

THE DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

CHAPTER 10

We now come to study one of the most important doctrines in the Bible for the Christian, the Doctrine of Prayer. There are many great statements made about God in the Bible, but one of the greatest of them for the child of God is found in Psalms 65:2, where we read, “*Oh Thou, that hearest prayers.*” If a child of God knows how to pray and will give himself to prayer, he can accomplish anything he desires for the glory of God. There is nothing impossible with God and neither is there anything impossible for the child of God who knows how to pray. There are many things to be discussed in this chapter on the subject of prayer, but before you begin the study, let me encourage you to take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to really speak to you in a very definite way through this study.

Prayer can be defined in many ways, but in reality prayer is simply talking to God and asking of God. Perhaps a better definition is summarized with these three statements:

1. Prayer is *coming into the Presence of God.*
2. Prayer is *communing with the Person of God.*
3. Prayer is *claiming the Promises of God.*

I trust that as you study these pages you will discover your own personal meaning of prayer and that prayer will take on a new meaning in your life. Remember that it's not how much you know about prayer or how much you study about prayer that will accomplish things in your life. It is how much you will pray. If you want to be a person of prayer, if you want to know how to pray, and that God answers your prayers; just start praying. Practice may not make your praying perfect, but it certainly will help improve it. Don't be one of the many people who believe that God answers prayer because they read it in a book. Pray until you know by your own personal experience that God answers prayers, because He has answered some of your own prayers for you. In our study on the subject of prayer we will look at several different thoughts about prayer.

A preacher friend of mine, who is a great man of pray, was asked by several people to write a book to help others learn how to pray. He said he asked the Lord about writing such a book and the Lord told him that all he needed to write was two words; -DO IT.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR PRAYING

As we think about praying, the first thing we must do is be sure we prepare ourselves to pray. In Ephesians 6:10-18, we are given the instructions for this preparation. Notice in verse 12 we read, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” It is evident in verse 18; the wrestling arena spoken of in these verses is the place of prayer. There are three things in these verses that demand our attention.

First, we must *Recognize our Adversary*. Verse 12 tells us that it is not flesh and blood (other people) that we wrestle against. We wrestle against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. The devil's desire is to keep us from praying and if we do pray, he is there to hinder us. Many of Satan's desires are given in the Word of God. He desires to *sift you* in Luke 22:31, to *scare you* in I Peter 5:8, and to *silence you*. He will try to *sidetrack you* in any way that he can.

Not only do we need to *Recognize our Adversary*; we also need to *Utilize our Armour*. In Ephesians 6:14-17, the different parts of the armour are listed. This armour will be of no value unless we take it unto ourselves, put it on and use it. As we study these verses we discover that there are six pieces of armour mentioned. The first five pieces of the armour are defensive weapons. The last one, the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is our only offensive weapon. The only thing that Satan cannot stand against is the Scriptures. This was what Jesus used when Satan tempted Him in Matthew 4:1-11. Notice some things about this armour.

There are three things that it says **WE MUST HAVE**

1. The girdle of truth
 - Truth here is the opposite of hypocrisy.
2. The breastplate of righteousness
 - Righteousness means right living.
3. Shod with the preparation of the gospel
 - Shod (shoes) speaks of our standing in the gospel.

-Truth, righteousness, and the gospel of peace are not things that you pick up and put on like clothing. You either have them or you do not have them.

There are three things that **WE MUST TAKE**

4. The shield of faith
 - Only as we pray with faith can we quench Satan's fiery darts.
5. The helmet of salvation
 - Prayer is good protection for the mind.
6. The sword of the Spirit
 - The Scriptures are our offensive weapon as we pray.

Finally we must *Memorize the Admonitions*. Three of them are given here. The first admonition given to us is in verse 10, "***Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.***" The second admonition is in verse 11 where we are instructed to "***put on the whole Armour of God,***" and in verse 13, "***wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.***" The third admonition is in verse 18; "***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.***" So we could say the first admonition is that we *be Strong*, the second is, that we *be Suited*, and the third one is, we *be Steadfast*.

There is one other thing about our Preparation for Praying. God has provided all the pieces of this armour for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must *PUT THEM ON*. A simple illustration of this is; the parents purchase clothes for their child, the mother laundries them and puts them in the child's closet, but the child must put them on. Likewise, God has provided all these things for us in Christ Jesus, but we must get out of bed every day and *TAKE THEM UNTO OURSELVES AND PUT THEM ON*.

