

From My Bible

Sermon Notes & Outlines



by

Terry D. Sellars

Pastor

Faith Baptist Church

Ludowici, Georgia

Introduction

These messages are compiled from study notes and outlines of my own and many others. I hope they are a help to you.

I'm sure that all of us have at times "*borrowed*" or "*used*" a sermon we heard or read somewhere along the way. A thought, a word, or an idea jumped out to us from another preacher and we took that thing and ran with it. You have probably used an outline from a preacher brother but ended up preaching something that was uniquely different. Same idea, it just came out differently when you preached. Using your own thoughts, experiences, and illustrations.....the message became your own.

I heard an old-time preacher once say, "*Any message worth preaching ought to be worth preaching again!*" Well, I have certainly preached some sermons again and again. I have borrowed from others to preach theirs again too. Please use these messages as the Lord leads and preach His Word over and over again!

I make no claim of complete originality for this material. Also, please remember that these messages are not expected to substitute for your own personal study of the Word of God! The thoughts and ideas are given as a catalyst to help begin your ideas on a given passage of Scripture or trigger a seed thought to get you going. It is my prayer that the "*stuff*" contained here will further kindle the fire of God's message that is already in your heart. Your own thinking, praying, and studying will be necessary to guide you into the delivery of His Word to your own people.

May these sermons become *messages* from the Lord that He uses in your own life as He has used them in mine.

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God Answers Prayer

Text - 1 John 5:14-15

Introduction: Prayer is equally a priority and privilege for every Christian. There cannot be too much stress on the importance of prayer. Prayer is an essential in our life. It has been well said, “*No prayer, no power.*” James said “*ye have not, because ye ask not*” (James 4:2). We cannot expect God to bless unless we pray. Understanding this, we must treat prayer as a distinct priority.

Prayer is also a unique privilege. We do not have to bear the burdens of life alone, but have the opportunity of bring every need of life to God in prayer. The Apostle John tells us that God answers prayer. The Bible says much about prayer, but in my estimation, verses 14-15 of First John 5, are some of the most informative and exciting in all the Word of God.

1. The Confidence Of Our Approach

A) Confidence In Our Access

B) Confidence In Our Asking

2. The Condition Of Our Asking

A) Guides What We Request From God

B) Governs What We Receive From God

3. The Certainty Of Our Answers

A) The Promise of Answered Prayer

B) The Procedures of Answered Prayer

Yes, God answers prayer! When was the last time you asked God for something and you received an answer from Him? Let me repeat, God answers prayer. He can answer your prayers.

It is possible that there will be a **direct** answer to prayer. The answer may come quickly or immediately.

It is also possible there will be a **delayed** answer to prayer. Even though assurance is given that God will answer the prayer, it may be sometime before the prayer is answered.

As well, it is possible that there will be a **different** answer. God may not answer the prayer just as we asked. He can answer the prayer, but in a way that is according to His will.

If He has not answered your request, it may be that you have not been praying according to His will. Seek God's will in prayer and begin to see the answers God has for you.

Jesus Is Praying for Me

Text - Hebrews 7:23

Introduction: Albert Barnes says on this verse: “*Under the Jewish dispensation, the object of this verse, and the following, is to state one more reason of the excellence of the priesthood of Christ. It is that, owing to the frailty of human nature and the shortness of life, the office of priest there was continually changing. But here there was no such change. Christ, being exalted to the heavens to live forever there, has now an unchangeable priesthood, and everything in regard to his office is permanent.*”

1. The Problem of the Old Priestly Ministry

The Levitical priests (as mortal men) could not be everlasting, but Christ, as he is everlasting, so has he also an everlasting priesthood, making most effectual intercession for them who come to God by him..

2. The Person of the New Priestly Ministry

Verse 24. *But this man.* - referring to Christ.

But this man, because he continueth ever; this Priest, Jesus, Heb. 7:22, is opposed to the Aaronical multitude; this excellent one, 1Tim. 2:5, after his resurrection abideth immortal. He is eternal and permanent for person and office: see Heb. 7:25; Ro 6:9. They are vanished, but he continues for ever, Rev. 1:17-18.

3. The Permanence of the New Priestly Ministry

Because he continueth ever. Gr., "Because he remains for ever." The idea is, because he does not die, but ever lives, he

has an unchanging priesthood. There is no necessity that he should yield it to others, as was the ease with the Jewish priests, because they were mortal. The reason, in their ease, why it passed to others, was not that they did not perform the office well, but that they were mortal, and could not continue to hold it. But this reason could not operate in the ease of the Lord Jesus, and therefore his priesthood would be permanent.

Hath an unchangeable priesthood. Marg., "or, which passeth not from one to another." The margin expresses the sense of the passage. The idea is not strictly that it was *unchangeable*, but that it did not pass over into other hands. The Levitical priesthood passed from one to another as successive generations came on the stage of action. This reasoning is not designed to prove that the priesthood of Christ will be literally *eternal*--for its necessity may cease when all the redeemed are in heaven--but that it is permanent, and does not pass from hand to hand.

4. The Power of the New Priestly Ministry

Wherefore he is able also. As he ever lives, and ever intercedes, he has power to save. He does not begin the work of salvation, and then relinquish it by reason of death, but he lives on as long as it is necessary that anything should be done for the salvation of his people. We need a Saviour who has *power* and Christ has shown that he has all the power which is needful to rescue man from eternal death.

To the uttermost. This does not mean simply *for ever*--but that he has power to save them so that their salvation shall be *complete*. He does not abandon the work midway; he does not begin a work which he is unable to finish. He can aid us *as long* as we need anything done for our salvation; he can save all who will entrust their salvation to his hands.

That come unto God by him. In his name; or depending on him. To come to God, is to approach him for pardon and salvation.

Seeing he ever liveth. He does not die as the Jewish priests did.

5. The Prayers of the New Priestly Ministry

To make intercession for them. He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved. The precise mode, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for his people is not revealed. The *general* meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavors to live a holy life. Compare 1John 2:1. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes; and is the *pledge* or *security* for us that the law shall be honored, and the justice and truth of God maintained, though we are saved. It is reasonable to presume that this is somehow by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that *that* is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. As that is infinite, we need not fear that it will ever be exhausted.

A Joyful Prayer

Text - Philippians 1:9-11

Introduction: "*This I pray*" - the character and content of Paul's prayers form a great incentive and instruction to all.

A Prayer For The Heart

"That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (9). Love is the first of all Christian characteristics, and so the apostle makes that the first of his desires for them - even as he opens with it the catalogue of Christian virtues, "the fruit of the Spirit is love . . .", Galatians 5:22 - as though to imply that if that is right, all else will probably fall into its due place. The word translated "abound" signifies "overflow" - a like conception to that of Malachi 3:10, "prove Me now herewith said the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it": all you can do is to overflow it. Or, as the Master said, in John 7:38 "He that believeth on Me . . . out of [him] shall flow rivers of living water" - verse 37 was the inflow; 4:14 was the up-flow; this verse 38 is the overflow. What a grand thought it is that any one of us Christians - yes, any one of us - can overflow with love: an overflowing "with all" love towards God, and a selfless love toward our fellows, Matthew 22:37-39. Of course, this same writer knew the secret of this so desirable quality, that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us", Romans 5:5. It is surprising how such love begets "knowledge" - and that, here, not simply a superficial knowledge, for, in the Greek, an intensive preposition is conjoined with the usual verb, to give it the force of a deep knowledge. Real love for a person brings us rare insight and understanding of them: we see it even in the highest realm - "Everyone that loveth . . .

knoweth God" I John 4:7. The converse is also true: that if love produces knowledge, knowledge safeguards love. Dr. Plummer has said that "love may go grievously astray - misty thought, emotional conduct, and indiscriminate good nature are perilous". If this is the point of this passage, which I beg leave to doubt, then this "knowledge" and this "judgment" would be as the banks of love's river, keeping the rushing water within bounds. In this sense, a deepening knowledge of others through experience, a heightening knowledge of God through communion, a widening knowledge of truth through the Word, are so greatly to be desired, and to be prayed for. Many of the commentators approve of this latter interpretation of the passage; but others offer the former explanation for the reader's consideration, which, with great temerity, I venture to endorse. Of this, however, we shall have no quarrel, that both deep knowledge, and overflowing love, are of exceeding worth, and that each, whatever be the meaning here, has a contribution to make toward the perfection of the other - for this twofold blessing let us all pray: whether for ourselves, or for others, as Paul did for his Philippians. A further qualification of this all-out love is this quality of "all judgment". Discernment, or insight, is the meaning of this word - a quick, sensitive perception such as would prevent love from doing, saying, thinking the wrong thing. You remember that promise concerning Messiah, in Isaiah 11:3, that the "Spirit of the Lord . . . shall make him of quick understanding", where the A.V. margin renders it, "of quick scent." A spiritual sense of smell is of great importance is both beneficial to love, and bestowed by love. Barnabas possessed it to an unusual degree. If I may put it thus crudely, he had a nose for the fragrance of the good - recall how he detected that in Saul of Tarsus, when everybody else was afraid of him, Acts 9:26-27; and how he detected it at Antioch, Acts 11:22-23; and how he detected it in John Mark, in spite of that young man's desertion, Acts 15:37-39. Happy they who have a quick scent for the fragrance of grace: there are many still of the

Barnabas ilk! There are others who have a nose for the effluvium of the evil, who can detect fake doctrines, false notions, and what not. They can exercise a very useful office in the church - as Paul himself did, when he smelt heresy even in Peter, Galatians 2:11-13: which, incidentally, Barnabas failed to detect (verse 13). But that great man had not much of a nose for bad smells, but for good! Of course, I have Scriptural authority for speaking thus of a spiritual nose. In I Corinthians 12, Paul speaks of those who are, as it were, spiritual feet, spiritual hands, spiritual ears, spiritual eyes; and though he shrinks from naming some as nasal men, he does imply their existence in his phrase, "If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" (verse 17). Let it be freely acknowledged that, in the course of the centuries, the Church has had reason to be grateful for her spiritual noses - men like Athanasius and Luther. But, listen - Paul's prayer proceeds to choose accordingly. That, for Paul's Philippians, and for us, is the happy way of life. The prayer goes on -

