

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Prayer, defined, is simply, human beings talking to God.

Sadly, I believe that most people's PRAYER LIFE is but empty demands.

Here is an example of what many Christians consider a typical prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

BLESS all my family .... oh yeah,

and all the missionaries also, since they gave up everything for You.

HEAL everybody I know that's bad off sick ....

like folks that need surgery or are in the hospital.

(Don't worry about those who need bifocals or hearing aids,

'cause all old people eventually gotta get that junk.)

HELP me make more money ....

(FIND me a good job where my boss will give me a raise)

so I can pay my bills, of course, to be a good witness.

SELL my house. SEND a buyer my way.

FORGIVE my sins ....

and my friends too, where we did some stuff we shouldn't have.

Please grant all these requests.

(... then they don't forget the 'seal all'): In Jesus' name, Amen.

Of course, they can be more specific when they 'customize' their prayer

by 'naming names' .... like 'Heal Uncle Joe from his cancer' ---

but the content is still the same. They 'order' God and tell Him what to do.

If circumstances in their life change the GOOD way they want ....

then they say God worked it out.

If things change in to a BAD way ....

then they say God is trying to get their attention,

or tell them something, or worse: chastise them.

As we study the 1st section of verses about Prayer -- it's important to notice --- just WHERE these verses are located in our Bible ....

(because they're NOT in the dispensation of grace)!

In most any so-called 'Christian Bookstore' ....

you can find comforting books of 'Prayer Promises'.

Let's investigate some of them:

**Matt 18:19** Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

**Matt 21:21,22** Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith (How much faith? Matt 17:20 includes "as a grain of mustard seed" .... well, that's not very big, is it?), and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

22 And **all things**, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye **shall** receive.

Here's why the prayers are always tagged 'in Jesus' name' at the end.

(I actually find myself habitually following this tradition):

**John 14:13,14** And whatsoever ye shall ask **in my name**, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 **If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.**

**John 16:24** Hitherto (**before ... up to now**) have ye asked nothing **in my name**: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

**God guaranteed physical healing through prayer:**

**James 5:15** And the prayer of faith **shall** save the sick, and the Lord **shall** raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Now, let's look at some common **EXCUSES for Unanswered Prayer.**

They've got some verses --- so you'd better know how to rightly divide!

**THEY SAY:** It's not that God CAN'T hear you pray ....

but it's that He WON'T listen to YOUR prayer .... because

**"You've got sin in your life."**

**Isa 59:1,2** Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

**THEY SAY:** This is why you can't be sure God will answer your prayer ....

you must remember to tag it.

**"You didn't ask .... according to GOD'S will."**

**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:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

How about this excuse? **THEY SAY:**

**"You aren't making God happy by your disobedience to His LAWS."**

**1 John 3:22** And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, **because** we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

**THEY SAY:** "You're just not abiding in Jesus."

**John 15:7** If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

**THEY SAY:** "You didn't have enough FAITH."

**James 1:6,7** But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.  
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

**THEY SAY:** The reason God is saying "NO" to you .... is that

"Your request was SELFISH."

**James 4:3** Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss (wrongly, improperly), that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

**THEY SAY:**

God will give you GOOD GIFTS .... but you have to ASK for them.

If you don't have whatever you want .... it's because:

"You're didn't ASK."

**Matt 7:7-11** Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

**James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

**James 4:2** Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

**THEY SAY:**

God won't answer a husband's prayers .... because:

**"You had an argument with your wife."**

**1 Peter 3:7** Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; **that your prayers be not hindered.**

That's enough excuses, don't you think?

The point is .... that every one of those EXCEPTION CLAUSES --- that disqualifies prayers --- is in Israel's Prophetic Program.

Jesus warned against the religious leaders that appeared pious with their holier-than-thou attitude:

**Luke 20:46,47** Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;

47 Which devour widows' houses, and **for a shew make long prayers:** the same shall receive greater damnation.

**Under Israel' Old Testament LAW program,**

**God bound Himself to respond to their prayers.**

We'll go through some references of Prayers that were

**EXAMPLES of Miraculous Intervention:**

**Num 11:1,2** Because of Moses' prayer, God quenched the huge camp fire He had sent to burn the disobedient Israelites.

**Gen 20:17,18**

Because Abraham prayed, God healed Abimelech and gave fertility to his wife and maidservants.

**1 Sam 1:27**

Because of Hannah's prayer, she conceived her son Samuel.

**Luke 1:13**

Because of Zacharias' prayer, his wife Elisabeth conceived John the Baptist.

**2 Kings 4:32-36**

God raised a dead boy back to life by Elisha's prayer.

**Acts 9:37-41**

Because of Peter's prayer, God resurrected a dead girl.

**2 Kings 6:18**

God smote the Syrian army with blindness by Elisha's prayer.

**2 Kings 20:5,6**

God healed Hezekiah and added an extra 15 years to his life.

