

DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

September 13, 1988

I. Introduction.

A. Prayer as a subject must be taught (Lk.11:1-13).

1. Jesus set an example in prayer that prompted the disciples to request a lesson on prayer (Lk.11:1).
2. He answered their request (it is legitimate to pray for wisdom on any subject; Jam.1:5,6).
3. John had taught his followers how to pray.
4. The model prayer (not "the Lord's prayer") is given as a guide to content (Lk.11:2-4).
5. Next follows a parable that emphasizes persistence in prayer (vss.5-8).
6. A prayer promise follows in vss.9, 10.
7. There follows an analogy between a father and his son to encourage us not to be reticent in petitioning our heavenly Father (vss.11, 12).
8. Last, he lays before them a challenge to ask for the Holy Spirit (vs.13).

B. True prayer is something very personal and specific.

1. Jesus taught His disciples to address God as "*Father*" (Mt.6:6,9; Lk.11:2)
2. Believers are therefore to bring their requests to God as a son to his father.
3. This elicits child-like trust on the part of the believer (also note the Aramaic term for Father, "*Abba*" [Rom.8:15; Gal.4:6], a particularly affectionate mode of address, like our "papa" or "daddy").
4. Think of God as a parent of whom you would make some specific request.

C. The supplicant's assurance that his/her prayers are heard are even stronger in the New Testament (NT) than in the Old Testament (OT; Mk.11:24 "*Believe that you have already received it*")

D. True prayer has great power.

1. It provides the salvation adjustment to the justice of God (SAJG; Lk.18:10,14).
2. It provided the Church with the Holy Spirit (Act.1,2).
3. It prepares one for the day ahead (Mk.1:35-39).
4. It is necessary to surround all activities with prayer (Eph.6:18,19).
5. Prayer helps overcome anxieties (Phil.4:6).
6. Prayer is necessary to reach maturity (Col.4:12).
7. It overthrows nations (Mt.21:21,22).
8. It will usher in the Lord's return (Rev.5:8, Lk.11:2,3).
9. It changes the weather (Jam.5:17,18).

II. Hebrew and Greek words for prayer.

A. Hebrew.

1. **יָחַן**, *chalah*: beseech, entreat. It occurs 16X, and in the piel stem only; it is used 13X of favor being sought of the Lord; this verb always is followed by "the face of" and means, "entreat". When used of the Lord, it usually involves a prayer for mercy or help in the threat of danger (cf. 2Kgs.13:4).

2. חָנַן, chanan: in the hithpael stem it is used of supplications to God (Deut.3:23; 1Kgs.8:33,47,59; 9:3; 2Chr.6:37; Ps.30:8; 142:1).
 3. תְּחִינָה, techinnah: supplication. This word occurs 24X and means prayer for grace on all but two occasions, when it means "mercy". Half of all the occurrences appear in Solomon's prayer at the temple dedication (1Kgs.8,9; 2Chr.6).
 4. תַּחֲנוּן, tachanun: supplication. This is always used in the plural. It is similar to the preceding word, but represents the outpouring of a troubled soul. It is used in parallel with "weepings" in Jer.3:21; 31:9.
 5. פָּלַל, palal: intercede, intervene, pray. This verb occurs 84X (80X in the hithpael and 4X in the piel). This word and its noun counterpart (below) are easily the most common word(s) for prayer in the OT. The usual translation is "to pray". Most often the verb and noun refer to intercessory prayer. This is best illustrated in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, where the root occurs 30X in these chapters alone, 2Chr.6; 1Kgs.8:28 *"yet have regard to the prayer (tepilla) of your servant and to his supplication (techinnah) O Lord my God, to listen to the cry (rinnah) and the prayer (tepilla) your servant prays (hithpael pt. פָּלַל, palal) before you today."*
 6. תְּפִלָּה, tephillah: prayer. This noun is found 76X, most often in the Psalms (32X) in their superscription (Ps.17; 86; 90; 102; 142).
 7. שָׁאַל, sha-al: ask, inquire. This verb occurs 176X in the OT, almost always in the Qal. In the OT usage, it means to ask something of someone. Over and over again it is used of individuals asking or failing to ask God for guidance. David, a man after God's own heart, many times "inquired of the Lord" (1Sam.23:2; 30:8; 2Sam.2:1; 5:19,23; 1Chr.14:10,14). Yet in Josh.9:14, the leaders of Israel *"asked not (counsel) at the mouth of the Lord"*; and in Isa.30:1,2 *"Woe to the rebellious children, says the Lord...that...have not asked at my mouth."*
 8. שְׂאֵלָה, she-elah: request, petition, demand. This fem. noun occurs 15X. It is used of a request to God for something specific (1Sam.1:27, Hannah's prayer for a son).
 9. מִשְׁאֵלָה, mishe-alah: petition, desire. This noun occurs only twice, but both verses are most significant, Ps.20:5 *"May the Lord fulfill all your petitions"*; 37:4 *"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."*
- B. Greek.
1. Αἰτέω, aiteo: to ask, request, demand. The basic meaning is to want something, to demand something (Mt.21:22; 1Jn.5:14-16).
 2. Αἶτημα, aitema: request, demand. This noun means the thing asked for (cf. Phil.4:6).
 3. Δέομαι, deomai: to ask, request, beseech, beg. The nuance of this word group is urgency based on some pressing need (Mt.9:38; Lk.5:12,22,32; Act.4:31).
 4. Δέσις, deesis: a request, entreaty. As with the verb, urgency is the emphasis of the noun (Rom.10:1; 2Tim.1:3; Heb.5:7; Jam.5:16; 1Pet.3:12).

