiteness of petition that caused her to know God had heard her cry, and it is a definite petition that God desires to hear. The more definite our petitions, the more sure we can be God has heard us, the more real thanksgiving we can give to God as a result.

## 3. Why We Major on This Point.

We major on this point because the tendency is to generalize rather than be specific in both petitions and thanksgiving. How much more like Bible prayers is it to pray for the blessing of a child, for the

restoration of one's health, for the conversion of one you are teaching, for helping in preparing a given sermon, etc. than to pray in an indefinite, general way as so many are prone to do! And how much better to thank the Lord for specific blessings of a suitable job, adequate money to pay a large bill that is about due, and safe arrival from a long trip, etc. than to thank the Lord in an indefinite, general way as so many tend to do!

We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that one of the things wrong with many prayers is that they are too general and not specific enough. Is it because we believe God prefers it that way, or is it that we are too mentally lazy, too little observing, too unspiritual at heart to want to take the time to break down our needs into specific requests? Whatever it is, it is not good. Not until we pray more definitely will we really know what to pray about, will we be able to spend much time in prayer with God, or will we know whether God has answered our prayers or not.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Pharisee's prayer a poor specimen of prayer?
2. Whose prayers were called petitions in the Bible?
3. How definite was Hannah in her prayer for a child?
4. How definite did she say God was in His answer?
5. The tendency is for people to \_\_\_\_\_ rather than being \_\_\_\_\_ in their prayers.
6. What are some explanations for people praying as described in question 5?

# Asking in Jesus' Name and "Amen"

Why when we pray do we include the name of Jesus? It is not merely to complete a form, but it has significant, important meaning.

## 1. We Are Unworthy.

When man sinned, he lost his opportunity for immediate contact with God. In order to teach man that he was not worthy to come to God directly, God set up the priesthood of the Old Testament. The priest represented man before God as well as God to man. This is one of the important lessons taught us by the Old Testament.

## 2. Jesus is Our Mediator.

When Jesus came, He showed that He was the One through whom men would approach God as well as He being the One through whom God would speak to men. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). After claiming that no man knew the Father but He Himself and he to whomsoever He would reveal Him, He called on men to come to Him if they would find rest for their souls (Matt. 11:27,28).

The book of Hebrews is especially rich in setting forth Jesus as our mediator, our intercessor, our high priest at the right hand of God. Yes, God speaks to us today through His Son (Heb. 1:1,2), but He also accepts those who come to Him through His Son. Christ "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25), and the rest of the verse goes on to say "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

That Jesus was to be the abiding high priest is traceable back as far as Psa. 110:4: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," a statement applied in Heb. to Jesus: "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:5,6).

When we pray we are to approach God through Christ: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my

name: ask, and ye shall receive" (John 16:24); "Giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). In using Jesus' name, therefore, we are admitting our unworthiness to an audience with God, and that our only hope of God's hearing us or regarding our prayer is that He recognizes Jesus in whose name we pray. That the world needs a Savior from sin is evident, but that Christians yet need a mediator with God proves that we still (this side of our baptism) stand by grace and not by merit.

Sometimes the question is asked if it is necessary to mention Jesus' name in the prayer itself since it is understood that all prayer today by a Christian is through the mediatorship of Jesus. It is true that whatever we do is to be done in the name of Jesus (Col. 3:17), and we don't go around saying, "This I do in Jesus' name," concerning everything we do. On the other hand, Jesus said, "In my name shall they...lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17,18). It is noteworthy that when Peter healed the lame man, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6), and it seems fair to infer that Paul must have audibly used the name of Jesus in his miracles at Ephesus the way the sons of Sceva tried to imitate him (Acts 19:11-13). Surely one is completely in order to say that his prayer is being prayed in the name of Jesus, and he should do so with the full understanding that Jesus is at God's right hand to intercede for him, and that God honors the prayer because of Jesus and not because of the merit of the one praying it.

## 3. The Meaning of "Amen".

The "amen" at the end of our prayers comes from a Greek word that means "truly". It was placed at the end of Bible books (Matt. 28:20; Mark 16:20; Luke 24:53; John 21:25; Rom. 16:27; I Cor. 16:24; II Cor. 13:14--in fact every New Testament book except Acts, Jas., and III John) as well as at the end of prayers. Everything we pray we should mean and be able to say "amen" meaningfully at the end as well as use it when others are leading in prayer (I Cor. 14:16).

## QUESTIONS

1. What deprived man of his opportunity for immediate contact with God?
2. God has set up a \_\_\_\_\_ between Himself and us.

3. Cite some verses showing Jesus to be our mediator with God.
4. Why do we pray in Jesus' name?
5. What does "amen" mean?

# Kneeling in Prayer

It is not always necessary to kneel in prayer, otherwise it would be wrong to stand in prayer such as is customary during a single prayer or during the benediction at a public church service, but the fact is that apparently more prayers in the Bible were prayed on people's knees than from any other position. Private prayers as well as the prayer meeting group can find greater satisfaction in prayer if people realize their smallness and God's greatness and demonstrate that realization by kneeling. Do not be ashamed to kneel before God--be afraid not to. And anyone claiming to go by the Bible who would dare make fun of a Christian praying on bent knee or who would call him a Pentecostal in derision is either woefully ignorant of the Scriptures or has a heart that needs to be humbled before God.

### 1. Significance of Kneeling.

The Egyptians were to bow the knee before Joseph (Gen. 41:43). In mock honor, the soldiers bowed the knee before Jesus when He was on trial (Mark 15:16-20). A trembling captain of fifty men fell on his knees before Elijah and pleaded for his life and theirs (II Kings 1:13). When Peter saw the great catch of fishes, he felt humbled, fell at Jesus' knees and confessed his unworthiness (Luke 5:8).

### 2. Biblical Example of Kneeling in Prayer.

When Solomon dedicated his temple to God,

he knelt before Him as he prayed (II Chron. 6:13). When Daniel prayed his three times a day, he did so on bended knee (Dan. 6:10). The leper who came seeking cleansing knelt before Jesus when he made his request (Mark 1:40). The Gadarene demoniac fell down before Jesus (Luke 8:28). When Peter would raise Dorcas, he knelt as he called on God (Acts 9:40). Stephen's dying prayer was prayed on bent knee (Acts 7:60). At Miletus Paul knelt and prayed with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:36). It was a large group that knelt in prayer on the seashore at Tyre when Paul was leaving them (Acts 21:5). And who can overlook the fact that Jesus knelt in prayer, yea even prostrated Himself on His face, in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41; Matt. 26:39)? Even the worshippers of Baal bowed their knees before their images (I Kings 19:18).

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psa. 95:6).

## QUESTIONS

1. What was the significance of kneeling in Bible days even in matters not involving prayer?
2. Did this significance carry over into prayer?
3. Cite instances in Biblical prayers when they knelt.
4. In Bible days did they always kneel in prayer?
5. Should we be ashamed to kneel in prayer?

# Meaningful Public Prayer

Have you been called on to lead in public prayer? Did you realize the responsibility that was yours? The words "lead in prayer" imply you are to pray so others can freely unite with you in the things you pray. Let us who lead others in public prayer so pray that they will pray when we pray. Otherwise we are not leading them in prayer! Let us give some thought to this subject.

## 1. Suggestions

If we are to lead others in public prayer, let us pray about things that are common-interest rather than things that are personal to us. At home, at the bedside, in the secret closet, is the place to pray about personal matters unless it is something unusual that others would be glad to join us in prayer about.

Each prayer should be appropriate for the occasion. For instance, if praying at the Lord's table, pray about things pertinent to it. Don't pray about the sermon coming up, the rulers of the nation, the young people, the unsaved, the sick, etc. Let those be prayed for at other times.

## 2. Abuses.

When we lead in public prayer, we are not to preach a sermon. Nothing will kill the spirit of prayer quicker than when one quits praying to God and begins "getting things off his chest" to people. Sometimes people do this when there is dissension in the congregation, and they want others to hear something said for their benefit. The true purpose of prayer should not be abused either by preacher, elder, deacon, or anybody else.

When leading in public prayer, guard against meaningless repetition. Some people say "Lord" or "Father" or "God" with nearly every line of prayer. People will sometimes ask a preacher to speak to some brother who has about worn everybody out with an over-use of the name God. There have been times

when after wearing people out with their repetition prayers, they have been known to use the name of God more than 100 times in a given prayer. If you would do this to somebody's name with whom you were visiting, they would notice it and would say something to you about it. Here is an example of what we mean: "Our kind, heavenly Father, we thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast brought us together in this service, God, and we pray, dear Lord, that Thou wilt have Thy way, Lord, in this service..." If we will be aware each time when calling the name of God, we will probably not over-use it. Every addressing of God should be thoughtfully made. He won't go away while we are praying, and He doesn't quit listening.

Similarly some over-use word "just". Example: "Father, we just pray that you will help us in our personal lives, and that you will just be with us today. Just be merciful to us in all our failures, and just help us be faithful to thee until we die."

Some public prayers seem to roam around with nowhere really to land. Many pray well in their opening words and in the middle part of their prayers, but in leading up to some kind of a conclusion they seem not to know how to do it. Such expressions as "Be with us in this service; be with us as we go to our homes; be with our lives; be with us during this week; be with us throughout life; and be with all of those for whom it is our duty to pray" are usually more formal than really meaningful, and yet it is meaningful prayer that we are after.

## QUESTIONS

1. What do the words "lead in prayer" imply?
2. In public prayer should we pray about our personal matters or matters of common concern?
3. What would be an example of praying appropriately for the occasion?
4. What is wrong with "preaching" in public prayer?
5. Give some example of meaningless repetition in public prayer?

# The Sincerity of Private Prayer

Jesus' statement in Matt. 6:6 has sometimes caused people to question whether we should pray publicly. It reads, "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."

## 1. Public Prayer is Not Forbidden.

If we had that statement only, we might so conceive, but there are other passages that show they prayed in public with divine approval. Here are some of them.

The apostles and others met together in public prayer prior to the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). The prayers referred to in Acts 2:42 would seem to be public prayers. Peter and John returned from the persecuting authorities and gathered the church together for prayer (Acts 4:23ff). In consecrating the seven to their labor, the apostles, prayed as well as laid their hands on them (Acts 6:6). Stephen prayed his final prayer with a loud voice in public (Acts 7:60). In conferring the powers of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritans, Peter and John prayed (Acts 8:14,15). When Peter was in jail, many gathered together in public prayer (Acts 12:12). Barnabas and Saul were sent forth on their evangelistic tour after being prayed for by those of the Antioch church (Acts 13:2,3). The prisoners heard Paul and Silas pray in the prison (Acts 16:25). Paul and the Ephesian elders prayed together on his departure from them (Acts 20:36). The church at Tyre (men, women, and children) all knelt down on the seashore with Paul in a great prayer meeting as he departed from them for Jerusalem (Acts 21:4,5). Before they ate, Paul publicly thanked God for the food even though his travel companions were not Christians (Acts 27:33-35).

Surely from these passages in Acts (and many more could be produced from other Bible books), it is evident that Christ was not forbidding public praying. He was, however, warning against praying merely to be seen of men. To parade one's religion is wrong; to live it sincerely is right. When a person prays in public but does not in private, surely God would just as soon not have him pray in public. If the privilege of prayer

really means something to him, he will be praying often when he is by himself.

I remember dealing one time with a man on the matter of prayer. He was so terribly weak in the matter of private prayer, but he could pray a fine sounding prayer in public. That has to be labeled hypocrisy, and Jesus forbid it. Jesus used this very word in Matt. 6: "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (verse 5). On the other hand, one does not let people interfere with his religion. That, I believe, is why Paul went right ahead and prayed on board the storm tossed vessel before eating. He did not pray merely to be seen of men, and, he did not let their presence keep him from praying. Some people fail in one way (hypocrisy), and some in the other way (timid followers).

## 2. Jesus Urges Private Prayer.

Besides forbidding hypocritical praying we do know that Jesus was urging private prayer in Matt. 6:6, and this is so all important. Numerous times do we read of Jesus going aside from the masses in order to be alone with God in prayer. In Mark 1:35 we read of His rising a long time before daybreak and going out into a solitary place to pray. In Gethsemane, though He wanted His disciples near Him, He was removed from the closest of them at least a stone's throw in order that He might know the holy presence of God the more (Luke 22:39). When Jesus perceived that His impressed crowd would desire to crown Him as a king in opposition to the rule that was over them, He sent the people away (John 6:15) and went into the mountain for some needed prayer (Matt. 14:23), and He remained there in prayer for a long season. And He spent all night in private prayer before choosing His apostles (Luke 6:12,13).

Those who are truly spiritually minded and who have prayer burdens on their hearts (actually those who are truly living the Christian life) will so arrange their lives that they will know the joy and the power of a real prayer life. The limited number of

public prayers will not suffice with them.

There is an unquestionable need for many to heed Jesus' instruction to abound in the matter of private prayer. This praying at church but not in the private "closet" is not New Testament Christianity. And note Christ's wonderful promise: "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." May the Lord stir up your heart to walk closer to Him and to pray more each day.

Have you read each of these studies on prayer? Have you meditated on the Scriptural examples of prayer studied? Have you compared them with your own prayers? Wherein have your prayers been found amiss or lacking? How have these studies improved

your own prayers? Do you care how you pray? Is God pleased with your praying? If He isn't how should you go about trying to improve your prayers? May God have blessed them to that end and use these studies as one means of drawing you closer to Him in an everyday life of prayer!

## QUESTIONS

1. How do we know Jesus was not forbidding public prayer in Matt. 6:6?
2. What was Jesus urging in that verse?
3. Cite instances in Jesus' life when He prayed privately.

# How the Devil Attacks Our Prayer Lives

God wants us to pray. His Word is filled with admonitions for us to pray. How God rejoices to see the Christian upon his knees! Jesus has set us an example of fervent, persistent, and prevailing prayer. But the devil attacks our prayer lives. He does everything within his power to keep us from praying. Surely every Christian can verify this in his own experience. If we would maintain the life of constant and prevailing prayer, we must be on guard lest the devil's attacks defeat us. Thus, Paul wrote the Christians to "watch unto prayer". This message is a personal one. The writer is writing from his own experience and the experiences of others with whom he has conversed. Will you not look into your own life, dear reader, and determine just what it is that has been keeping you from praying as you ought?

