

Prayer

Study Notes by

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This work is dedicated to my wife without whose understanding and proofreading abilities this study would not exist and whose example of prayer is unmatched by anyone I know.

I love you Donna.

The Priority of Prayer

I. Prayer in the Bible

The concept of prayer is found throughout the Bible. The word itself occurs over 500 times and the concept of talking to God occurs even more. Many of the Psalms themselves are complete prayers. One of the undisputed themes of the Bible is that God requires that men pray.

No insistence in the Bible is more pressing than the injunction it lays on men to pray. No exhortation contained therein is more hearty, more solemn, and more stirring. No principle is more strongly inculcated than that “men ought always to pray and not to faint.” In view of this enjoinder is it pertinent to inquire as to whether Christian people are praying men and women in anything like body and bulk? Is prayer a fixed course in the schools of the church? In the Sunday school, the home, the colleges have we any graduates in the school of prayer? Is the church producing those who have diplomas from the great university of prayer? This is what God requires, what he commands, and it is those who possess such qualifications that he must have to accomplish his purposes and to carry out the work of his kingdom on earth. (Bounds, pg. 397)

II. As Exemplified by Christ

It is curious to note that many times in the gospels we find Christ praying. It is odd to think that the very incarnate Son of God would even have to pray, yet it is obvious that prayer to Christ was an essential and indispensable part of His ministry.

Matthew 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.

Luke 9:28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

Why did Christ pray?

A. Intercession

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

B. Communion with the Father

Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

C. Spiritual renewal and strength

Nothing is more conspicuous in the life of our Lord than prayer. His campaigns were arranged and his victories were gained in the struggles and communion of his all-night praying. By prayer he rent the heavens. Moses and Elijah and the transfiguration glory wait on his praying. His miracles and teaching had their power from the same source. Gethsemane's praying crimsoned Calvary with serenity and glory. His high-priestly prayer makes the history and hastens the triumph of his church on earth. What an inspiration and command to pray is the prayer life of Jesus Christ while in this world! What a comment it is on the value, the nature and the necessity of prayer! (Bounds, pg. 257)

Matthew 14:23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

D. Guidance in His decisions

Although Christ was God He limited the independent use of His omniscience and depended on the direction of God through the Holy Spirit for His decisions. The most evident one of these decisions was that of the selection of the disciples.

Luke 6:12-13 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

E. To empower His service

Like all his followers who have drawn God nearer to the world and lifted the world nearer to God, Jesus was the man of prayer, made of God a leader and commander to his people. His leadership was one of prayer. A great leader he was, because he was great in prayer. All great leaders for God have fashioned their leadership in the wrestlings of their closets. Many great men have led and molded the church who have not been great in prayer, but they were great only in their plans, great for their opinions, great for their organization, great by natural gifts, by the force of genius or of character. However, they were not great for God. But Jesus Christ was a great leader for God. His was the great leadership of great praying. God was in his leadership greatly because prayer was in it greatly. We might just well express the wish that we be taught by him to pray, and to pray more and more. (Bounds, pg. 385)

F. Strength for His crucifixion

Matthew 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Like every other aspect and detail of Jesus' life and ministry, His agony in the garden was integral to the foreordained, divine plan of redemption. It was part of Jesus' preparation for the cross, where the climactic event in the work of that redemption would transpire.

Ever and always the teacher, Jesus used even this struggle with the enemy in the garden the night before the cross to teach the disciples and every future believer another lesson in godliness, a lesson about facing temptation and severe trial. The Lord not only was preparing

Himself for the cross but also, by His example, preparing His followers for the crosses He calls them to bear in His name (see Matthew 16:24). (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28, pg. 167)

G. As an example to us.

The dispensation of Christ's personality, was not and could not be the dispensation in its fullest and highest sense of need and dependence, yet Christ did try to impress on his disciples not alone a deep necessity of the necessity of prayer in general, but also the importance of prayer to them in their personal and spiritual needs. (Bounds, pg. 249)

In the ministry of prayer he is a divine example as well as the divine teacher. His example is affluent, and his prayer teaching abounds. How imperative the teaching of our Lord when he affirms that "men ought always to pray and not to faint!" and then presents a striking parable of an unjust judge and a poor widow to illustrate and enforce his teaching. (Bounds, pg. 248)

As Christ nears the close of his earthly mission, nearer to the greater and more powerful dispensation of the Spirit, his teaching about prayer takes on a more absorbing and higher form. It has now become a graduation school. His connection with prayer becomes more intimate and more absolute. He becomes in prayer what he is in all else pertaining to our salvation, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. His name becomes all potent. Mighty works are to be done by the faith which can pray in his name. Like his nature, his name covers all needs, embraces all worlds, and gets all good. (Bounds, pp. 252-253)

Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

John 11:41-42 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

III. As Exemplified by the Saints

From cover to cover we find the saints praying in the Bible. Many of the Psalms were David's prayers to God. Daniel is noted as a great prayer in the Old Testament. In the New we find Paul mentioning his prayer life in nearly every letter he penned.

Acts 10:9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

2 Thessalonians 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and

length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Colossians 1:9-11 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Philippians 1:3-4 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

IV. As Commanded

Rarely is prayer commanded in the Bible, it is assumed. It is as though the Scriptures expect the child of God to be in prayer at all times. However, there are those passages that call us to prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

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

The Purpose of Prayer

I. To glorify God.

Ultimately all prayer centers around God's program and purposes. Our "grocery list" should just be a P.S. to our prayers. In the Disciple's Prayer, which we study later, the first part has to do with God. Before we get to us, we are to hallow God's name, long for His kingdom, and request that His will be done. Prayer should be "theocentric", not "anthropocentric."

Nehemiah 9

Psalms 86

Psalms 89

What happens when we do not pray with God's glory as the primary objective?

- A. God becomes a celestial valet who exists to meet our needs and desires.
- B. Our needs and desires take precedence over God's will and program.
- C. God exists to make us happy.
- D. God exists to make us wealthy.
- E. Trials are seen as Satanic and not divine in nature. Anyone who is suffering trials is not suffering them as a result of God's will since it is not God's will for anyone to suffer.
- F. The gospel is distorted to meet man's needs and not God's demands for repentance.
- G. Since God's will is not of primary importance, truth is stuck on the back shelf and love becomes the motive for everything. This could be called a "relational hermeneutic."

II. To bring one's view in line with God's view.

Daniel 9:1ff.

The truth here is not that prayer changes God's mind or twists his arm, but rather that our prayer, generated and sustained as it is by God himself, becomes the means of our entering into God's mind. We end up asking him to do what he had planned all along to do, once he had brought us to the point of asking him to do it with an appropriately felt seriousness of concern. If we want to see the power of God at work answering our prayers (and there is something wrong with us if we do not), our task is not to screw ourselves up to a self-induced certainty that what we have chosen to ask for is going to happen, just because we have assured ourselves that it will. Our task is, rather, to seek God's mind about the needs that press on us and to allow him to show us (with as much or as little detail as Scripture and the Spirit may suggest to us in each case) how we should pray "thy will be done"—thus following Jesus' path or prayer in Gethsemane. (J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p 232).

III. To obtain power to live the Christian life.

Without a consistent prayer life, the believer faces the risk of spiritual burnout. This particularly happens to full-time Christian workers who are faced with the daily trials of the ministry. Charles Stanley, in his tape series, *The Place of Prayer in the Life of the Minister*, lists seven steps to disaster which result from prayerlessness.

- A. Prayerlessness
- B. Burden Bearing
- C. Weariness
- D. Discouragement
- E. Disillusionment
- F. Dropout/Disobedience
- G. Disaster

IV. To obtain help in time of need.

Psalms 18:1-6 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said, I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

2 Chronicles 20

V. To commune with God.

Our priority in prayer should be a real desire to be with God, to do nothing but stand in His presence and ask for nothing.

VI. To intercede for others.

Exodus 32

The Problem of Prayer

I. Prayer is hard work.

Powerful praying requires extreme effort. Notice the prayers of Daniel, David (Psalm 42), and Christ. Christ bled as it were great drops of blood as He viewed His death from the Garden. Specifically prayer requires:

- Persistence
- Concentration
- Time (Prime Time)
- Emotional energy
- Holiness

Mark 9:29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

James 5:16-18 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

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

Prayer is not a meaningless function or duty to be crowded into the busy or the weary ends of the day, and we are not obeying our Lord's command when we content ourselves with a few minutes on our knees in the morning rush or late at night when the faculties, tired with the tasks of the day, call out for rest. God is always within call, it is true; his ear is ever attentive to the cry of his child, but we can never get to know him if we use the vehicle of prayer as we use the telephone—or a few words of hurried conversation. Intimacy requires development. We can never know God as it is our privilege to know him, by brief and fragmentary and unconsidered repetitions or intercessions that are requests for personal favors and nothing more. That is not the way in which we can come into communication with heaven's king. (Bounds, pg. 325)

II. We are not convinced of the power of prayer.

- A. We do not pray specifically, hence we do not know when God answers.
- B. God is too busy to care about us.
- C. We do not pray correctly, therefore we do not see answers to our prayers.
- D. We forget God's answers.

