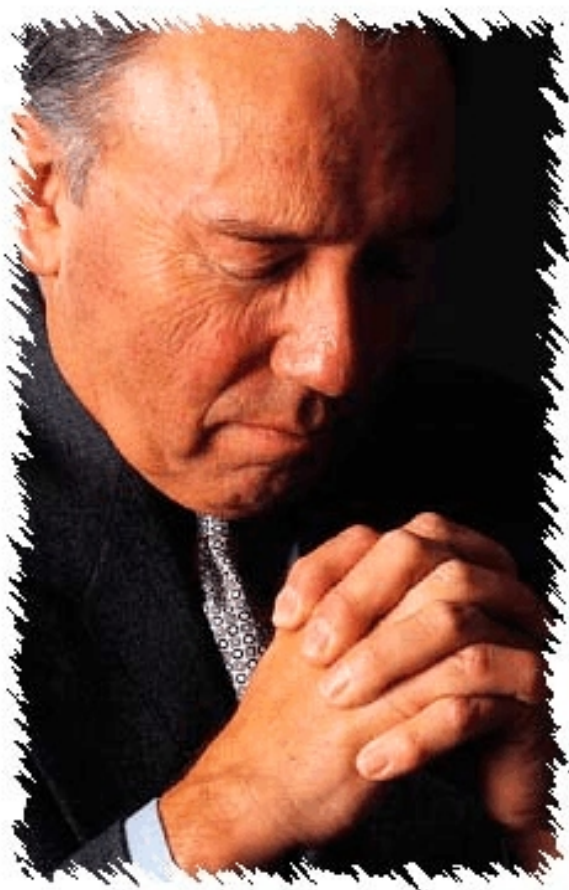

Preaching On PRAYER



*A Series of Lessons to Help the
Christian Pray More Effectively*

Gene Taylor

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What Is Prayer?

Introduction

1. As children of God no matter how diligently we may strive to please God in all other phases of our responsibilities, if we do not pray, or pray properly, we will be miserable failures.
2. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
3. This lesson will seek to define prayer in Scriptural terms.

I. Prayer Is the General Term for Addressing God

- A. God has made it possible for His children to talk to Him. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16)
- B. God asks His children to call upon Him. (Luke 18:1-8; Eph. 6:17-18; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; 1 Thes. 5:17)

II. Prayer Is the Privilege and Duty of the Righteous (Jas. 5:16)

- A. The model prayer of Jesus (Matt. 6:9) shows that prayer was designed for God's children. (cf. John 8:42, 44)
- B. Those trying to live righteously have their prayers approved of God. (1 Pet. 3:10-12)

III. Prayer Is Asking, Seeking and Knocking (Matt. 7:7-11)

- A. Asking petitions of God.
- B. Seeking answers to life's problems.
- C. Knocking to gain entrance into a more abundant life.

IV. Prayer Is an Act of Faith (Luke 18:1-8; Jas. 1:5-7)

- A. One cannot please God without faith. (Heb. 11:6)
- B. One must have a working faith. (Jas. 2:14,24)
 1. Prayer is not a substitute for works.
 2. Prayer is a mockery unless one strives for the most effective service possible in doing the will of God.
 3. As a farmer does not pray for good crops as a substitute for his obligation to prepare the soil, plant the seed, etc., but for reinforcement of his efforts; no Christian should pray for the sick, the needy or the lost as a substitute for his responsibilities to such teachings as Galatians 6:10; Romans 15:1; and Mark 16:15-16.

V. Prayer Is More Than Thinking

- A. Prayer is a communication with two parties involved—God listens, the Christian talks.
- B. This raises an important question: "Must one then verbalize private prayers?"
 1. No. God knows our hearts. (Heb. 4:13; Acts 15:8)
 2. The example of Hannah (1 Sam. 1:12-13). Though she had not verbalized her prayer, she:
 - a. "Poured out her soul before the LORD." (v. 15)
 - b. Had "spoken." (v. 16)
 - c. Had asked petition of God. (v. 17)

The Elements of Prayer

Text: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. This lesson will seek to set forth the Scriptural elements of prayer.