5. Ἐντευξις, euteuxis: intercession, petition, appeal. Used of prayer to a superior (2X in 1Tim.2:1; 4:5).
6. Ἰκετηρία, hiketeria: plea. Originally the word was used of a strong request for protection. Found once in the NT in Heb.5:7 "*He (Jesus) offered up prayers (deesis) and supplications (hiketeria) with loud crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death.*"
7. Προσεύχομαι, proseuchomai: to pray. This verb represents the most comprehensive term for "prayer" in the NT. This word occurs 87X.
8. Προσευχή, proseuche: prayer. Like the verb, this is a general word for all kinds of prayer; occurs 37X.
9. Εὐξομαι, euchomai: to pray. This verb is a simple form of proseuchomai and occurs 6X (Act.26:29; 27:29; Rom.9:3; Col.3:7,9; Jam.5:16; 3Jn.2).
10. Εὐχή, euche: prayer, oath, vow. A noun occurring 3X (Act.18:18; 21:23; Jam.5:15).
11. Ἐρωτάω, erotao: ask a question, request. This verb tends to be more intimate when used of a request (Jn.14:16; 16:26; 17:9,15,20).
12. Ἐντυγχάνω, entugchano: to intercede. This verb occurs 5X (Rom.8:27,34; Heb.7:25; cf. Act.25:24).
13. Ὑπερεντυγχάνω, huperentugchano: intercede. Occurs only once in Rom.8:27 for the Holy Spirit's "praying".
14. Εὐχαριστεῶ, eucharisteo: be thankful, thank. This is reserved almost exclusively in the NT for appreciation for God, His plan, and those who enhance it.
15. Εὐχαριστία, eucharistia: thanksgiving. This word is usually used in Paul's exhortations to thanksgiving (Eph.5:20).
16. Εὐχάριστος, eucharistos: thankful (adjective). Note: words for "praise" have been omitted.

III. Prayer in the OT.

- A. It was taught through the ritual of the Tabernacle (Ex.30; Doctrine of the Tabernacle).
 1. The Altar of Incense teaches that all prayer is to be offered through Christ (wood overlaid with gold represents the God-Man) (Ex.30:1-11).
 2. The Altar of Incense was located in the Holy Place, which speaks of Phase 2.
 3. The priest had to first pass the Bronze Altar (Cross, Phase 1) and the Bronze Laver (Rebound), indicating that prayer is only for the believer who is in fellowship (vss.17-21).
 4. The priest needed the light of the Golden Lampstand to offer incense, speaking of the light of the Word of God one needs to pray correctly.
 5. The incense itself was a specific combination of aromatic substances, representing prayer content (Ex.30:34-36).
 6. To alter the formula was to be excommunicated from Israel, speaking of God's attitude toward those who offer up "strange incense" (Ex.30:9; cf. 37,38).
 7. Only fire taken from the Bronze Altar (Cross and judgment) could be used to burn the incense (Lev.10 teaches by negative example that God does not hear the prayers of men who reject the Cross).