One of the best things we can do to convince ourselves of the power of prayer is to keep a prayer journal of answered prayers. When we feel that God doesn't listen or care, we can read this journal and be reminded of His faithfulness.

- E. We feel that we can fight the spiritual battle ourselves, we do not need God.

III. We do not know how to pray.

One of the most insightful questions asked Christ by the disciples is found in Luke 11:1. It is obvious that the disciples had seen Christ's prayer life, and desired to emulate it. Specifically, we do not know:

- How to pray
- What God's will is
- What to pray for

Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

Romans 8:26 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.

IV. We think we are too busy to pray.

Martin Luther once said, "I have so many things to do today that I need to spend the first three hours in prayer."

We often become so caught up in busyness and the immediacy of the situation, that we fail to do the most important thing, pray. We are like the man who jumped on his horse and ran off madly in all directions.

Prayer is the power source for all our efforts. Without prayer, we lose our edge and become spiritually dull and lethargic.

The story goes of a young man who applied for a job as a lumberjack. Since he was relatively new and untried, the foreman told him that he would observe his work for a few days before hiring him full time. The first day the young man cut down more trees than anyone else. The second day, however, he fell a little behind. The third day he fell even farther behind and the fourth day he did not do well at all even though he worked through his breaks and lunch time. The fifth day the foreman came to him and told him that he could pick up his check at the office but he wasn't working out. Exasperated, the young man told the foreman that he worked harder than anyone else and tried his best to fell an appropriate number of trees. He could not understand why his performance was so poor. Being somewhat understanding, the foreman asked him only one question, "Did you take the time to sharpen your axe?"

The process of hindering prayer by crowding out is simple and goes by advancing stages. First, prayer is hurried through. Unrest and agitation, fatal to all devout exercises, come in. Then the time is shortened, relish for the exercise palls. Then it is crowded into a corner and depends on the fragments of time for its exercise. Its value depreciates. The duty has lost its importance. It no longer commands respect nor brings benefit. It has fallen out of estimate, out of the heart, out of the habits, out of the life. We cease to pray and cease to live spiritually. (Bounds, pg. 342)

The apostles were as dependent upon prayer as other folks. Sacred work—church activities—may so engage and absorb us as to hinder praying, and when this is the case, evil results always follow. It is better to let the work go by default than to let the praying go by neglect. Whatever affects the intensity of our praying affects the value of our work. "Too busy to pray" is not only the keynote to backsliding, but it mars even the work done. Nothing is well done without prayer for the simple reason that it leaves God out of the account. It is so easy to be seduced by the good to the neglect of

the best, until both the good and the best perish. How easily may men, even leaders in Zion, be led by the insidious wiles of Satan to cut short our praying in the interests of the work! How easy to neglect prayer or abbreviate our praying simple by the pleas that we have church work on our hands. Satan has effectively disarmed us when he can keep us too busy doing things to stop and pray. (Bounds, pg. 371)

V. We are hindered by Satan.

What a misconception many people have of the Christian life! How little the average church member appears to know of the character of the conflict, and of its demands upon him! How ignorant he seems to be of the enemies he must encounter, if he engage to serve God faithfully and so succeed in getting to heaven and receive the crown of life! He seems scarcely to realize that the world, the flesh and the devil will oppose his onward march, and will defeat him utterly; unless he give himself to constant vigilance and unceasing prayer. (Bounds, pg. 62)

A. Satan sometimes hinders the answer as seen in Daniel 10:2ff.

B. Satan hinders the prayer life of the believer.

Satan trembles when the weakest Christian is on his knees.

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

VI. We are concerned with instant answers.

A. The American fast-food mentality

Yet faith is called upon, and that right often to wait in patience before God, and is prepared for God's seeming delays in answering prayer. Faith does not grow disheartened because prayer is not immediately honored; it takes God at his Word, and lets him take what time he chooses in fulfilling his purposes, and in carrying on his work. There is bound to be much delay and long days of waiting for true faith, but faith accepts the conditions—knows there will be delays in answering prayer, and regards such delays as times of testing, in the which, it is privileged to show its mettle, and the stern stuff of which it is made. (The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer, pg. 15)

B. Lack of patience

Isaiah 30:18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

VII. We are afraid of the answers.

Many times people do not pray as they ought for fear that God will answer their prayers in an unacceptable way. For example, many fear praying that God would lead them to a place of service for fear they would wind up in a mud hut in the middle of

Africa eating snake soup. We fail to realize that it is God's greatest desire that we experience His joy, and that joy is only available when we are in the center of His will.

The idea that God is waiting for us to ask that his will be done in our lives so that he can make us unhappy is to have a wrong view of God.

VIII. We have an improper view of God.

Sometimes we do not believe that God is really sovereign. We may intellectually ascribe to that doctrine, but practically we do not really believe God is in control, and therefore we do not really believe God can answer prayer.

One of the greatest chapters on the centrality of God's sovereignty is Revelation 4. Just before God reveals the end-time program to John, He gives John a picture of the throne in heaven. This picture serves to emphasize the fact that God is in control. The entire theme of Revelation 4 is the throne of God, a picture of His sovereign control.

- on the throne - vv. 2-3
- around the throne - v. 4
- out from the throne - v 5.
- before the throne - v. 6ff.

Another great picture of God's sovereign control is found in Genesis 16:7-14. There we read of Hagar who was forced out of Abraham's tent into the desert. In despair of life she lies down to die only to have God speak to her. She names God, Jehovah-Roi, the God Who Sees. God sees all things. He is ever aware and cognizant of all things that go on in this world, and especially in the lives of his children.

Praying men and God's providence go together. This was thoroughly understood by the praying ones of the Scripture. They prayed over everything because God had to do with everything. They took all things to God in prayer because they believed in a divine providence which had to do with all things. They believed in an everpresent God, who had not retired into the secret recesses of space, leaving his saints and his creatures to the mercy of a tyrant, called nature, and its laws, blind, unyielding, with no regard for anyone who stood in its way. If that be the correct conception of God, why pray to him? He is too far away to hear them when they pray, and too unconcerned to trouble himself about those on earth. (Bounds, pg. 221).

IX. We are not willing to pay the price.

The price of prayer is hard work, effort, time, and patience. Very few Americans have these qualities in sufficient measure to become very powerful prayers.

X. We have sin in our lives.

There is an old adage that says, "Prayer will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from prayer." Sin in our lives stifles the work of the Holy Spirit and makes it very difficult for us to pray. Note the example of David in Psalm 32 and 51. For a long time after His sin with Bathsheba David did not pray to God as he used to. His sin stifled his prayer life.

An obedient life is a great help to prayer. In fact, an obedient life is a necessity to prayer, to the sort which accomplishes things. The absence of an obedient life makes prayer an empty performance, a mere misnomer. A penitent sinner seeks pardon and salvation and has an answer to his prayers even with a life stained and debauched with sin. But God's *royal*

intercessors come before him with royal lives. Holy living promotes holy praying. God's intercessors "lift up holy hands," the symbols of righteous, obedient lives. (Bounds, pg. 57)

XI. We forget to pray!

Many times we get so busy in the affairs of this life that we forget to pray. Or, if we do remember to pray, it is at the final hour of the day when we can barely stay awake. The mark of a Spirit-filled Christian is that they are ever in a mode of prayer, ever ready to approach the throne of grace.

Some specific helps in this area are:

- A. Set aside a particular time to pray, preferably while you are awake.
- B. Set aside a specific place for prayer.
- C. Make a list of prayer requests so that you do not ramble and repeat yourself, or miss important requests.
- D. Record the answers to your prayers in a prayer journal.