## 1. We get so busy doing other things that we neglect prayer.

Men get busy with their farming or some other job. Women get busy with the house work and other matters. Preachers get busy with "church work". These may not be necessarily objectionable, but the result is that so much do these occupy people's time

that no time is left (or taken) for prayer.

Now even though we are busy, we take time to eat and sleep. So your writer has found the only solution to the above attack is to devote a definite portion of every day to prayer. Until we make prayer as much a part of every day as we do food, work, and sleep, the devil will always play havoc with our prayer lives and will gain the upper hand.

You people know this is a chief attack in your life. Then take necessary measures to correct this condition. I challenge you to devote a definite time or times in every day when you are to be found in prayer.

## 2. We maintain wrong attitudes toward what we should ask.

The average person has little tasks, little problems, and little matters before him every day of his life. But too often the attitude is that prayer for these little, insignificant things is not in order. The result is that the little things are not taken to the Lord in prayer. On the other hand men do not ask big things of God. They would consider such action as exaggerated. The result is that they do not ask God for big things. Consequently the little things are too

small to bother God with, and the big things are too much to ask of the Lord.

Then some people have the idea that the only things for which we should pray are spiritual blessings. Oh, how this conception has wilted the prayer out of the average person! Actually prayer is the **DESIRE** of the heart expressed to God in the name of Christ. Several appropriate passages could be cited showing that every petition should stem from the desire rooted in the human heart. What did Christ teach we should do about our desires? Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when we pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Jesus says to pray and express our desires to God. What desires? "What things soever ye desire." This would include every desire of the Christian. I challenge you to point out one legitimate desire which a Christian may have which he cannot properly pray to God for. Brethren, by our ignorance and unbelief we have limited that "whatsoever" to spiritual things. But such is vicious and prayer-blighting. It is no wonder people pray so little.

The simple way I pray is this. I am going to pray for **THE VOICE OF EVANGELISM**, shall I say for illustration. How do I pray? Well, I ask myself this question: What do I desire to result from my praying about it? Here are some of the things that come to my mind as my desires with reference to it: I desire spiritual insight into the needs of men's hearts so that vital things can be published which will stir them up for Christ; I desire ability in writing and expressing those things in a powerful way which the Lord has laid on my heart; I desire to be protected from circulating anything that is false teaching; I desire God's help and blessings on the other men who write for the paper; I desire help in compiling the particular issue being made up today; I desire that each sermon, every article, every editorial will fill a need and be blessed as it goes on its way; I desire that more people will get to read the paper regularly; I desire that those who do read might find the help they need; I desire that adequate finances will be on hand to meet every expense connected with it. Now these are some of the things that I desire in my heart for **THE VOICE OF EVANGELISM**. So as I pray, how shall I pray? Shall I say, "Lord, bless the paper; bless and help it to be what it should be; bless and help it grow, etc., etc., etc., in Jesus name. Amen?" No! That type of praying is not telling the Lord in any reasonable way what I

desire. That's a lazy man's way of doing a thing half-heartedly. I take every one of those desires and pray for it personally until my real desire has been sufficiently expressed to God. I can illustrate it like this. Suppose somebody told you to write down your desires, and whatever you desired and asked would be given. How would you do it? Would you write, "Lord, give me whatever I need?" That sounds good but would not express the desires of your heart as God has asked you to do, and because you don't do what God says--express whatever desires you have--you are weak in your prayer life, prayer is a drudgery task that only a conscience can keep you doing. My brethren, you would not write your desires in such a sense. No. You would list the things that were in your heart. You would pray, "Lord, I have a time with my tongue--help me to overcome my sin of gossip. I need wisdom for the responsibility of teaching this particular lesson--Lord, give me the wisdom to deal with pertinent problems. I have a bill (a righteous bill) coming due next week, and, Lord, you have said owe no man anything. Now, Lord, I want to meet my honest debts--help me in some way meet that obligation. If I have wasted money or have been a poor manager, help me know it and overcome it. Father, I am going to talk to Mr. So and So about his soul--help me be used this day to his salvation; help me to know just what to speak; how to speak it; even, Father, where to begin in my talking with him."

Who doesn't delight to express his legitimate and real desires? We all do. But how much better when we realize there is a possibility that those desires can become realities. This is what I understand Jesus to mean about receiving great joy in prayer. He said, "**WHATSOEVER** ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; **ask, and ye shall receive, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL**" (John 16:23,24). Before I came to realize this was the way the Bible teaches us to pray, the way that Biblical prayers were prayed, my prayer life was a burden, a problem, a shamefully weak thing. But now, thank God, I know the joy of prayer. I know the meaning of prayer. It is now the most natural thing of my Christian life. And for anyone who wants to quibble about what I have just written, I ask you, "Would you say you pray as you should? Do you find it a burden to pray? Do you find yourself neglecting prayer? Do you find yourself resolving every time you hear a sermon on prayer that you are

really going to pray from now on, only to fall back into the same old rut?" Then, brother, open your eyes. Ditch this infidel attitude toward prayer as for what you should ask. Make it natural--just like the Bible says--ask God for the desires of your heart, and if you cannot ask God for your desires, then it is wrong for you to have such desires. If in the name of Christ you work to bring about your desires, then why cannot you pray to God to help you in the name of Christ?

### **3. Prayer is too often just a form and habit.**

If the devil cannot keep us from praying, then he must get hold of our prayer lives so prayer means nothing to us spiritually. He often does this by perverting the purpose and the motive of prayer. If he can get us just to say words, to mouth pious expressions, to keep prayer merely formal, then he has nullified the real meaning of prayer. If he can get us to pray merely from the standpoint of habit instead of desire, then again he has defeated us in prayer. How many people merely "say" words over their food! He

gets them to grunt out a few sounds just before crawling into bed at night, not because they love to pray, but because they feel it is their duty to pray.

Whenever the devil has overpowered us with this conception of prayer, then he has us paralyzed as far as active, accomplishing prayer is concerned.

May the Lord bless these words to your prayer lives.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What was the first attack mentioned?
2. What was the suggested solution to this problem?
3. What was the second attack listed?
4. Why do little things often not get prayed about?
5. Why do big things often not get prayed about?
6. What does the Bible say about prayer and our desires?
7. What was the final attack listed?

# **What Makes a Prayer Meeting Joyous?**

The public prayer meeting is almost a "has been". Few congregations even pretend to have a prayer meeting. Usually those that do have prayer meetings find a very light attendance of a few elderly people. In an effort to build the prayer meeting crowd, all types of methods have been used, such as light refreshments afterwards. But a prayer meeting does not need to be dull and boring. A prayer service can be joyous indeed. In fact, all prayer should be joyous. Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL" (John 16:24). In a brief way let us set forth some things that make a public prayer service joyous.

### **1. When many participate.**

When Peter came to Mary's house after being

miraculously delivered from prison, the book of Acts says he found "many gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12). When the prayer meeting draws a good turn-out of faithful, praying people, it makes for a joyous service.

### **2. When there are many urgent requests.**

When brethren come together to pray, there ought to be something to pray about. There is no virtue inherent in merely coming together to pray. But with so many things to pray for and about, there is no excuse for God's children to gather without plenty of urgent requests. When there are deep prayer-burdens on the hearts of those gathering, presented as requests, then a joyous time before the throne of grace is in store.



### **3. When great earnestness characterizes the prayers.**

When people pray with real fervor and spirit, not just mouthing prayer expressions but praying with real feeling and concern, then a prayer service is joyous. Heartless and formal praying has done much to discourage attendance at the prayer meeting.

### **4. When the service is not draggy.**

Over much repetition of certain requests does much to stifle a good prayer meeting. When a request has been sincerely prayed for, then other petitions should be prayed for instead of "vainly" rethrasing a former one.

Great inexcusable pauses between prayers should be avoided if a prayer service has the power it ought to have. A good prayer service is a LIVE service--not a dead and draggy one.

### **5. When people get down on their knees before the Father.**

It is true that one can acceptably pray to God in any legitimate body-position, but it is also true that the Bible pictures earnest prayer many times on the knees. When Paul and the Ephesian elders prayed that farewell prayer, they got down on their knees (Acts 20:36-38). Upon his departure from Tyre, Paul and the brethren knelt on the shore in prayer (Acts 21:3-5). This is a much neglected element in prayer today that we would do well to restore.

### **6. When a brotherly and harmonious spirit pervades the hearts of those gathered.**

Nothing will kill the spirit of prayer quicker than the spirit of enmity and contention. When brethren really love one another, then they are interested in one another's petitions; then they can wholeheartedly engage in the whole service.

Really there is no reason why brethren cannot have real, live, joyous prayer meetings. We thank God for some such services over the land. They have been a blessing to our hearts. We thank God for the faithful preachers who have taught people their need of prayer and how to pray. They have made an inestimable contribution to many lives and homes and to the life of the church.

If the church is not having such a prayer service, by all means do all within your power and ability to gather the brethren for such a service. Pray for yourselves, for one another, for faithful preachers and evangelistic meetings in progress, for backsliders, for interested sinners, for the church itself. May God multiply the power of the church today by multiplying the number of such meetings.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the sad state of prayer meeting with many congregations?
2. Give Biblical proof that prayer should be joyous and not boring?
3. Name 3 things that can make a prayer meeting joyous.

# We Need Prayer-Power with God

Men of the world seek for various kinds of power. They are interested in money power and political power. We often hear of "purchasing power". Religious ecclesiastics are seeking dominating power. Many are paying dearly for personality power. Some are seeking fame that they might have the power of prestige.

But the power that we are declaring that is needed is altogether different from any of the above-named powers. While the above powers are human, earthly, and worldly, the power that is needed lies in a different realm. The power that is really needed is SPIRITUAL power.

I know prayer can accomplish great things. I know there is something wrong when there is much praying but little accomplishment. This demonstrates the fact it is possible to pray but have no prayer-power with God.

There are many ways I know prayer can accomplish great things.

FIRST of all, I know from the promises concerning prayer. Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; 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" (Matt. 7:7-11). Nobody can accept the Bible at face-value and say nothing happens in answer to prayer. People may say prayer is a waste of time and they have whatever they need even if they don't pray, that nothing in particular is a direct result of prayer, but as long as Jesus is the One in whom we believe, we dare not deny that prayer is a powerful part of our Christian lives. Jas. 5:16 declares, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." If such a promise does not mean that prayer accomplishes much, it is nothing but a false promise held out to gullible people.

SECONDLY, I know prayer can accomplish great things because of the emphasis placed on prayer in the example of Jesus. The fervency and the constancy with which Jesus prayed definitely indicates the importance of prayer. Of Him the Hebrew writer wrote, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong

crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7). What a portrait of His wonderful life! Inspiration drew the picture of His prayer-life--praying constantly, praying fervently, praying expectantly! Jesus would not have spent so much time in prayer if it were a fruitless endeavor. If prayer be vain and useless, let us be "wise" and not follow the example of prayer left us by Jesus.

THIRDLY, I know prayer can accomplish great things because of the emphasis placed on prayer in the teaching of the Bible. Of the first converts in the dispensation of grace it says they continued steadfastly in prayer (Acts 2:42). There is much teaching in the epistles about prayer. There are many examples of people praying. There are many allusions to prayer. Why all of this if prayer is void of accomplishment? "Why?" I ask!

FINALLY, I know that prayer can accomplish great things because of my observations of those who do pray. Jesus said, "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" (Matt. 6:6). To those who live the real life of prayer Jesus promises that they will be rewarded openly. In other words, instead of praying as the hypocrites do (pray to be seen of men), Jesus promised that if they lived the life of prayer as they should, they wouldn't need to flaunt their prayer lives before men. God would reward them OPENLY. Men whom I have worked with who are men of great prayer have been blest mightily. God has heard their prayers. He has seen their sincerity and their faithfulness. He has rewarded them openly before the eyes of all men. In the life of every praying child of God there has been that difference of life all can easily detect.

Since prayer can accomplish great things, we ought to pray so as to have great power with God. As willing as we ought to be to ask and receive, I verily believe God is even more willing to hear and give. God delights in answering prayer for those who really trust Him and seek Him. "He is the rewarder of them

that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). There is great depth in that verse which will bear much thought and consideration.

If we are going to pray, surely we ought to pray availingly. We ought to desire to prevail mightily in prayer. We should have great prayer-power with God. But this power we shall never have until we pray the Bible way.

To pray the Bible way means that we must pray continually. The example of Jesus, the example of Paul, and the teaching of the New Testament (I Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2) demonstrate Bible praying is **CONSTANT** praying. Prayer is not something Christians engage in spasmodically. It is something we are to persevere in. If we are going to pray the Bible way, we must take time to pray. We must not get in a hurry about getting through praying when we are alone before the heavenly Father. As we bow before the great God of all, brother after brother, congregation after congregation, preacher after preacher, and need after need should flood our minds and hearts. Such praying is fruitful prayer. It is meaningful and satisfying prayer. Yes, it is powerful prayer. It is the prayer taught in the Bible.

Bible praying prays about "everything"--not just a few things of life. Writing to the Philippians, Paul said, "Be careful for nothing; but in **EVERYTHING** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Not until we learn to pray about the little matters of life and the big matters alike will we know the real and full meaning of prayer. Not until we "take everything to God in prayer", as the hymn goes, will we know the power that prayer can be in our lives. This is Bible prayer, and it alone is availing prayer.

Bible praying is earnest praying. Jas. 5:16 says, "The effectual **FERVENT** prayer of a righteous man availieth much." Of Jesus' praying Luke 22:44 says,

"And being in an agony he prayed more **EARNESTLY**." Concerning a brother who was with Paul, he wrote, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always **LABORING FERVENTLY** for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12). These three passages show us that Bible praying was zealous praying. It was prayed in real earnestness of soul. It was not dead, heartless praying as so much praying tends to be today. Notice that Epaphras actually "labored" in prayer. When the Bible promises great things in answer to prayer, remember that it is fervent earnest praying that carries the promise.

Perhaps many who read these lines are getting nowhere in prayer. Maybe you have started but have quit. Maybe your prayer life goes limping along as a burdensome chore rather than a joyful accomplishment. Aren't you concerned about having greater prayer-power with God? Are you intending to do nothing about the fruitlessness and barrenness of your prayers? Because you dwell among people who have no life in their prayers and who do not persevere in prayer, are you going to be satisfied with such weakness when you could have great power? I tell you it is a shame to pray much and get nowhere. It is a shame to pray and get nowhere when we can pray and get somewhere. In view of real thinking I believe we ought to count the time wasted that we spend in prayer when we get nowhere and avail nothing. Why waste time and power when we can lay hold upon divine power?