A Prayer For The Mind

"That ye may approve things that are excellent" (10). According to Lightfoot (and what greater, more painstaking, and more exact scholar shall we follow?), commenting on the margin, "things that differ", it is not "things which are opposed", for it requires no keen moral sense to discriminate between these, but "things that transcend" - we may add, not between what is good, and what is bad; but between what is good, and what is better. The word "approve" here means "discriminate" - to test, and set the seal of approval on the one thing rather than on the other. It is akin to the quality of "judgment", or "discernment" that we discussed in the previous verse. This is, as we saw, indeed a gift of the SPIRIT, and must needs be prayed for. Shall I serve God, or not? The answer needs no wisdom: it is plain to every Christian. Shall I serve God at home, or overseas? The answer to this may, for

various reasons, be hard to see - the believer can serve God anywhere; but he can serve Him to the best only in one place, the place of God's own choosing. How important, therefore, to be able to discriminate. As we get to know Him better, to know His Word more - we shall increasingly possess this gift of discrimination - recognizing, of course, the distinction between good and not good; but also between good and better. How precious is that word in I Corinthians 2:16, "We have the mind of Christ." Coming down to the practicalities of ordinary everyday life this touches upon our choice of friends, of books, of amusements, of employments, of ambitions. Of course, the highest office of this gift of discrimination is to guide us about what would best please and honour God - and what - would displease - and grieve Him. A gang of boys were bent on doing something wrong, and when one of them demurred, the others twitted him, "Ah, you're afraid that if your father knew he'd hurt you!" But said he, "No, I am only afraid that if he found out I should hurt him." Such is "the fear of the Lord . . . the beginning of wisdom". Proverbs 9:10. That is how it is to be with the children of God: to distinguish between what would hurt, and what would please, the Heavenly Father, and -

A Prayer For The Character

"That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (10). Here is one's character, as it were, in three dimensions.

(A) As Concerns Ourselves - "*sincere*". Apparently adopting the suggestion of some scholars that the word translated "*sincere*" derives from a word meaning "sunlight", the late Dr. Meyer has this interesting illustration, "Just as the X-rays passing through the limb will at once show the fracture, or the result of some accident, so the X-rays of God'S truth are always searching the heart . . . and the man who lives in love

does not mind meeting the searching rays of God's truth, which show that he is no hypocrite". The idea is, that in His sight we are to be adjudged true, pure, unsullied, whole. In the Authorized Version of I Peter 2:2 you have "the sincere milk of the Word" - there the thought means "unadulterated". The idea is, again, the same: true, pure, unmixed with incompatible ingredients. The Child of God, as the Word of God, is to be entirely wholesome, and wholly devoid of any mixture of inconsistency. Which of us stands the test? Not by the standard of our own opinion of ourselves - not by the standard of what others think of us - but by the infallible eye of God.

Do you remember Dr. James Stalker's sermon on "The Four Men" - (1) The Man the World sees; (2) The Man our Friends see; (3) The Man we Ourselves see; (4) The Man God sees. The same man; but only the last is the Real Man.

but how much more salutary that we should see what God thinks of us - and then, humbly and prayerfully, to seek to be utterly sincere, through and through. A further facet of character is, as I think, in the apostle's prayer for these his children in the faith. I Timothy 1:2 -

(B) As Concerns Others - "*without offence*". I hold that the word can with equal accuracy be said to be either intransitive, as in Acts 24:16, "I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence . . ." or transitive, as in I Corinthians 10:32, "Give none offence." Here in this context we must decide whether the "offence", or "stumbling", is stumbling ourselves, or causing others to stumble. Either meaning is legitimate; and perhaps we may escape the dilemma by ruling that both are referred to. Yet, I cannot help feeling that it is the latter that Paul has in mind in interceding for his friends. He would have them so walk that they shall leave no stumbling-block in the way of others; even as the writer of Hebrews 12:13 exhorts his readers. "Make straight

paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way". It is so easy for us to become unmindful of others and of our influence for good or ill upon them. Happy is the Christian, who neither by demeanor nor behavior, gives anyone the reason, or the excuse, to think wrongly of the faith, or to act wrongly regarding the Master. That leads me to the third aspect of character -

(C) As Concerns Our Saviour - "*till the day of Christ*". The American scholar, Professor Marvin Vincent, suggests that "till" has the idea of "with a view to." Have you heard of employees, in factories or offices, who work with an eye on the clock? Well, it is the Christian's joy and wisdom to work with an eye on the Coming. Paul has the same conception in his letter to Titus 2:11-13. "*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared . . . teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly [concerning ourselves], righteously [concerning others], and godly [concerning our God] in this present world; looking for that blessed hope . . .*" That's it! "We should live . . . *looking.*"

Here is a little girl whose Daddy is returning home after a long term of military service abroad. Mother has received the message that he is on his way - not sure quite when he is to arrive, but it might be almost any day now. The child can scarcely sleep for excitement. Anyhow, she is careful to be clean and spruce those days; she sees that her bedroom is left neat and tidy; she is ever so good in all her behavior; she rushes home quick as soon as school is over - why all this? Only that she is living with an eye on the Coming! So does the keen Christian want to be ready for His arrival - "*and not be ashamed before Him at His coming*" I John 2:28. This happy looking will prove a great stimulus to his holy living. See now how this great intercession concludes with -

A Prayer For The Life

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (11). The character will inevitably issue in conduct. That is why there are plums on those trees in my garden: that is their character coming out in conduct - they are plum trees. That is why those people behave in a Christian manner: it is their character emerging into the open - they are Christians. This last petition of Paul's is exactly parallel to the word in Isaiah 61:3, "that they might be called trees of righteousness ["being filled with the fruits of righteousness"], the planting of the Lord ["which are by Jesus Christ]," here, that He might be glorified, here, "[unto the glory and praise of God]." The roots are all right; for, as the apostle reminded these Philippian believers at the outset (1:1), they are "in Christ" - and if we may reverently put it so, a soul in such soil has every chance to flourish: to fail is somehow, somewhere, entirely his own fault. "My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill" says Isaiah 5:1: why then should it produce only "wild grapes", sour grapes? The fruits, then, are "in", and also "by" JESUS CHRIST. He plants the tree, preserves the tree, prunes the tree, that it may bring forth "fruit . . . more fruit . . . much fruit", John 15:2, 8. "Herein is My Father glorified", added the Master; "that He might be glorified", said the Isaiah 61 passage; "unto the glory and praise of God", as Paul says here. We cannot forbear quoting II Thessalonians 1:10, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe . . . in that day". Yes, perfectly so in that "day of Christ": why not, then, in measure, in these days that intervene? For it is not we, but He that is to do it; "the fruit of the Spirit . . .", as Galatians 5:22 reminds us. Ours but to trust and obey; His to employ His beautiful agencies of fruitfulness in the believer - the rain (Psalm 68:9). - the dew (Hosea 14:5). - the wind (John 3:8). - the sun (Malachi 4:2). Let us, then, never forget that there is no glory to us in all this. Paul,

elsewhere, utterly repudiates any such suggestion: "They glorified God in me," Galatians 1:24. This, then, is the apostle's prayer - in all its fullness and sweetness. We close by repeating our title for this study. What a joyful prayer!

Four P's On Prayer

Text - Luke 11:1-13

Introduction: It is instructive and interesting that the disciples never requested that Jesus teach them to preach or heal, or perform miracles. However, they did ask Him to teach them to pray, *not how to pray* but *to pray*. There is a big difference. Many today know *how* to pray but for some reason or other, they don't pray.

Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 11 grew out of a prayer meeting, a miracle, and an invitation to dinner. It is essential that we understand these truths to our own lives.

The Priority Of Prayer (V. 1).

We usually think of John the Baptist as a prophet and martyr, and yet our Lord's disciples remembered him as a man of prayer. John was a "miracle baby," filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born, and yet he had to pray. He was privileged to introduce the Messiah to Israel, and yet he had to pray. Jesus said that John was the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:28), and yet John had to depend on prayer. If prayer was that vital to a man who had these many advantages, how much more important it ought to be to us who do not have these advantages!

John's disciples had to pray and Jesus' disciples wanted to learn better how to pray. They did not ask the Master to teach them how to preach or do great signs; they asked Him to teach them to pray. We today sometimes think that we would be better Christians if only we had been with Jesus when He was on earth, but this is not likely. The disciples were with Him and yet they failed many times! They could perform miracles, and yet they wanted to learn to pray.

But the greatest argument for the priority of prayer is the fact that our Lord was a Man of prayer. Thus far we have seen that He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21), before He chose the Twelve (Luke 6:12), when the crowds increased (Luke 5:16), before He asked the Twelve for their confession of faith (Luke 9:18), and at His Transfiguration (Luke 9:29). The disciples knew that He often prayed alone (Mark 1:35), and they wanted to learn from Him this secret of spiritual power and wisdom.

If Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, had to depend on prayer during “the days of His flesh” (Heb. 5:7), then how much more do you and I need to pray! Effective prayer is the provision for every need and the solution for every problem.

The Pattern For Prayer (Vv. 2-4).

We call this “The Lord’s Prayer,” not because Jesus prayed it (He never had to ask for forgiveness), but because Jesus taught it. There is nothing wrong with praying this prayer personally or as part of a congregation, so long as we do it from a believing heart that is sincere and submitted. How easy it is to “recite” these words and not really mean them, but that can happen even when we sing and preach! The fault lies with us, not with this prayer.

This is a “pattern prayer,” given to guide us in our own praying (see Matt. 6:9-15 for the parallel). It teaches us that true prayer depends on a spiritual relationship with God that enables us to call Him “Father,” and this can come only through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:1-7).

Lyndon Johnson’s press secretary, Bill Moyers, was saying grace at a staff lunch, and the President shouted, “Speak up, Bill! I can’t hear a thing!” Moyers quietly replied, “I wasn’t addressing you, Mr. President.” It is good to remind ourselves that when we pray, we talk to God.

True prayer also involves *responsibilities*: honoring God's kingdom and doing God's will (Luke 11:2). It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. Prayer is not telling God what we want and then selfishly enjoying it. Prayer is asking God to use us to accomplish *what He wants* so that His name is glorified, His kingdom is extended and strengthened, and His will is done. I must test all of my personal requests by these overruling concerns if I expect God to hear and answer my prayers.