The Pitfalls of Prayer

I. Prayer becomes a formal exercise.

Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

II. Prayer becomes a ritual.

We can and do pray by many inspirations and in many ways which are not of God. Many prayers are stereotyped in manner and in matter, in part, if not as a whole. Many prayers are hearty and vehement, but is it natural heartiness and a fleshly vehemence. Much praying is done by dint of habit and through form. Habit is a second nature and holds to the good, when so directed, as well as to the bad. The habit of praying is a good habit, and should be early and strongly formed; but to pray by habit merely is to destroy the life of prayer and allow it to degenerate into a hollow and sham-producing form. Habit may form the bank for the river of prayer, but there must be a strong, deep, pure current, crystal and life-giving, flowing between these two banks. Hannah multiplied her praying, “but she poured out her soul before the Lord.” We cannot make our prayer habits too marked and controlling if the life-waters be full and overflow the banks. (Bounds, pg. 288)

Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

III. Prayers become lengthy.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

IV. Prayers become repetitious.

Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

V. Prayers become anthropocentric.

James 4:1-3 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 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. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Our addresses to the throne of grace must be solemn and humble, not flippant and loud, or formal and careless. The colloquial form of speech is out of place before the Lord; we must bow reverently and with deepest awe. We may speak boldly with God, but still He is in heaven and we are upon earth, and we are to avoid presumption. (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pg. 54).

A. We want a “cargo delivering God” much like the cargo cults of the South Pacific.

- B. This idea is fed by the materialistic society in which we live.

The story is told about a little boy who prayer, "Lord, bless Mommy and Daddy, and LORD, I WOULD LIKE A NEW BICYCLE." His father told him that God wasn't deaf to which the boy responded, "Yes, but Grandma is in the other room and she is pretty hard of hearing.

- C. Proponents of the "name-it-and-claim-it" tell us that it is our inheritance as God's children to get it all now.

- VI. Prayers become a source of pride.

Matthew 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.

Beware of having an eye to the auditors; beware of becoming rhetorical to please the listeners. Prayer must not be transformed into "an oblique sermon." It is little short of blasphemy to make devotion an occasion for display. Fine prayers are generally very wicked prayers. In the presence of the Lord of hosts it ill becomes a sinner to parade the feathers and finery of tawdry speech with the view of winning applause from his fellow mortals. (C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pp. 55-56)

- VII. We ask for things we already have.

- A. Love - Romans 5:5

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

- B. Peace - John 14:27

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

- C. The Holy Spirit - Ephesians 1:13-14

Ephesians 1:13-14 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

- D. Joy - Galatians 5:22-23

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

- E. God's Presence - Matthew 28:29-20

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- VIII. We reduce prayer to magical formulas and incantations.

- A. "In Jesus Name"
 - B. "If it be thy will"
 - C. "I plead the blood of Christ"
 - D. Binding Satan
- IX. We pray with an errant view of God.

- A. God is our "buddy"

Another fault equally to be avoided in prayer is an unhallowed and sickening superabundance of endearing words. When "Dear Lord," and "Blessed Lord," and "Sweet Lord," come over and over again as vain repetitions, they are among the worst of blots. I must confess I should feel no revulsion in my mind to the words, "Dear Jesus," if they fell from the lips of a Rutherford, or a Hawker, or a Herbert, but when I hear fond and familiar expressions hackneyed by persons not at all remarkable for spirituality, I am inclined to wish that they could, in some way or other, come to a better understanding of the true relation existing between men and God. (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pp. 56-57).

- B. God becomes our "valet"

Avoid that kind of prayer which may be called—though the subject is one which language has not given us many terms—a sort of peremptory demanding of God...Never fall into a vainglorious style of impertinent address to God; he is not to be assailed as an antagonist, but entreated with as our Lord and God. Humble and lowly let us be in spirit, and so let us pray. (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pg. 57).

- C. God is too detached to care about us

Hebrews 4:14-15 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The Paradox of Prayer

Why should we pray when God is sovereign and is going to do as He pleases anyway? How can our prayers in any way change the decree of God?

- I. God has chosen the instrument of prayer as one of the means His will is accomplished in the world. A fatalistic view of reality is nowhere taught in the Bible.
 - A. Hezekiah was given an additional 15 years when he prayed to God after Isaiah told him that he was to soon die - Isaiah 38.
 - B. Moses interceded for Israel on many occasions in order to stay the judgment of God - Numbers 11:2; 21:7; Deuteronomy 9:26.
 - C. Samuel prayed for the people of Israel although he knew the plan of God - 1 Samuel 8:6-16 cf. 1 Samuel 12:19-24.
 - D. Daniel prayed for the return of Israel although he knew that it had been prophesied by Isaiah that they would return - Daniel 9:19.
 - E. John prayed for the soon return of the Lord although he had just been given a complete vision of the end times - Revelation 22:20.
 - F. Christ prayed that Peter would not succumb to temptation although He knew as God that Peter would not succumb - Luke 22:31-32.
 - G. Elijah prayed that it would not rain although the drought was a judgment from God on the wickedness of Ahab - James 5:17ff.
- II. When God answers our prayer, it strengthens our faith.
- III. We are commanded to pray.
- IV. Prayer is one of the main means by which we commune with God, regardless of our "grocery list." Prayer would be worthwhile even if we asked for nothing.

The Preparation for Prayer

I. Humility

Humility is a rare Christian grace, of great price in the courts of heaven, entering into and being an inseparable condition of effectual praying. It gives access to God when other qualities fail. It takes many descriptions to describe it, and many definitions to define it. It is a rare and retiring grace. Its full portrait is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayers must be set low before they can ever rise high. Our prayers must have much of the dust on them before they can ever have much of the glory of the skies in them. In our Lord's teaching, humility has such prominence in his system of religion, and is such a distinguishing feature of his character, that to leave it out of his lesson on prayer would be very unseemly, would not comport with his character, and would not fit into his religious system. (Bounds, pg. 87).

To be clothed with humility is to be clothed with a praying garment. (Bounds, pg. 89).

Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

II. Confession of Sin

It is a fact, unhappy but undeniable, that repentance nowadays rarely gets mentioned in evangelism, nurture, and pastoral care, even among evangelicals and Christian traditionalists. The preoccupations of stirring congregational excitement, sustaining believers through crises, finding and honing gifts and skills, providing interest-based programs, and counseling people with relational problems, have displaced it. As a result, the churches, themselves orthodox and heterodox together, lack spiritual reality, and their members are all too often superficial people with no hunger for the deep things of God. (J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p. 144)

To approach God without confession of sin is like approaching the leader of a nation in clothes soaked in raw manure.

This topic is covered more fully in the section below on holiness.

Daniel 9:3-11 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but

unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

III. Boldness

Although we have boldness in our access to God, it is a boldness marked with a deep sense of unworthiness. Our boldness is founded in our relationship to Jesus Christ, not in our own merits or our own worth.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Boldness, (*parrhesia*), refers to the ability to speak openly and honestly with someone (from *pas*, *all*, and *rhesis*, *to speak*). Therefore, it is the ability to speak one's mind without fear of reprisal or resentment on the part of the hearer. For comparison passages look at Acts 2:29, 4:13, Ephesians 6:19, 1 John 4:17, 5:14. This boldness is based in large measure on Christ's work as our intercessor. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us to hold fast our profession (*homologeō*) because we have a great high priest in the heavens petitioning God on our behalf (1 John 2:1-2). Additionally, our high priest understands our problems and difficulties having faced them Himself, so He is able to help and guide us in our own struggle with sin.

A. What Boldness IS NOT based on

1. It IS NOT based on presumption

The heart of a true Christian is not one of presumption. We do not demand anything of God nor do we try to cajole or manipulate Him to do what we want.

2. It IS NOT based in my own worth before God

The true Christian also realizes that their access to God is not because of their own innate worth, but because Christ has provided the way to the Father through the cross.

3. It IS NOT based on my righteousness

Finally, boldness is not based on my own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. My righteousness falls far short of God's holy standard.

Philippians 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

B. What Boldness IS based on

1. It IS based on humility - see Hebrews 4:15-17

2. It IS based on Christ's work as our Intercessor - see Hebrews 4:15

3. It IS based on Christ's righteousness

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

4. It IS based on our confession of sin

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

IV. Singleness of Mind

By singleness of mind we are referring to that quality which focuses on God and not on the myriad issues of life. Too often our minds are filled with extraneous thoughts when we are praying to such an extent that we do not even know for what we are praying.

Psalms 42:1-2 To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms 112:7-8 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.

James 1:5-8 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

V. Community Viewpoint

The Jewish rabbis had a prayer which enjoined God to not hearken unto the prayer of a traveler. Too often, a traveler would be interested in fair weather, something that the inhabitants of a land may need for crops. The idea here is do not ask for anything for yourself which would cause harm to others if God would answer your prayer.

Note the "us" and the "we" in the Disciple's Prayer.

