

PRAYER

COMMUNICATING
WITH
GOD

BURLEY W. MOORE

**PRAYER
COMMUNICATING
WITH
GOD**

All scripture references are taken from the KJV

Copyright © 2017
Burley W. Moore
All Rights Reserved

The author acknowledges with grateful appreciation all materials
from other individuals and sources.

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

**Burley W. Moore
2704 Fairway Drive
Greensboro, NC 27408
burleymoore@att.net
336-292-2408**

Please Visit Our Web Site At
www.covenantofgraceministries.com

Cover Design © Morris Publishing

Printed in the United States by Morris Publishing ®
3212 East Highway 30
Kearney, NE 68847
800-650-7888

**The prevailing idea seems to be,
that I come to God and ask Him for
something that I want,
and that I expect Him to give me
that which I have asked.
But this is a most dishonoring
and degrading conception.
The popular belief
reduces God to a servant, our servant:
doing our bidding, performing our pleasure,
granting our desires.
No, prayer is a coming to God,
telling Him my need,
committing my way unto the Lord,
and leaving Him to deal with it as seemeth Him best.**

.....A.W. Pink

Table Of Contents

Preface ...	5
Chapter 1 Prayer Power ...	6
Chapter 2 The Exercise of Prayer ...	14
Chapter 3 The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus ...	26
Chapter 4 Conditions of Answered Prayer ...	39
Chapter 5 A Sinner's Prayer ...	44
Chapter 6 Intercessory Prayer ...	54
Chapter 7 Prayer and Fasting ...	62
Chapter 8 Being a Watchman on the Wall of Prayer ...	77
Chapter 9 The Privilege of Prayer ...	83
Final Thoughts ...	92

Preface

I'm not writing this book on prayer because I've arrived at learning how to pray. In fact, more times than I can count, I've asked the same question of Jesus that the disciples of His day asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk. 11:1). Throughout my years as a pastor, I had the privilege of teaching God's Word on the subject of prayer. What most people don't realize is that when a preacher is preaching, he's preaching to himself just as much if not more so than to the congregation. I need the Word of God for my own edification and I've tried to learn something about how to pray. Hopefully, that which I have gleaned from the Holy Scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit and with the aid of others whom the Holy Spirit has used to teach me, I'll be able to pass a little bit along to help you.

I'll be the first to confess that I'm the least of all people to be writing on this subject because it is such an awesome privilege to communicate with Almighty God. However, it is an expectation that God has of all His children. God wants to hear from us and for us to pour out our hearts to Him. He wants us to learn how to let go and trust God to do that which He wills in our lives. He wants us to learn how to rejoice in Him and trust Him regardless of the bumps that we encounter in the road of life.

The Christian life is not about us, but it's about Christ and how He can best be glorified. Now that I've come to the sunset years of my life and look back over the precious time that God has granted me to live, I realize that the only thing that's important is knowing and doing the will of God and that He be glorified. From God's Word, we can receive His instructions and guidance for life's journey, but in prayer we can learn submission to living the victorious Christian life. May this little book on prayer be a blessing in helping others along that journey.

Chapter 1

Prayer Power

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. 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. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 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. 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. 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. (Matt. 6:5-18)

I'm sure that we've all heard and perhaps used the expression, "there is power in prayer." But, what exactly do we mean in associating power with the subject of prayer? As we think on the subject of prayer power, we must understand that the "power" (Acts 1:8) does not lie in the prayer of the one doing the praying, but in the OMNIPOTENCE of Almighty God. The word, "power," can be translated to mean authority and speaks of that which has been granted to mortal human beings by God alone (Matt. 28:18, Jh. 19:11, Rom. 13:1). Nothing is more vital to the Christian than learning how to "pray" in the "power" of the "Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:8, Rom. 8:26). Christians need to realize that nothing lies outside of prayer, except that which lies outside the "will" of God (I Jh. 5:14-15).