It is important for Christians to know the Word of God, for there we discover the will of God. We must never separate prayer and the Word (John 15:7). During my ministry, I have seen professing Christians disobey God and defend themselves by saying, "I prayed about it and God said it was all right!" This includes a girl who married an unsaved man (2 Cor. 6:14-18), a fellow living with a girl who was not his wife (1 Thes. 4:1-8), and a preacher who started his own church because all the other churches were wrong and only he had true "spiritual insight" (Phil. 2:1-16).

Once we are secure in our relationship with God and His will, then we can bring our *requests* to Him (Luke 11:3-4). We can ask Him to provide our needs (not our greeds!) for today, to forgive us for what we have done yesterday, and to lead us in the future. All of our needs may be included in these three requests: material and physical provision, moral and spiritual perfection, and divine protection and direction. If we pray this way, we can be sure of praying in God's will.

The Persistence In Prayer (Vv. 5-8).

In this parable, Jesus did not say that God is like this grouchy neighbor. In fact, He said just the opposite. If a tired and selfish neighbor finally meets the needs of a bothersome

friend, how much more will a loving Heavenly Father meet the needs of His own dear children! He is arguing from the lesser to the greater.

We have already seen that prayer is based on *sonship* (“Our Father”), not on friendship; but Jesus used friendship to illustrate persistence in prayer. God the Father is not like this neighbor, for He never sleeps, never gets impatient or irritable, is always generous, and delights in meeting the needs of His children. The friend at the door had to keep on knocking in order to get what he needed, but God is quick to respond to His children’s cries (Luke 18:1-8).

The argument is clear: If persistence finally paid off as a man beat on the door of a reluctant friend, how much more would persistence bring blessing as we pray to a loving Heavenly Father! After all, we are the children *in the house with Him!*

The word translated “importunity” means “shamelessness” or “avoidance of shame.” It can refer to the man at the door who was not ashamed to wake up his friend, but it can also refer to the friend in the house. Hospitality to strangers is a basic law in the East (Gen. 18:1ff). If a person refused to entertain a guest, he brought disgrace on the whole village and the neighbors would have nothing to do with him. The man in the house knew this and did not want to embarrass himself, his family, or his village; so he got up and met the need.

Why does our Father in heaven answer prayer? Not just to meet the needs of His children, but to meet them in such a way that it brings glory to His name. “Hallowed be Thy name.” *When God’s people pray, God’s reputation is at stake.* The way He takes care of His children is a witness to the world that He can be trusted. Phillips Brooks said that prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness. Persistence in prayer is not an attempt to change

God's mind ("Thy will be done") but to get ourselves to the place where He can trust us with the answer.

The Promises For Prayer (Vv. 9-13).

The tenses of the verbs are important here: "Keep on asking . . . keep on seeking . . . keep on knocking." In other words, *don't come to God only in the midnight emergencies, but keep in constant communion with your Father.* Jesus called this "abiding" (John 15:1ff), and Paul exhorted, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17). As we pray, God will either answer or show us why He cannot answer. Then it is up to us to do whatever is necessary in our lives so that the Father can trust us with the answer.

Note that the lesson closes with an emphasis on God as Father (Luke 11:11-13). Because He knows us and loves us, *we never need to be afraid of the answers that He gives.* Again, Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater: if an earthly father gives what is best to his children, surely the Father in heaven will do even more. This even includes "*the good things of the Holy Spirit*" (compare Luke 11:13 with Matt. 7:11), blessings that in the Old Testament were reserved only for a special few.

In Everything By Prayer

Introduction: “*in everything by prayer and supplication . . . let your requests be made known unto God*” (6). “*What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer*”, as the old hymn says. When difficulties and distresses surround us, how it brings peace to our heart to bring it all to Him in prayer.

Three different words are used in this verse for prayer.

General Prayer

The word translated “*prayer*” is what we may call general prayer. This is a talking with God, quite naturally, about everything - smiling to Him in joy; confiding in Him in sorrow; looking to Him for direction; talking over with Him the details of daily life. May we all learn to live in the spirit of general prayer.

Particular Prayer

The word for “*supplication*” may be held to represent particular prayer. Prayer for “*supply-cation*,” that is for God to supply a particular need.

The talking to Him of some definite issue, subject, event, person - whether we intercede alone, or whether “*two of you shall agree*”, or whether “*prayer is made of the Church*”, as a whole as in Acts 12:5.

Detailed Prayer

There is a third word here, rendered “*requests*”, which we may be think of as indicating minute details of our situations and needs.

God is interested in the *Telescopic* view, things afar, things at large. He is also interested in the *Microscopic* view, things nearby, things small and insignificant to others but meaningful to us and to Him - the details. One old-time preacher put it this way:

- The Concert As A *Whole*; The Program In *Particular*; The Items In *Detail*.
- The Men's Meeting In *General*; The One Man In *Particular*; The Many Needs He Has In *Detail*.
- We think of George Muller's life of Prayer in *general*, the Orphanage in *particular*, the Children's welfare in *detail*.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Blessed Savior, Thou hast promised Thou wilt all our burdens bear

May we ever, Lord, be bringing all to Thee in earnest prayer.

Soon in glory bright unclouded there will be no need for prayer

Rapture, praise and endless worship will be our sweet portion there.

The God Who Answers Prayer

Text - Luke 1

Introduction: The God of the Bible is "*The God Who Answers Prayer!*" His great promises concerning prayer throughout the Bible verify that He is certainly involved in this business. An example in the Old Testament is, "*Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not*" (Jer. 33:3). In the New Testament, Jesus said, "*Ask, and it shall be given you*" (Matt. 7:7).

Luke 1 illustrates the commitment of God to answer prayer. A "*priest named Zacharias*" (1:5) was ministering in the temple and "*there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord*" (1:11). Initially, he was very troubled to see the angel. But, the angel said unto him, "*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard....*" (1:13).

By means of the expression "*thy prayer is heard*" notice the following:

1. The Guidelines God Sets

Three guidelines in the first division (Luke 1:5-17):

A. *His Own Channels*

B. *His Own Time*

C. *His Own Will*

2. The Grace God Shows

All the actions of God are actions of grace. In Spite of:

A. *The Hesitancies*

B. *The Hindrances*

C. *The Hour*

3. The Glory God Shares

Grace leads to glory! True in Christian experience.

A. *In the Family*

B. *To the Father*

C. *For the Future*

Conclusion: George Mueller, the great Victorian Christian and social reformer, tells a story of persistent prayer in his diary:

In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller's friends, were still not converted. He wrote, "*But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be.*" In 1897, fifty-two years after

he began to pray daily, without interruption, for these two men, they were finally converted—but after he died! Mueller understood the parable Jesus told about prayer, "*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*" - Luke 18:1

Unanswered prayer? How do we ever know for sure it will remain unanswered? Since we do not, we should always pray and not give up. God hears and answers prayer! Oh, may we persevere with praying! May we continue to seek His face! Somewhere, He will unite *our* will with *His* will, and "*The God Who Answers Prayer*" will be pleased to work in our lives for His glory and His honor.

God has given you His promise
That He hears and answers prayer.
He will heed your supplication
If you cast on Him your care.

Refrain

*He will answer every prayer,
He will answer every prayer,
Go to Him in faith believing,
He will answer every prayer.*

He will not withhold one blessing,
He will give you what is best.
God will answer by His Spirit,
Every one who makes request.

He can hear the great petition,
And the smallest, over there.
Unto God pray without ceasing,
He will answer every prayer.

Take to God your plans and failures,
Anytime and anywhere.
No one ever goes unanswered,
For He answers every prayer.

We Must Pray In God's Will

Text - Matthew 6:9-13

Introduction: This prayer is known familiarly as “The Lord’s Prayer,” but “The Disciples’ Prayer” would be a more accurate title. Jesus did not give this prayer to us to be memorized and recited a given number of times. In fact, He gave this prayer *to keep us* from using vain repetitions. Jesus did not say, “Pray in these words.” He said, “Pray after this manner”; that is, “Use this prayer as a pattern, not as a substitute.”

The purpose of prayer is to glorify God’s name, and to ask for help to accomplish His will on earth. This prayer begins with *God’s* interests, not ours: God’s name, God’s kingdom, and God’s will. Robert Law has said, “Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man’s will done in heaven, but for getting God’s will done in earth.” We have no right to ask God for anything that will dishonor His name, delay His kingdom, or disturb His will on earth.

It is worth noting that there are *no singular pronouns* in this prayer; they are all plural. It begins with “OUR Father.” When we pray, we must remember that we are part of God’s worldwide family of believers. We have no right to ask for ourselves anything that would harm another member of the family. If we are praying in the will of God, the answer will be a blessing to all of God’s people in one way or another.

If we put God’s concerns first, then we can bring our own needs. God is concerned about our needs and knows them even before we mention them (Matt. 6:8). If this is the case, then why pray? Because prayer is the God-appointed way to have these needs met (see James 4:1-3). *Prayer prepares us for the proper use of the answer.* If we know our need, and if

we voice it to God, trusting Him for His provision, then we will make better use of the answer than if God forced it on us without our asking.

It is right to pray for daily physical needs, for forgiveness, and for guidance and protection from evil. “Lead us not into temptation” does not mean that God tempts His children (James 1:13-17). In this petition we are asking God to guide us so that we will not get out of His will and get involved in a situation of temptation (1 John 5:18), or even in a situation of tempting God so that He must miraculously rescue us (Matt. 4:5-7).

True prayer also involves *responsibilities*: honoring God’s kingdom and doing God’s will (Luke 11:2). It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man’s will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth. Prayer is not telling God what we want and then selfishly enjoying it. Prayer is asking God to use us to accomplish *what He wants* so that His name is glorified, His kingdom is extended and strengthened, and His will is done. I must test all of my personal requests by these overruling concerns if I expect God to hear and answer my prayers.

It is important for Christians to know the Word of God, for there we discover the will of God. We must never separate prayer and the Word (John 15:7). During my ministry, I have seen professing Christians disobey God and defend themselves by saying, “I prayed about it and God said it was all right!” This includes a girl who married an unsaved man (2 Cor. 6:14-18), a fellow living with a girl who was not his wife (1 Thes. 4:1-8), and a preacher who started his own church because all the other churches were wrong and only he had true “spiritual insight” (Phil. 2:1-16).