I. Adoration or Praise

- A. Prayer is a way of eulogizing God. (Acts 2:47; Matt. 6:9)
- B. "But what makes prayer worship? Since worship is an expression of love for and devotion to God, prayer which recognizes Him; which appeals to His love, mercy, grace, and power; and which shows a reliance on Him and the need to communicate with Him; is surely worship. It exalts God as the object of our praise, the recipient of our love, and the source of all blessings. In turn, God displays His providential care and love for His children by hearing and answering their prayers (1 John 5:14-15; Matthew 7:7-11)." (Gene Taylor, *Worshiping the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*, p. 48)
- C. An example: The prayer of the disciples after Peter and John had been released from prison. (Acts 4:24-31)

II. Petitions

- A. Petitions include pleas for one's needs. (1 John 5:14-15)
- B. Petitions include supplications (Eph. 6:17-18; Phil. 4:6). *Deesis*: "Primarily, a wanting, a need...then, an asking, entreaty, supplication..." (W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, p. 882)
- C. Petitions include confession of sins and pleas for forgiveness. (1 John 1:9 - 2:2)
 1. The example of Simon. (Acts 8:14-24)
 2. Ezra 9 contains a prayer of confession of sin. (Ezra 9:6 - 10:1)
 3. The prayer of David in Psalm 51 is an acknowledgement of his sin and a plea for forgiveness of it. (esp. vv. 1-4)

III. Thanksgiving

- A. Prayer should be characterized by thanksgiving for blessings received. (Phil. 4:6)
- B. The Christian should be "abounding in thanksgiving." (Col. 2:6-7; 4:2)

IV. Intercession

- A. The Greek word translated intercession in the New Testament is *enteuxis*. It is "a petition...it is a technical term for approaching a king, and so for approaching God in intercession." (Vine, 607)
- B. Intercessions are pleas for others (1 Tim. 2:1). In commenting on the intercessions of 1 Timothy 2:1, W.E. Vine said it meant "seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others." (Ibid)
- C. Again we can cite the example of Simon in Acts 8:24 where he asked Peter to pray for him.

The Assumptions of Prayer

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. This lesson will consider the assumptions one must grant about prayer.

I. God Is Real

- A. One must see God as a thinking, powerful and personal being. (Heb. 11:6)
- B. One must have no doubt as to God and His willingness and ability to hear and answer prayer. (Jas. 1:6)
- C. One must be assured that the Father—child relationship with God is a reality. (Matt. 11:25; Luke 11:2)

II. God's Love for Man

- A. God is interested in the welfare of His children. (Matt. 10:29-31)
 1. He loves and cherishes them. (1 John 3:1)
 2. He desires to meet their needs. (Matt. 6:25-33)
- B. Because of His love, every sincere prayer offered to Him by His faithful children is heard and answered. (Matt. 7:7-11)
- C. His love allows the intercessory work of Jesus (1 Tim. 2:1-5) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27).

III. Man's Need for God

- A. Born out of a sense of his own human weakness and the inability to direct his own life (Jer. 10:23), the Christian stands in need of God's providential care (Phil. 4:18-19).
- B. Jesus, in the figure of the vine and the branches, emphasized man's inability to live fruitfully and victoriously without reliance on divine strength and care. (John 15:5)
- C. The Christian can boldly approach "the throne of grace" in prayer in order to "obtain mercy and find grace in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16)

IV. God Hears Prayer

- A. The ears of God are open to the prayers of the righteous. (1 Pet. 3:12; cf. John 9:31)
- B. As one draws near to God, He draws near to him. (Jas. 4:8)
- C. Prayer involves two parties—God and His child.
 1. Neither is passive.
 2. Every movement of one toward God in proper prayer is met by an eager movement on God's part toward that one. (Jas. 4:8; 1 Pet. 3:12; Psa. 65:2)

V. God Answers Prayer

- A. If God heard the prayers of His children and made no response at all, how futile their prayers would be. (Heb. 11:6)
- B. God answers all proper prayers. (1 John 5:13-15)
- C. God answers prayers in different ways. He, at times:
 1. Withholds the answer. (Matt. 26:39-44; Job 30:20)
 2. Delays the answer. (Luke 18:7)
 3. Exceeds the request. (Acts 12:5,15; Eph. 3:20)
 4. Does not grant what is requested—He knows best. (Matt. 26:39; 2 Cor. 12:8-9)

The Power of Prayer - Its Blessings

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. Some Christians err when considering the power of prayer. Some fail to recognize the great power that is at their disposal while others view prayer as a substitute for doing what they ought to be doing thinking that prayer will solve all their problems and take care of all their needs and responsibilities.
3. This lesson will consider the power of prayer as it is revealed in the Bible and will demonstrate the reality of that power by setting forth the blessings it provides.