## QUESTIONS

1. Of the 4 things mentioned name 3 ways we can know prayer accomplished specific things.
2. What 3 things were pointed out as to the way we should pray?

# Prayer and God's Providence

Somewhere between the natural and the miraculous order of things there is the providential working of God in the affairs of this world. "All things work together for good, to them that love God and that are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28) is a definite statement of such. If I didn't believe in God's providential care, I would cease to pray, for if there isn't God's providence in the world, there can be no answering of prayer. Indeed most people who doubt God's providence today have become very negligent in prayer.

People often propose the theory that prayers have no affect on God, but that the change is merely in us. For example, when we pray, it makes us feel better, and by doing this, prayer does work a blessing on us. The question is, does this theory adequately represent prayer? Does God really hear us? Does He regard our prayers? Has He promised to answer our petitions? If He has, then prayer must be acknowledged to be more than a psychological change in us.

The Scriptures declare that Christ, our great High Priest, "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we might receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15,16). This Scripture makes the psychological theory a very poor representative of prayer. In fact, that which the psychological theory denies, this Scripture affirms--that God is moved and affected about our needs, and in answer to our prayers before the throne of grace grants us mercy and grace in time of need.

The Scriptures abound with affirmations of God's providence, and that He is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. Let us stand by in reverent faith as some of these holy declarations of prayer parade before us: "The eyes of the Lord are over the

righteous and His ears are open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (I Pet. 3:12); "Ask and ye shall receive" (Matt. 7:7); "And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (I John 3:22); "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14); and, "Ye have not because ye ask not, ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your own lusts" (Jas. 4:2,3).

Prayer is conditional, but to them that "walk by the Spirit" and that ask "according to God's will" it is the Father's "good pleasure to give" them the things that will help them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), and He will supply all the needs of His people in Christ (Phil. 4:19).

Jesus was a perfect example of dependence and prayer. Marvelous is the thought that He who had created all things, left His glory, emptied Himself, became wholly dependent and lived among men, revealing to them the true life of trust! As He went about doing good, many times He became wearied, but He withdrew Himself into solitude and there prayed to God. In His trying hour in Gethsemane, He cried with "strong crying and tears", thus exemplifying to mankind what He meant when He said, "Men ought ALWAYS to pray and not to faint."

## QUESTIONS

1. Give Biblical proof of God's providential working?
2. What do some people say is the main effect brought about by prayer?

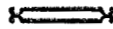
**PART THREE**

**GOOD READING ON PRAYER**

**By OTHERS**

**(Mostly delivered at a rally devoted exclusively  
to the subject of prayer)**

# HOUSECLEANING TIME



Prayer must mean something to us if  
it is to mean anything to God.

# Just Why Should We Pray

By ARCHIE WORD

Read Gal. 4:4-7 and Eph. 6:18.

Generally speaking real prayer has been left in the background if not left out completely in most of the churches over the land. Yet we claim to be a Bible people. Most churches' prayer meetings run less than 20% of the membership, and MORE than 1/2 of those who do come do not pray. Most large congregations average less than 5%, and some less than 1% while others close up, and have no prayer meetings at all. But socials are promoted, pink teas are served, breakfasts are cooked, dinners are spread, entertainment is even hired, bazaars bloom, rummage sales boom, amateur circuses zoom, and slumber parties "doom".

Fasting and praying are OUT, and feasting and playing are IN! Then in order to have "additions", they hire a hotshot organizer and promoter to hold a "Campaign" that is highlighted with entertainment. The church reports additions but not conversions. Soon these unconverted members who have never known the Lord are voted into office. Then worldliness like an army of termites comes in to kill the devour the church of God, His temple.

If you believe the Bible at all, when you read Eph. 6:18 you will be impressed with prayer's importance: "With ALL prayer and supplication (entreaty) praying at ALL seasons, in the Spirit, watching (literally sleeplessness) thereunto, in ALL perseverance and supplication (asking). for ALL the saints." Note all the "ALLS"!

Paul knew man is lazy and forgetful by nature. The tendency is to slack off, get sleepy, and quit. It is hard work to pray earnestly. Church member sinners would much rather visit with their neighbors than talk with God

I propose to speak to you on "Why should We Pray?"

## **A. We should Pray because There is a Devil.**

He is cunning, subtle, mighty to deceive, and untiring, and he never takes a vacation. He is plotting

the ruination of every man, woman, and child. Read the context of our text (Eph. 6:12,13). There our armor is described, and we are brought the "Holy Spirit's climax" in verse 18. The New American Standard puts it this way: "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." We are to add to the shod-feet the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit--and then PRAYER! Constant prayer, persistent prayer, untiring prayer, sleepless prayer in the Holy Spirit. Why? Because there is a devil, and God knows that prayer works.

Before you went around knocking this rally, did you pray? If you had prayed, would you have said what you did? Before you took out that cigarette and lit up, did you pray? If you had prayed, would you have defiled your temple? Before you went to the dance or attended the theater, did you pray? If you had, would you have gone? Before you read that dirty, cheap novel, did you pray? If you had prayed, would you have indulged? Before you stayed home and deserted the church that Jesus died for, did you pray? If you had prayed, would you have done it? Before you hobnobbed with evil companions, gossiped, or cheated God, did you pray? If you had prayed, would you have done so? Before you backslid and quit really serving God, did you pray? If you had prayed, would you have quit the Lord who died to save you? There is a devil in the world, and prayer really puts a dent in his armor.

## **2. Prayer is God's Appointed Way to have His Children Obtain His Blessings.**

The great secret of our "poverty" is our NOT asking. Jas. 4:2 says, "Ye have not because ye ask not!" The subtle secret of our powerless poverty is neglected prayer, and often the direct result is unconverted children in the home. Ask yourself, "Why is it that I make such slow growth in my Christian life? Why so little fruit from my efforts? Why is my Bible school class unconverted? Why do the members where

I preach not pray? Why do I not overcome worldliness? Why do I have no abiding joy in Christ?" The answer is often (too often) neglect of your prayer life. In Luke 11:9,10 God says, "ASK and ye shall receive; SEEK and ye shall find; KNOCK and it shall be opened to you." Your prayers prove what you sincerely believe.

### **3. We should Pray because Jesus has Set the Example.**

In Mark 1:35 it is recorded, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there He prayed." He was a very busy person, but He took time to pray even though at times He robbed Himself of sleep to do so. Luke 6:12: "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." He was also up all night the night before He died on the cross to save you from sin and Hell. All NIGHT! That night He gave the farewell discourse material of John 14, John 15, and John 16; He prayed the prayer of John 17; He prayed and agonized in Gethsemane, was arrested, was given six trials (which were a disgrace and a farce), was condemned, scourged, abused, mocked, and crucified about 9:00 in the morning. Then you think you cannot get up and get to church by 9:45 Sunday morning. If you had been praying and bleeding and agonizing all night for a lost world, you would have no difficulty on Sunday morning to get to the assembly to worship Him who gave up everything to save you. Christ set the example. If He needed to pray, do you not think we do too?

The same Spirit who moved Jesus moves the Christian. Do you have that Spirit manifest in you? If you don't, then remember Rom. 8:9 (you are none of Him).

Jesus was well pleasing to God. He prayed. Would you please God and be blessed of God? Then pray and follow the example of Jesus.

### **4. We should Pray because Intercession is the Important Ministry of Jesus Now.**

Christ's ministry did not close with His death. His atoning death was finished then, but He arose, ascended to the Father, and there opened up a new office which was to complete His atoning death. He is

now our Intercessor. His atonement and intercession are inseparable and of equal value relative to our salvation!

Read Heb. 7:25: "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost, those that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." He saves from sin, even to the uttermost, by His death on Calvary. He takes us through to Heaven, to the uttermost, by His PRAYERS. This verse tells us why He lives--to make intercession for us. Jesus is praying right now in Heaven for you. Rom. 8:34: "Who is he that shall condemn? 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."

Would you have fellowship with Jesus! Pray constantly, persistently, sleeplessly, and overcome in it! Every Christian CAN have a part in this ministry, BUT no one but a real Christian will! The shut in, the busy mother, the wash woman, the businessman, the preacher, the mechanic, the farmer--all may have part in this work of God.

You can be an elder in some churches and not pray, but you cannot be a Christian and not pray. You can lead a Sunday morning Bible school or be a deacon in some churches and not pray, but you cannot be a Christian and not pray. If you do not pray, you are not a child of God. If you are not a child of God, you are a child of the devil. If you are a child of the devil, you are on your miserable road to Hell. What a miserable end for the one who does not pray!

### **5. We should Pray Because It is God's Appointed Way to Impart His Mercies, Grace, and Help.**

Heb. 4:16: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in times of need." This makes it plain that this is God's way for Christians to obtain grace, mercy, and help. It is by PRAYER: bold, outspoken, confident, constant, persistent, sleepless, and overcoming prayer.

We can approach the throne of grace where our sympathetic High Priest intercedes on our behalf, and we must, because we all need mercy, and grace is what we cannot do without. Without these two elements in our lives, we fail utterly. God's grace is of infinite height, depth, length, and width. The measure



of our personal appropriation of His mercy and grace is determined by our prayers.

## **6. We should Pray because of What Prayer Accomplishes.**

We are here merely adding to what we have already stated. Prayer promotes our spiritual growth. Real Bible study and prayer go hand-in-hand. Prayer uncovers secret sins. In Psa.139:23,24 David said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me." David knew what prayer could do. Kneel in prayer, and pray that prayer. Immediately God sends His searchlight into the dark recesses of your soul, and sins you have forgotten about are brought to your mind again. Then through prayer God promises to forgive you, His wandering child. Compare Acts 8:22,23 and I John 1:9.

In answer to prayer God opens up the wonders of His Word. Psa. 119:18: "Open my eyes that I may

see wondrous things out of thy law." In answer to prayer God gives wisdom to know His way. Jas. 1:5: "If any lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not." Then God gives strength to walk in the way He has pointed out.

Finally my "short time friends", have you been a constant, persistent pray-er, watching and overcoming in your prayer life? Have you really ever prayed. Have you been faithful in your time spent in prayer? Are you faithful right now? Have you repented of the sin of not praying? Did you know it is a sin not to pray? I Sam. 12:23-24: "Far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you." There is a way of escape from the penalty of this awful sin. Do you know how it is forgiven? Humbly come to God in prayer and ask Him to forgive you. Read I John 1:6-10 and then obey it.

God loved us, and He still loves us, and He is waiting to hear from your heart via your lips, His Name called in prayer. Do it today. Do it right now and receive His promised blessing.

# **Just Why We Don't Pray**

By RODNEY REYMAN

Is it because we aren't taught? No, I think not. When anyone in the church wants to know a good subject on which to teach, I usually suggest "Prayer". Prayer is the subject for study and discussion in many of our assemblies.

This title suggests that we don't pray as we should. We do not pray with enough earnestness, faith, and submissiveness to God. We do not "strive in our prayers to God" as Bible prayers did.

I prayed about this lesson and tried to figure out why we do not pray and finally decided to ask different ones of the saints. I was somewhat surprised to find that most of them answered me in the same general way. Most of them said, "We just forget about it much of the time and fail to stop and think about how great God is and how much we need Him." In this answer to the question, I'm sure that most of them ailed to realize just what is involved in a

confession of forgetfulness.

We want to discuss the problem of forgetfulness of God and how to deal with it. This is a heavier subject than we may think at first, and if we can come to grips with this problem and correct it, only Heaven would fully reveal the results.

## **1. The Problem of Forgetfulness**

This is an age-old problem of God's people. It is more tragic than we realize. We will see that it is a very subtle affliction of the soul, and we should know the mind of God regarding it.

God is near WHEN we call on Him (Deut. 4:7-9). When we forget Him in prayer, we begin to look to something else for help. We look to our own wisdom, friends, doctors, government, horoscope, fortunetellers, books, etc. (Deut. 4:23,24).

Prosperity has always had a tendency to make man forgetful of God. This was taught in the warning verses that Moses gave the Israelites (Deut. 6:10-12; 8:11-19). Also the thought in Hos. 13:6 is similar. Jesus taught us that over-indulgence was a cause of forgetfulness, and I'm sure when we become extremely concerned about the body's needs and desires, we tend to forget God (Luke 21:34-36). Our affluent society is not conducive to prayer. We are commanded not to forget (II Kings 17:38; Prov. 3:1). Many people have testified they were happier when they were poor and were not so involved in business and taking care of the many material assets God has given them.

The more you consider the matter of forgetfulness, the more serious it becomes. It is an evil (Judg. 3:7). It makes us godless and is a mark of God's enemies (Job 8:13,14; Psa. 119:139-141). People who forget God let their children go to the dance, and the children forget God also and hate anyone who tries to remind them of the importance of prayer meeting. Read it in Job 21:11-15.

We forget the good things God does for us everyday and therefore fail to thank Him in prayer (Psa. 78:11; Psa. 106:13,14,21). When God is forgotten, fearfulness takes over in our hearts. Though we are in the very midst of the handiwork of God, we fail to realize His presence (Isa. 51:12-13). God has commanded us to be alert (Eph. 5:14; II Tim. 1:7). Forgetfulness is habit-forming (Jer. 2:32,33). It becomes a willful forgetfulness since we see ourselves as so very guilty of rebellion and ingratitude (II Pet. 3:5).

Forgetfulness of God is just plain backsliding (Jer. 3:21,22). Some assume they are cleared of guilt when they say, "I forgot." God doesn't look at it this way. We can never know the true mind of God without revelation. Man's ways are not God's ways (I Cor. 2:9; Isa. 55:8,9).

Forgetfulness makes people crooked and dishonest (Eze. 22:12). Do you pray about business deals? Do you prayerfully bring your tithes and offerings to the Lord? Prayer keeps all other phases of our relationship to Christ and others as it should be. Prayer about everything is essential (Phil. 4:6). When we put God in the background and go our own ways, we must bear the guilt of our own sins (Eze. 23:35).

When God is forgotten, men try to use all kinds of carnal devices to build God's church. They

try various organizations, association, all sorts of advertising, build showy buildings, and continually boast of their accomplishments. God has little place in their plans, and they drift away from the spiritual pattern for the church (Hos. 8:14). In Rev., chapters 12 and 17, you can notice the contrast between the true bride and the harlot church. We should analyze ourselves and see where we stand with God. God's work is not dependent upon material things and schemes of man for its progress but upon the power of God (Zech. 4:6).