Once we are secure in our relationship with God and His will, then we can bring our *requests* to Him (Luke 11:3-4). We can ask Him to provide our needs (not our greeds!) for today, to forgive us for what we have done yesterday, and to lead us in the future. All of our needs may be included in these three requests: material and physical provision, moral and spiritual perfection, and divine protection and direction. If we pray this way, we can be sure of praying in God's will.

With Christ In The School Of Prayer

Introduction: Andrew Murray's book on "*With Christ in the School of Prayer*" is a good book for all of us. This is the schoolroom for the school of prayer, and this is the first lesson. Let us read & reference {Matthew 6:6}, "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*"

In a Bible of one of J. Wilbur Chapman's friends was an outline on the margin for this very passage, Matthew 6:6:

Period for prayer -- 'When thou prayest.'

Place for prayer -- Enter into thy closet.'

Privacy of prayer -- 'Shut thy door.'

Persons in prayer -- 'Pray to thy Father.'

Promise for prayer -- 'He shall reward thee.'

Have you a closet in your home for prayer? "Enter in, shut the door, pray to thy Father." "Why," you say, when you rise from your knees, "I don't believe he heard it. I don't believe he heard a word." I don't believe he heard it, either. The trouble is with your haste, my brother. You cannot enter unceremoniously into the presence of the President of the United States; how much more must you revere the presence of God?

My prayer-life must be the life that Jesus Christ would live. Then it must be in his name. When I have "surrendered all," as we sang, I have the right to use his name, and "he shall reward

me." He has promised it. There are three things that give us the right to use a name:

1. A Legal Union. I have the right to use the name of my partner.

2. A Life Union. It is my privilege to use the name of my father.

3. A Love Union. My wife has a perfect right to use my name.

For all of these reasons we have the right to the use of the name of Christ.

There is a name that is above every name. It sets the angels singing. Plead it; plead it. "Lord, teach us to pray." Oh, teach me. Thou didst teach George Mueller and Andrew Murray -- teach me. Can you say it, my brother, and mean it -- "Lord, teach me to pray"? -- J. W. C.

By J. Wilbur Chapman, "Present Day Parables."

Praying in the Holy Ghost

Jude 20

Introduction:

Prayer According to the Word of God

Since the Holy Ghost inspired men to write the Word of God, He would not lead anyone to pray contrary to His revealed Word (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Prayer Guided by the Holy Ghost

His leadership in who and what we pray for comes from His guidance (Rom. 26, 27).

Prayer Which is Holy

He is the Holy Ghost and He detests sin in all its forms – pride, lust, selfishness, worldliness, in every shape and of every degree. He is grieved by it (Eph. 4:30-32). We must not regard iniquity in our hearts or He will not hear us (Ps. 66:18).

3 Aspects of Prayer

Text: James 4:1–2

Introduction: We all desperately need to learn how to pray. Our failures are all prayer failures. There are three aspects of victorious prayer.

UNOFFERED PRAYER

We try to get what we think we need by using our own strength.

Illustration: Boy didn't use all his strength to move a huge stone.

Illustration: Boy stole a sour orange when by asking he would have had more good oranges than he could carry.

Prayerlessness is sin, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Luke 18:1.

By not praying we miss out on all the good things God has for us.

Illustration: John Bunyan's quote about the relationship of prayer to sin.

There is no substitute for prayer.

UNACCEPTABLE PRAYER

James 4:3

God is not going to underwrite our selfish motives by answering such prayers.

Illustration: A husband would not finance his wife's affair.

God supplies all our legitimate needs, but never our selfish desires.

UNDENIABLE PRAYER

How can we pray so that our lives are linked with the omnipotence of God?

James gives five principles of undeniable prayer.

- 1. -Sensitivity to the Spirit, James 4:5.**
- 2. -Submission to the Father, James 4:6**
- 3. -Standing against the Devil, James 4:7**
- 4. -Separation from the world, James 4:8**
- 5. -Seriousness in our purpose, James 4:9**

Conclusion:

- James 5:16b

A Request for the New Year

Text - Psalm 119:18

“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

The first of the year has become a time when many people make their New Year’s resolutions. According to recent polls, the ten top New Year’s resolutions are as follows:

- (1) Spend more time with family and friends,
- (2) Fit in fitness,
- (3) Tame the bulge,
- (4) Quit smoking,
- (5) Enjoy life more,
- (6) Quit drinking,
- (7) Get out of debt,
- (8) Learn something new,
- (9) Help others,
- (10) Get organized.

While attempting to reach any of these beneficial goals is to be commended, the most important matter seems to be overlooked. None of the top ten resolutions have anything to do with our relationship with God. We must not forget that Jesus taught, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

This is not to imply that it is wrong for Christians to have renewed goals and resolutions. We must not lean on the arm of the flesh, however, to accomplish these goals. The Holy Spirit lives within us to enable and empower us to do the will of God. I think it is good to have a verse of Scripture to claim or a prayer from the Scriptures to pray throughout the New Year. This is the prayer request I have chosen for the next twelve months.

Recognize A Spiritual Universe!

There is a world of divine realities, a realm of eternal truths, which many never know. The Psalmist intensely desired to enter this sphere and prayed to “behold wondrous things” from God’s law. The word “wondrous” indicates “marvelous, surpassing, or extraordinary.” Oh, may we be conscious of the truth of God and conscious, as well, of the God of truth.

Request A Spiritual Unveiling!

Our spiritual eyes must be opened for us to see the things of God. A mere reading of the Bible, or a casual acquaintance with holy matters, will not bring divine realities into focus. Neither can we force the spiritual world to open to us through self-discipline. The Lord must take the veil away. He must remove the fleshly hindrances from our minds. With the Psalmist, then, let us cry out, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”

Renew A Spiritual Understanding!

The need is greater than just to be aware of the spiritual world, and it is greater than just praying for God to open our eyes.

The need is to “behold” the wondrous things in the divine sphere. The word “behold” means “to look, to consider, to regard.” The truths of God are to be deeply appreciated and appropriated by the children of faith.

A Telegram Prayer

Text - Psalm 12:1a (Help Lord)

Introduction: James Montgomery correctly wrote: “Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath”. Prayer is the believer’s very life; without prayer he dies! No wonder the disciples said, “Lord, teach us to pray,” and Jesus and the apostles commended “praying without ceasing” or “praying always.” They did not say, “Be always saying your prayers”—that would be impossible since we have daily jobs to perform. But we should always be in an attitude and atmosphere of communion with God. Walking along the street, riding in a bus or train, standing by our workbench, or wherever we are, we should be in contact with God.

The Psalmist was like that. In difficulty, danger, sickness, or distress he was in prayerful communion with his God—for himself, his enemies, his nation, the world—above ground, in the darkness of a cave—morning, noon, and night. These two words at the beginning of Psalm 12 are a characteristic petition of the Psalmist and a pattern for every believer.

I. THE CAUSE OF THE PRAYER

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan comments: “Out of a consciousness of the terrible evil of his times he cries to God for help.” What evil times we are living in! Radio, television, newspapers (even Christian literature about drug addicts and dropouts) all emphasize the evil state of the world. Here, then, is a prayer for every parent, Sunday school teacher, and church member: “Help Lord!” God alone can intervene and change people and situations.

The Psalmist was living in days of national decay due to a turning away from God—the very cause of our modern

decadent society. “The godly man ceaseth,” he says. “Men of godly faith are squeezed out of public life” is how one modern translation puts it. “Ceaseth” in the Hebrew is equivalent to “exterminated.” How few godly men there are among politicians, philosophers, psychiatrists, educators—the so-called architects of society. We have to affirm what the Psalmist says in Psalm 121: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord.”

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRAYER

Only two words, but a fourfold prayer:

A. It was short.

The rest of the Psalm is a description of the cause of these two words. It is a “telegram prayer.” C. H. Spurgeon used to be irritated by long-winded people who prayed for several minutes and then asked the Lord to “forgive us our shortcomings”! This describes prayer as “the upward glancing of an eye” or “the falling of a tear.” Neither takes very long.

B. It was simple.

“The simplest form of speech that infant lips can try” is how the hymn goes. “Highfalutin” phrases are not included in a telegram—every word costs money. The message must be short and simple.

C. It was sincere.

The Psalmist was not crying “wolf,” he was praying real, heartfelt prayer.

D. It was prayed with the spirit of fervency.

Like Peter (“Lord, save me”) it was the cry of a drowning man, a piercing scream that penetrated the gates of heaven and ended up at the mercy seat.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRAYER

“Help” can be translated “save.” It is the same word as in verse 5:

“I will save him.” As a consequence of crying “Help” (save me), the Psalmist was made safe.

It is the fervency of our prayers (“the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”) that counts with God and causes Him to answer, not the arithmetic (frequency) or rhetoric (eloquence) ; not the geometry (their length, width, or depth) or music (how sweet-sounding they are to others); not the logic (the arguments we use to “twist God’s arm” as it were) or the doctrine or Scripture texts quoted. True prayer is in telegram form rather than sermon, catalogue, or book fashion.

The “All’s” of Prayer

Ephesians 6:18

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

Introduction: When we pray we enter three realms, The Hidden Place, the Heavenly Place, and the Holy Place.

The Hidden Place...a closet, a cathedral, a bus, a barn, a backyard (quiet)

The Heavenly Place...God' Throne Room..."in the heavenlies"...where many of Satan's forces operate (Wandering, Wicked, and Worldly Thoughts)

The Holy Place..."near to the heart of God" (hymn)

In the text before us, it appears that the Apostle Paul was also attached to the word “all.” "all prayer".....all types of prayer.....confession, adoration, praise, petition, intercession, and supplication.

In one form or another, he used it four times in this one verse. In the section that precedes our key text, where a detailed description is given of the Christian’s armor, the word “all” only appears one time (see 6:16). But when the importance of the ministry of prayer in spiritual warfare is set forth, the word is repeated and reemphasized.

Prayer should be offered at “all” times and places! We are confronted immediately with the admonition, “Praying always.” Certainly, the Apostle is not suggesting that we kneel and make verbal petitions twenty-four hours a day. Rather,

like Christ's command, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17), the words "Praying always" speak of a constant attitude of prayer. No matter what the time or location, the silent utterances of our hearts can ascend to the blessed throne of grace.