Matthew 6:9-13 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

VI. Theocentric Viewpoint

Matthew 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

The truth here is not that prayer changes God's mind or twists his arm, but rather that our prayer, generated and sustained as it is by God himself, becomes the means of our entering into God's mind. We end up asking him to do what he had planned all along to do, once he had brought us to the point of asking him to do it with an appropriately felt seriousness of concern. If we want to see the power of God at work answering our prayers (and there is something wrong with us if we do not), our task is not to screw ourselves up to a self-induced certainty that what we have chosen to ask for is going to happen, just because we have assured ourselves that it will. Our task is, rather, to seek God's mind about the needs that press on us and to allow him to show us (with as much or as little detail as Scripture and the Spirit may suggest to us in each case) how we should pray "thy will be done"—thus following Jesus' path or prayer in Gethsemane. (J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p 232).

VII. Thanksgiving

Gratitude and thanksgiving always looks back at the past though it may also take in the present. But prayer always looks to the future. Thanksgiving deals with things already received. Prayer deals with things desired, asked for and expected. Prayer turns to gratitude and praise when the things asked for have been granted by God. (Bounds, pg. 97)

Two examples of the fortitude that is integral to holiness may be given as I close. The first is Mabel, a blind, deaf, disease-ridden, and cancerous old lady of eighty-nine whom Tom Schmidt met in a convalescent home where she had been bedridden for twenty-five years. He asked her what she thought about as she passed her lonely days and nights. "She said, *I think about Jesus....* I asked, *What do you think about Jesus?* She replied slowly and deliberately as I wrote. And this is what she said: *'I think about how good he's been to me. He's been awfully good to me in my life, you know.... I'm one of those kind who's mostly satisfied.... Lots of folks wouldn't care much for what I think. Lots of folks would think I'm kind of old-fashioned. But I don't care. I'd rather have Jesus. He's all the world to me.'*" Schmidt affirms, and truly, that Mabel had power—the kind of power Paul prayed that the Ephesians might have, power to "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Eph. 3:18). (J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, pp. 269-270)

For what are we to give thanks? A study of the New Testament reveals the following:

- A. We are to be thankful for the Saviour of the world.

Luke 2:38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

- B. We are to be thankful for victory over death.

1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- C. We are to be thankful for triumph in the difficulties of life.

Colossians 2:6-7 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

- D. We are to be thankful for deliverance from evil.

2 Corinthians 1:10-11 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

- E. We are to be thankful for our eternal inheritance.

Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

- F. We are to be thankful for the coming righteous rule of God.

Revelation 11:16-17 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

- G. We are to be thankful for God's abundant sufficiency for us, in us, and through us.

2 Corinthians 9:8-12 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

- H. We are to be thankful for the Lord's supper, which is a picture of His death on the cross which provided deliverance from sin.

Luke 22:15-19 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

I. We are to be thankful for Christian friends.

Romans 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Ephesians 1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Colossians 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

1 Thessalonians 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

1 Thessalonians 3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

K. We are to be thankful in response to preaching and worship.

1 Corinthians 14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

1 Corinthians 14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

L. We are to be thankful for our leaders.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

M. We are to be thankful for food.

Matthew 15:36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Acts 27:35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

Romans 14:6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to

the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

1 Timothy 4:3-4 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

N. We are to be thankful for all things.

2 Corinthians 8:16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

Ephesians 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

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

Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

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

VIII. Holiness

But the cause of this sad state of things may be traced further back. It is largely due to the decay of prayer. For with the decline of the work of holiness there has come the decline of the business of praying. As praying and holiness go together, so the decline of one, means the decay of the other. Excuse it if we may, justify the present state of things if we will, yet it is all too patent that the emphasis in the work of the present-day church is not put on prayer. And just as this has occurred, the emphasis has been taken from the great work of God set on foot in the atonement, holiness of heart and life. The church is not turning out praying men and women, because the church is not intently engaged in the one great work of holiness. (Bounds, pg. 115).

It means that church discipline, now a lost art in the modern church, must go hand in hand with prayer, and that the church which has no disposition to separate wrong-doers from the church, and which has no excommunication spirit for incorrigible offenders against law and order, will have no communication with God. Church purity must precede the church's prayers. The unity of discipline in the church precedes the unity of prayers by the church.

Let it be noted with emphasis that a church which is careless of discipline will be careless in praying. A church which tolerates evildoers in its

communion, will cease to pray, will cease to pray with agreement, and will cease to be a church gathered together in prayer in Christ's name. (Bounds, pg. 134)

The triune God who is *light* is also *love*—holy love. (See 1 John 1:5, 4:8, 16.) What does this mean? It means that only what is actually holy and worthy can give God actual satisfaction. As the love that binds spouses in a good marriage is an evaluative love that appreciates the excellence of the loved one, so the love that binds Father, Son, and Spirit is an evaluative love whereby each delights in the holiness of the other two, and in the holiness of the holy angels. That love will not have full joy of us who are Christ's until we are holy too. Nor can we fully love God, and fully enjoy him as we love him, while we know ourselves to be still in the grip of moral weaknesses and perversities. To know oneself, here and now, to be, in Luther's phrase, *simul justus et peccator*—a justified sinner, right with God though sinning still—is a wonderful privilege. But the hope set before us is yet more wonderful, namely to be in the presence of God, seeing him and fellowshiping with him, as one who is a sinner no longer. What God plans for us in the present is to lead us toward this goal. (J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p. 60).

Psalms 15:1-5 A Psalm of David. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Psalms 24:3-5 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

A. What Holiness is NOT

1. It is not asceticism
2. It is not legalism
3. It is not mystical

B. What Holiness IS

1. It is separation FROM sin
 - a. We are to separate from sinning brethren

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

- b. We are to separate from Christian brothers who disobey the Word.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

- c. We are to separate from brethren who cause division

Romans 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

- d. We are to separate from other Christians under church discipline.

Matthew 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

- e. We are to separate from evil men

Proverbs 1:10-16 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

- f. We are to separate from being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

- g. We are to separate from the world

1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And

the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

- h. We are to separate from false teachers

Titus 1:9-11 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

1 Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

- i. We are to separate from sin

1 Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

1 Peter 1:13-16 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

2. It is separation TO God

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Ephesians 1:4-5 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

- C. How to be Holy

1. Flee from sin
2. Repent when we sin

In the Bible, repentance is a theological term, pointing to an abandonment of those courses of action in which one defied God by embracing what he dislikes and forbids. The Hebrew word for repenting signifies turning, or returning. The corresponding Greek word carries the sense of changing one's mind so that one changes one's ways too. Repentance means altering one's habits

of thought, one's attitudes, outlook, policy, direction, and behavior, just as fully as is needed to get one's life out of the wrong shape and into the right one. Repentance is in truth a spiritual revolution. This, now, and nothing less than this, is the human reality that we are to explore. (J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p. 123)

Five components of repentance (from J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, pp. 123-124):

- a. Realistic recognition that one has disobeyed and failed God, doing wrong instead of doing right.
- b. Regretful remorse at the dishonor one has done to the God one is learning to love and wanting to serve.
- c. Reverent requesting of God's pardon, cleansing of conscience, and help to not lapse in the same way again.
- d. Resolute renunciation of the sins in question, with deliberate thought as to how to keep clear of them and live right for the future.
- e. Requisite restitution to any who have suffered material loss through one's wrongdoing.

3. Gain a vision of God

The spiritual growth process opens the eyes of the Christian's heart to see more clearly not only the greatness of God's love, but also the intensity of his holiness. We have already noted that "holiness" is the biblical label for all that sets God apart from humanity, with direct focus on his majestic potency and his moral purity. Here the focus is on the latter.

Clearer perceptions of God's purity have a reflex effect, as if that purity were a light shining into the recesses of the self and showing up all that has been lurking in the dark there. As a result, Christians come to see in themselves sinful motives and attitudes, failures, shortcomings, and deficiencies, of which they were unaware before, simply because until now their consciences had not assessed their conduct by so bright a light from God. (J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p. 220)

4. Gain a vision of yourself

Intense distress at one's continuing imperfection, in the context of an intense love of goodness as God defines it and an intense zeal to practice it, is the clearest possible sign of the holiness of heart that is central to spiritual health. The paradox—too hard a nut, it seems, for some to crack—is that increase of real holiness always brings increase of real discontent, because of what has not yet been achieved. The truth is that the sense of frustrated longing which the "wretched man" heart-cry expresses belongs to the experience of all those who seek to live in the power of the Spirit and so please their Savior-God. (J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p. 222).