We are in need of continual exhortation. We need many times of meeting together for fellowship because we are so given to forgetfulness (Heb. 12:5). Some churches are known to forget to have a time of fasting and prayer when men are set aside for the ministry. It is amazing how many serious things are forgotten! Peter said that some people even forgot they were baptized (cleansed--II Pet. 1:9). This seemed strange to me, but just yesterday while visiting a lady in her sixties at the hospital, she said she couldn't remember if she had been baptized or not.

Some say, "We hear so much of the same old thing at church that is gets tiresome. It doesn't if you like it. I eat about the same stuff for breakfast everyday, and so do you, but you still like it. Stores stock the same stuff month after month because people come back for it over and over again. If you like something and are interested in it, it doesn't get tiresome.

Many forgetful people need to be converted to Christ. They have a form of godliness and are denied the power thereof. That's why God doesn't like it when people forget Him. He is our very source of life and breath and all things, yet we forget Him "Days without number"! God's wrath was prayed down on those who neglected family worship (Jer. 10:25). The very God who gives us our homes, our strength, and our daily bread is ignored day after day in many so-called Christian families. When families are too rushed to take time for daily prayer together, they need to stop and set some new priorities. Nothing is more important to a family than daily worship together!

## **2. What shall We Do about This Problem of Forgetfulness?**

The first thing we need to do is get stirred up

about it. Too many are like those mentioned in Isa 64:7. Don't be passive about this condition. God's wrath is revealed against it, and it's the raging wrath of a jealous God! Timothy was told to stir up the gift that was in him (II Tim. 1:6). After Peter had warned against the danger of forgetfulness, he thought it right to stir up people's memories (II Pet. 1:12-15; II Pet. 3:1,2). Let the good, old Word stir you up and then do these three things:

FIRST, establish a definite time for private prayer each day. Jesus said, "When thou prayest enter into thine chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father" (Matt. 6:6). Now, don't do a lot of talking about it. You will ruin it if you do. That's what the devil would like you to do. Just do it in secret between yourself and God. Surely we will pray with our families or other Christians as the occasion arises and also at various times throughout the day, but set a time for private prayer also. It's best at the beginning of the day. If you cannot do it then, work out a schedule so it fits into your day somewhere. David prayed in the morning (Psa. 88:13), and of course this was true of our Saviour (Mark 1:35).

SECOND, make a list of requests. This helps your memory. For a trivial thing like going shopping, most people make a list. You don't just go to the market and say, "Give me 20 dollars worth of groceries." You put some thought and planning into it. How much more should we with prayer! We have discovered that it's no small offense against God to forget, so we need every possible encouragement to remember to pray and to pray as we should. We don't want our prayers to be casual and programmed and shallow. We want to pray with a fervent spirit and in a definite way. A list helps a lot. It keeps us from a lot of meaningless nothings in our prayers.

THIRD, learn to practice self-defense. Every Christian must carefully study self-defense if he is ever to live a life of submission to God. I mean, spiritual defense, and I mean the James-method (Jas. 4:7). This is two-fold. Go only half-way, and you are defeated. There are many times that I have not felt like praying and had a terrific struggle. If you will follow the method in Jas. 4:7, you will experience victory, and angels will minister to you.

You must submit to God, saying something like, "Now my will, but thine be done." Then you must resist Satan like Jesus did. The reason you have a struggle in prayer is because the devil doesn't want you to pray. You must quote a Scripture to Satan, one that pertains to your need for prayer and God's help, and then say, "Get thee behind me, Satan," or tell him to leave you. You must say this in Jesus' name because he won't pay any attention to you otherwise. He's stronger than you are but not stronger than the Spirit of Jesus Christ! Now please try this when you have a problem with prayer. Please speak to Satan in Jesus' name and ask him to leave, and you will experience a power and freedom in prayer and the ministry of angels that will make your prayer time worthwhile. All you do, of course, must be in Jesus' name (Col. 3:17). Never be disrespectful or rash with Satan. He has tremendous power. Remember what it says in Jude 9.

The way to defeat Satan is by the Spirit's Sword, but you must use it (Matt. 4:1-11). We must realize this tardiness in prayer is not just a physical handicap but is simply the "oppression of the devil". He must be resisted in the same way Jesus did! When I do this, I experience a different Spirit take control of me. Pray for a fuller measure of the Spirit in your life. Just as the Holy Spirit helped the disciples remember as the need arose, so also He will cause you to remember to pray and remember what to pray for too.

Conclusion: We see that a deep reason for prayerlessness is forgetfulness. We can see the seriousness of this offense against God. We can see how to overcome it. There is suffering involved, but the ministering of angels and the victories won make it well worth the effort. Psychological studies at the University of Michigan have shown that people aren't haphazard about the things they remember. They remember the things they really care about. Also what you remember about another is a strong indication of the relationship you have with that one.

How is our relationship with God? Do we care about Him and His will? "If you love me," said Jesus, "you will keep my commandments." He has commanded us to pray. Will you remember?

# God's Promise and God's Power for Prayer - Do We Really Believe?

By RODNEY REYMAN

Nature's laws seem unchangeable. Some feel, "Why pray? God rules the universe by unchangeable natural laws." We have found out by experience, however, that we can tap the resources behind natural law by prayer. "Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer," Jas. 5:16 (Phillip's). This is not unscientific. Dr. Alexis Carol, a scientist of renown, said, "The most powerful form of energy one can generate is prayer." Though he had witnessed power demonstrated in the mechanical, electronic, and even atomic form, he said, "Prayer power is greater."

Since prayer has great power in its effects, and the world seems to be governed by natural law, how can harmony exist between these two ideas? The reign of law cannot be denied. There is law and order in all of God's creation, witnessed even in the vast expanse of space. It makes modern science possible with all of its various applications. The use of gravity, modern space travel, and electricity all work with the natural laws.

Is prayer merely subjective? Does it simply readjust our thinking so that we work better with existing circumstances? Think about this: Creative and purposive personality can manipulate natural laws and use them. Ordinarily a heavy substance falls to earth, but at this very moment I hear the roar of a heavier-than-air machine in the skies above. This shows that man can use the laws and forces of nature to his own advantage.

Water normally flows downhill, yet everyday it flows freely uphill in the highest buildings through the power of creative personality.

Many scoffers criticize the incident recorded in II Kings 6 of an axe head floating, yet everyday the iron steamships sail the seas.

In short, personality can work the most wondrous effects by simply using natural forces to serve personal ends. This adds a new dimension to cause-and-effect. With man's personality injected into

the picture, things happen that natural law could not produce. The sun and the wind can remove the snow and ice from the road. But so can men with salt and a blade. The Straits of Gibraltar are explained by natural forces. But personality explains the Suez Canal. We can, therefore, see that the injection of the personal will into the picture bring changes in the situation without breaking any natural laws. If such is true on the limited human level, what could be said concerning God's relation to natural law? He is master of all laws. Our knowledge is partial; His is complete. God has forces entirely unknown to man at His disposal! He does things that are so entirely unexplainable from the human viewpoint that we simply call them miracles. This is not to say that God necessarily suspends natural laws. It may seem that He does simply because of limited human comprehension (Job 9:9-12). This simply means that God can do for us what purely natural law could no more raise a man from the dead without divine intervention than natural forces could send a man to the moon without human intervention. Prayer-power then is the result of man's aligning himself with the divine personality of our Creator in such a way that things take place that never would otherwise. This does away with the argument against prayer based on the unchangeableness of natural law and forces. Whatever God does in response to prayer is perfectly natural to Him and the use of His laws. We can ask of Him in complete confidence (Psa. 84:11).

We do not pray presumptuously. There is a difference in "faith in prayer" that makes prayer a wizard's wand to command anything into existence and "prayer in faith" which approaches God in submissive faith, ever desiring to align ourselves with His all-powered divine purpose, who "works all things after the counsel of his will."

In consideration of the subject of this message let us first think briefly upon

## 1. The Promise of Prayer.

Though it is by no means the first or last promise, it is always refreshing to read Matt. 7:7-11. James tells us that the greatest hindrance to the realization of this promise is failure to ask, or asking with a greedy motive (Jas. 4:3).

The prayer-promise of Isa. 58:9 is also in the definite context of unselfishness. The promise of answer to prayer before we even carefully ask of our desires is set forth in Isa. 65:24. Many of us have experienced the truth of this promise!

Other promises that are simply stated and the results followed are: Abraham's prayer for Abimelech (Gen. 20:17,18); Israel during their captivity (Jer. 29:12-14); the children of Israel's understanding God's promise to answer prayer (I Sam. 7:8-13); even wicked old Jeroboam understood God's promise to answer prayer (I Kings 13:6); Hezekiah experienced God's promise to hear and answer many times (II Kings 20:1,2,5,6). It is quite obvious that God has promised to hear and answer prayer. This seems to be the pattern in both Old and New Testaments.

Let us give some thought to

## 2. The Power of Prayer.

There is one Old Testament character who was a special example of power in prayer: Elijah. He is chosen in the New Testament as an example for us in prayer. There are many others, however, in both the Old and New Testaments who prayed and prevailed. Jacob's prevailing prayer caused his name to be changed to Israel. Moses was a man of prayer whose intercessory prayers saved Israel over and over again. Daniel was a habitual pray-er. There are many others from Abraham to the last of the Old Testament prophets, including kings, priests, prophets, soldiers, judges, reformers and sufferers of all sorts. But why was Elijah chosen as the outstanding example of prayer for us?

The Old Testament story offers no explanation for his power. The narrative simply tells of his dramatic experiences and ends with the most dramatic of all: the way he left this earth! He dwelt in solitary places, and his plaintive cry is often heard: "I am alone."

You can't be a gad-about who is always socializing if you want power in prayer. You must

separate yourself for long periods of time, even from your dearest ones on earth, to be alone with God if you expect to experience prevailing power in prayer. The Old Testament closes with Elijah's promise to return, and the New Testament begins with its fulfillment. Now the New Testament's explanation of the man and his work is simply that he prayed. On the surface of the Old Testament record we notice that Elijah prayed, but the New Testament shows that prayer was the entire explanation for his power. He stands out as a long figure, yet in the New Testament it says he was a man of like passions as we. James makes it plain that he was a man of like passions with us--but HE PRAYED--and that makes the difference. We don't pray like we should!

Anyone who really prays is going to be different too. He's not going to be in want, defeated, bound by lust, and always making mistakes.

The main difference there is in preachers can be found in that some pray, and some don't! A while back a brother said that if a preacher feels he must move to a different field, usually all he needs to do is fast and pray for a couple of days and go back to work where he is because the problem is probably entirely with himself. People who are always wanting to go somewhere else to "get away from it all" can never do it because there is no way to get away from yourself but to go to God, and He is everywhere! It's not the altitude that needs changing; it's the attitude. It's not the view that needs changing but your viewpoint. The change needs to be in the inner man, not the location!

Prayer with Elijah was divine force. One translation of Jas. 5:16 says, "The energized prayer of a righteous man is of great force." Elijah never discussed natural law. He never doubted what we call supernatural law. He prayed, and there was no rain. He prayed again, and it came in floods. He prayed for life to come again to the dead child of the widow, and it came. He prayed for fire from heaven, and God sent it. He did not argue about prayer. He prayed.

Prayer today will solve the problem of prayer. Do you believe it? There have always been problems about prayer. In the wilderness the Israelites questioned how God could possibly provide for them, but Moses prayed, and God answered. We stand on the very threshold of unexplored worlds, and what seemed impossible to man a few years back has now happened. If so much is possible with man, who can say that anything is impossible with God? Words of

men can be heard by men hundreds of thousands of miles away, so who dares say God can't hear us? He who made the heavens and the earth and all therein is surely greater than what He made! Who can believe He is imprisoned within His own laws!

No one denies the power of prayer to influence the mind and develop character and purify the will and motives, but that is not all. Prayer is force. Prayer changes things when we get in touch with "the Lord God of Elijah".

Everyone who truly prays has found there is no explanation but God for the things that follow. I am reluctant to give personal examples of answer to prayer, but I can, and you can too. The language of the psalmist is often on my heart, "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

I will say that the way I find prospects is, I pray. The way I study is, I pray. The way I preach is, I pray. The way I keep out of debt, live joyfully with the wife of my youth, the way we reared our children, and the only way I ever get anything worthwhile accomplished is by prayer. If we don't pray right, it is doubtful that we can do anything right. "Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus said.

Now it's not just any kind of prayer that works. It is the energized prayer that is of great force. Elijah was a man of passion in all he did. God can't stand lukewarm hearts, but He responds to hearts aflame (Jer. 29:13,14). Of Elijah it says in the footnote of the American Standard that in "prayer he prayed". There is some prayer that has little praying in it. When he went into the death chamber, he put himself into the prayer. Hear him plead the honor of God on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18:36,37). In true prayer of God's saints it's always the same: Abraham pleading for Sodom; Jacob wrestling in the night, saying, "I will not leave thee except thou bless me;" Moses standing in the breach, pleading; Hannah pleading, full with sorrow and desire; Samuel in prayer, crying to God all night for Saul; David in prayer, heartbroken in grief; Jesus praying with "strong crying and tears" and bloody sweat!

Such praying prevails and is powerful in its working. It changes people. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings fire. It brings God onto the scene! In the case of Elijah he was fed by the birds, fire came from heaven, the dead were raised, needs were abundantly

supplied, rain ceased, rain came again, and the New Testament attributes all this to prayer and says we should have similar results from similar prayers.

This type of prayer is more effective in secret. It takes an abandonment of self. The truth of the passage in Jas. 5:17,18 is that Elijah prayed with energy and vitality. The Greek meaning of the passage brings out this truth. This righteous man got his face down between his knees and kept up the persistent petition for seven times (and it wasn't any vain repetition either), and finally the little cloud appeared, and the flash flood came! Read it and weep that we aren't more like Elijah (I Kings 18:42-44)!