Prayer should be offered in "all" the energy of the Spirit! The next phrase, "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," underlines this truth. Our prayers are nothing more than religious rhetoric apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But when we pray, as Jude explains, "in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 1:20), in cooperation with and in the energy of the Spirit of God, our prayers are not just words. They are mighty, persuasive, effectual petitions before God.

Prayer should be offered for "all" believers! That is indicated in the statement, "watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Yes, the saints in Ephesus needed prayer, but so did the saints in Rome, in Corinth, in Galatia, in Philippi, in Colosse, in Thessalonica, and elsewhere. Praying for others makes our world bigger. Even today, may we experience an enlargement of life and outreach through the ministry of prayer.

An Answer For David

Text - Psalm 13

Introduction: Psalm 13 was penned when David appeared to have some great conflict in his life. King Saul's accusations and attacks were taking their toll on David, almost to the point, that it was too much for him.

1 His Question

Psalm 13:1-2 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? [2] How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

He declares that his afflictions lasted a long time.

A Where is Your Presence? === "Forget me"

B. What is Your Purpose? === "how long thou hide thy face"

C. Where is Your Protection? === "how longmine enemy be exalted"

2 His Quest

Psalm 13:3-4 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; [4] Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

A. Hear Me == "Consider and hear me"

B. Help Me == "Lest mine enemy say..."

C. Honor Me = Vs. 4 don't let me be defeated

3.His Quota

Psalm 13:5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. 6 I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

The mercy of God is the cause of our salvation. Both are the benefits past and by others to come.

A. My Hope ===== "I Trusted"

B. My Heart ===== "my heart shall rejoice"

C. My Harmony == "I will sing"

D. My Honor ===== "He hath dealt bountifully with me".

Call Unto Me...

Text - Jeremiah 33:3

Introduction: For years, one of my favorite prayer verses has been, “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer. 33:3):

EXERCISE THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER!

This is embodied in the words, “Call unto Me.” Although much is said about Jerusalem in the context, this is a personal word from the Lord to Jeremiah. The name, “LORD,” used in the surrounding verses, not only reminds us that He is the Self-Existent One, but that we are privileged to call on such an awesome Being. The Lord also says to our hearts:

EXPERIENCE THE PROMISE OF PRAYER!

Not only are we blessed to enjoy the privilege of prayer, but He promises, “I will answer thee.” The idea set forth in the word, “answer,” is “respond to, or receive.” Our great God pledges to hear us and be responsive to us. Of course, in this phrase, we have one of God’s great “I Will” statements of the Old Testament. The God Who never fails, promises to respond to our prayers.

EXPECT THE POWER OF PRAYER!

While in and of itself, prayer possesses no power, it becomes a special channel through which God’s power flows! The God Who says, “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee,” also promises that He will “shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Prayer, offered in the enablement of the Spirit, connects us to the greatness and might of God.

The last phrase, “which thou knowest not,” reminds us that there are spheres of blessing we have never entered, and cannot enter in ourselves. May “the Spirit of grace and supplications” be pleased to help us tap into these divine resources.

Five Kinds of Prayers Jesus Prayed

I. His Prayer of Praise (Matt. 11:26)

II. His Prayer of Petition (Luke 23:34)

III. His Prayer For Peace (Jn. 17:4)

IV. His Prayer of Permission (Luke 22)

V. His Prayer of Power (Jn. 11:41-42)

How To Pray As Jesus Did

Text - Matthew 26:36

Introduction: Matt. 26:36 "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples. Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

I. HE PRAYED ALONE "And again he went away, and prayed . . ." (Mark 14:39, Luke 22:41; Matt. 26:39).

A. Jesus often communed alone with God on the mountainside. He prayed alone when He was facing the most crucial time of His life.

B. It is good to pray with other Christians, but there are times, perhaps crucial times, when we should be alone with God in the prayer closet (Matt. 6:6).

II. HE PRAYED WITH HUMILITY "He . . . kneeled down, and prayed" (Luke 22:41; Mark 14:35, Matt. 26:39).

A. Jesus was humble, His life, His birth, and death on the cross exemplify this.

B. We must humble ourselves before God as we pray (I Peter 5:5-6).

III. HE PRAYED EARNESTLY "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44).

A. Jesus was experiencing the greatest struggle of His life. The hope and life of the world were at stake.

B. In times of trouble and trial, every Christian must pray more earnestly.

IV. HE PRAYED PERSISTENTLY "And again he went away, and prayed . . ." (Mark 14:39).

A. Jesus did not stop short. He kept praying until He was assured of victory.

B. We must prevail by taking our burdens to the Lord until we are assured He has heard.

V. HE PRAYED WITH SUBMISSION "O my Father . . . thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

A. Jesus resigned Himself to the Father's will.

B. We should pray with submission.

Prayer: Any Need, Anywhere, Anyhow, Any Time

You can pray for **ANY NEED** -- for lengthened life, as Hezekiah did; for help, as Daniel did; for light, as Bartimaeus did; for mercy, as David did; for rain, as Elijah did; for a son, as Hannah did; for grace, as Paul did.

You can pray **ANYWHERE** -- in the deep, like Jonah; on the housetop, like Peter; on your bed, like Hezekiah; on the mountain, like Jesus; in the wilderness, like Hagar; in the street, like Jairus; in the cave, like David; on the cross, like the dying thief.

You can pray **ANYHOW** -- short, as Peter and the publican did; long, like Moses at the consecration of the Tabernacle, or Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. You can pray in silence, as Hannah did in the Temple; in your secret thoughts, as Nehemiah did before Darius; or aloud, as did the Syrophenician woman; in tears, as Mary Magdalene did; in groans or songs, as David did.

You can pray **ANY TIME** -- in the morning, as David did; at noon, as Daniel did; at midnight, as Paul and Silas did; in childhood, as Samuel did; in youth, as Timothy did; in manhood, as the centurion did; in age, as Simeon did; in sickness, as Job did; or in death, like Jacob and the dying Christ. --W. M. Tidwell, "Pointed Illustrations."

Prayer - The Biggest Waste Of Time!

Text: Luke 11:1

Introduction: Those who are doing something positive with their life recognize that we are only allotted so many days, weeks, months and years in this life, and we cannot afford to waste the precious time that is given to us.

PRAYER CAN BE NO MORE THAN A WASTE OF TIME.
When?

- I. PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD God**
- II. PUBLIC PRAYER WITHOUT PRIVATE PRAYER**
- III. PRAYING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE**
- IV. PRAYING SELFISH PRAYERS**

For example:

(1) SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME

In the name of increased productivity, we humans have battled against time since the beginning of time. For example, if you look at the past 200 years, the invention of the cotton gin, the assembly line, the telephone, and the computer, have made it possible for the business world to increase productivity in a greater way.

The Business world knows these time saving devices will increase their productivity, and will put more money in their pockets.

(2) SUCCESSFUL FARMERS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME

A farmer used to take his mule and plow all day in a field, and if he worked really hard, he might plow one acre. But today, successful farmers know that they can save all kinds of time by plowing with their tractors, and in one day, they may plow 10 to 25 acres. The time they save plowing with tractors will put more money in their pockets.

The point I want to make is this; those who are successful know they cannot waste the time God has allotted them.

But there are those who do not think twice about wasting hours, days, weeks, months, or years of their life.

One of the smartest things a person can do is take a course in "Time management," and learn to use the time allotted to them wisely.

Illus: A man died and went to heaven. It's a slow day for St. Peter, so upon passing the entrance test, St. Peter says "I'm not very busy today. Why don't you let me show you around?" The guy thinks it's a great idea, and graciously accepts the offer. St. Peter shows him all the sights: the golf course, reading room, library, observation room, cafeteria and, finally, a HUGE room full of clocks. "What's up with those clocks, Saint Peter?"

"Everyone on earth has a clock that shows how much time he has left on earth. When a clock runs out of time, the person dies and comes to the Gates to be judged."

The guy thinks this makes sense, but notices that some of the clocks are going faster than others, and he asks why.

"Every time a living person tells a lie, it speeds up his clock." This also makes sense, so the guy takes one last look around the room before leaving and notices one clock in the center of the ceiling. On this clock, both hands are spinning at an unbelievable rate.

"What's the story with that clock?" "Oh, that," St. Peter replies. "That's Bill Clinton's clock. We decided to use his clock as a ceiling fan."

We have to be careful how we spend the time that God gives us each day. If we are not careful, others will plan our time (life) for us.

Illus: One wife felt that her husband was not spending his time wisely, watching the ball game on television. He thought differently. She said, "I think you should talk to me while I sew." He said, "Why don't you sew to me while I watch the ball game?"

We can all be thankful that we live in an age when we can wear a wrist watch to help us know what time it is.

Illus: Did you hear about the man who was proudly showing off his new apartment to friends late one night? He said, "Did you know that I have a talking clock?" He showed them a large hammer against the wall, and the friend said, "How does it tell time.? He picked the hammer up and hit the wall, and a voice from the other side said, "KNOCK IT OFF, YOU IDIOT! It's two AM in the morning!"

All of us need to be **TIME CONSCIOUS!** There are many ways we can waste our time, but one of the biggest ways we can waste time is to pray an "Unacceptable prayer." You see, prayer is like many things in our life, there are **GOOD PRAYERS** and **BAD PRAYERS**.

- Prayer, in and of itself, is not necessarily good
- Wrong praying is just as bad as not praying at all. Some prayers are no more than a waste of time

Let's examine some types of prayers that fall into the category of wasted time.

I. PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD God

We see an example of this in Ezekiel 8:16, “Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, WITH THEIR BACKS TOWARD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD, AND THEIR FACES TOWARD THE EAST; AND THEY WORSHIPED THE SUN TOWARD THE EAST.”

WHAT DOES THIS VERSE MEAN? Notice, there were about 25 men at the inner court of the temple, with their backs turned away from God. You could say they were “Thumbing their noses” at God, by turning their backs toward God and facing toward their sun god.

Illus: On the national news, a young girl who played in the high school band objected to the war against Iraq. When the band stood on a field, pledging allegiance to the flag, as an act of protest against the war in Iraq, she turned her back toward the flag.

That is what these twenty-five men did at the temple. They were at the RIGHT PLACE, but they were FACING THE WRONG DIRECTION. They were at the temple, but they

were showing their hearts were toward the sun god that they worshipped.

Illus: This would be like a man spending time with his wife, (he is at the right place) but if you could get into his mind, you would find he is thinking of another woman.