The life of holiness is one of downward growth all the time. When Peter writes, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pt 3:18), and when Paul speaks of growing into Christ (Eph 4:15) and rejoices that the Thessalonians’ faith is growing (2 Thes 1:3), what they have in view is a progress into personal smallness that allows the greatness of Christ’s grace to appear. The sign of this sort of progress is that they increasingly feel and say that in themselves they are nothing and God in Christ has become everything for their ongoing life. It is into this framework, this continual shrinkage of carnal self, as we may call it, that the thesis of the present chapter fits. (J.I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*, p. 121)

The Passion of Prayer

I. Intensity

The wrestling quality in importunate prayer, does not spring from physical vehemence of fleshly energy. It is not an impulse of energy, not a mere earnestness of soul; it is an inwrought force, a faculty implanted and aroused by the Holy Spirit. Virtually, it is the intercessions of the Spirit of God, in us; it is, moreover, "the effectual, fervent prayer, which availeth much." The divine Spirit informing every element within us, with the energy of his own striving, is the essence of the importunity which urges our praying at the mercy seat, to continue until the fire falls and the blessing descends. This wrestling in prayer may not be boisterous nor vehement, but quiet, tenacious, and urgent. Silent, it may be, when there are no visible outlets for its mighty forces. (Bounds, pg. 39)

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Romans 15:30 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;

Colossians 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 and complete in all the will of God.

Daniel 10:1ff.

II. Fervency

Fervency in prayer is the earnest, hot, energy of prayer which causes one to become single-minded and oblivious to all else.

Importunate praying is the earnest, inward movement of the heart toward God. It is the throwing of the entire force of the spiritual man into the exercise of prayer. Isaiah lamented that no one stirred himself, to take hold of God. Much praying was done in Isaiah's time, but it was too easy, indifferent and complacent. There were to mighty movements of souls toward God. There was no array of sanctified energies bent on reaching and grappling with God, to draw from him the treasures of his grace. Forceless prayers have not power to overcome difficulties, no power to win marked results, or to gain complete victories. We must win God, ere we can win our plea. (Bounds, pg. 43)

James 5:16-18 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

III. Consecration

Consecration is not so much the setting one's self apart from sinful things and wicked ends, but rather it is the separation from worldly, secular and

even legitimate things, if they come in conflict with God's plans, to holy uses. It is the devoting of all we have to God for his own specific use. It is a separation from things questionable, or even legitimate, when the choice is to be made between the things of this life and the claims of God. (Bounds, pg. 119).

"Sept. 24th—The determination with which I went to bed last night, of devoting this day to prayer and fasting, I was enabled to put into execution. In my first prayer for deliverance from worldly thoughts, depending on the power and promises of God, for fixing my soul while I prayed, I was helped to enjoy much abstinence from the world for nearly an hour. Then read the history of Abraham, to see how faithfully God had revealed himself to mortal men of old. Afterwards, in prayer for my own sanctification, my soul breathed freely and ardently after the holiness of God, and this was the best season of the day." (C.H. Spurgeon quoting Henry Martyn, *Lectures To My Students*, pp. 49).

IV. Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The third, and final area that Christ discusses regarding the subject of hypocrisy is that of fasting. Although God only required a single fast in the Old Testament (the Day of Atonement), the Pharisees and religious leaders took the idea of fasting to new levels by requiring many fasts. Some even fasted twice per week (see the Parable of the Tax Collector and Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14).

Although fasts are not required by God, there are times in which men should fast. **When one is particularly burdened by some great trial or situation or overcome by sin, fasting is a normal response to such stress. Note, however, that fasting is always connected to prayer.**

On the other hand, the Pharisees fasted all the time, and when they did they made sure to make themselves look like it, so that everyone would see their religiosity.

Christ condemns this behavior by stating again, "They have their reward." The only reward of the religious hypocrite is the applause of men, God owes them nothing.

Instead of disfiguring oneself to look like one has been fasting, Christ says that those who fast should anoint themselves with oil. In other words, don't make it appear as though you are fasting, wear your deodorant, comb your hair, and don't wear a frown. God who sees your fast in secret will one day reward you openly.

The Persistence of Prayer

I. The Importunate Friend - Luke 11:1-13

Luke 11:1-13 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 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. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Christ is asked by His disciples to teach them to pray. In doing so, He gives them what is properly called The Disciples Prayer (see the analysis of this under *The Pattern of Prayer*). He then gives them a parable which teaches the persistent nature of prayer.

The picture in this parable is that of a man who has a friend who visits unexpectedly late at night. Since he has nothing to set before him, he goes to his friend's house in order to borrow bread. Since the hour is late, the man and his family are already in bed and do not want to get up. Because of the persistent knock of the man who needs to borrow the bread, the sleeping man will arise, not because he is the man's friend, but because of the man's importunity.

This is in contrast to God. When we pray to God, He, unlike the man in this story, longs to give us those things that we need. However, God still responds to persistent prayer, the kind that will not let go unless it is answered.

It is interesting to look at the account of the Syro-Phoenician woman in Matthew 15 where she will not let go of the Lord until He heals her daughter. She is paid one of the strongest compliments given to anyone in the gospels, she is called a woman of great faith. Sometimes God holds back on answers, not because He does not want to respond, but because He wants to increase our faith.

II. The Persistent Widow - Luke 18:1-8

Luke 18:1-8 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will

avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

The purpose of this parable is given in the first verse of this chapter, that is that men ought always to pray and not to faint. In other words, that men be persistent in their prayers.

Again, as in the previous parable, Christ is drawing a contrast between what men are like, and what God is not like. The unrighteous judge in this parable doles out justice according to his personal whim, or maybe because of a bribe. Unlike Him, God eagerly desires to answer the prayers of the righteous who cry unto Him day and night for justice.

III. What Persistent Prayer IS NOT

A. It IS NOT meaningless repetition - Matthew 6:7

Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

B. It IS NOT long prayer - Matthew 23:14

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

IV. What Persistent Prayer IS

A. It IS bound by the will of God.

B. It IS intense.

Luke 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Hebrews 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

C. It IS a way of life.

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

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

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

Colossians 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 and complete in all the will of God.

V. Motives for persistent prayer (from John F. MacArthur, *Growing a Healthy Flock Part 5*, tape GC52-28).

A. A desire for the Lord's Glory.

Matthew 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

B. A desire for fellowship with God.

Psalms 42:1-4 To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

Psalms 63:1-4 A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

Psalms 27:1-4 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

C. A desire for needs to be met.

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

D. A desire for wisdom.

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Matthew 6:13 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.

- E. A desire for deliverance from trouble.

Psalms 20:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

Psalms 27:5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

- F. A desire for relief from fear and worry.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- G. A desire to offer thanks for past blessings.

Psalms 44:1 To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

- H. A desire to be freed from the guilt of sin.

Psalms 32:3-6 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

- I. A desire for the salvation of the lost.

1 Timothy 2:1-7 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

- J. A desire for the spiritual growth of believers.

Ephesians 1:15-19 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 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: 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, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Colossians 1:9-11 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

VI. Examples of Persistence in the Scriptures

A. The Syrophenecian Woman

Mark 7:25-30 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

B. The Woman with an Issue of Blood

Mark 5:25-34 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

C. The Leper in Luke 5

Luke 5:12-15 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

D. Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise;

he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

E. Zacchaeus

Luke 19:2-10 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Power of Prayer

I. Prayer can remove mountains.

Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. (Bounds, pg. 165)

Matthew 21:19-22 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, 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. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

II. Prayer can change the hearts of men.

It aims to change bad men into good men; it deals with inward badness, and works to change it into inward goodness. And it is just here where prayer enters and demonstrates its wonderful power and fruit. Prayer drives toward this specific end. In fact, without prayer, no such supernatural change in moral character, can ever be effected. For the change from badness to goodness is not wrought “by works of righteousness which we have done,” but according to God’s mercy, which saves us “by the washing of regeneration.” And this marvelous change is brought to pass through earnest, persistent, faithful prayer. Any alleged form of Christianity which does not effect this change in the hearts of men is a delusion and a snare. (Bounds, pp. 47-48)

Praying, which does not result in right thinking and right living, is a farce. We have missed the whole office of prayer if it fail to purge character and rectify conduct. We have failed entirely to apprehend the virtue of prayer, it if bring not about the revolutionizing of the life. In the very nature of things, we must quit praying, or our bad conduct. (Bounds, pg. 50)

Colossians 1:9-12 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Seven requests found in Paul’s prayer are:

A. A desire that one be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

This refers to the knowledge of what God would have one do in life. It is a desire that one understand spiritual things and know how to apply God’s wisdom to everyday life.

- B. A desire that one walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

This refers to obedience in our daily walk. Without obedience, it is impossible to please God.

- C. A desire that one be fruitful in every good work.

Fruitfulness is to be the natural result of a Spirit-filled walk. Fruit consists of souls won to Christ, good works, and Godly attitudes.