**James 5:17,18**

Because of Elijah's prayer, God withheld the rain for 3-1/2 years.

**Dan 9:21**

Daniel was physically touched by an angel while he was praying.

**Acts 12:5-8**

Peter's prison chains fell off and an angel led him out .... as an answer to the church's prayer.

People pray in the CLOSET because of these next verses:

**Matt 6:5-7** 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.

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.

7 But **when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,** as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Jesus' 12 disciples asked Him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1).

His response (the so-called 'Lord's Prayer') is clearly the Jewish program:

**Matt 6:9-15** After this manner therefore **pray** ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed (that is, holy and revered) be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. (They were rightly expecting God to establish His kingdom **on the earth**, as prophesied many times, as in Dan 2:44.)

(In Rev 21:2,3 John wrote that the city of New Jerusalem will float down from heaven to the earth.)

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (It will be in the Lord's Day, according to Isa 9:6,7.)

11 Give us this day our daily bread. (God will supernaturally provide food for them every day - Rev 2:17, as He gave them manna in the wilderness for 40 years - Exo 16:35.)

12 And forgive us our debts, **as** we forgive our debtors. (This principal is specifically stated in verses 14 and 15.)

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (This is CLEARLY the regulation of the LAW.)

Next, we'll read the companion passage for Matt 6:14,15 (which will be verses 25 and 26) .... but we'll begin in verse 23, since it also has to do with Prayer - in the God's Earthly Kingdom Program for Israel:

**Mark 11:23-26** For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, **when ye pray, believe** that ye receive them, and ye **shall** have them.

25 And **when ye stand praying,**  
**forgive,** if ye have ought against any:  
 that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But **if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.**

**Quite frankly, everything we've looked at thus far in this study on Prayer does NOT apply to us. NONE of the verses we've read .... are for the dispensation of grace.**

**So, now, let's begin the 2nd section on Prayer -- and see what DOES belong to us .... what WE should pray for.**

### **WHEN TO PRAY:**

**Eph 6:18** Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

**Col 4:2** Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

**Rom 12:12** Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; **continuing instant in prayer;**

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

## WHERE TO PRAY:

**1 Tim 2:8** I will therefore that **men pray every where**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

## PRAYER POSTURE:

*Did you ever notice that religious people often do things backwards?*

When we read the verses about SINGING to the Lord (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16)

**raising hands** was never even mentioned ....

But, we just read 1 Tim 2:8, where ....

'our' Apostle Paul writes for **men to hold our hands up when we pray**.

Incidentally, the Bible does not tell us what POSITION to be in when we pray.

Throughout the scriptures are records of prayer where men have

- kneeled on their knees
- bowed down
- layed flat-out prostrate on the floor
- faced toward Jerusalem
- spread out their hands
- stood up on their feet.

Next, we'll read where Paul got down on his knees before the Lord.

**Eph 3:14-19** For this cause **I bow my knees** unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, **to be strengthened** with might by his Spirit **in the inner man**; *(our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is renewed day by day - 2 Cor 4:16)*

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;

that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints

what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,

that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Now, we'll examine 2 of Paul's prayers .... to see what he prayed for.

Notice that it is for **SPIRITUAL THINGS --- NOT physical blessings:**

**Eph 1:15** Wherefore I also, after I **heard** of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Paul thanked God for his faithful, loving saint-friends:

**16 Cease not to give thanks for you,**

Paul regularly talked to God about the Ephesian saints:

**making mention of you in my prayers;**

Here's Paul's request for them:

**17** That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may **give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:**

**18** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened;

that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,

and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

**19** And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

God supplied the Ephesian saints the ability to realize His will:

**Eph 5:17** Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Acknowledging Paul's unique authority ....

furnishes us with appreciation for ALL of God's holy Word:

**2 Tim 2:7** Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

When we understand God's Word ....

we will have confidence and boldness to share what we know with others.

Paul's prayer for the Colossian saints ....

was **QUITE SIMILAR** to his **SPIRITUAL REQUESTS** for the Ephesians:

**Col 1:9** For this cause we also, since the day we **heard** it, (**Eph 1:15**)  
do **not cease** to pray for you, (**Eph 1:16**)

and to desire that ye might be filled  
with the **knowledge** of his will in all **wisdom** (**Eph 1:17**)

and spiritual **understanding**; (**Eph 1:18**)

10 That ye might **walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing,

being fruitful in every good work,

and increasing in the **knowledge** of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to **his glorious power**,  
unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; (**Eph 1:19**)

12 **Giving thanks** unto the Father, (**Eph 1:16**)

which hath made us meet to be partakers of the **inheritance of the saints in light**: (**Eph 1:18**)

In the next chapter (Col 2), Paul expressed the desires of his heart again:

**Col 2:1-3** For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you,  
and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the  
flesh;

2 That their hearts might be comforted,

being knit together in love,

and unto all riches of the **full assurance of understanding**,

**to the acknowledgement of the mystery** of God, and of the Father, and  
of Christ;

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Here's another 'spiritual prayer request' made by Paul ....

that the Philippian saints would be **able witnesses**:

**Phile 1:4-6** I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

5 Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

6 **That the communication of thy faith may become effectual** by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Paul told them the content of his prayers.