Jeremiah addresses this problem, we read in Jer. 2:27, “...FOR THEY HAVE TURNED THEIR BACK UNTO ME, AND NOT THEIR FACE: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.”

- People have always done God this way. They turn their backs on God and when they are in trouble they turn to God
- But then they are surprised when God turns his back on them

There are many Christians that are praying WASTED PRAYERS. They wonder why God never hears and answers their prayers, and it is because they have turned their backs on God. Many are like the twenty five men at the temple, they are in the right place, but their hearts are somewhere else.

The Lord said in Matthew 15:8, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”

PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD God IS A WASTE OF TIME. We need to realize that, because God is not going to waste His time on these people when they come to Him in prayer.

II. PUBLIC PRAYER WITHOUT PRIVATE PRAYER

Matt. 6:5-6, “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for **THEY LOVE TO PRAY STANDING IN**

THE SYNAGOGUES AND IN THE CORNERS OF THE STREETS, THAT THEY MAY BE SEEN OF MEN. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 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.”

Notice, these disciples wanted to know how to pray, and the Lord taught them that they must NOT PRAY AS THE HYPOCRITES PRAY!

HOW DID THE HYPOCRITES PRAY? The Word of God teaches that the only time they prayed was in public, and the only reason they prayed was to be seen of men. In other words, they were not using prayer as a means to communicate with God, but as a tool to be seen by men.

Illus: Sometimes I wonder if much of the praying on the Capitol steps is really no more using prayer as a means of hoping the television networks will broadcast the event, so they can be seen of men for whatever reason.

God is not pleased with such prayers, they are a waste of time. So much in the church is done to be SEEN OF MEN.

Illus: It is said that, before he retired, Rex Humbard literally had thousands of people attending his church. Every week, the television camera would sweep the congregation and it would show people singing and praying. When he retired, the television cameras were removed, and listen, a good portion of that congregation suddenly felt God was leading them to another church. Could it be the only reason they were there to was to be seen of men?

People will do all kinds of things to be SEEN OF MEN. And one of the things that man has always done, is use PRAYER

AS A TOOL to get attention. But I can tell you, on the basis of God's Word, their prayers are no more than a waste of time.

God is displeased when we take the sacredness of prayer and use it as a tool to accomplish something self-centered.

I want to remind you again, **PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD God and PUBLIC PRAYER WITHOUT PRIVATE PRAYER** are a waste of time.

III. PRAYING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE

There are times when prayer is used as an excuse. Prayer is never a substitute for obedience. Joshua and the elders of Israel were complaining before God after the Israelites were defeated at Ai. They were putting on quite a show, tearing their sackcloth, throwing dust in the air, and complaining to God.

God broke in on this little prayer meeting. Look at Josh. 7:10-11a, we read, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, **GET THEE UP; WHEREFORE LIEST THOU THUS UPON THY FACE? Israel hath sinned,....**"

God's people were defeated because Achan had partaken of the accursed (forbidden) thing. Disobedience in the camp had brought about this defeat, and they prayed, but **PRAYER WAS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE.**

Disobedience in the church and disobedience in the heart hinder the blessing of God.

In Joshua's time, it was not **MORE TIME SPENT IN PRAYER THAT WAS NEEDED**, what was needed was the removal of the sin in the camp!

There are folks who know they have sin in their life, and they wonder why God does not answer their prayers. Listen to me:

- He never has
- He never will

Until the sin problem in their life is dealt with.

We read in Ps. 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Their prayers are no more than a waste of time.

Illus: Their life reminds me of the little boy who prayed "Lord, if you can't make me a better boy, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time like I am."

I want to remind you again that **PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD God, PUBLIC PRAYER WITHOUT PRIVATE PRAYER, and PRAYING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE ARE A WASTE OF TIME!**

IV. SELFISH PRAYING

True prayer...

- HONORS GOD'S NAME
- ADVANCES GOD'S KINGDOM
- IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S WILL

To put it another way, prayer is meant to be God-centered, not self-centered.

Illus: There are people who do not see prayer as a means of communicating with God, but as a tool to convey some selfish thing they want to convey, using prayers as the means of doing that. This praying is a waste of time.

Illus: A Judge called a preacher one day, and asked him if he could come to the jail because he needed to talk to him. His office and court were located in the county jail building. But the judge said, "Preacher, I am not in my office at the jail, I am in jail." He went to see him, and discovered that he and the governor had gotten into some kind of a situation that was illegal. But while he was in jail, his wife died. He called again, and asked him if he would be kind enough to preach his wife's funeral. He told him he would be glad to do it. His wife was raised up in the Mormon church, and the Judge did not like Mormons, and did not get along with them or her family. Just before the preacher was ready to step onto the platform, the Judge, with handcuffs on his wrists, handed him a letter and asked him if he would read this at the end of his eulogy. He did not have time to pre-read it, and did not have any idea what the letter contained. When he got through, he told the congregation, (hundreds of Mormons) that he was asked to read this letter. He knew he was in trouble when it started off, "Dear Honey, I will always love you even if your family has never loved you." And for the next two pages this letter contained negative things about her family and the Mormon church.

Now listen, this judge used a good friend for the wrong purpose. And many folks will use prayer for the wrong purpose.

But we read in James 4:3, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

V. PRAYING TO ONE'S SELF

Luke 18:11a, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself....." This man is not really praying to God. He is praying. . . with himself.

HOW DOES HE DO THIS? He is using prayer as a means to PROMOTE HIMSELF! Some will spend hours before God, trying to convince Him that they are special.

Listen, you do not need to brag and tell God how special you are, HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU. If you are going this route, you might want to find someone that DOES NOT KNOW YOU!

There are many folks who do a lot of bragging about their greatness.

Illus: There was a Japanese man who went to America on a sightseeing trip. On the last day, he caught a cab and told the driver to drive him to the airport.

- During the journey, a Honda drove past the taxi. Thereupon, the man leaned out of the window excitedly and yelled, "Honda, very fast! Made in Japan!"
- After a while, a Toyota sped past the taxi. Again, the Japanese man leaned out of the window and yelled, "Toyota, very fast! Made in Japan!"

And then a Mitsubishi sped past the taxi. For the third time, the Japanese leaned out of the window and yelled, "Mitsubishi, very fast! Made in Japan!"

The driver was a little angry, but he kept quiet. This went on for quite a number of cars. Finally, the taxi came to the airport. The fare was \$300.

The Japanese exclaimed, "Wah... so expensive!"

There upon, the driver yelled back, "Meter, very fast! Made in Japan!"

Listen, this crowd that is always bragging before man and God, can't be taken seriously. Why? Because everything that comes out of their mouths is spoken to make them look good. That is all they are concerned about.

Conclusion: I want to close this sermon on a positive note. The Bible says in James 5:16, "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Illus: A Christian woman was at work when she received a message that her daughter was very sick with a fever. She left her work and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication for her daughter.

Upon returning to her car, she found that she had locked her keys in the car. She was in a hurry to get home to her sick daughter, so she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. Within five minutes an old rusty car pulled up, with a dirty, greasy, bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag on his head. The woman thought, "This is what you sent to help me?" But, she was desperate, so she was also very thankful.

The man got out of his car and asked her if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get her some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?"

He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than one minute the car was opened. She hugged the man and

through her tears she said, "Thank you so much! You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft and have only been out for about an hour."

The woman hugged the man again and with sobbing tears cried out loud, "Oh. Thank you God! You even sent me a Professional."

Prayer is no more than a Believer that is sincere, talking with God the Father.

Illus: Dr. Odell Belger tells how one of the best prayers he had ever heard was from a man who was gloriously saved. After a year, he was serving as an usher in the church. Dr. Belger asked him would it be all right to call on him to pray over the offering some time. He said, "That would be fine!" One Sunday when the church was almost packed, he called on him to pray. This man shut his eyes and shut everyone out in the congregation. He talked to God like a little child would talk to his father. And when he got through he said, "That's all I got to talk about right now, I will talk to you later!"

Everyone opened their eyes, and they felt like they had been sitting in the presence of a man talking to God. I want to remind you again, PRAYER CAN BE NO MORE THAN A WASTE OF TIME. When?

- I. PRAYING WITH YOUR BACK TOWARD God
- II. PUBLIC PRAYER WITHOUT PRIVATE PRAYER
- III. PRAYING AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE
- IV. PRAYING SELFISH PRAYERS

Prayer: What, Why, Where, When

Text - 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Introduction: Do you know why people knock on wood? It was a form of praying, and it dates back to the Druids of ancient England. They believed that trees were inhabited by their gods. When presenting a request, the Druid priests would knock on the tree. If the "tree-god-in-residence" was in favor of answering the prayer, he would return the knock on wood. Aren't you grateful that you pray to our Father in Heaven?

Prayer is the act by which man approaches God. It's the heart of religion. There can be no religion without prayer. That's why men from the earliest ages began to call upon the name of the Lord. The fin of a fish demands water; the wind of a bird demands flight; so the instinct of the heart of man is for the Lord.

I. The Priority

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

II. The Procedure

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

III. The People

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

1 Timothy 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

IV. The Purpose

1 Timothy 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

V. The Place

1 Timothy 2:8 I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

VI. The Prerequisites

1 Timothy 2:8 I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Prevailing In Prayer

Text - James 5:16-18

Introduction: As one makes their way through the book of James you see that he uses certain personalities to illustrate certain spiritual truths. He has used Abraham, Rahab, and Job. Now, as he comes to the close of his letter, he once again illustrates a spiritual truth by drawing our attention to another Biblical personality - Elijah.

2. Elijah is mentioned by New Testament writers more than any other Old Testament personality. His name occurs nine times in Matthew, nine times in Mark, eight times in Luke, twice in John, and once in Romans and James. When you consider the life of Elijah of Elijah, there is much about a his life that instructs and inspires. As for James, it was his prayer life that he sought to bring to our attention.

3. James has been talking about prayer and to illustrate mighty, prevailing prayer, he could not have picked a better example. Elijah was more than just a man of prayer. He was a man that mightily prevailed in prayer. What do I mean by mighty, prevailing prayer? I am talking about the kind of prayer that gets answers from God. I am speaking of the kind of prayer in which man reaches up in asking and God reaches down in answering.