THE PROMISES OF PRAYING

It is important to know that when we pray we are not just saying words. We are not just going through a religious ritual, or doing some wishful thinking. We are doing something for which we have a Scriptural basis. Prayer is claiming the promises found in the Word of God. It would be impossible for me to discuss in this book all the promises on prayer that are in the Bible, but I will list the references to many of them. I cannot impress upon you enough how important it is that you study all these verses until you know them by memory. Again I repeat, prayer is not trying to convince God of something, nor is it trying to convince yourself that you are going to talk God into doing something but **PRAYER IS YOU CLAIMING THE PROMISES GOD HAS GIVEN IN HIS WORD**.

Here are several Bible references that give us a promise on prayer. You need to look them up in your Bible and memorize them. This is my own order of studying these verses.

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| 1. II Chronicles 7:14 | 11. Mark 11:24 |
| 2. Psalms 55:17 | 12. Luke 18:1 |
| 3. Psalms 91:1 | 13. John 15:7 |
| 4. Jeremiah 29:13 | 14. Ephesians 3:20 |
| 5. Jeremiah 33:3 | 15. Philippians 4:6-7 |
| 6. Matthew 6:6 | 16. I Thessalonians 5:17 |
| 7. Matthew 7:7-8 | 17. James 5:16 |
| 8. Matthew 18:19 | 18. I John 3:22 |
| 9. Matthew 21:22 | 19. I John 5:14-15 |
| 10. Mark 9:29 | 20. Jude 20 |

There are many more promises about prayer in the Word of God, but these should be sufficient for now. Again I encourage you to memorize these verses and base your praying upon these promises of the Word of God.

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYING

Praying should always be done with a purpose. Prayer is not something that you do just to be doing something religious. In Matthew 6:5-7 we find two wrong purposes for praying. In verse 5 we read, ***“And when thou prayest, thou shall 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.”*** The Lord is not condemning them because of their position, (standing). He is not

condemning the place, (in the synagogues). He is condemning their purpose. They were praying to be seen of men. Again in verse 7 the Lord says ***“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”*** Here we see again, our Lord is not condemning their long praying, but rather He condemns their purpose for praying. They were praying long repetitious prayers to impress people. Many today pray only to be seen or heard of men. This is not the right purpose for praying.

THE PLACE FOR PRAYING

I am aware that you can pray anytime and anywhere. However, the Bible says in 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.”*** From this verse we learn that every Christian should have a private, personal place of prayer. We do pray in public places, but we must have a private place of prayer because we will not pray in public like we will in the secret place. If you do not have your own secret place of prayer where you can get away and shut everything out but you and God, you need to make you one. Your prayer closet does not have to be anything fancy, just a place where you can get alone with God and spend some time with Him. What the Lord is literally saying in Matthew 6:6 is, *“If you will meet me in the secret place and ask me, I will meet you in the public place and answer you. If you will meet me in the closet and ask, I will meet you in the church and answer you.”*

THE PATTERN FOR PRAYING

In Matthew 6:9-13, we have the model prayer. This gives us the Pattern for our Praying. Even though this is often referred to as The Lord’s Prayer, in reality, it is the model prayer that our Lord used to teach His disciples and all of us how to pray. The statement in verse 12, ***“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”*** is enough to prove the Lord is not praying for Himself. In this model prayer there are three divisions which we will study. These will give us a good pattern for our praying.

First, **PRAYER IS APPROACHING GOD.** How we approach God will determine how God will answer our prayers. We must approach Him on the basis of *Relationship*, ***“Our Father, which art in Heaven.”*** Only Christians can really call God their Father and they are the only ones who really have access to the throne room of God. Then we must approach Him with *Reverence*, ***“Hallowed be thy name.”*** We must learn to approach God with reverence and respect if we want our prayers answered. We will never accomplish anything by approaching God with an arrogant spirit. Also we must approach God with *Resignation*, ***“Thy will be done...”*** We must learn that by resigning our own will and submitting to His will, we get our prayers answered.