I. Some Powers That Prayer Does Not Have

- A. Prayer does not have the power to save the “alien” sinner apart from obedience.
 1. The one outside of Christ cannot be saved by prayer.
 - a. The example of Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 9:9-12; 22:12-16)
 - b. The example of Cornelius. (Acts 10:1-6,33-35; 11:13-14)
 2. Faith and obedience save the sinner who is outside of Christ—not prayer.
 - a. In both of the above examples, salvation came at baptism. (cf. Gal. 3:26-27)
 - b. Other Scriptures show the need for faith and obedience: Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9; etc.
- B. Prayer does not have the power to work miracles today.
 1. There was a time when prayer had such power (Matt. 17:14-21; I Cor. 14:13-15), but miracles ceased when the New Testament was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Jas. 1:25).
 2. Today, though, some brethren act as though they believe prayer can still work miracles.
 - a. They pray for the sick to recover but do nothing to help them as though they will miraculously recover.
 - b. They pray for the needy and then do nothing to relieve their need.
 - c. They pray for the lost and do nothing to reach nor teach them.
- C. The prayers of those who will not do the Lord’s will are powerless prayers. (1 John 3:22)
 1. We should pray for daily bread (Matt. 6:11), then work for it. (2 Thes. 3:10-12)
 2. We should pray for the needy and then help them according to our abilities and opportunities. (Prov. 21:13; Jas. 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17)
 3. We should pray for the lost and then work to save them. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)

II. The Power of Prayer

- A. Assurance of its power.
 1. It “avails much.” (Jas. 5:16)
 2. It is heard and answered by God. (1 John 5:14-15)
 3. God is a loving Father who is not only willing but also anxious to grant the petitions and supply the needs of His children. (Matt. 7:7-11)
- B. Some examples of its power.
 1. It saves the penitent child of God from sin. (1 John 2:1; Acts 8:18-24)

2. It helps the child of God overcome temptation. (Jas. 1:2-8)
3. It helps the child of God to conduct himself as he should toward others. (Matt. 7:1-12)

III. Evidence of the Power of Prayer - Its Blessings

- A. Peace that passes understanding. (Phil. 4:6-7)
- B. Help in time of temptation. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- C. Wisdom. (Jas. 1:5)
- D. Physical necessities. (Matt. 6:11, 33)
- E. Healing—both physical and spiritual. (Jas. 5:16)
- F. Forgiveness. (Matt. 6:12; Acts 8:22)
- G. Help with prayer. (Rom. 8:26-27)
- H. All good things. (Psa. 84:11; Jas. 1:17)

Things for Which to Pray

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. Though as Christians we do not always know how to pray and the things for which to pray (Rom. 8:26-27), the New Testament does identify a number of things for which the child of God is to pray.
3. This lesson will look at those things found in Scripture for which we are to pray.

I. Forgiveness of Sins

- A. If the Christian, with Jesus as his Advocate (1 John 2:1), confesses his sins to Him, God is faithful and just to forgive him and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)
- B. In teaching His disciples how to pray, Jesus taught them, when they pray, to ask for forgiveness of sins. (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4)
- C. The apostle Peter told Simon the sorcerer to pray for forgiveness of his sin of attempting to purchase the gift of God with money. (Acts 8:22)

II. Wisdom

- A. The child of God who lacks wisdom can request it from God in prayer. (Jas. 1:5)
- B. Praying for wisdom is not a substitute for study. (2 Tim. 2:15)
- C. When one prays for wisdom, God will grant him the opportunity to gain it.

III. The Daily Necessities of Life

- A. While instructing His disciples to pray, Jesus told them to pray for their “daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3)
- B. God knows His children have physical needs (Matt. 6:32), therefore, He realizes they should ask for them.

IV. The Sick

- A. Those who are suffering are to pray. (Jas. 5:13)
- B. Elders are to pray for the sick. (Jas. 5:14)
- C. The apostle Paul set an example that one can pray for his own sicknesses and infirmities. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

V. Protection from Temptation

- A. Jesus told His disciples to “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38)
- B. God has promised a “way of escape” in time of temptation. (1 Cor. 10:13)

VI. Deliverance from Evil

- A. The disciples of Jesus were taught to pray to be delivered from the evil one. (Matt. 6:13)
- B. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations. (2 Pet. 2:9)