4. As we read the Bible we see that prayer is to be a fact in our life. Believers are to be among many things, a praying people. Prayer is to be a custom and habit in our life. The simple truth is that any failure in our life can be traced to a prayer failure. But prayer is to be more than a fact. It is to be a force.

5. When James draws our attention to Elijah, he reminds us that prayer can be and should be a force in our life. Elijah was

a man that learned to prevail in prayer. As believers, we should learn to prevail in prayer. In verse 16 we read, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." He then gives us in Elijah a specific example of how the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man can prevail.

1. THE PERSON OF PRAYER!

1. The first word that I draw from the statement is the word "man." Let's begin by thinking of Elijah the man and as a man. From our text we learn what kind of man he was. First, I point out that Elijah was a:

A. REGULAR MAN

1. It is easy for us to read our Bible and place the great saints of the Scriptures on a high and lofty pedestal. We tend to put them into categories reserved for a select few. We see them as giants among men, and in a sense they are. Yet, we must not forget they were only men -- human beings like you and me. Nothing more and nothing less.

2. Elijah was one of the most honored and revered prophets to the Jewish people. He has been called, "the grandest and most romantic character Israel ever produced." There were numerous traditions that grew up around Elijah and exaggerated opinions developed, ascribing him super-human traits. Yet, as James draws our attention to him he reminds us that he was just a regular, ordinary man. before he tells of what Elijah accomplished through prayer, he reminds us that Elijah was a man just like each one of us. We read in verse 17, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are."

3. Elijah had the same nature that each of us has. You could say, "Elijah put his pants on just like we do, one leg at a time." The word translated "subject to like passions" simply means,

"to be similarly affected." One writer speaking of the statement wrote: "Elijah was subject to the same human emotion and liable to the same weaknesses that we all have." Another translator rendered the words, "with feeling just like ours."

4. We have the same thought in Acts 14 when Paul preached at Iconium. When he performed miracles the people began to cry out, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:1). The response of Paul and Barnabas was, "We also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14:15). Paul was saying, "We are not gods. We are only human beings like each of you."

5. In case you think that your praying could never be effective and prevailing as Elijah, remember he was just a human being like you. Elijah was a great man, but he was just a man. James reminds us of the humanity of Elijah to disarm our feelings that we could never get answers to prayer as did he. The emphasis on his likeness to all of us in an encouragement that we are praying to the same God that Elijah prayed and that God can answer our prayers as He did Elijah's. Furthermore, we not only see him a regular man, but also as a:

B) Righteous Man

1. In verse 16 tells us that mighty prevailing prayer is the result of a "righteous man." Elijah may be been just a man, yet there was mark of holiness and righteousness about his life. He was a man wholly devoted to God. Oftentimes Elijah is addressed as "a man of God." He was a man committed and consecrated to God. The people of his day saw him and knew him to be a man that belonged to God.

2. I think of 2 Kings 1:10 where we read, "And Elijah answered and said to the captain of the fifty, If I be a man of

God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty." Elijah conditioned the answering of his prayer on the matter of he being a man of God or a righteous man.

3. God answered his prayer. If we are to prevail in prayer we must as well be righteous. What does it mean to be righteous? The word describes someone who by implication is "innocent or holy." To be righteous is simply to be right with God! To prevail with God in prayer we must be clean before God. There can be no unconfessed sin in our heart. To get an audience with God requires that we be right.

4. The Psalmist was very straight forward when he stated: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). Nothing could be said any plainer. If I have something in my heart that is not right, the Lord will not hear my prayers. If He cannot hear me, I will never get an answer.

5. I read about a Sunday School class of young girls that wrote missionaries to tell them they had been praying for them. The teacher told them that the missionaries were busy and not to expect them to answer their letter. One little girl wrote: "We have been praying for you. We are not expecting an answer."

6. When it comes to unconfessed sin in our life, there is no use to expect an answer. Mighty prevailing prayer is prayer offered from the heart of someone that is righteous. The second thing about prayer that I want you to see in Elijah is:

2. THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER!

1. Notice with me the words, "The effectual fervent prayer." In these words we learn something about how we are to pray. First, we see that are to:

A. Pray Specifically

1. The word "prayer" that is used could be translated "supplication." It is a word that is restricted to petitionary prayer. It describes the kind of praying where one brings specific petitions to God. There are specific things that are desired and being asked for in prayer. In verse 15 the word "prayer" that is used speaks of prayer that exclusively addressed to God but includes all types of prayer. But in verse 16 we see the kind of prayer that specifically asks God for things.

2. When you look at Elijah you find that when he prayed he asked for specific things. First, we see in verse 17 that he prayed that it might not rain. The result it did not rain. In verse 18 he prayed that it would rain and it did rain. Elijah did not pray in generalities but prayed specifically.

3. I read about this little boy that acting up in church. His dad kept telling him to sit still and be quite. Finally the dad grabbed him and started out of the church. They were about halfway down the aisle when the little boy cried out where everyone could hear him, "Ya'll pray for me now." You could say he was being specific in prayer.

4. I think of Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." We are to let our "requests" be made known to God. The word speaks of a particular things for which we ask God. We often pray, "Lord, meet my needs." That is praying generally. To pray, "Lord, I need strength," or "Lord, will you give me a job," is to pray specifically. To pray, "Lord, bless our church" is to pray generally. To pray, "Lord, supply the money we need to build the new building" is to pray specifically. To pray, "Lord, touch

my children" is to pray generally. To pray, "Lord, save Joe, bring back Ann" is to pray specifically.

5. Prevailing prayer is when we bring specific requests and petitions to God. Furthermore, we see that we are to:

B. Pray Earnestly

1. The words "effectual fervent" prayer come from one word from which we get our word "energy." The word literally means "stretched out" and gives the picture of a runner stretching for the finish line with his last gasp of energy. James is telling us that if we are to prevail in prayer we must approach God with integrity and with intensity. A simple way of saying it is that we must pray with all our hearts.

2. Three preachers were talking about prayer and the appropriate and effective positions in prayer. As they were talking a telephone repairman working on the phone line was listening. One preacher said that he felt the key was in his hands. He always held his hands together and pointed them upward as a form or symbolic worship. The second suggested that real prayer was conducted on ones knees. The third suggested that the only way to pray was while stretched out flat on your face. The telephone repairman spoke up and said, "I have found that the most powerful prayer I ever made was while I was dangling upside down by my heels from a telephone pole suspended forty-feet above the ground."

3. I am sure he was praying from the heart. That is how we are to pray. We are to put ourselves into prayer. We are to pour our hearts out in prayer. The Psalm said in Psalm 62:8, "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us. Selah."

4. That is how Elijah prayed. He not only prayed specifically but earnestly. His prayer was more than a little prayer prayed over the food he was about to eat. He got down to business with God and poured his heart out to God. He prayed earnestly. The final thing about prayer that I point out is:

3. THE POWER OF PRAYER!

1. Notice the words, "availeth much." The words literally mean, "is strong, is able to do much." The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is able to do much in prayer. This kind of praying is powerful praying. It is the kind of prayer in which man asks and God answers. It is the kind of prayer found in Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me and I will answer thee and shew thee great and mighty things." This is the kind of praying we see in Elijah. He got things from God when he prayed.

2. In verses 17-18 we see described a particular occasion when Elijah prayed and God answered. The account is found in 1 Kings 17:1, "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Let's look at this particular occasion in Elijah's life and what it teaches us about the power of prayer. First, we see;

A) What Man Must Acknowledge In Prayer

1. The Bible tells us that when Elijah prayed it did not rain for the space of three and a half years. It is important to understand that Elijah's prayer was more than he getting his will done in heaven. The answer to his prayer was a matter of God's will being done on earth. The shutting of the heavens was an act of God's judgment on the land. The Bible does not reveal the moment, but somewhere God had made his will

known to Elijah and when he prayed that it might not rain, it was after God's will.

2. It has been well said that nothing lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God. We read in 1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." It is important to understand that God answers our prayers according to HIS will and not ours. Let me emphasize that prayer is not getting our will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth.

3. Jesus expressed this truth when He taught us to pray, "And he said unto them, 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" (Luke 11:2). It did not rain for three and half years because it was God's will. When it did rain, it was according to God's will. When we pray, our prayers must be governed and guided by God's will. Furthermore, we see:

B) What God Can Accomplish By Prayer

1. Elijah prayed, "that is might not rain and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." He prayed a second time, "and the heaven have rain, and the earth brought forth fruit." We see prayer being answered! In the answers we see to Elijah's prayer, we see not what Elijah did, but what God did. We God working and moving in response to prayer. Prayer is the means of bringing God into what we do. Prayer is the avenue whereby we see God work.

2. R. A. Torrey said, "Prayer is the key that opens wide the inexhaustible storehouse of divine grace and power. There is only one limit to what prayer can do; that is what God can do."

3. Torrey speaking of D.L. Moody described him as a far greater "*pray-er*" than preacher. He spoke of how time and time again he was confronted by obstacles that seemed insurmountable, but he always knew the way to surmount and overcome all difficulties. Torrey said, "He knew the way to bring to pass anything that needed to be brought to pass."

3. Thomas Guthrie said, "The direct power of prayer is, in a sense, omnipotent. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world."

4. Jonathan Edwards said, "There is no way that Christians, in a private capacity, can do so much to promote the work of God and advance the kingdom of Christ as by prayer."

5. Charles Trumbull said, "Prayer is releasing the energies of God. For prayer is asking God to do what we cannot do."

6. What were all these men saying? They were saying that there is power in prayer! They are telling us that God can accomplish much through a person that will pray. Elijah prayed and God answered in a great and mighty way. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet he reminds us that we can prevail in prayer. LET'S PRAY!

Something Happens When People Pray

Text - Acts 12:1-24

Introduction: Prayer is a wonderful privilege. God has opened the door to His throne room and invited His children to enter His presence with their petitions, Heb. 4:16. He has promised to hear us when we call, Jer. 33:3. And, he has promised to answer our prayers when we pray according to His will, 1 John 5:14-15. We all know that there are many privileges and promises associated with prayer.

We have all experienced the power of private prayer. We have experienced those times when we called on the Lord in the secret place of prayer and He heard us, and He answered us in power for His glory. There is something special about entering God's presence, by yourself, to talk to Him in secret. It's something we should all do, and should do often.