- D. A desire that one increase in the knowledge of God.

This does not refer to knowledge about God, but God Himself.

- E. A desire that one be strengthened with all might according to God's glorious power.

God is all powerful, and He has made available to us all the strength we need to face life's trials and situations. Our problem is not availability, by appropriation.

- F. A desire that one be patient and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Patience refers to circumstances, longsuffering refers to people. Only the power of prayer can help one endure adverse circumstances and people with joyfulness.

- G. A desire that one give thanks unto the Father for all of His wonderful blessings, especially salvation.

Finally, we are to be thankful for everything that God has richly provided. Ungratefulness is a heinous sin against the One to who we owe everything.

III. Prayer Can Redeem the Lost

The key of all missionary success is prayer. That key is in the hands of the home churches. The trophies won by our Lord in heathen lands will be won by praying missionaries, not by professional workers in foreign lands. More especially will this success be won by saintly praying in the churches at home. The home church on her knees fasting and praying, is the great base of spiritual supplies, the sinews of war, and the pledge of victory in this dire and final conflict. Financial resources are not the real sinews of war in this fight. Machinery in itself carries no power to break down heathen walls, open effectual doors and win heathen hearts to Christ. Prayer alone can do the deed. (Bounds, pg. 143).

I was reading a book by Father Faber, late of the Oratory, at Brompton, a marvellous compound of truth and error. In it he relates a legend to this effect. A certain preacher, whose sermons converted men by scores, received a revelation from heaven that not one of the conversions was owing to his talents or eloquence, but all to the prayers of an illiterate lay-brother, who sat on the pulpit steps, pleading all the time for the success of the sermon. It may in the all-revealing day be so with us. We may discover, after having laboured long and wearily in preaching, that all the honour belongs to another builder, whose prayers were gold, silver, and precious stones, while our sermonisings being apart from prayer, were but hay and stubble. (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pg. 47).

IV. Some Biblical examples of the power of prayer.

- A. Prayer saved Nineveh from destruction - Jonah 3:5-10
- B. Prayer controlled nature - James 5:17-18
- C. Prayer healed Publius - Acts 28:8
- D. Prayer delivered saints - Acts 12:4ff.
- E. Prayer alters the course of the heavens - Joshua 10:12ff.
- F. Prayer postponed death - Isaiah 38:1ff.
- G. Prayer rescued Israel from the Assyrians - Isaiah 37:21ff.
- H. Prayer raised the dead - Acts 9:36ff.
- I. Prayer stays the judgment of God - Numbers 11:1ff.

The Pattern of Prayer

I. The Audience of Prayer - Matthew 6:5-6

A. Not men - Matthew 6:5

Matthew 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.

Another major area of exhibition for the hypocrite is that of prayer. In New Testament times, prayer had become very ritualized to the extent that there were certain times of the day in which one prayed. The hypocrite made sure that when those times came, they were on a busy street corner or even in the middle of the street so that their religiosity may be seen.

Christ again affirms that those who pray in order to be seen have completely and totally received all the reward they will get. There is nothing God owes them.

B. But God - Matthew 6:6

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.

Instead of attempting to be seen of men, the believer desires that they be seen of God.

Christ is not teaching, as some would have us believe, that the closet is a magical place to pray, that somehow our prayers are better heard by God there. What Christ is actually teaching is that since God is omnipresent, it matters little where we pray because God can see us.

The believer is not interested in what other people think of their prayers, they are more interested in communing with God.

II. The Content of Prayer - Matthew 6:7-8

A. Not Vain Repetition - Matthew 6:7

Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

In developing their religious system, the Pharisees had totally destroyed the meaning and method of prayer.

1. Prayer had become ritualized.

The Pharisees had made prayer a matter of reciting memorized prayers, not of true communion with God. For example, they would repeat the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4ff.) and the *Shemoneh Esreh* (The Eighteen). Prayer had lost its significance and had just become meaningless repetition.

2. There were special prayers for special occasions.

Pharisees had developed prayers for waking up, going to sleep, going on a trip, etc. etc. etc. All without meaning and purpose.

3. There were prayers for certain times.

4. Prayer had become long.

One of the greatest fallacies of prayer is “the longer the better.” Christ emphasizes in the example prayer giving in this passage that longer is not better, but proper content is better.

5. Prayer had degenerated into vain repetition.

Prayers were full of statements repeated over and over again with the idea that the more something was said, the more likely was God to answer.

6. Prayer had become a theatrical display.

To the Pharisee, “image was everything.” They were more interested in the way they looked when praying, than they were in the content of their prayers.

B. But Sincere Requests - Matthew 6:8

Matthew 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

In contrast to vain repetition, the believer makes their requests knowing that God already knows what they need, even before they ask. This is not to say they are not to ask, but that they do not need to tell God something over and over again for Him to listen.

III. The Model of Prayer - Matthew 6:9-15

In this passage we see Christ’s model prayer. Instead of the Lords Prayer, we really have here the Disciples Prayer.

Although many repeat this prayer word for word, it is not meant as a “canned prayer” but as an example. Each part of this prayer gives us a pattern for our own prayers.

A. The Recipient - Matthew 6:9b

Matthew 6:9b Our Father which art in heaven...

First and foremost is the recipient of prayer, the Father. When we pray, we are to pray to the Father, not to Christ, and not to the Holy Spirit.

Christ is the one through whom we have access to the Father.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to pray intelligently and according to God’s will.

Romans 8:26 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.

B. The Priority of Prayer - Matthew 6:9c

Matthew 6:9c ...Hallowed be thy name.

The priority of prayer is the holiness and majesty of God. Too often we fly into God's presence as though we are doing Him a favor by showing up. We need to stop, right at the beginning of our prayer, and recognize the infinite holiness of God and our own unworthiness.

When we "hallow" God's name, we set it apart. "Name" refers to the character and essence of the individual who bears that name. In the same way, God's name refers to His character.

Note that this is the opposite of taking God's name in vain.

C. The Program of Prayer - Matthew 6:10a

Matthew 6:10a Thy kingdom come.

Thirdly, we see the program of prayer, which is God's Kingdom. This should be the cry of every believer, the realization of the Kingdom of God.

The goal of history is the realization of God's righteous reign through Christ. When we pray for the coming of the Kingdom, we are truly praying according to the will of God.

D. The Desired Results of Prayer - Matthew 6:10b

Matthew 6:10b Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

First and foremost on the mind of the Believer is the will of God. Too often we pray hoping to somehow mold God's will to our own, when in reality we need to mold our will to God's.

Behind every prayer request for the Believer should be the unshakable desire that God's will be accomplished at all costs. Christ Himself followed this pattern in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed, "Thy will be done."

E. The Provision of Prayer - Matthew 6:11

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

After exalting God and humbling himself, the Believer now turns and acknowledges the provision of God. He sees that the ultimate source of all his sustenance is God and not himself.

The believer must be ever careful not to think that he is self sufficient.

Later on in this same passage Christ emphasizes that the believer should not be concerned about the provision of his earthly needs but needs to realize that his Heavenly Father will provide for him. The believer's first priority is the Kingdom, God takes care of the earthly provision.

F. The Forgiveness of Prayer - Matthew 6:12

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The believer is a forgiving person, realizing that God's forgiveness for us is contingent upon us forgiving others.

This verse is not teaching that God will *judicially* not forgive a person, but that He will *parentally* not forgive a person.

Note that sin is considered a debt to God.

G. The Protection of Prayer - Matthew 6:13a

Matthew 6:13a And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

The protection of prayer is a call to avoid temptation and the evil one. Within the heart of the believer is a desire to escape temptation which carries the potentiality of failure. They so desire to please God that they do not even want to be subjected to the possibility of falling.

Secondly, the believer desires deliverance from the "evil one." The word translated "evil" is *ho ponaros*, which means "the evil one" or Satan.

Peter's problem in Mark 14:66ff. was that Peter failed to seek the protection of God, and as a result he was sifted by Satan.

H. The Preeminence of Prayer - Matthew 6:13b

Matthew 6:13b For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Finally, prayer should close with praise to God's character. The believer realizes that all of creation exists to praise and glorify the creator.

IV. A Brief Warning - Matthew 6:14-15

Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Christ closes His discussion of prayer by giving a warning regarding those who may have trouble forgiving others. Someone has once said that we are most like God when we forgive others. Christ tells His listeners that if they fail to forgive others for the wrongs that others have done to them, they will not receive forgiveness from God, someone they have wronged far worse.

This concept of forgiveness is further explained by Christ in the Parable of the Two Debtors in Matthew 18:21ff.