VII. Help with the Problems Encountered in Daily Living

- A. The Jerusalem church prayed for Peter while he was in prison. (Acts 12:5)
- B. Those affected by the destruction of Jerusalem were told to pray that their flight might not be in winter or on the Sabbath. (Matt. 24:20)
- C. Those who are suffering are to pray. (Jas. 5:13)

VIII. Other People

- A. Enemies including those who spitefully use you and/or persecute you. (Matt. 5:44)
- B. Those lost in sin. (Rom. 10:1)
- C. All people including civil rulers, those in authority. (1 Tim. 2:1-2)
- D. The people of God including all the saints in all the world. (Eph. 6:18)

IX. The Effective Working of the Word of God

- A. For an abundant harvest. (Luke 10:2)
- B. For those who preach. (Eph. 6:19-20)
- C. For the free course of the word into all the world. (2 Thes. 3:1-2; cf. Eph. 6:18-20)

Keys to Acceptable Prayer

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. This lesson will concern those things that can hinder one's prayers and some essentials and nonessentials of acceptable prayer.

I. Hindrances to Prayer

- A. A lack of faith. (Jas. 1:5-7)
 1. The faithful Christian prays with unwavering trust.
 2. An unstable doubter will receive nothing from God.
- B. Wickedness. (Psa. 66:18)
 1. The prayers of those who will not obey His will are an abomination to God. (Prov. 28:9)
 2. God hears the prayers of the righteous. (Prov. 15:8; 1 Pet. 3:10-12; Jas. 5:16; 1 John 3:22)
- C. Substituting prayer for obedience.
 1. One cannot expect to receive blessings that are conditional upon action just by praying.
One cannot expect:
 - a. Salvation without obedience. (Heb. 5:8-9)
 - b. Restoration of health without seeking treatment.
 - c. To save the lost without seeking them.
 2. God's law of sowing and reaping is applicable. (Gal. 6:7-8)
- D. Selfishness (Jas. 4:3). One must have a desire to use God's blessings unselfishly.
- E. Improper attitudes toward others.
 1. An unforgiving spirit. (Matt. 6:14-15)
 2. Unreconciled differences. (Matt. 5:23-24)
 3. An improper view and/or treatment of spouse. (1 Pet. 3:7)

II. Nonessentials to Acceptable Prayer

- A. A particular body posture.
 1. Several different positions are seen in Scripture.
 - a. Falling upon one's face. (Num. 16:22; 1 Chron. 21:16-17; Matt. 26:39)
 - b. Standing. (1 Kings 8:22-23; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13)
 - c. Lifting up hands. (Psa. 28:2; Lam. 2:19; 1 Tim. 2:8)
 - d. Lifting up eyes. (John 17:1)
 - e. Kneeling. (Psa. 95:6; Luke 22:41; Acts 20:36; 21:5)
 2. "The Prayer of Cyrus Brown" by Jack Frost, Jr.

"The proper way for a man to pray,"
Said deacon Lemuel Keyes,
"And the only proper attitude
Is down upon his knees."
"No, I should say the way to pray,"
Said Preacher Doctor Wise,

"Is standing straight, with outstretched arms,
 and rapt and turned up eyes."
 "Oh, no, no, no," said Elder Snow,
 "Such posture is too proud;
 A man should pray with eyes fast closed
 And head contritely bowed."
 "It seems to me his hands should be
 Austerely clasped in front,
 With both thumbs pointing toward the ground,"
 Said the Preacher Doctor Blunt.
 "Las' year I fell in Hodkins' well,
 Headfirst," said Cyrus Brown,
 "With both my heels a stickin' up,
 My head a-pintin' down."
 "An' I made a prayer right then and there—
 Best prayer I ever said,
 The prayinest prayer I ever prayed,
 A-standin' on my head."

B. Olde English (King James English).

1. Some contend that for prayers to be acceptable, they must be phrased in King James English using the pronouns "Thee," "Thou," "Thine," etc. Consider the following article from "The Grandview Guide," Vol. 2, No. 16, May 1983.

- "Is it wrong, according to the Bible, to use the words 'you' and 'your' in reference to God when praying?"

"The use of these words in praying to God by Christians is relatively a modern thing. Twenty years ago such was nearly unheard of among brethren in the Lord. Many still would not thing (sic) of using such words in prayer.

"...in the King James and American Standard translations the words 'you' and 'your' are not used in any of the prayers to God recorded therein. 'Thee' and 'thou' are always used. The translators of the American Standard Version...retained the use of 'thee' and 'thou' in the recorded prayers because even nearly 300 years after the translation of the King James Version...these words still conveyed a special reverence to God which is due our Heavenly Father. Today, this style, characteristic of the English language remains.