I. THE CRISIS v. 1-5a

A. There Were Attacks - James the brother of John, one of the Lord's inner circle, is put to death by Herod. Peter has also been imprisoned and is sitting on death row awaiting his own execution. The Jews pressed these attacks against the early church because they hated the Gospel they preached. Herod persecuted the early church because it gave him a political advantage.

B. There Was Apprehension - The church did not know what the future held. As a result, there was fear and concern for the future of the church. After all, these people had left their Jewish roots to follow the way of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they were afraid that the hatred of the Jews and the king might eventually turn away from the leaders of the church and settle on the members of the church.

II. THE CRY v. 5a

(III. There is a tiny word in verse 5 that makes a big difference. It is the little conjunction “but”. The situation looks desperate, but! It looks as though Peter might be put to death, but! The church lifted its collective voice and rang the prayer bells of Heaven! God heard their prayers and moved in mighty power to bring them His answer!)

A. It Was Fervent Prayer - We are told that that “prayer was made without ceasing...” The word “ceasing” means “to stretch forth”. It is a medical term that refers to a stretched ligament or a pulled muscle. It has the idea of “going beyond the boundaries”. When applied to prayer, it is a picture of fervency. It is the picture of people pouring out their hearts in prayer before the Lord as they seek His face for their needs.

That’s the kind of praying we need to undertake. The promise of God is that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous men availeth much,” James 5:16. The words “effectual fervent” refer to “energetic passionate” prayer. It is not prayer that is sluggish, lifeless, unconcerned, casual, halfhearted, blasé and apathetic; it is prayer that pours forth from a burdened heart. That kind of prayer reaches heaven and moves the hand of God.

B. It Was Faithful Prayer - By faithful praying, I mean theirs was a prayer of faith. Their prayers were made “to God”. This seems obvious, but there are times when it seems like our prayers are designed to be heard by other people, or even by us. This congregation joined their voices and reached up as one to touch God for their church and for Peter. When we pray, we must pray in faith. Faith is the essential ingredient that marks the difference between answered and unanswered prayer.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Heb. 11:6.

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,” Matt. 21:22.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him,” 1 John 5:14-15.

C. It Was Focused Prayer - Prayer was “made...for him”. In other words, Peter was the focus of this prayer meeting. They came together to pray for a specific purpose. This was not generalized praying, that sought to cast a big blanket of prayer over everything and everyone. This was pointed prayer that sought God’s power for a specific need.

Gabe Stover's journal, *"Until I have prayed specifically, I have not prayed at all!"*

D. It Was Family Prayer - They church gathered together to pray for one of their own. They came together as a family to seek God’s help for a brother in great need. The church touched Heaven for Peter. Their prayers had power because they were united in their walk with God. They joined their hearts and their hands, then they lifted their voices to God, and He heard them and moved in power.

There are people in our church family who are facing life-threatening illness and difficult situations. There are others who are wayward. We should be touching Heaven for them. There are other who are struggling with needs, burdens and problems. We should be touching Heaven for them.

III. THE CONSEQUENCE v. 5b-24

A. v. 6-11 There Was Powerful Salvation - When the church prayed, God heard them and answered their prayers. Peter was delivered from prison through a tremendous, miraculous intervention. God saved Peter because the church asked Him to!

B. v. 12-17 There Were Powerful Surprises - When Peter was released from prison, he went to the house where the church had met to pray. He knocked on the gate, Rhoda came out to see who was there, heard his voice and went and told the church that Peter was outside. They didn't believe her, but assumed that he must be dead, and that it was his guardian angel at the gate. The Jews believed that every person had a guardian angel that could assume that person's form.

As Warren Weirsbe said, "God could get Peter out of a prison, but Peter couldn't get himself into a prayer meeting." Yet, when they investigated, they discovered that it was Peter himself, and they were "astonished." Why were they amazed? After all, they had been praying for this very thing, hadn't they? They were surprised because they were just like us!

Often our best praying is done in an atmosphere of unbelief. On our best day, we are marked by a lack of faith. I praise His name that my faith does not have to be perfect, it just has to be exercised.

As long as we live in this world and speak to God in prayer, we will often be "astonished" at His answers. Let's not worry about cultivating big faith; let's concern ourselves with developing simple, childlike faith in the kind heart and supreme power of our Heavenly Father!

C. v. 18-24 There Was Powerful Sovereignty - This passage closes with God giving His church even more evidence that He is sovereign over everything His church faces.

1. v. 20-23 His Sovereignty Over The Opposition - Herod, the king who dared persecute the Lord's people, dies a horrible death at the hands of God. He refused to glorify God, and God killed him in a gruesome, public fashion. This was a lesson to the church to leave their enemies in the hands of the Lord. It was a lesson designed to teach them that God was greater than anyone, or anything they would ever face.

The same is true today. Our duty is to serve the Lord faithfully and leave the opposition to Him. If we could ever adopt the mindset of David, it would help us a great deal. In 1 Sam. 17:47, as David faced the giant Goliath, he said, "...the battle is the Lord's...". It always has been, and it still is!

2. v. 24 His Sovereignty Over The Outreach - The early church, with good reason, worried about their survival. As they weathered the storms that came their way by seeking shelter in prayer, they saw the Lord expand their outreach in ways they never imagined. As He blessed the church and judged her enemies, God taught a watching world that He was in control of the situation. The early church learned the lesson that they were not responsible for the success of their ministry; they were merely responsible for being found faithful.

That is a lesson we need to learn today. Success cannot be measured in numbers on a board. If that is the criteria for success, then John the Baptist, and Jeremiah were dismal failures. The truth is, the success of our church does not rest on your shoulders or on mine. The success of this, or any other ministry, is all up to God. Our duty is to be found faithful to Him and to His call on our lives. As we yield to Him and look to Him in faith and by prayer make our petitions to Him, we

can count on Him to do what is best, what is right, and what brings Him the most glory.

Conclusion: Church, we need to be able to get a hold of the Lord. We need that as individuals and we need that as a church. The only way that will ever happen is for us to come together like the early church and make seeking God our priority.

Something happens when God's people pray. Let's pray together and see what happens!

The Seasons of Prayer

Nehemiah 1:4

Introduction: Prayer is not some religious rabbit's foot that one rubs when all other sources of help have been exhausted. Prayer is to play an active role in every aspect of our lives. We are admonished, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). Our Lord encouraged prayer by His life, "he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35), as well as His lips, "And he spake a parable . . . that men ought always to pray" (Luke 18:1). Prayer is for every season of life. The book of Nehemiah is an excellent example of this great truth.

(I) The Prayer of Distress - 1:4, 6&11

In just a matter of moments the merriment of one's heart can be replaced by misery. Nehemiah's life of ease is shattered by a visit from a bearer of bad news. This is not a truth reserved just for this young captive, but its pain is felt by Adam's entire race. Just like the Patriarch Job, servants line up to bear the distasteful news to each of us. Distressed for a people and a place, Nehemiah turned to heaven for an answer to earth's problems. Before he sought the ear of an earthly king, he would seek the ear of the Heavenly King.

(II) The Prayer of Discernment – 2:4

In answer to Nehemiah's prayer, God gives Artaxerxes, the king, a sensitive and sympathetic spirit. Nehemiah finds himself in need of discernment when the King said, "For what dost thou make request?" Before conversing with this king, he must consult another King. Nehemiah knew that he needed discernment for his life and his lips. Solomon knew this great principle when he sought wisdom over wealth and longevity.

(III) The Prayer of Deliverance – 4:4&9

Nehemiah soon discovered that the ways of the Lord are met by warfare with the enemy. Would Nehemiah turn to his own ingenuity and lean on the arm of the flesh? No! Nehemiah prayed for deliverance from the enemy's cruel words (vs.3) and their conspiring ways (vs.8). The God that had directed was a God that could deliver! Jesus prayed this prayer for each of His disciples, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). Our security is not in self, but in the Sovereign!

(IV) The Prayer of Dedication – 9:4,9,27&28

Spiritual growth soon revealed to the hearts of God's children that the enemy was not only outward, but also inward. They must not only do battle with Satan, but they must contend with self. Broken over past sins, present sins, and possible sins, they pray a prayer of dedication. The distress that they face can be attributed to the waywardness of their fathers. Thus they desire a "sure covenant" (vs.38) with the True and Living God. Like the Psalmist David, they seek His guidance, "he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Ps. 23:3).

(V) The Prayer of Devotion – 11:17

Prayer is more than just supplication. It is a means of salutation. This truth is seen in the model prayer, when Jesus instructed the disciples to pray thus, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). Prayer is a means whereby we cultivate our worship of God. Prayer is not just the hand of man reaching up to the hand of God, but it is the heart of man bonding with the heart of God. It is rejoicing over a relationship as well as riches.

Prayer is a privilege to be used in every season of life. It should never become just a plea in crisis, but rather a pattern of communion. It is the opportunity to tell God what disturbs and delights the heart.

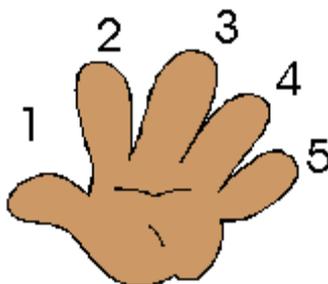
Praying Hands For Missions

Text - Hebrews 13:18

How to pray for missionaries

"Pray for us." -- Hebrews 13:18

Praying for world evangelism's front-line workers



Want to know how to pray for those working to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission among those yet unreached?

You can use your fingers as memory aids when you pray for missions. Here's how those fingers become prayer points:

Thumb Since your thumb is nearest to you, begin by praying for those missionaries closest to you. They are the easiest ones to remember. C.S. Lewis said that praying for those we love is a *"sweet duty."*

Index or pointing finger Let your *"pointing finger"* remind you to pray for missionaries who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and evangelists. They need support and wisdom for pointing others in the right direction.

Middle finger Our tallest finger reminds us of our church leaders. We can never pray too much for them. Pray for those who supervise and direct missionary outreach.

Ring finger Surprisingly, the ring finger is our weakest finger (as any piano teacher will testify). This weak finger

reminds us to pray for those missionaries who are discouraged, in trouble, or in pain.

Little finger Our little finger is the smallest finger of all, which is where we should place our individual wants and desires in relation to world evangelism needs. The Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for the people of the world who have the greatest need to find Jesus. Pray that they will open their eyes and see Him.

--Author unknown