### 3. Do We Really Believe?

Much of the time it doesn't appear that we do. I hate to say anything against the church since Jesus loved it, and I do too, but love carries with it chastening (Rev. 3:19). The pattern for prayer that Jesus gave us in Matt. 6:9-13 shows the necessity of daily family prayer. More time is spent in lamenting the evil in our day than in prayer to overcome it. Natural law need not be set aside for God to work. This we have discussed. Jesus said, "Have faith in God." Faith is so powerful, it is so precious, it is reckoned for righteousness. It brings great peace. And it is from God (Eph. 6:23). He wants us to have it. Let us pray, "Lord, increase our faith."

Conclusion: Our God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Recently a man went to a dealer to buy a Rolls Royce. Money was no object to him, but being a practical business man he said, "I'd like to see the motor." The salesman said, "I'm sorry, Sir, we never show the motor. The company trains your chauffeur in maintenance, and you have no need to see it. It's guaranteed." The customer asked the horse power, and the salesman said he didn't know. The wealthy man about to spend big dollars for the car told the salesman to wire the company immediately and find out. He did. The wire came back and simple read: "Horse power adequate." Our God is that way too. His power is adequate to cleanse our doubtful and wayward hearts and to make us partakers of His power through prayer.

Will you really believe Him?

# You are not Spending Enough Time in Prayer

By JERRY WELLER

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

Lengthy fellowship with God was one of the privileges of Adam and Eve in Eden. Since then it has been the desire of godly men such as Enoch ("Enoch walked with God," Gen. 5:23), Samuel ("It grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night," I Sam. 15:11), Moses ("I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights! I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger... Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the Lord had said he would destroy you," Deut. 9:18,25), and our Lord Himself ("It came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God," Luke 6:12).

This need has been felt even by Gentiles ("When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking," Matt. 6:7) and Pharisees ("Scribes and Pharisees... for a pretense make long prayers," Matt. 23:14).

To help us maintain proper spirituality the Scriptures warn us against both a lack of prayer and of lengthy prayers for a show.

Proposition: Let us consider the charge and then the challenge of our title: "You are not spending enough time in prayer."

## 1. The Charge.

You are not spending enough time in prayer when you consider various Bible passages. Note the capitalized words in the following verses:

"Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face CONTINUALLY" (I Chron. 16:11); "Men ought ALWAYS to pray" (Luke 18:1); "Praying ALWAYS"

(Eph. 6:18); "Pray WITHOUT CEASING" (I Thess. 5:17); "CONTINUING instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12); "Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face EVERMORE" (Psa. 105:4).

While reflecting on the above passages, fill in the proper blanks below:

I do \_\_\_\_\_, don't \_\_\_\_\_ have a prayer time daily.

I spend \_\_\_\_\_ minutes daily in prayer.

I am \_\_\_\_\_, am not \_\_\_\_\_ satisfied with my prayer life.

My biggest hindrance to prayer is \_\_\_\_\_.

You are not spending enough time in prayer when you consider various Bible characters and their prayers. Consider the praying of the following Bible characters: Cornelius ("Prayed to God alway," Acts 10:2); David ("Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice," Psa. 55:17; "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up," Psa. 5:3; "I prevented (anticipated) the dawning of the morning, and cried" Psa. 119:147); Daniel ("He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime," Dan. 6:10); the apostles ("It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables... We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts 6:2-4); the early Christians ("Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him," Acts 12:5); Paul ("Night and day praying exceedingly, "I Thess. 3:10; "We give thanks to God... praying always for you. Since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you", Col. 1:3,9); Anna ("She... departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," Luke 2:37; Compare I Tim. 5:5: "She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and

day”); and Jesus (“In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed,” Mark 1:35; “And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land,”

Mark 6:46,47; “He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,” Luke 6:12).

In view of these thoughts are you spending enough time in personal, family, and congregational prayer? Yes \_\_\_\_\_, No \_\_\_\_\_.

## You are not Earnest Enough in Your Prayers

By MALBURT PRATER

Jas. 5:17 “He prayed earnestly.”

I presume that some who hear these charges feel the speakers are presumptuous and have no right to bring such accusations. Brethren, I did not plan this rally, and I did not choose this topic, but I AGREE with this proposition. For a long time I have felt that we are short on fervency and earnestness in prayer.

Generally speaking if there is fervency in petitioning our God, the person learned this from a Pentecostal or holiness group and not a Church of Christ. It is like the little lady who attended a very formal assembly for the first time. The robed clergyman with manuscript in hand climbed into his preaching stall. He read a verse of Scripture, and the little lady responded with a hearty “Amen!” It startled the rector, but he considered it a favorable response. He quoted another verse from memory and received the same response whereupon an usher tapped the lady on the shoulder and said, “We don’t do that here.” She said, “I cain’t hep it; I got religion.” “I can’t help it if you have--you didn’t get it here.” That’s right.

A man told me he hadn’t been a Christian very long when he was called on to lead in prayer. He prayed fervently. He told me it was the only way he knew to pray. Well, praise God, but after the meeting a sister took him aside and said, “That is not the way we pray in the Church of Christ.” Brother, wouldn’t it be wonderful if this rally would operate on our prayer lives and give us some of the old time fire and fervency that we need so that when we go back to the home congregations, prayer meetings would be happy

meetings where we could share our prayer burdens and pray earnestly to a great big wonderful God? Maybe we can change the attitude enough so that in ten years people in the heretical groups will say, “You pray like the Church of Christ people.”

What causes the leaders of this rally to formulate a charge like this: “YOU ARE NOT EARNEST ENOUGH IN YOUR PRAYERS”? They have been in our prayer meetings, and they seem as wells without water, dry cisterns, rivers that are only beds of dry sand. That’s right. The prayers have dried up, the prayer meetings are dried up, and we hold onto a form.

Listen, friend, Jesus would put our lives at floodtide--no ebb tide, no rise and fall, but constant flowing in and filling up and flooding out. John 7:38: “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.” But, oh, what God sees in our prayer lives! DRY, DRY, DRY as moon dust. Look at the Bible descriptions of prayer; “With the heart” (Jer. 29:13); “with the whole heart” (Psa. 119:58); “pouring out the soul” (I Sam. 1:15); “a desire to be heard” (Neh. 1:6); “importunity” (Luke 11:8,9); “weeping” (Hos. 12:4); “seeing” (Matt. 7:7); “pleading” (Gen. 32:9-12); “fasting” (Acts 13:3); “kneeling” (Acts 20:36); and “crying” (Psa. 27:7). BUT this is not the way we do it!

My brother, how long has it been since you poured out your soul to God in prayer? How long since you were in a meeting where anyone else did? God has tried to teach us to do this. He said Elijah was like we are, and he prayed earnestly! You may say, “But I’m not like Elijah--he was an inspired



prophet, he was gifted." Brother, he was like we are; God says so. God wants us to pray like Elijah.

We are too much like the little girl whose mother asked if she had said her prayers before going to bed. "No, Mom, I didn't need anything tonight." While the normal state of affairs exists, we think we don't need anything, so we say a little poem we learned or a little prayer we said last week. But if your loved one goes to the hospital and is about to die, or if you are in a foxhole with enemy fire all around, THEN YOU PRAY EARNESTLY! If we could just get our minds off the material world and see Heaven and Hell. If we could see terrible Gethsemane and horrible Calvary and the great Judgement Day, our prayers would be earnest prayers. When Peter started sinking in those powerful waves of Galilee, he didn't quietly say, "Lord, save me." He wanted to be heard: "LORD, SAVE ME!"

I tell you our prayers are so cut-and-dried they sound like we just want men to hear us. Well, it is the truth. And I confess that too many times mine are just like yours--no seeking, no pleading, and no weeping. We do not pray earnestly enough.

Have you been where one person breaks down weeping in prayer? What effect is there? Well, other hearts respond, our eyes well up, and we weep with those who weep. That's when I feel like we have touched the heart of God. People, we are too dry-eyed. We would rather talk and criticize and gossip and hate people than we would cry and pray to God for them. No, you are not earnest enough. "Hear O Lord, when I cry with my voice" (Psa. 27:7).

This charge has done me more good than it can ever do you. When I began to prepare for this, I decided I had better get some earnestness myself, so I began to fast for about twenty-four hours. If you don't believe the flesh is weak, try fasting. Some say that was just Old Testament, but the early Christians fasted (Acts 13:2), the apostles fasted (II Cor. 6:5), Paul fasted (II Cor. 11:27), and Jesus fasted (Matt. 4:2). God is able to bring sin before your eyes if your

stomach isn't too full. David said, "I humbled my soul with fasting." When a man goes without food and drink so he can pray more earnestly, God hears prayers from a heart like that--He knows you mean business. Paul said I want you to strive together with me in your prayers. If you want a picture of earnest prayer, look at Luke 22:44 or Heb. 5:7.

There are two other things I just mention in connection with earnest prayer.

One has to do with posture. Twenty years ago most of the prayer meetings had most of the Christians on their knees, but not today. This may be my option, but I believe kneeling shows a little more earnestness than standing. It show more humility before a great God, and God hears the humble. In Acts 20:36 Paul knelt down and prayed.

Then importunity shows earnestness. "Shall not God avenge his elect which cry day and night?" (Luke 18). Brethren, we need some "day and night" praying.

I must say something about forgiveness. Many Christians and whole congregations are kept from having peace that prayer brings and are actually suffering physically because they are too stubborn to forgive. Oh, my people, the Bible teaches "forgiveness as you forgive."

Earnest prayers are the only ones the Lord hears. You know and I know that most prayers are not heard. This "yes, no, wait awhile" explanation is a cover for half-hearted, cut-and-dried, hypocritical prayers. Jas. 5:16 says the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and any other kind doesn't avail very much.

Are you one of the many among us who would have trouble digging up one successful prayer? One with an answer that is really definite? We ought to have a prayer testimony every week; yea, if burdened and earnest, every day.

WE HAVE NOT BEEN EARNEST ENOUGH IN OUR PRAYERS.

# You are not Thorough Enough in Your Prayers

By RODNEY REYMAN

In the event you resent this accusation, please bear with us as we consider the subject, and then if you are still inclined to resent it, you may be heard.

When I was assigned the subject, I regarded it as being personally addressed to me. There seems to be two realms in which I neglect prayer, and having personally been convicted by the subject, I have sought to rectify them. They are:

1. The seemingly difficult and unlikely.
2. The seemingly trivial and unimportant.

I do not always ignore these areas of prayer, but my neglect is more prevalent in them.

It is evident that all prayer requests seem to include people in them. Whether it is for famine or rain, prosperity, food, mercy, or healing, people are involved. Since people are of high value, prayer is too.

Proposition: The following Scriptures relating to prayer make us aware that we have need for more thoroughness in prayer.

1. Praying for civil rulers (I Tim. 2:1-4).
2. Praying for laborers in the harvest of souls (Matt. 9:36-38).
3. Praying for all saints in the right way at the right time (Eph. 6:18).
4. Praying definitely for certain preachers (Col. 4:2-4; II Cor. 1:11,12; Heb. 13:18,19).
5. Praying for the afflicted and sick (Gen. 20:17; II Kings 20:1-11; I Sam. 1:9,10).
6. Praying for health and prosperity (III John 2; Neh. 1:11).
7. Praying for food (Matt. 6:11; Prov. 30:7-9; Gen. 28:20-22).
8. Praying for deliverance (Exo. 2:23-25; II

Thess. 3:2). We need deliverance (II Cor. 1:10; Acts 12:5).

9. Praying for discernment (Gen. 24:42-48; Acts 1:21-26).

10. Praying for friends (Job 42:10).

11. Praying in unity for certain needs (Takes forethought to get together--Matt. 18:19,20).

12. Praying for enemies (Matt. 5:44; Acts 7:60).

13. Praying for the lost (Rom. 10:1).

14. Praying for the weak and wayward (Luke 22:21,22; Acts 8:24).

15. Praying for mercy (Psa. 51:1; I John 1:9; Psa. 119:132).

16. Praying for wisdom as Solomon did (Jas. 1:5-8).

17. Praying for the church (Eph. 1:15-23). (Note the detailed requests for their spiritual development.) In most of Paul's letters he testified of his praying in detail for the church. The thoroughness of his prayers for the church alone makes me feel my lack of it.

18. Prayer for deliverance from temptation (Psa. 141:2-5).

19. For unity among God's people (Jesus gave us an example--John 17:20,21).

Now in compiling this list I skipped over so many prominent passages! It could be doubled and tripled! I meditated for an hour and decided I could remember way over a thousand people whom I know personally (and I am sure I forgot some!)

Are we thorough in our prayers? The main prayer I can think of in the Bible is the one in Luke 18:13: "God be thou merciful to me the sinner."

# Jesus has Shown us How to Pray

By DONALD HUNT

The Holy Spirit inspired the writer of Hebrews to show that Jesus' earthly life was a life of prayer--earnest prayer. He wrote, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." This is the way we should live our lives on earth!

Jesus' constant earthly companions, the apostles, were much impressed with what prayer meant to Him, for one day they waited until He had finished praying and then asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). It should be a rebuke to our prayer lives if we have never had anyone ask us to teach him or her to pray because of the way we pray!

Jesus' prayer life was indeed impressive, and it is an example to us. He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21). He prayed before He ate (Luke 24:30). He prayed all night before choosing the twelve apostles and before preaching the most famous sermon on record, the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:12). He prayed for Peter even when His own burden was getting heavier and heavier (Luke 22:31,32: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee"). He prayed instead of sleeping in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41-44). He prayed mercy upon His heartless crucifiers (Luke 23:34). The last thing He did before He died was pray (Luke 23:46: "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit"). What a wonderful way for us to leave this world. And He prayed as He left the earth to return to Heaven in His ascension (Luke 24:50,51: "He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven"). What an example of prayer Jesus has left us!

Let us look into that prayer life to see what we can find for our own needs.

## 1. Jesus did not Try to Get along without Prayer.

He knew He had accepted a dependent role

when incarnated. Heb. 2:10-14 brings this out. Let us look at verse 14 of that section: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." How different this was from the eternal glory and power He had previously known when He was with the Father. Now He was a man on His maternal side. Now He was subservient to the Father. Now He was cast into the role of a servant, of a dependent. How well He lived the teaching of Prov. 3:5,6: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Jesus realized one's spiritual life cannot exist without prayer any more than one's physical life can exist without breathing. Do we realize this?