"...Those among us who address God with the words 'you' and 'your' would be careful not to address a judge in a court of law with undue familiarity, because of the dignity of the office. Words could be used that convey the kind of respect that the occasion and the civil dignitary demands. Surely God is due a special kind of recognition also...yea, even more so!

"Because of the accepted style of the English language that employs words that convey special respect and reverence, particularly to God; and because of brethren who are conscientiously opposed to the use of the words 'you' and 'your' when addressing God; and because of the teaching of the law of Christ as respects the expediency of seeking our neighbor's good; plus the command to be an example worthy of others following...YES, we believe the use of the words 'you' and 'your' when addressing God in prayer is Scripturally wrong." (M.W. Jackson, "The Grandview Guide," Vol. 2, No. 16, May 1983)

2. The Bible was written in the language of the common man. The prayers of Jesus it contains were phrased in everyday language.
3. Though one must never use slang or improper language in praying, "Thee," "Thou," "Thine," etc., are not necessary as long as proper respect is shown.

C. Some Miscellaneous Nonessentials

1. Solemn looks and pious tones.
2. Flowery, impressive language. (Matt. 6:5)
3. Vain repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)

III. Essentials of Acceptable Prayer

A. A proper life.

1. One must be righteous (I Pet. 3:12) or sincerely seeking to be righteous. (Psa. 51)
 - a. To be righteous, one must do or practice righteousness. (1 John 3:7)
 - b. Practicing righteousness involves keeping the commandments of God. (Psa. 119:171; 1 John 3:22; John 15:7)
2. One who does not hear and do the will of God will not have his prayers heard. (Prov. 28:9; Psa. 66:18)

B. A proper disposition. One must pray with:

1. Reverence. (Matt. 6:9; Psa. 111:9)
2. Faith, trust and confidence in God. (Jas. 1:5-7)
3. Sincerity. (Matt. 6:5-6)
4. Thanksgiving. (Eph. 5:20)
 - a. For material blessings. (1 Tim. 4:3-4; Acts 27:35)
 - b. For spiritual blessings including salvation, the church (brethren), the word, strength to overcome trials and temptations, victory over death, etc.
5. Humility. (Luke 18:9-14; 1 Pet. 5:5b-7)
6. An obedient spirit. (1 John 3:22; 1 Pet. 3:10-12)
 - a. Submission to the will of God. (1 John 5:14; Matt. 26:39)
 - b. With "holy hands." (1 Tim. 2:8)
 - c. Confessing sins. (1 John 1:8 - 2:2)
7. A forgiving spirit. (Matt. 6:14-15)
8. A willing spirit. (1 John 5:14)

C. Proper authority.

1. One must pray in the name of Christ. (Col. 3:17)
 - a. "In the name of " = by the authority of.
 - b. Jesus is the Christian's High Priest (Heb. 8:1-2), Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5) and Advocate (1 John 2:1-2), therefore, all prayers should go through Him.
2. One must pray that all things be done in accordance with the will of God. (1 John 5:14; Matt. 26:39)

D. Proper frequency.

1. One "always ought to pray and not lose heart." (Luke 18:1)
2. The Christian should "pray without ceasing." (1 Thes. 5:17)

E. Proper motive. (Jas. 1:5-7; 4:3)

The Model Prayer

Text: Matthew 6:5-15 (cf. Luke 11:1-4)

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. Though this text is often called “The Lord’s Prayer,” in reality, it was a model prayer given at the request of the disciples for Jesus to teach them to pray. (Luke 11:1)
 - a. Since prayer is a vital part of the Christian’s life, he must be taught how to pray effectively and acceptably before God.
 - b. The lessons of this model prayer Jesus gave His disciples must be learned by us today if our prayers are to meet with God’s approval.