Pictures of Prayer

The men of olden times who wrought well in prayer, who brought the largest things to pass, who moved God to do great things, were those who were entirely given over to God in their praying. God wants, and must have, all that there is in man in answering his prayers. He must have wholehearted men through whom to work out his purposes and plans concerning men. God must have men in their entirety. No double-minded man need apply. No vacillating man can be used. No man with a divided allegiance to God, and the world and self, can do the praying that is needed. (Bounds, pg. 81)

I. Daniel

A. Daniel 2:1-49

1. The Problem - Daniel 2:1-15
2. The Petition of the King - Daniel 2:16
3. The Prayer Meeting - Daniel 2:17-18
4. The Private Praise - Daniel 2:19-23
5. The Pardon - Daniel 2:24
6. The Poking - Daniel 2:25-27
7. The Public Praise - Daniel 2:28
8. The Pronouncement of the Dream - Daniel 2:29-45
9. The Pagan King - Daniel 2:46-47
10. The Promotion - Daniel 2:48-49

B. Daniel 6:10

C. Daniel 9:2-20

1. The Prompt - Daniel 9:1-2
2. The Prostration - Daniel 9:3-15
3. The Pardon - Daniel 9:16-18
4. The Petition - Daniel 9:19

II. Nehemiah

A. Nehemiah 1:4-11

Nehemiah 1:4-11 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

1. Nehemiah's Preparation - 1:4

Note that Nehemiah just did not hop into God's presence unprepared.

2. Praise to God - 1:5

3. The Penitence of Nehemiah - 1:6-7

As in the case of Daniel, Nehemiah identified himself with the sin of Israel. He acknowledged that God was just in what had befallen Israel on account of their sin.

4. The Promise of God - 1:8-9

Nehemiah's prayer was based in the promise of God that He would restore Israel after He judged them for their sin. Our prayers need to also be founded in the promises of God as revealed in His word.

5. The People of God - 1:10

It is important to note that Nehemiah's prayer dealt with the people of God. God is interested in His own, whether they were the Jews of the Old Covenant, or the believers of the New. God is not obligated to hear the prayers of those that are not His.

6. The Petition - 1:11

It was Nehemiah's desire that he be part of God's answer. He knew that God would restore Israel since that was what God had promised Moses. Nehemiah just wanted to be part of that answer if possible.

B. Nehemiah 2:4

Nehemiah 2:4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Note that Nehemiah had already prepared his heart beforehand. Therefore, when the King asked him what troubled him, all Nehemiah had to do was whisper a prayer to God for wisdom.

- C. Nehemiah 5:19 - prayer that God would be merciful to him.

Nehemiah 5:19 Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

- D. Nehemiah 4:4-5; 6:14 - imprecations against God's enemies.

Nehemiah 4:4-5 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

Nehemiah 6:14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

- E. Nehemiah 6:9 - strength to do the Lord's work.

Nehemiah 6:9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

- F. Nehemiah 13:22 - remembrance for his zeal in upholding the Sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

- G. Nehemiah 13:29 - remembrance for judgment on those who defiled themselves with foreign marriages.

Nehemiah 13:29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

- H. Nehemiah 13:30 - remembrance for all the he did for the Lord.

Nehemiah 13:30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;

The Prerequisites of Prayer

I. A Personal Relationship

Luke 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

II. A Proper Relationship

A. Confession of Sin

Psalms 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

B. Unselfish Motives

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

C. According to God's Will

But in Gethsemane his praying was against the declared will of God. The pressure was so heavy upon him, the cup was so bitter, the burden was so strange and intolerable, that the flesh cried out for relief. Prostrate, sinking, sorrowful unto death, he sought to be relieved from that which seemed too heavy to bear. He prayed, however, not in revolt against God's will, but in submission to that will, and yet to change God's plan and to alter God's purposes he prayed. Pressed by the weakness of the flesh, and by the powers of hell in all their dire, hellish malignity, and might, Jesus was on this only one occasion constrained to pray against the will of God. He did it, though, with great wariness and pious caution. He did it with declared and inviolable submission to God's will. But this was exceptional. (Bounds, pp. 276-277).

Conformity means to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." It means to delight to do God's will, to run with eagerness and ardor to carry out his plans. Conformity to God's will involves submission, patient, loving, sweet submission. But submission in itself falls short of and does not include conformity. We may be submissive but not conformed. We may accept results against which we have warred, and even be resigned to them.

Conformity means to be one with God, both in result and in processes. Submission may be one with God in the end. Conformity is one with God in the beginning, and the end. Jesus had conformity, absolute and perfect, to God's will, and by that he prayed. This was the single point where there was a drawing back from God's processes, extorted by insupportable pain, fear, and weariness. His submission was abject, loyal, and confiding, as his conformity had been constant and perfect. Conformity is the only true submission, the most loyal, the sweetest, and the fullest. (Bounds, pg. 277)

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.

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

D. By Faith

James 1:5-7 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

Mark 11:21-23 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 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.

This faith is two-fold.

1. In the ability of God to answer our prayer.
2. In the willingness of God to answer our prayer.

The statement of our Lord about faith and prayer quoted above is of supreme importance. Faith must be definite, specific; an unqualified, unmistakable request of the things asked for. It is not to be a vague, indefinite, shadowy thing; it must be something more than an abstract belief in God's willingness and ability to do for us. It is to be a definite, specific, asking for, and expecting the things for which we ask. (Bounds, pg. 18)

Faith is not an aimless act of the soul, but a looking to God and a resting upon his promises. Just as love and hope have always an objective so, also, has faith. Faith is not believing just *anything*; it is believing God, resting in him, trusting his Word. (Bounds, pg. 19)

The possibilities of prayer are the possibilities of faith. Prayer and faith are Siamese twins. One heart animates them both. Faith is always praying. Prayer is always believing. Faith must have a tongue by which it can speak. Prayer is the tongue of faith. Faith must receive. Prayer is the hand of faith stretched out to receive. Prayer must rise and soar. Faith must give prayer the wings to fly and soar. Prayer must have an audience with God. Faith opens the door, and access and audience are given. Prayer asks. Faith lays its hand on the thing asked for. (Bounds, pg. 166)

How can one increase their faith?

1. Ask specifically.
2. Remember the past.

3. Exercise faith. Faith is a muscle and must be exercised to develop.

E. No Unforgiveness in One's Life

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

F. A Proper Relationship with One's Spouse

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.

G. Obedience

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.

If you have an earnest desire to pray well, you must learn how to obey well. If you have a desire to learn to pray, then you must have an earnest desire to learn how to do God's will. If you desire to pray to God, you must first have a consuming desire to obey him. (Bounds, pp. 56-57)

Men would pray better if they lived better. They would get more from God if they lived more obediently and well pleasing to God. We would have more strength and time for the divine work of intercession if we did not have to expend so much strength and time settling up old scores and paying our delinquent taxes. Our spiritual liabilities are so greatly in excess of our spiritual assets that our closet time is spent in taking out a decree of bankruptcy instead of being the time of great spiritual wealth for us and for others. Our closets are too much like the sign, "Closed for Repairs." (Bounds, pg. 345)

The Petitions of Prayer

A new preacher had been at this church in the south for only a few weeks. One of the parishoners was asked by someone from another town how he liked the new preacher. "He's fine," said the parishoner, "he is a great preacher and a praying man. In fact, he asks God for things our other preacher didn't even know God had!" (Vance Havner, from a sermon entitled Sanctified Extravagance)

I. Salvation

Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Romans 10:9-10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

II. Daily Provisions

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

III. Protection from the Evil One

Matthew 6:13a And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

IV. Deliverance from Temptation

Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

V. Impartation of Spiritual Wisdom

Colossians 1:9-11 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer. How wonderfully were the books opened to Daniel when he was in supplication! How much Peter learned upon the housetop! The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author Himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to Him and enlists Him in our cause. (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, pg. 43).

VI. Strength for Spiritual Service

There can be no substitute, no rival for prayer; it stands alone as the great spiritual force, and this force must be imminent and acting. It cannot be dispensed with during one generation, nor held in abeyance for the advance of any great movement—it must be continuous and particular, always, everywhere, and in everything. We cannot run our spiritual operations on the prayers of the past generation. Many persons believe in the efficacy of prayer, but not many pray. Prayer is the easiest and hardest of all things; the simplest and the sublimest; the weakest and the most powerful; its results lie outside the range of human possibilities—they are limited only by the omnipotence of God. (Bounds, pg. 317)

In spite of the benefits and blessings which flow from communion with God, the sad confession must be made that we are not praying much. A very small number comparatively lead in prayer at the meetings. Fewer still pray in their families. Fewer still are in the habit of praying regularly in their closets. Meetings specifically for prayer are as rare as frost in June. In many churches there is neither the name nor the semblance of a prayer meeting. In the town and city churches the prayer meeting in name is not a prayer meeting in fact. A sermon or a lecture is the main feature. Prayer is the nominal attachment. (Bounds, pg. 318)

VII. Peace in the Midst of Difficulties

Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

VIII. Salvation of Others

The most noted and most successful missionaries have been preeminently men of prayer. David Livingstone, William Taylor, Adoniram Judson, Henry Martyn, and Hudson Taylor, with many more, form a band of illustrious praying men whose impress and influence still abide where they labored. No prayerless man is wanted for this job. Above everything else, the primary qualification for every missionary is prayer. (Bounds, pg. 146).