Second, **PRAYER IS ASKING GOD.** In verses 11-13, we find four things that He teaches us to ask for as we pray: ***Give us, Forgive us, Lead us, and Deliver us.*** All four of these are asking

God for something. I am very thankful that we can pray about everything (Philippians 4:6). It makes no difference whether its temporal things like our daily bread, or spiritual things like the forgiveness of our sins and God's leadership and deliverance in the things of our life. When we fail to pray about anything, it is like telling God that we can handle this situation without His help. Again, I repeat, PRAYER IS ASKING GOD. In the last phrase of James 4:2, you find these eight words, "***Yet ye have not, because ye ask not.***" These words are a strong indictment against many of us in many areas of life. Notice the word "ask" is in almost all of the verses listed above in the Promises of Praying.

Not only is prayer approaching God and asking God, but also, **PRAYER IS ADORING GOD.** The prayer that God is pleased to answer is a prayer that is filled with praise, honour, and thanksgiving. Notice the closing phrase of this prayer, "***For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.***" We should never close our prayer until we have adored God with praise and honor. You'll never praise Him too much.

THE POWER OF PRAYING

Time and space will not permit a detailed study on the Power of Prayer, but may the Holy Spirit remind us of a few familiar incidents in the Word of God to refresh our memory and reveal the power of prayer. When I think of the power of prayer I think of Abraham praying for Lot down in Sodom in Genesis 18. I think of Daniel praying before he was thrown into the den of lions in Daniel 6. I think of Peter in prison in Acts 12 who was delivered because the church prayed for him. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were delivered from jail by the power of God after they had prayed and sang praises unto God. The early disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost and power after they prayed in Acts 4:31-33. Many more passages could be mentioned, but these are sufficient.

THE PROBLEMS WITH OUR PRAYING

There are two things that hinder God from answering our prayers. First of all, many of our prayers are hindered because they are *Heartless*. Our heart is not in what we are praying. Notice Jeremiah 29:13, "***And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me WITH ALL YOUR HEART.***" Much of our praying is heartless. We have no burden, or tears. Most of our so-called praying is just saying vain and empty words from our lips. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, "***This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.***"

The second problem with our prayers is, they are *Hindered*. None of us pray too much, so I'm sure we want God to hear and answer us when we do pray. All we who pray know what it is to pray and get an answer, and all we who have prayed much know what it is to pray and seemingly get no answer. Sometimes it is not God's will to answer our prayers. Sometimes the timing is not right. Sometimes there is a problem on our part that keeps God from answering our prayers. We do not want this, so we must keep a vigilant check on our Christian life to make sure we do not allow anything to come into our life that would hinder our prayers from

being answered. It would be awful to stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat and the Lord say to us, *“I wanted to answer your prayers, but there was some sin which hindered me from doing so.”* Here is a list of ten things that will hinder God from answering our prayers if we permit them to remain in our lives.

1. Unjudged and unconfessed sins, Psalms 66:18
2. An unsettled dispute with a brother, Matthew 5:23-24
3. Failure to abide in Christ, John 15:7a
4. Failure to have His word abiding in you, John 15:7b
5. Failure to ask, James 4:2
6. Asking amiss, James 4:3
7. Wrong relationship between husband and wife, I Peter 3:7
8. Living a life that is displeasing to God, I John 3:22
9. Failure to believe God, Matthew 13:58; Matthew 21:22
10. You are a sinner, John 9:31

Let me close this study by reminding you that there are two ways to deal with the sins that get into our lives. There is a *human* way and there is a *heavenly* way. The human way to deal with sin is to cover it up. The heavenly way is to confess it to God. First John 1:9 says, ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** Again we read in Proverbs 28:13, ***“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”***

If you are a Christian and your prayers are being hindered by one or more of the sins listed above, confess your sins to God, forsake them, and He will cleanse you and forgive your sins. If you are a sinner, humble yourself before God, repent of your sins, and call upon God for salvation. He will save you right now, see Romans 10:9-13.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did you read each passage of Scripture that is mentioned in this chapter? If you did not, do so right now.
2. What is the simple definition of prayer?
3. List the three statements that describe prayer.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

4. List the six pieces of armour God has provided.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

5. List three things that we must do in preparation for prayer.

- a.
- b.
- c.

6. What weapon did Jesus use against the devil?

7. Prayer is _____ found in the Word of God.

8. List the two wrong reasons to pray.

9. List the three divisions of the model prayer.

- a.
- b.
- c.

10. List and give Scripture references for the nine things that hinder our prayers.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.
- g.
- h.
- i.

Be sure to study these questions until you know them well before you go to the next chapter.