I. The Setting in Which This Prayer Is Found

- A. If Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4 refer to the same prayer, then Jesus gave this prayer in response to a request from His disciples. If not the same prayer, then Jesus was meeting a similar need on another occasion.
 1. Having heard Jesus pray, they wanted to pray like Him (Luke 11:1).
 2. Upon hearing His teaching on how they should not pray, they needed to know how they should pray. (Matt. 6:5-8)
- B. In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount recorded by Matthew, Jesus was warning His listeners not to pray like the hypocrites or the Gentiles. (Matt. 6:5-8)
 1. The prayers of the hypocrites. (vv. 5-6)
 - a. Theirs were prayers of the lips and not of the heart. (Matt. 15:7-9a)
 - b. Their purpose was to be seen of men.
 - 1) They often prayed at a set time and place each day.
 - 2) They sought to be public when they prayed in order to display piety and have others think they were religious. (Luke 18:10-14)
 - c. They could expect no further reward because their purpose for prayer had been accomplished—they had been seen of men.
 - d. Note: Jesus is not prohibiting public prayer just as His teachings in Matthew 6:1-4 do not prohibit public giving.
 2. The prayers of the Gentiles. (vv. 7-8)
 - a. They thought they could weary their gods by repeating their petitions over and over.
 - b. This would insult the living God who knows, without our speaking, all our needs.

II. The Intent of This Prayer

- A. Jesus never meant this prayer to be bound upon anyone as a set form.
 1. That was not the intent of Jesus even in His day as seen in His use of the phrase “In this manner.” (Matt. 6:9)
 - Manner: “Kind, sort.” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 515)

2. "It should be called 'The Model Prayer' rather than 'The Lord's Prayer.' 'Thus' pray as he gives them a model. He himself did not use it as a liturgy (cf. John 17). There is no evidence that Jesus meant it for liturgical use by others...there is no evidence whatever that Jesus designed it as a set formula." (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. I, p. 52)
- B. Its use today is limited by two significant changes which have taken place since this prayer was uttered.
1. One can no longer pray, "Your kingdom come," for the kingdom is now in existence. (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9)
 2. With the establishment of His kingdom, all power and authority have been given to Jesus (Matt. 28:18) and prayer is to be offered in His name. (Col. 3:17; John 16:24)

III. The Elements of This Prayer

- A. An outburst of praise and reverence: "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name."
1. Prayer is an exclusive blessing of the child of God. (Eph. 1:3)
 2. The child of God is His spiritual, not physical, child. (John 3:3-6; Gal. 3:26-27)
- B. A petition on behalf of the kingdom: "Your kingdom come."
- C. A petition for obedience: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
- D. A petition for temporal things: "Give us this day our daily bread."
- E. A petition for forgiveness: "And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors."
- F. A petition for deliverance from temptation: "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."
- G. A recognition of God's power: "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."

IV. The Models This Prayer Establishes

- A. It is a model in reference to brevity and scope.
1. The entire prayer contains only 65 words (NKJV) but they embrace a condensed statement of the Lord's chief ideas about God and men.
 - a. It is both brief and comprehensive.
 - b. It addresses, in a few short words, a wide range of human needs as well as the relationship between God and man.
 2. An analysis of the prayer in Matthew 6 shows a well-conceived literary structure of four parts:
 - a. The address. (v. 9)
 - b. A series of petitions pertaining to God. (v. 10)
 - c. A series of petitions pertaining to those offering the prayer. (vv. 11-13a)
 - d. The closing. (v. 13b)
- B. It is a model in reference to simplicity and directness.
1. Instead of being a prayer which would appeal to only the cultured and sophisticated, those highly educated, it is one that everyone can easily understand. (cf. Matt. 11:25ff)
 - a. Such simplicity does not indicate shallowness.
 - b. A study of it gives great insight into the relationship of man to His God.

3. Its directness is seen in its requests—each petition is a distinct and definite request.
 - a. This is based upon the understanding that God will meet all of one's needs. (Phil. 4:19)
 - b. Requests should be made to God with the same frankness and directness with which a child makes known his wants to his parents. (cf. Mark 10:15; Phil. 4:6-7)
- C. It is a model in reference to order.
 1. It teaches that honoring God should be the first priority of every child of God who prays.
 2. Before a word is said about personal needs, Jesus taught His disciples that God's name should be hallowed, His kingdom acknowledged and His will done on earth.
 3. One of our hardest tasks as children of God is to learn to prefer God's will to our own and to seek after the things He demands of us. (Matt. 6:33; 16:24)
- D. It is a model with reference to spirit.
 1. The power of this prayer does not depend solely or in great proportion upon the words used but also upon the spirit in which it is offered. (John 4:24)
 2. The spirit which makes prayer effective is that of childlike confidence and trust. (Heb. 11:6; Mark 10:15)
 - a. It was because of our Lord's trust and confidence that His prayers constitute such complete and sufficient guides as to the proper principles of acceptable prayer.
 - b. Christ's spirit of loving confidence must be portrayed in our prayers.