If God can get it through our heads and into our hearts that we should not try to get along without Him, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit, then we would pray like Jesus prayed. But if we think we can get along without God, watch the subtlety of the human heart. It will lift itself up and forget God instead of lifting up one's voice to God in constant, fervent prayer. We sing this dependence in various songs. We sing, "Jesus is all the world to me: my life, my joy, my all; He is my strength from day to day; without Him I would fall." We also sing, "I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus; I cannot bear these burdens alone; I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus; Jesus can help me, Jesus alone." Four words in that last song are emphatic: "I cannot" and "Jesus can". When we truly realize there are many things we cannot do in our own strength and understanding, then we will seek Him who is "able to exceeding abundantly above all that we ask" (Eph. 3:20). But if we don't think this way, we won't pray.

## 2. Jesus Got away from Everybody Else to Pray.

Mark 1:35 tells us what He did one morning at Capernaum: "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary

place, and there prayed.” He could have remained where He was and prayed, but He wanted to get away and be with His heavenly Father all alone. This is the essence of true spirituality. Another time, after feeding the 5,000, He sent the apostles away by boat and the people by land, and “He went up into a mountain apart to pray.” He was there alone. Thus reads Matt. 14:22,23. Jesus went “apart” to pray. He got where He could be “alone” as He prayed. Is this a part of your prayer practice? Do you love to be alone with God? Do you ever get up early to pray? Do you have a solitary place where you can pray?

Listen to the words of this beautiful song: “On Mount Olive’s sacred brow Jesus spent the night in prayer; He’s the pattern for us all, all alone. If we’ll only steal away in some portion of the day, we will find it always pays to be alone. There are days I like to be with the sanctified and blessed; there are days I like to be all alone. These can never grace impart to my weary, sin tossed heart. There are days to fast and pray for the pilgrim in this way; there are days to be with Christ all alone. We can tell Him all our grief; He will give us quick relief. There are days I like to be just all alone. Where a heart is broken up with the bitter, woeful cup; there’s the time to go to Christ all alone. In our blessed Lord divine, there is peace and joy sublime when we take our sorrows all to him alone.”

Group-prayer at church is good. Family-prayer is also good. And so is praying with one’s mate. But there is really nothing like a Christian’s being all alone with God in prayer. We can tell Him everything. We can say it just the way we feel. We don’t have to be concerned about what others think or how much of their time we are consuming. We don’t have to bother them with things that concern only ourselves and God. In these “alone-with-the-Lord” sessions we can have the very closest communion, and we can see why the altar of incense (Old Testament type of prayer) was the nearest place to the Holy of Holies! We can take our time. We can search our hearts. We can talk things over as friend with Friend. We can do what we feel like doing even when we wouldn’t do the same when praying with others. Sometimes it is good just to bow quietly before the Lord, ask Him to receive you in Jesus’ name, and sweetly and lovingly converse with Him. Oh, the blessing sometimes of meaningfully and personally saying the words of certain songs to the Lord, like, “My Jesus, I love Thee; I know Thou

art mine. For Thee all the follies of sin I resign. My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ‘tis now. I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me and purchased my pardon on Calvary’s tree; I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ‘tis now.” And then as other similarly appropriate songs come to your mind, say them over to God personally. Oh, what a season of refreshing your soul will have from the Lord! Try it. You will see. And when you pray like that, all alone, you know you are sincere about it. You are not praying because others are. You are not praying because others hear you. You are praying because you want to, and you are praying to God to be heard of Him.

### **3. Jesus Prayed When He was Getting Popular.**

The many, many miracles of His great Galilean Ministry seemed to climax in His feeding the 5,000 with the 5 loaves and the 2 fishes. They wanted Him to become their king. With Him at the head they would react against Rome just as the courageous Maccabees had in their inter-testament history period. John 6:15 says they were about to come and make Him king by force. What do we find Him doing that night? Praying (Luke 9:18).

Then there was the big day of miracles at Capernaum early in His ministry. The next morning they were all out seeking Him. He had attained a quick popularity with them. This was the morning of Mark 1:35 when He rose early in order to spend more time than usual in prayer. But this is not when many people pray.

Each of us has those times when things seem to be coming our way. That is the time to pray. When you get promoted, don’t forget prayer. When you are honored, pray. When people seem to love you and cling to you more than usual, don’t trade God for people! Pray. Jesus did.

### **4. Jesus Prayed Himself into Subjection to God’s Will.**

One of the ways we could describe temptation would be a time when our own will is seeking to assert itself in opposition to God’s will. And don’t forget that Satan is a tempter. He tempted Jesus in

three strong temptations immediately after His baptism (Matt. 4). He tempted Him again through Peter (Matt. 16:23). And in Gethsemane He was seeking to make Jesus' will something different from the Father's. We see this when Jesus prayed, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). The coming ordeal of the cross was the greatest test of Jesus' obedience. He knew beforehand what it would be. When a part of the Godhead, He shared in the facts about the crucifixion written ahead of time in Psa. 22, which begins, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But He found power in prayer--power to help Him submit when nothing else could help.

Why don't you come to grips with yourself and the will of God through prayer--if you are a child of God, of course? Maybe at this very time you are tempted to drop out of the church. Maybe things aren't going just as well there as they should. But would quitting be God's will? If it isn't, pray, "Not my will, but thine, be done." You may be tempted not to preach when you have already started out to preach. What is the matter? Why not pray for the Lord to make you a preacher in spite of all the difficulties you have encountered?

Ephraim prayed that his fellow-Christians at Colosse would "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12). Is it this way with your life, or are several things "out of step" with the will of God? Please let me ask, "Just what part of God's will do you know you have not bowed to? Or what duty have you been running from, and you know it? Or what important, spiritual decision have you been putting off and putting off?" Won't you follow Jesus'

example and sincerely take these matters to the Lord in prayer? You will find "grace to help" in your time of "need" (Heb. 4:16).

And what about prayer itself? It is a part of God's will. Are you spending enough time in prayer? Are you earnest enough in your praying? Are you complete enough in the things you pray about? Are you sincere enough? Are you accomplishing enough through your prayers? These are heart-questions. What is your answer?

In closing let us give special notice to the appropriateness of Rom. 3:10-13,18. That is the passage that begins, "There is none righteous, no, not one." And then it proceeds to specify some of the things that are universally wrong with each human being, and the first two things he mentions are: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Doesn't the preaching done in this rally help these statements be realized as never before? We have not understood as we should. We have not had spiritual understanding. We have not been as spiritually discerning as we should. Oh, don't you feel this way at times when you meditate on the greatness of God, His majesty, His mighty power, His omniscient wisdom, and His great plan? We have nothing to be proud about--we grasp so very little of God's total. No wonder, then, that none of us seeks God as we should. This is a serious charge but true. As we study the prayer life of Jesus, let us get some more spiritual understanding; let us truly seek God as we should. In short let us follow His teaching and His example. Let us pray as He prayed. Let us pray as we should and as we can!

# Let Us Restore Prayer as 100% as We have Baptism

By LAFE CULVER

“And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance...And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works that he had done for Israel” (Judg. 2:6-10).

The period of the judges in Israel’s history was saturated with the evidence of SPIRITUAL DECAY! One cannot study the book of Judges without being impressed with the sin-bondage-anguish-repentance-deliverance cycle of their history. One might blame it on the lack of respect for authority for, “in those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). Yet our initial text, I believe, reveals the real cause, the true underlying problem: “And there arose another generation after them which KNEW NOT THE LORD.” Now who was to blame for this situation? Obviously the parents! Like many of our parents today, they had taught their children everything but the Lord. They had educated them in every necessity but the need of their soul. They had fed them well-balanced and nutritional meals and at the same time starved their souls. They had provided every necessity for their young people but the spiritual necessities. Is not this same attitude prevalent today? It is the curse of America and the plague of the church! We have turned out a generation of well-fed, educated, and pampered UNBELIEVERS! We have hatched out (you cannot say “raised up”) a generation that does not know the Lord. We now have a generation “that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother” (Prov. 30:11). The same people who are wringing their hands and bemoaning the

wayward walk of today’s youth are the same parents who lived hypocritical lives before their children. They are the same people who never studied the Bible at home with their family. They are the same people who have seldom if ever knelt in prayer with their own offspring. They were parents who were too busy amassing material goods and too busy fussing with their neighbors and fighting with people in the church to take care of the matter of teaching their own flesh and blood to KNOW THE LORD!

The same book that reveals what our problems are also gives us the solution to those problems regardless of whether it is on the scale of home, church, community, or nation. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14). We will never solve our problems unless we follow this formula. Until we restore these spiritual practices in our hearts and homes, we will continue to suffer an endless chain of disappointments and defeats. If we repent and pray, if we start putting first things first, if we humble ourselves and cry out to God for help, He will forgive us and heal our land.

Many people seem to be unaware of the fact that there is a constant war raging about them as unseen forces grapple for possession of their souls. Israel was not aware of any war going on the day that Moses died on Mt. Nebo, yet Jude 9 reveals that Michael, the archangel, was at that very time contending with the devil over the body of Moses. Daniel was not aware of why his prayer was not being answered until an angel came and told him Satanic forces delayed him from coming to Daniel for 21 days (Dan. 10:1-21). An unseen spiritual war rages around your head like a swarm of angry mosquitoes as demonic forces grapple for the control of your mind, trying to dictate the eventual damnation of your soul. Satan circles the saint, seeking for an opportunity to thrust his fiery darts between the cracks in one’s

spiritual armor. If one could suddenly make this spiritual battle physically apparent, there would be more fireworks than a 4th of July celebration! How the ground would shudder and tremble as Satanic forces clashed with the Angelic hosts of God! Christian friend, this battle is going on around you right now! As you stand in the amphitheater of life, a fight-to-the-finish is in progress. The victorious saints of the past make up a cheering crowd, urging you to be faithful to the last (Heb. 12:1). How we need to **PRAY FERVENTLY** once we are aware of such circumstances.

But I hear someone say, "Now really, preacher, are you sure all that is going on in the unseen world?" Yes, friend, I am sure that all that is going on and a whole lot more. Do you believe your body is being shot full of needle-size holes right at this moment? Scientists tell us it is true. Cosmic rays constantly bombard us from outer space though we are physically unaware of it. How many radio waves do you think are in this auditorium right now? They are there all the time whether or not we have a set to receive them. The atmosphere and ionosphere are literally bouncing with radio waves on a hundred different frequencies. If you had powerful enough electronic equipment, think of how many AM and FM stations could be picked up in this room--and if you had enough sets, you could have them all playing at once. Add to that all the stations or channels that CB operators could pick up. Add to that all the conversations that could be going on if Ham operators had their equipment set up too. Man has filled this room with hundreds of competing and confusing radio waves. Messages are being transmitted that go right through houses and buildings with no trouble at all. If man can land on the moon and at the same time converse with his friends back on earth, why would we find it hard to believe God can hear us when we pray? The many testimonies and obvious proofs of answered prayer demand a better explanation than that of just coincidence! When we pray in Jesus' name, we have a 'hot-line to Heaven"! Satan's interference can be blasted out of the way just as easily as a station of 50,000 watts can come booming in and drown out a feeble station of 1,000 watts. And to think that with all these blessed promises and privileges, **WE STILL DO NOT PRAY!** If there is any sight that troubles Satan, it is to see a saint of God on his or her knees. Obviously he will do everything possible to keep us

from praying as we ought, for once we come to God in prayer, the devil loses his advantage over us.

Prayer needs to be restored. Prayer needs to be preached on just as we have preached on baptism because the rest of the world has overlooked the importance of this basic truth. But what can be done to help us restore prayer? I have two basic suggestions.

### **1. Get Convicted.**

I was somewhat apprehensive when I saw the theme of this year's rally. An entire rally on prayer? Would people come for such a concentrated assault on their prayer lives? The size of the crowds at these services has caused my faith in God's people to be reassured. However, I am sure there are a good number of people who are not here who sorely need to hear these messages. I know of no better way to get convicted than come to a rally like this. No preacher can prepare a series of messages on prayer like we have heard and not be self-incriminated. No honest person can hear the messages on prayer we have heard and not feel deeply convicted. I can think of no better way to be convicted than have a brief running-review of all the preceding messages. And were you not convicted during the sincere sharing of ideas at the various discussion groups?

Brother Word certainly got the rally off to a convicting start with his message, "Just Why Should We Pray?" "Fasting and prayer is out and feasting and playing is in!" was one of his open statements. I'm afraid that fits too many churches. He rebuked us for our laziness and observed that most people would rather visit than pray. How true! How many times have we stayed up late visiting with old friends and then slighted our prayer life before we fell into bed? He gave us a series of questions that said, "Before you went into that worldly act, **DID YOU PRAY? IF YOU HAD PRAYED**, would you have done it?" He observed also that some people pray so repetitiously that they might as well send a tape-recording to services in their place. Who hasn't heard one of these "Cassette Christians" who pray like a tape recording? Some of them would probably feel right at home spinning a Buddhist monk's prayer wheel.

Brother Reyman's message, "Just Why We Don't Pray," was certainly enlightening. It seems his personal poll of Christians revealed a common excuse

for not praying: "We just forget." I am thankful he scorched us with Scriptures on the sin of forgetfulness. How true was the statement, "People remember the things they really care about!" That should stab every careless heart here! If you love someone, you just do not forget!

Then came Brother Weller's charge and challenge, "You are not Spending Enough Time in Prayer." When he passed out those slips to be filled out, and we were asked some very personal questions about our prayer life, it was very convicting. Who among us can say he is satisfied with his prayer life? He urged us to analyze what was our biggest hindrance, get rid of it, and then get down to the business of improvement.

We certainly needed Brother Prater's message, "You are not Earnest Enough in Your Prayers." How depressing it is to attend a dry, droning prayer meeting with long pauses between petitions. I am certain he convicted us all on the need for fasting and prayer. He pointed out that when we get desperate, we pray earnestly. What a shame as we are only earnest when the going gets rough.

Brother Reyman's second message emphasized God's promises and power in prayer. Time and space prohibit all that we could say. I especially recall the observation that many preachers who feel they must move to a different field just need to fast and pray for a couple of days and go back to work where they are!

Brother Hunt's message about our Lord's example was very stirring. If you truly want to feel convicted, just study Jesus' prayer life. An unforgettable question he asked was, "Has anyone ever asked you to teach him to pray?" No doubt we have failed to impress others with our prayer life. Another convicting observation was that we do not pray just because we don't like to! The flesh would rather do something else.

We were again convicted by Brother Reyman's message when he preached on not being thorough enough in our prayers. What a list of things he gave us to pray for! Then we were rebuked for not praying for those things that seem trivial or unimportant and also for ignoring requests that we might judge difficult for God to answer.