8. The Altar of Incense sat directly before the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (heaven), telling us that in Phase 2 (Holy Place) we (priests) offer prayers (incense) through Christ (veil) to the throne of grace (Heb.4:16).
 9. The heathen offer incense to their gods (2Chr.34:25).
 10. David recognized that his prayers were analogous to incense (Ps.141:2).
 11. We (royal priests) have an altar (Bible Doctrine in the soul, Heb.13:10) from which we offer incense (prayer, and other priestly sacrifices) to God (Heb.13:15).
 12. Incense is used to picture the prayers of saints, which lead to the judgments of the Tribulation (Rev.5:8; 8:3ff).
- B. As now, those who acclimated to the Word of God were heard (Prov.15:8,29; cf. 28:9).
- C. So God heard the prayer of the adjusted believer in Old Testament times (Ps.32:6; 65:2a; 66:19, 20; 102:17).
- D. David stands as one of the great prayer warriors of the Old Testament (Ps.72:20).
- E. The temple was called "*a house of prayer*" (Isa.56:7; Mt.21:13; Mk.11:17; Lk.19:46). Here, Jews and Gentiles could come and pray (cf. Lk.1:5-16; 18:9-14).
- IV. Prayer classifications.
- A. Confession (1Jn.1:9; Mt.6:12)
 - B. Intercession for self (Mk.13:33; cp. 14:38) and for others (1Thess.5:25; 2Thess.2:11).
 - C. Thanksgiving for some specific blessing (39X in the NT, and the noun 15X).
 - D. Praise (pure) for divine essence (Mt.6:9).
- V. Prayer's protocol.
- A. The believer is to direct his prayers to God the Father (Mt.6:6,9; Eph.3:14; 5:20).
 - B. The believer is to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn.14:13; 15:16). This does not mean you have to use the exact phrase "in the name of..."; what it does mean is that you are not to pray to "Jesus" and so abandon His mediatorship (cf. 1Jn.2:1; Rom.8:27,34; 1Tim.2:5; Heb.7:25; 9:24).
 - C. The believer is to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit (Jd.20; Eph.6:18). You are never to pray to God the Holy Spirit as is the practice of some. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit and pray according to the Word of God, He delivers your prayer directly to heaven (Rom.8:26).
- VI. Prayer's disciplines.
- A. Maintain the filling of the Holy Spirit (FHS; Jn.15:7 "*If you abide in Me [FHS], and My words abide in you [Bible Doctrine in the brain computer, or the indwelling of Christ], ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you*").
 - B. Learn Bible Doctrine (Jn.15:7 "*and My words abide in you*"; cf. Jn.14:12-15).
 - C. Consistency (1Thess.5:17 "*Pray without ceasing*").
 - D. Persistence (Lk.11:5-13); parable of the persistent friend (Lk.18:1-8).
 - E. Inclusiveness (Phil.4:6 "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer [προσευχή, proseuche] and entreaty [δέησις, deesis] with thanksgiving [εὐχαριστία, eucharistia] let your requests [αἴτημα, aitema] be made known to God*").
- VII. Prayer's objects.