Common Questions on Prayer

Introduction

1. This series of lessons is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively.
2. In any study of prayer, some of the same questions often arise.
3. This lesson will look at some of those questions and attempt to answer them from Scripture.

I. "Must Prayer Be Offered in the Name of Jesus?"

- A. Several passages of Scripture confirm that prayer is to be offered in the name of, i.e., by the authority of, Jesus.
 1. Colossians 3:17. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."
 2. John 16:23. "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you."
 3. Ephesians 2:18. "For through Him (Jesus - GT) we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."
 4. Romans 1:8. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."
- B. Jesus is Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), Advocate (1 John 2:1), and High Priest (Heb. 4:14-15), therefore, the Christian can have boldness and access with confidence through Him (Eph. 3:12) to come to the throne of grace in time of need (Heb. 4:16).
- C. Most who ask the question, "Must prayer be in the name of Jesus?", in reality are asking, "Does one have to audibly state that the prayer is being offered in the name of Jesus?"
 1. This is a common practice, usually at the close of the prayer, among most brethren in the prayers offered in worship assemblies of local churches.
 2. This is similar to what is done when one is baptized.
 - a. Baptism is to be "in the name of Jesus Christ." (Acts 2:38)
 - b. It is a good practice to audibly express that baptism is being done "in the name of Jesus Christ" when baptizing someone so that those viewing it, especially non-Christians, will be able to recognize and acknowledge that fact.
 2. Though it could be classified as a tradition, it is a good tradition.
 - a. It states to all present, including possibly first-time visitors or others who would not know otherwise, that prayer is through Jesus and by His authority.
 - b. It reminds the Christian of the wonderful access he has with the Father because of the loving sacrifice of Jesus and His gracious gift of prayer. It is a recognition of His Lordship over him.
 3. In personal prayers, even though they may not be stated audibly (See the first lesson of this series), it is good to always acknowledge the love and authority of Jesus.

II. "Can We Pray to Jesus?"

- A. When a Christian prays, all persons of the Godhead have a role, therefore, in that sense, one cannot pray without involving Jesus.
 - 1. Prayers come before the throne of God. (Rev. 8:3-4)
 - 2. The intercessory roles of both Jesus (1 Tim. 2:1-5) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27) are clearly stated.
 - 3. Therefore, Jesus has knowledge of every prayer offered in His name by His disciples.
- B. The New Testament plainly teaches that prayer is to be directed to the Father.
 - 1. The instructions of Jesus. (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2; John 16:23)
 - 2. The example of the apostle Paul.
 - a. Colossians 1:3. "We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you."
 - b. Ephesians 3:14. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - c. Ephesians 5:20. "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- C. James 1:17 says the Father is the giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift." If one desires to receive those things for which he is petitioning, he must make his requests to the one who grants those gifts.
 - 1. The heavenly Father knows the needs of His children. (Matt. 6:32)
 - 2. The Father supplies "all your need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." (Phil. 4:19)

III. "Does God Hear the Prayer of Sinners?"

- A. The usual answer to this question is a swift "No!" with some qualifications such as Cornelius (Acts 10:4). But if God never hears the prayers of sinners:
 - 1. How can His children who have sinned ever receive forgiveness through prayer as instructed in 1 John 1:9?
 - 2. Why did the apostle Peter tell Simon the sorcerer to "pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" when he was "bound by iniquity?" (Acts 8:22-23)
- B. A consideration of John 9:31.
 - 1. In this text the man who was born blind, having been healed by Jesus, stated, while making his defense before the Jews, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him."
 - 2. Some have said this verse is not applicable because the man was not inspired but several passages of Scripture support his statement.
 - a. Proverbs 15:29. "The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous."
 - b. Psalm 66:18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."
 - c. 1 Peter 3:12. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