Brother Word's final message revealed just why our prayer meetings are so ineffective. How many of us come together to pray just out of a sense of duty! We come without faith, without repentance, and

without humility. He observed that some couples have a big fuss at home and then come to church and try to act spiritual.

Truly this has been a rally of deep conviction. I have sensed a spirit of contrition among us, especially during the discussion periods. We need to feel convicted because out of such feelings grow our CONVICTIONS! We preach, "Repent and be baptized," because Acts 2:38 convicts us of its importance. Let us not forget that the same book tells us, "Repent and pray", if our heart is not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:21,22). Let us begin preaching and practicing prayer like we do baptism! If we had a Scripture that said, "Baptize without ceasing", would we not pound that truth home? Would we demand that it be observed? Yes, we would, and you already know that we have that verse on prayer (I Thess. 5:17). We have just not been concerned enough to do much about it. What if God sent a divine messenger among us tonight to put a mark of preservation upon everyone here who was concerned enough to sigh and cry about our sins? What if the messenger only put a mark in the foreheads of those who had been EARNESTLY PRAYING? And then, just like Eze. 9 puts it, what if God sent His destroying angels to slaughter everyone who did not have the identifying mark? How few might survive such a test?

I believe if we sincerely repent and pray that our conviction will be contagious. Just as Ezra was so shocked over the abominations committed by his people that he wept and prayed, casting himself down in the presence of the people, and pulled out all his hair and yanked out his beard! Soon a great revival rumbled through the ranks of Israel, and people began to get right with God.

When we get convicted enough to get down on our knees and weep and pray, God will blast things wide open!

At this very time I sense a great depth of conviction among us. I feel all of us want to do something concrete to improve our prayer lives, so here is my final point:

## **2. Get Committed.**

Get convicted, yes, but then get committed! You have been convicted over prayerlessness before. You promised yourself you were going to do better. But what usually happened? Gradually the conviction



drained away, and you slipped back into the old neglectful habits. I challenge you tonight to get committed! Set aside a special time to pray. Get a separate notebook and list all the preachers, churches, new works, training programs, relatives, etc. that you can think of, and start praying with a method. I challenge you to pray openly and honestly about your temptations and sins--NAME THEM IN PRIVATE! I challenge you to ask God to chasten you if it will help you be more spiritual. I challenge you parents to kneel down and pray earnestly with and for your children. I challenge you young couples to get Bible study and prayer established in your homes. I challenge you middle-aged people to set a definite time for prayer and do not let your work take it from you. I challenge you older people to deepen your prayer lives. I challenge my fellow preachers to go home and preach and practice lives of prayer.

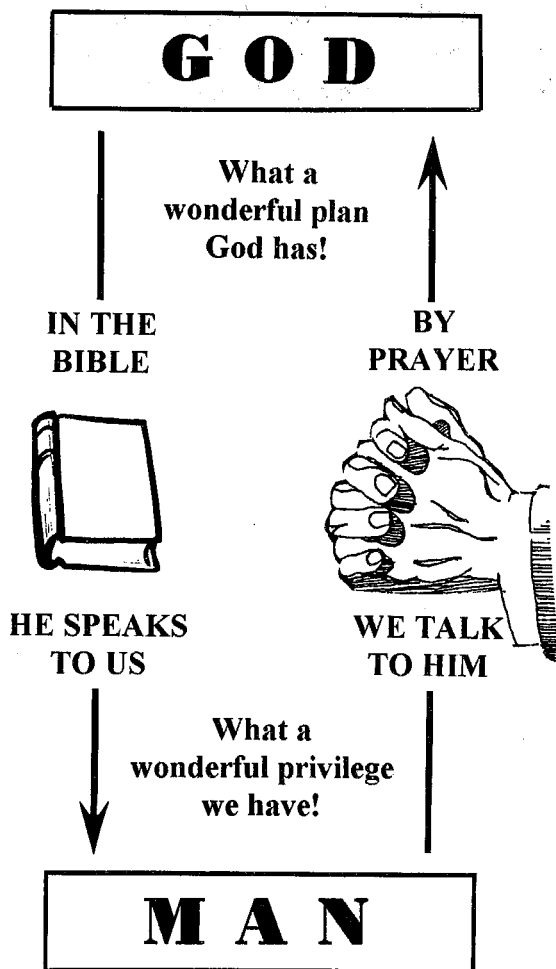
Now here is what I want you to do. If you are truly convicted and want to be committed, I want you to GO ON RECORD so the devil will not take this victory from you.

1. Stand up to indicate your desire to be committed (I will not think any less of you if you do not. Perhaps you have a better plan of your own.) Do not stand up if you do not plan to do anything in a definite way.

2. Ask someone to be your prayer-partner. Have some family or individual phone you each week to see how you are doing. Most of us are too sensitive to have anyone inquire uninvited, but if we request it, they will feel obligated to do so.

Brethren, if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows how far we have slipped. Get committed RIGHT NOW!

**THE 2-WAY COMMUNICATION  
BETWEEN  
MAN AND HIS CREATOR/JUDGE**



The thought presented in this diagram is not new, but it is true and very significant.

In the Bible God is speaking to us just as in prayer we are talking to God. Realizing this will help us be more serious about our Bible study and our praying. God IS talking to us, and we ARE talking to God.

God is our Creator and Judge. Each person is God's by right of creation: "Remember thy Creator" (Eccl. 12:1); therefore, "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord..." (Psa. 29:2). And each person will render an account of himself to God (Rom. 14:11,12).

Why do we pray to God using Jesus' name (John 16:23,24; Col. 3:17)? Because He is the mediator between God and us (I Tim. 2:5; John 14:6). It is because of our sins that we are not worthy to go to God directly but must go to Him through a mediator. And it is evidently for the same reason that God does not speak to us directly but through inspired ones whose words are in the Bible (Heb. 1:1,2).

This is a wonderfully devised system of God communicating with us, and for us it is a wonderful privilege to hear God and to get to talk with Him!

# Testimonies

The studies of this book have been factual, objective studies of prayer from a Biblical standpoint. This is the way it should be, for our message is to be the Word of God. It will be the sanctifying truth we can count on (John 17:17). It will be a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathways (Psa. 119:105).

Many published treatments of the subject of prayer are heavy on human experiences. People's experiences are many times interesting to read, but our faith should come from hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) so that our faith will not be built on the varying and sometimes contradicting experiences of people but on the unvarying and always dependable teachings and promises of God.

But as a reader you have the right to ask, "Do Christian people today still receive answers to prayer as people of Bible times did?" The answer is yes, and in confirmation of it you will thrill at the testimonies of answered prayer that follow.

## Room For Just One More

By Donald G. Hunt

Between the Sacramento (Calif.) and Troutdale (Oreg.) Gatherings of 1951, as we were in northern California on our way up the coast, word came by telephone that I must return to Ottumwa (Ia.) to care for some important business. It had to do with purchasing the school Administration Building for Bible training classes at 908 N. Court Street. It was so urgent that neither driving, taking the bus, or taking the train would have gotten me there by the deadline.

Flying was the only possibility, but its prospectiveness was dimmed by an airline strike which affected all planes from Portland east. When I arrived in San Francisco, I found 'everyone and his brother' crowded into the airport terminal trying to get flights east. And there I was with no reservation.

The ticket agent said there was no chance for me. It was still 4 hours before the flight that I would catch. I never left the terminal but waited there either for a flight east or to learn the worst. How did I pray,

as any Christian man of responsibility would have done under those conditions.

Finally the time came for the passengers to load the flight. It seemed as if the terminal had suddenly become depopulated, so many were heading out the gate. But I stayed on. Finally the agent called me to the window and told me he would sell me a refundable ticket that would entitle me to a seat on the plane in the event that a regularly scheduled reservation failed to show up. So I bought the ticket and went to the proper gate only to find others waiting ahead of me and with the same privilege.

Those holding reservations filed up the steps into the plane, and a long period went by. Finally this little group concluded that all the passengers must have shown up. Just then the first of us was fingered forward and permitted to board the plane. After another long period we concluded that he must have gotten the last seat available. But in time the man and wife ahead of me were signaled on. How this did fan a greater hope than ever within me! If there were just one more seat, it would be for me, I realized. It would be impossible to state the overjoyed feeling that swept over my soul when I too was called for, boarded the plane, and saw the door shut behind me. I was the last one on!

I think I have never praised God more. He went on to lead in taking care of all the other important details of that trip; to the securing of the property and to the safeguarding of the several thousand dollars which had already been made upon it.

## Never "Tire" of Praying

By Burton Barber

In the spring of 1946 I graduated from college at San Jose, California. Following the closing exercises we were scheduled to leave on our move from California to Iowa. Once there, we were to make all necessary preparations for an evangelistic meeting that was to be conducted by Archie Word, which later resulted in the formation of the

Centerville, Iowa church.

Tire rationing had been lifted, but tires themselves were scarce. The tires on our car were only moderately good, with no spare. It was essential that we obtain one new tire so that one of the poorer ones could be used for a spare.

We had neither the money or the prospect for a new tire. The night before, my wife Opal and I had special prayer for a tire, and money to pay for it, expecting that we would receive the money through the normal channels. The mail brought no money, and no one handed us any. But the day was only begun.

Early in the morning I learned that a friend of ours was in a similar predicament, except he had money but no tires. In faith I asked another friend, who operated a service station, to secure a tire for me if possible. I left the rim so it could be mounted, trusting that both a tire and money would be forthcoming. We believed that God does answer prayer, even though not in the precise way that we sometimes expect.

When I arrived at the auditorium to preach my graduation sermon, I was met by friends who lived some sixty miles distance. They brought with them a new tire, saying that they felt that we would need one on our return trip. No money came, but a tire did. The service station notified me that a tire had been secured. So I sent the tire I had along with my tireless friend (and his money), and the 'swap' was made that provided for both of us.

Two days out, we had a blow-out. On the spare tire we made our way to a small town and stopped at the first service station. Asked if he had any tires, the attendant replied, "Yes, I took in a shipment of eight last night. You are lucky. One hour later we would have been sold out." We had driven all night, and this was 7:30 in the morning.

I hereby testify that God does hear prayers, even for tires, and answers in ways far different from what we may anticipate. Never, never should we place God in a straight-jacket!

## Trusting Prayer Foils a Terrible Crime

By a 21-Year-old Christian Mother

On the afternoon of January 7, 1966, my 19 month-old son and I were getting ready to leave a shopping center on the east side of San Jose, California. As I sat in the car for a minute looking for the ignition key, I glanced to my left, and there, beside the car, stood a man with a gun pointed directly at me. He said sternly, "Move over--don't say a word and look straight ahead." As he started the car, he said, "If you love your baby, you will do what I say." I asked if he would allow me to pray before we left, but he told me to shut up. I prayed out loud anyway.

He turned left as he drove out of the shopping center, and after going about a mile, he forced me to put my son in the back seat while still pointing his gun at me. Then he told me to lie down in the front seat. I was praying silently all the time he was driving.

After a while he turned on to a bumpy road. Then a few minutes later, he stopped the car and told me to sit up and put my hands behind me. Then he handcuffed me. He sat there a few minutes, asking me such questions as, my name and how long I had been married. Then he pulled my hair back and asked me if I wanted to have it chopped off. All I could think to say was that the Bible mentions that a woman's long hair is her glory.

The man then got out of the driver's side of the car and went around to the passenger side and opened the door. He made me lie back down and began disrobing me. As he prepared to finish this terrible act, I began praying out loud again: "Dear God, have mercy on this poor man, for in the end he will truly be punished for what he is doing. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

Suddenly the man went no further. He began dressing me and told me to sit up. He went around to the other side of the car, got in, and took the handcuffs off me. He then brought my son into the front seat and made both of us lie down again, out of sight, while still pointing the gun at us.

He drove almost all the way back to the shopping center and pulled to the side of the road and

stopped. Then he said, "You should be thankful I didn't harm you." I told him I WAS thankful to my God for sparing us. He made me get out of the car and walk back to the shopping center. He said that when I got there, I would find the baby safe in the car, parked in the same place as before. He said, "If you run, you will never see your son again." He wanted to allow enough time to escape before I reported the incident to the police. As I walked to the shopping center, I continued to pray. When I reached the car, I found my baby, scared and crying, but safe.

God had taken care of us both. I am thankful to this day that God answers prayer. I am also thankful that I serve a living God who is always near to guide me whenever I need Him.

## **Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread**

By James Gibbons

While I was a young, unmarried preacher in training, I preached "part time" in a traditional church in central Kentucky.

When summer vacation came, I moved to the place where the church was located. Since the church could only partly support me, I took a job working with a construction company, clearing highway right-of-way (which is very hard work to say the least).

I secured a room where I could sleep and planned to eat out at a restaurant for meals. I made a practice of going by the church building every morning for a time of prayer before I went to work (and a very good practice it was).

Before the first week really got under way, I suddenly became aware that I was out of money. Perhaps it had never been your lot, but to face a week of hard physical labor with the problem of where the food would come from was not a very pleasant prospect. The next Sunday I could expect some money from the church, but in the meantime there was no help for me. I hesitated to tell the church of my plight. What was I to do?

But I had to go to work that day, so I climbed the steps of the church building for my talk with God as I had been doing each morning bright and early.

Only on this morning there was a little more desperation and fervor in my prayers. I really opened my heart, letting the Lord know the nature of my problem.

When I rose from praying, something within me seemed to say, "This is going to be a long hard day; you had better order a big breakfast for you will need it." I made my way across the street to the restaurant, and did just that (although I did not have a penny in my pocket). I ate the hearty breakfast and walked up to the cash register as if to pay, but not knowing what to say. Before I could speak, the voice of the gentleman behind the cash register rang out the clear tones, "It's yours; you do not have to pay for it."

I thought that I had prayed in faith, but I wasn't ready for this---such a speedy answer to my prayer. I cried out, "O God, help my unbelief! May I never again doubt your power."

Needless to say, I was 'in the clouds' all that day because of what God had done. The owner of the restaurant, although not a Christian, made it clear that I was to eat breakfast all that week at his expense, which I did. My other meals were provided by good-hearted church people who invited me into their homes.

I have prayed about many things since that experience, but it has proven to be the most speedy and obvious answer to prayer I have received. Thank God that He does hear and answer prayer! Praise His name!