- A. Wisdom is the single most important petition you can offer (Jam.1:5; cf. Solomon's prayer in 1Kgs.3:3ff).
 - B. The establishment chain of command (1Tim.2:1-4), so that the authorities make possible a society in which the royal chain of command is able to operate in a state of tranquility.
 - C. Pastor-Teacher (Rom.15:30; 2Thess.3:1, 2).
 - D. Congregation (1Thess.3:9,10; Col.1:3,9; 2Thess.1:11,12).
 - E. Living grace (Mt.6:11).
 - F. Maturity adjustment to the justice of God (MAJG, Col.4:12,13).
 - G. The Lord's return (prayer is associated with "*watching*", Lk.21:34-36; Mt.6:10; 1Cor.16:22; again, the prayer must come from a correct understanding of the pertinent facts. So you pray for the fact as well as for yourself so that you will not be embarrassed when He comes).
 - H. Individuals who are positive but under testing (3Jn.2; 2Cor.1:11).
 - I. All of one's cares (1Pet.5:7; cp. Phil.4:6).
 - J. Enemies (Mt.5:44-48). By so doing, you emulate God the Father who provided salvation for His enemies (cf. Lk.23:34; Act.7:60). This applies to those who hate you because of your viewpoint.
 - K. Yourself when under special testing (Mt.26:41; Jn.5:13).
 - L. The sick (Jam.5:14, prayer of faith).
- VIII. Some prayer promises.
- A. Ps.37:4, 5.
 - B. 1Pet.5:6,7 (associated with the Faith-Rest technique; cf. Ps.55:22).
 - C. Mt.21:22 ("*everything*" is tied to what the Word of God says is God's will; cf. Jn.14:13; 15:7,16; 1Jn.3:22; 5:14,15).
 - D. Mt.7:7 "*Ask (αἰτέω, aiteo), and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find (ζήτηω, zeteo implies a period of waiting); knock, and it shall be opened.*" Before you enter a home, you knock. So knock where you are welcome and be patient.
 - E. Jam.1:5 (if you lack understanding, ask and you will be given the answer).
 - F. Mt.18:19, 20 (group prayer).
- IX. Hindrances to effective prayer (cf. 1Pet.3:7 "*That your prayers may not be hindered* [pres.pass.infin. ἐγκόπτω, egkopto]"; cf. Act.24:9).
- A. Carnality (Ps.66:18).
 - B. Wrong content (Prov.28:9) based on negative volition and/or ignorance.
 - C. Wrong intent (you pray from the lust grid of the indwelling sinful trend of Adam; Jam.4:3).
 - D. Lack of faith (Mk.11:24; Jam.1:5-8).
 - E. Lack of domestic harmony (1Pet.3:7) due to the husband's lack of understanding toward the "*weaker vessel*".
 - F. Lack of forgiveness (Mt.5:23,24; Mk.11:25).
 - G. Simply because you do not ask (Jam.4:2b).
 - H. Lack of compassion (Prov.21:13)
- X. Things to avoid..
- A. Traditional lingo, "Thou".

- B. Vain repetitions (Mt.6:7,8); to repeat over and over again some phrase or word designed to get God's attention.
 - C. Long, drawn-out prayers of the clergy (Mt.6:5).
- XI. The Holy Spirit makes total sense out of all our prayers (Rom.8:26, 27).
- A. He takes up the slack where we lack all the facts pertinent to a given situation.
 - B. He perfects the prayer and brings a complete and accurate petition to the throne of grace.
 - C. Even our most intense groaning is translated into perfect prayer.
 - D. The prayers the Holy Spirit delivers are preconditioned by searching each one's heart.
 - E. So He polishes every true prayer and presents it to God the Son, who in turn intercedes before the Father.
- XII. Concluding remarks and exhortations.
- A. Prayer, like all divine good, falls under the dictum: "action with honor".
 - B. Prayer is a royal imperative which we are to be devoted to (Rom.12:12 "...devoted to prayer"; Col.4:2 "*Devote yourselves to prayer*" [pres.act.imper. προσκαρτερέω, proskartereō]; cf. Act.1:14; 2:42,46; 6:4).
 - C. The local church is to pray for "right" pastor (Rom.15:30-32; Eph.6:19). The Pastor is to pray for the spiritual excellence of "right congregation" (Rom.1:9-12; Eph.1:16-19; Col.4:12; 1Thess.1:2; 3:10).
 - D. Certain individuals in the local body have a niche which permits large amounts of time to be devoted to intercessory prayer (cf. 1Tim.5:5)
 - E. Exhortations on thanksgiving (1Thess.5:18 "*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus*"; Col.3:15 "*and be thankful*"; Eph.5:20; Col.3:17).
 - 1. Food (Jn.6:11, 23; 1Cor.14:16; 1Tim.4:3-5).
 - 2. Response of believers to Bible Doctrine (Rom.1:8; Eph.1:16).
 - 3. Ultimate sanctification (Rom.7:25).
 - 4. Believers who serve the plan of God "above and beyond" (Rom.16:4).
 - 5. Reality behind the Eucharist (1Cor.11:24).
 - 6. One's gift(s) (1Cor.14:17,18).
 - 7. Prayers of others (2Cor.1:11).
 - 8. Grace (1Cor.1:4; 2Cor.4:15).
 - 9. Grace giving (2Cor.9:11,12).
 - 10. Past blessings (Phil.4:6).
 - 11. Surpassing grace blessings in Phase 3 (Col.1:12).
 - 12. Bible Doctrine and what it provides (Col.2:7).
 - 13. Establishment chain of command (1Tim.2:12).

Heb.4:16 "*Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.*"

Ps.55:16 "*As for me, I shall call upon God, and the Lord will save me.*"

Phil.4:6 "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*"

Mt.21:11 *"And everything you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."*

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

Reviewed: April 13, 1989

Reviewed: April 13, 1994

Reviewed: June 4, 1996