3. In each of the above Scriptures, the matter under consideration is whether or not God will even hear the prayers of His own children, Jew or Gentile, when they continue in sin.
 - a. God will not hear the prayer of one who claims to belong to Him if that one persists in sinning. (Isa. 59:1-2)
 - b. When a child of God truly repents, he may always turn to God in prayer with the full assurance that God will hear him but as long as he continues to sin impenitently, he has no hope that God will hear him.
- C. The more accurate question is, "Does God ever hear the prayers of non-Christians?"
1. The case of Cornelius.
 - a. Though he was not a Christian, his prayers were heard by God. (Acts 10:4,31)
 - b. We are not told that for which Cornelius was praying.
 - 1) Even though God answered his prayer by sending Peter to him, I doubt he was praying for Peter to be sent to him or about the gospel Peter would preach.
 - 2) He may have been praising God, thanking Him or making some special requests based on what he knew.
 - c. Not realizing that he was not a true child of God, he offered many prayers to God for many things.
 - 1) God heard his prayers for God always hears the prayers of those who truly seek Him. (Matt. 7:7-11; Heb. 11:6)
 - 2) But he was not a child of God.
 - d. Since he was not a child of God and did not really have the right to approach God in prayer as his Father, there was only one answer God could give him.
 - 1) That answer was how to become a child of God.
 - 2) Peter was sent with the answer that Cornelius did not even know he needed.
 - e. A summary.
 - 1) Cornelius was "on the outside looking in" – seeing children of God praying, and wanting to be like them, he prayed too.
 - 2) His understanding was still imperfect so he did not realize he did not have access to the throne of grace that those who were already Christians had.
 - 3) God heard his prayer and answered it, not by granting the things the non-Christian has no right to request, but by providing that which the man really needed – the opportunity to hear and obey the gospel and thereby gain access to God's throne of grace through Jesus Christ.
 - f. "Another unusual instance of prayer is in the case of Cornelius, 'a centurion of the band called the Italian band.' He is described as 'a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, *and prayed to God always*' (Acts 10:1,2). Truly, he was an unusual character. In response to the prayers of this man, who was neither a Christian nor a Jew, God sent an angel to

instruct him what to do. He must send to Joppa for a man named Peter. 'who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house' (Acts 11:14). The answer to his prayers was in bringing him in contact with one who could tell him what to do to be saved; this was his primary need. Today if God hears the prayer of an individual like Cornelius, it will be to bring him providentially together with one who can teach him the word and the way of salvation. God saves the unsaved person through obedience to the gospel, not in some mysterious manner in direct answer to prayer. The unsaved person does not have the full right and privilege of prayer that the Christian has; this is the blessing of the saved." (Homer Hailey, *Prayer and Providence*, p. 12)

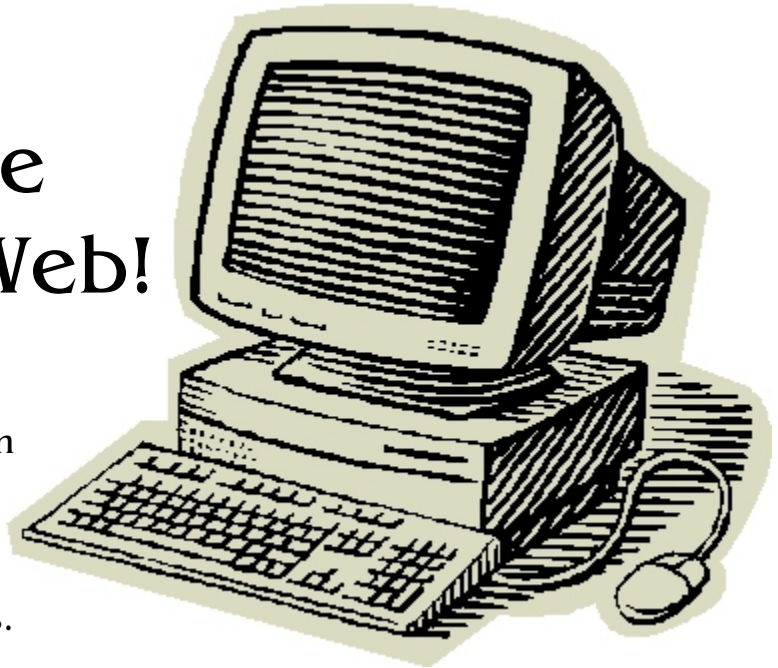
2. The example of Saul of Tarsus.
 - a. After Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, Saul went into the city where he penitently spent three days in fasting and prayer. (Acts 9:8-9, 11)
 - b. God sent Ananias to him "for behold, he is praying." (Acts 9:12)
 - 1) The prayers of Saul were heard by the Lord.
 - 2) As in the case of Cornelius, God provided Saul with that which he really needed — the opportunity to hear and obey the gospel.
- D. When one obeys the gospel, as a child of God he may approach God as his Father.
 1. He may do so with the assurance and confidence that Scripture gives him. (Jas. 1:6; Matt. 7:7-8)
 2. No one outside of Christ has that assurance or that right.

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