1 Timothy 2:1-7 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Matthew 9:36-38 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Romans 9:1-3 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I

could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

IX. Pray for your Pastors.

A. Safety

2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Romans 15:30-31 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; 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;

Deliver=rescued (*ruoma*), disobedient=unregenerate

B. Wisdom in service

Romans 15:31 - service(*diakonia*)

Some issues are dealing with people, conflict resolutions, dealing with sinners, etc.

C. Direction and priorities.

Romans 15:30 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;

D. Effectiveness in the proclamation of the Word.

Ephesians 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Colossians 4:2-3 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

E. Spiritual strength.

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

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

X. Deliverance from trouble

But when we survey all the sources from which trouble comes, it all resolves itself into two invaluable truths: First, that our troubles at last are of the Lord. They come with his consent. He is in all of them, and is interested in us when they press and bruise us. And secondly, that our troubles, no matter what the cause, whether of ourselves, or men or devils, or even God himself, we are warranted in taking them to God in prayer, in

praying over them, and in seeking to get the greatest spiritual benefits out of them. (Bounds, pg. 106).

But these present afflictions can work for us only as we cooperate with God in prayer. As God works through prayer, it is only through this means he can accomplish his highest ends for us. His providence works with greatest effect with his praying ones. These know the uses of trouble and its gracious designs. The greatest value in trouble comes to those who bow lowest before the throne. (Bounds, pp. 108-109).

The Promises of Prayer

I. Prayer Activates the Promises of God

Prayer and the promises are interdependent. The promise inspires and energizes prayer, but prayer locates the promise, and gives it realization and location. The promise is like the blessed rain falling in full showers, but prayer, like the pipes which transmit, preserve and direct the rain, localizes and precipitates these promises, until they become local and personal, and bless, refresh and fertilize. Prayer takes hold of the promise and conducts it to its marvelous ends, removes the obstacles, and makes a highway for the promise to its glorious fulfillment. (Bounds, pp. 152-154)

God's promises are dependent and conditioned upon prayer to appropriate them and make them a conscious realization. The promises are inwrought in us, appropriated by us, and held in the arms of faith by prayer. Let it be noted that prayer gives the promises their efficiency, localizes and appropriates them, and utilizes them. Prayer puts the promises to practical and present uses. (Bounds, pg. 156)

God's promises lie like giant corpses without life, only for decay and dust unless men appropriate and vitalize these promises by earnest and prevailing prayer. (Bounds, pg. 238)

II. God will hear

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

We put it to the front. We unfold it on a banner never to be lowered or folded, that God does hear and answer prayer. God has always heard and answered prayer. God will forever hear and answer prayer. He is the same yesterday, today and forever blessed, ever to be adored. Amen. He changes not. As he has always answered prayer, so will he ever continue to do so. (Bounds, pg. 195)

III. God will answer

Not only do these and all the promises pledge Almighty God to answer prayer, but they assure us that the answer will be specific, and that the very thing for which we pray will be given. (Bounds, pp. 192-193)

The Personalities of Prayer

I. The Father Receives Our Prayer

Scripture teaches very clearly that it is the Father who is to be the ultimate focus of our prayers. Although in a sense all members of the Godhead, being God, are address in prayer, the Father is the one to whom our requests are to be directed.

Matthew 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

John 16:23-24 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give {it} you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

In a real sense, Christ was our model of this. See John 16 and 17.

II. The Son Gives Us The Right to Pray

Prayer is directed to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. It is Christ that gives us access to God. Without Him, our prayers would fall on deaf ears.

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Scripture does indicate that at times men have prayed to Jesus Christ, but this is the rare exception.

Acts 7:59-60 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

2 Corinthians 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

III. The Holy Spirit Reveals God's Will To Us and Our Hearts to God

But the greatest and the divinest of all helpers is the Holy Spirit. He takes hold of things for us. We are dark and confused, ignorant and weak in many things, in fact in everything pertaining to the heavenly life, especially in the simple service of prayer. There is an "ought" on us, an obligation, a necessity to pray, a spiritual necessity upon us of the most absolute and imperative kind. But we do not feel the obligation and have no ability to meet it. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, gives wisdom to our ignorance, turns ignorance into wisdom, and changes our weaknesses into strength. The Spirit himself does this. He helps and takes hold with us as we tug and toil. He adds his wisdom to our ignorance, gives his strength to our weakness. He pleads for us and in us. He quickens, illumines, and inspires our prayers. He proclaims and elevates the matter of our prayers, and inspires the words and feelings of our prayers. He works mightily in us so that we can pray mightily. He enables us to pray always and ever according to the will of God. (Bounds, pp. 285-286)

Finally, it is the Holy Spirit that makes us conscious of spiritual things and of the will of God. He not only intercedes for us, but he reveals God's will to us so that we may pray according to God's will.

Romans 8:26 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.

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.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The Phraseology of Prayer

The word **prayer** expresses the largest and most comprehensive approach to God. It gives prominence to the element of devotion. It is communion and fellowship with God. It is enjoyment of God. It is access to God. **Supplication** is a more restricted and more intense form of prayer, accompanied by a sense of personal need, limited to the seeking in an urgent manner of a supply for pressing need. Supplication is the very soul of prayer in the way of pleading for some one thing, greatly needed, and the need intensely felt.

Intercession is an enlargement in prayer, a going out in broadness and fullness from self to others. Primarily, it does not center in praying for others, but refers to the freeness, boldness and childlike confidence of the praying. It is the fullness of confiding influence in the soul's approach to God, unlimited and unhesitating in its access and its demands. This influence and confident trust is to be used for others. (Bounds, pg. 225)

I. Verbs

A. *euchomai* (εὐχομαι)

2 Corinthians 13:7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

3 John 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Romans 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

B. *proseuchomai* (προσευχομαι)

The most frequent word for "prayer."

Romans 8:26 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.

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

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

Jude 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

C. erotao (ἰ)

Means “to ask” or “to make a request.”

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

John 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

D. deomai (ἰ)

Means “to desire.”

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

E. entunchano (ἰ)

Means to converse with then to make petition, especially in the behalf of others.

Romans 8:27 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.

F. huperentunchano (ἰ)

Intensified form of .

Romans 8:26 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.

G. eucharisteo (ἰ)

Means to give thanks to God for all that he has done.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 4:2-3 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

II. Nouns

A. eucha (ἰ)

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.

B. *proseucha* ()

Used of prayer in general.

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

Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

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

1 Timothy 5:5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

C. *deesis* ()

Stresses the sense of need.

Philippians 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

D. *enteuxis* ()

Stresses the petition of an inferior to a superior. It is also used to refer to the act of interceding on someone else's behalf.

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

E. *aitama* (μ)

Synonymous with *enteuxis*.

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

1 John 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Personalizing Prayer

I. Private Prayer

- A. Time
- B. Place
- C. A plan
- D. A purpose

II. Public Prayer

The following points are taken from C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, chapter IV:

- A. Be assured that free prayer is the most scriptural, and should be the most excellent form of public supplication.
- B. Be it ours to prove the superiority of extempore prayer by making it more spiritual and earnest than liturgical devotion.
- C. Our prayers must never grovel, they must soar and mount. We need a heavenly frim of mind.
- D. Let the Lord alone be the object of your prayers.
- E. Avoid all vulgarities in prayer.
- F. Another fault to be equally avoided in prayer is an unhallowed and sickening superabundance of endearing words.
- G. Avoid that kind of prayer which may be called—though the subject is one on which language has not given us many terms—a sort of peremptory demanding of God.
- H. Pray when you profess to pray, and don't talk about it.
- I. As a rule, if called upon to preach, conduct the prayer yourself.
- J. Vary the length of your public prayers.
- K. Vary the current (topics) of your prayers in intercession.
- L. As you would avoid a viper, keep from all attempts to work up a spurious fervor in public devotion.
- M. Lastly—this is a word I utter in confidence to you—prepare your prayer.