We should notice that he didn't ask for **PHYSICAL** blessings:

**Phil 1:9-11** And this I pray,

that your love may abound yet more and more  
in knowledge and in all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent;

that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Paul's fellow-workers also prayed for people's spiritual needs:

**Col 4:12** Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, **that ye may stand perfect (that's mature) and complete (that's fully capable) in all the will of God (that's getting out the gospel and the fellowship of the mystery).**

Remember that it is our knowledge of the entire word of God --

which is understood by right division --

that fully equips us to stand like Epaphras prayed:

**2 Tim 3:16,17** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 **That the man of God may be perfect,**  
thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

By being in the body of Christ, we have God's wisdom available to us:

**1 Cor 1:24** But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

**1 Cor 1:30** But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

**Finally, let's examine OUR Prayer Promise .... under grace.**

**We are invited by God .... to talk to Him about EVERYTHING --**

**ALL the cares and concerns of our hearts:**

**Phil 4:6** Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

**However .... God does NOT promise us**

**that we can have everything we ask for ---**

**like He did in the 1st section of verses we read.**

**INSTEAD .... GOD promises we will have His PEACE:**

**Phil 4:7** And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**Thus, when we talk to God .... we should do so INTELLIGENTLY ---**

- realizing what God IS and what God IS NOT doing ....

**today, in the dispensation of grace**

**and • believing *WHAT KIND* and *WHERE* OUR blessings are:**

**Eph 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us (we're ALREADY blessed of God) with all spiritual blessings (NOT physical blessings) in heavenly places in Christ: (our blessings are not here on earth)

God understands our frailties.

He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust (Psa 103:14).

**Rom 8:26-28** Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:  
for **we know not what we should pray for as we ought:**  
but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Regardless of the outcome of any situation ....

we can find reasons to rejoice in it.

God taught Paul to do that.

(Before the scriptures were complete, God actually SPOKE to the apostles and prophets, of which Paul was):

**2 Cor 12:7-10** And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Paul asked God 3 times to remove it:

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

But the Lord would not relieve him:

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Paul's response is amazing:

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

What an attitude of thankfulness Paul expressed:

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

We .... who understand right division of the scriptures,  
recognize that God is NOT MIRACULOUSLY INTERVENING  
in the affairs of man today.

Therefore,

we do not pray for God to super-naturally CHANGE these examples:

- physical healing (Go to the doctor, take medicine, exercise a little, and eat nutritious foods.)
- financial wealth (Get a job or start your own business.)
- traveling mercies and safety (Be alert & obey the traffic rules.)
- selling or buying houses (Contact a real estate agent.)
- finding work (Read 'Help Wanted' section of the newspaper, send out resumes, or list yourself with an employment agency.)
- location of residence (Check out the climate, job availability, pay rate, and cost of living, for whatever city or country you like.)
- getting a parking place close to the front (Drive through the lanes several times and watch for someone to back their vehicle out.)
- not be late for an appointment (Get up and leave early enough to allow for red lights, detours, slow drivers, and road construction.)

**We can, and certainly SHOULD talk to God - about ALL these things!**

But, in praying, we need to also appreciate that God's word is complete ....

The Apostle Paul completed God's revelation to mankind (Col 1:25).

**God is not trying to tell or teach us anything  
by manipulating a situation.**

We don't look to any circumstances of our lives  
to see His love and care for us.

We find that at Calvary --- where Jesus died to pay our sin debt:

**Rom 5:8** But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

For that, we can ALWAYS pray with THANKSGIVING:

**Eph 5:20** Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

So, pour your heart out to God,

talk to Him about the details of your life,

tell Him all your worries, concerns, joys, and fears ....

**He is your Father. He welcomes your prayer. He's listening ....**

God's words 'back to you' can be read in your Bible (rightly divided).

*This is David Dowell, saying, "Think about it!"*

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It should be mentioned, that in Paul's UNIQUE ministry, he requested prayer .... that God would provide for him to journey to the many different places He wanted him to go and preach the gospel.

Since God sent Paul to various cities .... (even specifically to some)

He, therefore, prepared his way ....

and granted Paul safe and successful passage

(though not without troubles and hardships along the trips):

**Rom 1:9-11** For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

**10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.**

**11** For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

**Rom 15:30-32** Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

**31** That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and **that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;**

**32** **That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God,** and may with you be refreshed.

**1 Thess 3:10** Night and day **praying exceedingly that we might see your face,** and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

**Phile 1:22** But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that **through your prayers I shall be given unto you.**