## **Just Enough and Right On Time**

By Edward Werner

It was my last year in the Midwestern School of Evangelism. I was looking forward to traveling to South Portland, Maine, to help for a few months in a newly established congregation. After that I planned to drive to Los Angeles, California, where I had accepted an invitation to teach several classes in a Bible training program. During that time I planned to establish a new congregation in that area. I looked forward with great anticipation to the coming events. For these trips I needed money, but I also needed

much time to prepare for the classes I was to teach.

I was then preaching to two small country churches in Missouri. I had a very good part-time job, but when the Christmas holidays were over, business dropped considerably, and they began to lay off some of the employees. Knowing that I had only one more semester of school, and since I was employed only on a part-time basis, the store decided that I should be among those laid off.

Would I have to cancel my plans? I needed sufficient funds to make the trips, and it was only a few more months before I would begin my travels. I was out of work, and no one was hiring after the holidays. Was God leading some other direction? I prayed He would lead me and show me His desire for my life.

One evening Donald Hunt of the school faculty, invited me to his home to give me some helpful pointers on teaching. While there he told me of a lady who might be of some help to me. He wrote her, explaining my situation, and in few days he received a letter from Mrs. W. Leo Austin. The first paragraph of her letter read as follows: "Your letter is a real blessing for today. I have been praying for God to direct me so I might put my money where it will help the church most, since the church is all I have to live for... So I feel this privilege of helping Eddie is a real answer to prayer."

She sent me enough money that I did not have to work the rest of that semester, and so I had the much needed time to study in preparation for the classes I was to teach. In the months ahead, I carried on correspondence with Sister Austin which was a great encouragement to me. But I was never privileged to meet her in person. She passed away in June, 1963.

My time spent in the east proved a real blessing to my life, and God rewarded our efforts. On my way to California I stopped at my home in Nebraska. I had a nickel and 5 pennies in my pocket, and was scheduled to be in Los Angeles within 2 weeks. I was able to get work for a neighboring farmer in the harvest field part of the first week, but I still lacked a considerable amount to make the trip to California.

I preached at my home congregation at Dewese, Nebraska on Sunday night, planning to leave the next morning, but still not knowing how I

would be able to do so. I had not mentioned my need to the congregation. Just as I was leaving the building that night, a lady in the church handed me an envelope, and inside was enough money for the trip.

God always provides according to His will, even if it is at the "last minute."

## **No Payments For Seven Months**

By Al Schwartzkopf

We became Christians at Gering, Nebraska on June 20, 1954, during a revival meeting conducted by Burton Barber. After three weeks I gave some thought to enter the work of preaching. I spoke with Brother Barber about the expense of going to school and the advisability of studying by correspondence. He indicated that attending classes would be more profitable but the decision needed much prayer. Then we thought of something that could help us decide. It called for God to answer a specific prayer request.

We had equities in two houses, so we decided we would pray something like this: "God, if it is your will that I go to school and become a preacher of the Gospel, answer by providing a sale for one of the houses." After offering this definite prayer, I went to a realtor in Scottsbluff and had the house listed with him. I decided that if it could be sold within six weeks, I would enter school and take up preaching. After this six weeks I planned to spend my two weeks' vacation attending the Centerville (Iowa) Rally. So, after explaining this to the realtor he replied, "We will list your house, but houses are not selling this time of year, so I doubt it will sell in six weeks. Don't build your hopes too high."

Then we began to pray, "If it is your will, Lord, that we go to school, let us know by sending a buyer for this house at the price we asked." In two weeks the realtor called saying he had a buyer for our house, providing we would wait for a few months as this party would need to arrange for a G.I. loan. We agreed to wait.

I told my wife there was nothing else to do except to begin packing as God must have wanted us to move to Ottumwa, Iowa. We signed a contract with the buyer in which he agreed to have the loan

completed within three months. We immediately started to pack our things, selling those items we didn't intend to take with us, and I terminated my job at the dairy.

Loading our belongings into a U-Haul trailer, and with no house or job to go to, we took off for Ottumwa. Upon arriving, we looked for a house but found none. We unloaded our things into a student's garage and returned to Nebraska for another load of furniture. We arrived back in Ottumwa and again began looking for a house. It was here that God really showed His providential leading and care in our behalf.

We finally found a house for sale through the help of other Christians. We called the real estate man, who had an equity in the house due to a trade he had made and was paying an elderly widow \$40 a month payments. After we looked the house over, and agreed to take it at the price being asked, the realtor asked us what terms we could meet. We offered him \$100 and \$40 per month until we received the equity from our house in Scottsbluff. He asked us to consider it further, and he would return in an hour to close the deal. In that hour we talked about it and prayed over it. When he returned he said, "My wife and I have decided to allow you the \$100 down payment in return for a little fixing up that needed to be done." So we signed the contract and agreed to pay \$40 monthly to the realtor, which he, in turn, paid to the widow.

When the 1st of October came, I went down to pay the \$40 dollar payment, but he refused to take it. He said, "You use that, as I know starting college takes a lot of money."

I didn't have very much income during October, and by the 1st of November I didn't have the \$40 payment. When I went down to tell the man I was sorry I couldn't pay yet, he said, "That's all right, I've already made my payment to the widow."

During the month of November things went better. I did some yard work and received some money from my home congregation (Gering, Nebr.). When I went to make the payment on the 1st of December, he again refused it, saying, "Winter is setting in, and Christmas is coming, so you will need it. Just go ahead and use that \$40."

In the mean time the three months were up

on the contract for our house back home but still no money because the man had not yet had his G.I. loan go through. So we signed another contract extending the period for another three months.

By the 1st of January we were short again. I went down to tell the man that we didn't have the money, but that I would borrow on my insurance to pay the \$40. He said, "I wouldn't think of having you borrow on your insurance. I appreciate your coming in. I was able to make the \$40 payment to the widow."

On the last night of the January Gathering I received a call to come back to work for a machinery dealer for whom I had worked previously.

On February 1st I again went down to pay the \$40 payment, and, again he refused it. This time he said, "You've just started to work, and it's only a part-time job at that. You need it."

March came...the same thing. He refused to take it. But still no money came for the house back home. We did, however, receive word that the loan had been approved.

In April we received our equity for the house back home. With it we paid the real estate man his equity in our present house and then made payments to the widow every month thereafter.

You talk about God's divine leading! We experienced it and praised His name for it. Here was a man we had never met; no one in the School of Evangelism knew him; yet he allowed us to live in his house for seven months WITHOUT PAYING ONE RED CENT.

## **Challenged By the Death of a Child**

By Paul Crist

The big, yellow school bus rolled to a stop as usual that Friday afternoon. The children were home and ready for another weekend vacation from school activities. It was a pleasant day, September 20, 1963. Fall was beginning in Missouri. This is very beautiful

time of year: a season when the days are warm but not too hot, the nights are cool, and often the haze of Indian Summer lingers in the skies. This particular day was the beginning of many days, weeks, and months that were to be filled with anxiety, sorrow, tears, and prayerful pleadings. Also, there would be soul-searching, the learning of lessons, and yes, the joys of knowing we serve a prayer-answering God.

Manford, our youngest son who was 5 years old, had just started his first year of school. To him school was a great joy. When he had to miss for some reason, it was a time of tears. Even though when asked what he liked best about school, he would mischievously reply, "Recess." He loved to ride on the big, yellow school bus, and, to him books were a never-ending source of enjoyment and challenge. Books were a means of opening up new worlds and fresh ideas, and they were to become his constant companions through many hours of illness. Toward the last, he was proud to and happy to purchase his own Bible and to read, with understanding, many verses from it.

As soon as he was in the house that evening, he lay down on the divan and went to sleep. His mother, knowing this to be a departure from his normal activity, soon discovered he had a high temperature, (in excess of 105 degrees).

His grandparents were at our house that evening, and my father and I were out in the field tending cattle. John, our son just older than Manford, came out to inform us that Manford was sick. We lost no time taking him to the hospital, where we learned he had a throat infection. It was there we also learned that he had a unusually high count of white blood corpuscles. About 8,000-12,000 is normal. His was 35,000 and increasing. Our doctor said that Manford probably had leukemia and sent us to the University Medical Center in Columbia, for additional tests. It turned out that he had a very rare type of leukemia, acquired in children, and we were told he could pass away at any time. Amidst the tears we found great comfort in fervent prayer, knowing God was taking care of all things, and that many Christians were also praying.

The medicines available were not very effective in this type of leukemia, but within a few weeks he had responded to treatment in a remarkable

way. He even returned to normal in his activity and appearance for a few months. We know this was a answer to prayer. It brought amazement to the doctors and gratitude to all of us. All the while we knew God COULD heal him completely, but it would have to be according to His will, and we must not be selfish if He wanted to call His own to be with Him.

The doctors told us this type of illness could affect many parts of the body and result in much suffering. Our prayer was that, if God saw fit not to heal him, his suffering would be at a minimum. This prayer was very definitely answered. In the 9 months of his illness, aside from shots, tests, ear infection, and the normal strain on his nervous system, he suffered very little. His suffering could have been tremendous, but God was merciful.

Our little Manford displayed much patience during his entire illness, asking only once if he would always be sick. From the very first he dreaded the many tests and shots he had on his visits to the doctor and hospital, but eventually he learned to take these in stride with little or no objection.

Naturally we talked to him often about spiritual things. His faith was that of a child, with no pretense. A few weeks before he died, I was talking with him about Heaven and what it would be like, and in the course of our conversation he made this statement: "Someday I will know what it is like." Yes, to him, Heaven was a reality.

Among the many things granted through prayer, in connection with his sickness, we are appreciative of the physical health, strength, and material means supplied to us in order to meet the extra obligations.

Undoubtedly the greatest result of all this- perhaps the purpose God had in mind- was that various ones indicated to us that our boy's illness caused a real challenge to their lives spiritually. We know it certainly did to ours.

While he was in the hospital, his mother and I took turns caring for him. On the morning of June 27, 1964 we attended him during a prolonged nose bleed. He was conscious, seemingly in no pain, and talked some. While I stepped out to summon the doctor, he slumped over in his mother's arms, into unconsciousness, and soon into eternity. The doctor's efforts to revive him were futile. God had called him



home.

Many members of our family lived some distance from our area, but since that weekend was vacation time, many of them were home and able to come to the funeral. At any other time this might not have been possible. At the memorial we were all blessed with a true and challenging sermon. Was this all just coincidence? No, for we know it was the work of a wonderful, prayer-answering God.

## A Phone Call Leads to An Eye Operation

By Bill Paul

One day in 1947 I began noticing a dimness developing in my vision. Up until then I had 20/20 vision. So I went to the eye doctor thinking I possibly needed glasses. After an extensive examination the doctor bluntly said, "Son, you're going blind." Naturally, this hit me very hard. I had developed cataracts on both eyes.

But the dimness in vision got worse very gradually. After deciding in 1950 to preach the Gospel, I was enabled by God to use my eyes sufficiently to get through school and begin preaching the Word of God.

However, by the early 1960's the cataracts had so impaired my sight that I could distinguish only light in my left eye. The right eye was considerably better but still far below normal. This condition was getting so bad it was threatening to end my labors as a Gospel preacher. I could not drive at night, and driving during the day was very risky, especially in the bright sunlight. Bible study and sermon preparation required the use of a powerful magnifying glass to see the print, especially the fine print of commentaries and reference works. I was becoming quite concerned about my condition and began to wonder if, perhaps, the Lord was through using me in the ministry of the Gospel.

Being a disabled veteran from World War II, I was eligible for Veterans Administration treatment and hospitalization. One VA eye doctor in St. Petersburg, Florida told me an operation was needed soon on my left eye due to the muscles of that eye becoming

weakened. (Since I could not see objects with that eye, it tended not to move as far to the right or to the left as the other eye).

Two Navy eye specialists at the Jacksonville Naval Air Station examined the eye carefully and said that, due to an "absorption" process that had developed, neither of them would attempt the operation.

Another eye surgeon at the Bay Pines VA Hospital agreed to operate but gave no assurance whatever of success. He was a very gruff and unsympathetic man, and I was unable to feel any confidence at all in him, especially when it involved cutting into my eyes.

A private ophthalmologist in my own city (Orlando), examined me and showed willingness to operate on the eye. He was optimistic about it, saying the operation stood a 95% chance of being successful. But since he was a private physician, my eligibility to VA care would not cover the expense if he operated. I didn't have that kind of money. So there things stood. All we could do was pray and wait upon the Lord's leading.

Then one day in 1963 I was talking on the phone to the state Vocational Rehabilitation about a person in the church who was being considered by them for possible assistance. In the course of our conversation I had occasion to testify to this counselor how God had blessed me through the years of study while preparing to preach, in spite of cataracts in the eyes, a chronic skin condition, and the handicap in appearance of a scalp disease. I pointed out to him that though I had been hospitalized 6 times (up till that time) for my condition, God had mercifully granted me 16 years of service for Him.

This somehow impressed him, for he said, "May I ask you a few personal questions?" A little surprised, I replied, "Why yes, I guess so." He then asked about the extent of my present eye disability, how much it was handicapping me in my work, the size of my family, and the amount of my income. After giving him the answers, he asked me if I would come to his office for a personal interview. I agreed, although it seemed a little strange he would take such an interest in my problem since my original conversation with him had absolutely no bearing whatsoever on my own needs. I wondered if this,

perhaps, could be God beginning to work all things together for good, as He promised.

When I received the call from the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, he informed me the State of Florida had authorized that an operation on my left eye be performed completely at their expense. They agreed to pay the doctor's bill, the hospital bill, and even for the contact lens I would need and the tedious work of having it fitted correctly. They allowed me to select my own surgeon and even the very time I wanted to be operated on. What a marvelous blessing! Surely God is able, "to do abundantly above all that we ask or think."

The operation went fine. I had very little discomfort (actually no more than from an ordinary toothache). I was able to be in a local hospital near my family and friends for only 10 days. The eye healed perfectly. I was later fitted to a contact lens, giving me 20/15 vision in that eye. I became able to drive a car easily both day and night. With my improved ability to read and study again I was able to continue preaching.

All the credit and glory must be given to my wonderful God, through Jesus Christ the Lord! Praise His name for His might acts.

\*THE ABOVE TESTIMONIES ARE FROM THE BOOK, "TELLING ON GOD," BY WILLIAM E. PAUL AND ARE USED BY PERMISSION.