Jesus began His remarks on the subject of prayer by pointing out how the "hypocrites ... pray ... that they may be seen of men" (v.5-8). To begin with, notice that Jesus didn't say "if," but "when thou prayest," indicating that He expects His people to pray. Prayer is not optional for a child of God, but an expectation of our Heavenly "Father." However, there is a right way and a wrong way for a Christian to pray. The "hypocrites" of Jesus' day would "pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets" so that they may be "seen of men."

There are some people who look upon prayer as having a religious merit in and of itself and try to impress others by how they "pray." The only "reward" that such a person will receive is the "reward" of men. Now, would you rather have the reward of men or of God? Perhaps "hypocrites" will be complemented for sounding or looking spiritual. Their words might even be eloquent and so beautifully arranged that it will draw attention from their peers.

I remember a woman in one of my pastorates who could put words together and pray what others would call a "pretty prayer," but she was one of the meanest devils that I ever had in all the churches that I pastored. Unfortunately, this type of praying gets

no further than the ceiling and God pays it no mind. Unless we come to God on a personal basis in humility, sincerity, and simplicity with a clean heart, He will not hear us.

Prayer should never become an object of display regardless of where it is done. It's a matter between each individual believer and God that draws attention to the Lord and not ourselves. Jesus didn't condemn PUBLIC PRAYER because there is a place for it, but He did condemn the misuse of it. Public "praying" (Acts 12:12) can be found in Holy Scripture, but even public prayer meetings can turn into carnal religious rituals where people pray to be heard of men.

The most effective prayer that can be offered to God is when you "enter into thy closet ... shut the door ... pray to thy Father ... in secret." The truth of the matter is that it's impossible for mortal man to hide any "secret" from God. While public and private prayer has its place, the place and time of prayer is not nearly as important as the fact that a believer will commit to a life of private and persistent (Matt. 7:7-11) prayer, regularly communicating with God. Don't ever criticize anyone for not wanting to pray in public. In fact, when people do pray in public don't criticize how they put their words together because they're not talking with you to begin with. God knows what's in our hearts and what we're trying to say.

The prayer found in our text is sometimes called THE LORD'S PRAYER, but in reality, it's a MODEL PRAYER outlining the pattern of prayer for the disciples and for this reason it can also be called THE DISCIPLE'S PRAYER. Christ didn't need to "pray" this prayer because He was sinless and never did anything for which He needed forgiveness. Therefore, it's a MODEL that teaches believers how to "pray" pleasing to God. If this prayer is recited by a congregation, it should be done as a reminder in how to pray and not a mere routine ritual lest it become "vain repetitions" to which Jesus warned against. In other words, reciting words that have no meaning from within our hearts is not pleasing to God. Persistent praying is not the same thing as using "vain repetitions." "Vain repetitions" means to weary "the Lord with words" (Mal. 2:17) that are stammering, repetitive, empty, and meaningless.

Prayer should never be seen as an attempt to change God's mind (Mal. 3:6a, Heb. 13:8) because in His sovereignty He knows "what things ye have need of before ye ask him." God's method of changing us is to bring us into conformity with His "will" as we seek it through His Word and prayer. Never should we use prayer as a tool by which we think we can manipulate God. True genuine prayer to God is a spiritual act by which the "will" of the one doing the praying yields to the "will" of God whereby He would receive the glory (Matt. 26:39).

The Person of Prayer v.9

Prayer involves four persons as we consider the Trinity of the Godhead. The key person in prayer is the "Father" Who makes conversation with Him possible through the indwelling "Holy Spirit" (Rom. 8:26, Jude 20) and the "intercession" (Heb. 7:25) of Jesus Christ. God wants His children to talk with Him and He delights to hear from us. The "Father" desires for us to come before Him seeking His "will" (I Jh. 5:14) and making our petitions expressing utter dependence upon Him. Of all the persons involved in praying, the one doing the praying is the least significant of all. However, if we fail to initiate a life of prayer, there will be no personal communion with "our Father which art in heaven." God has made access to Himself possible and all that we must do is avail ourselves of the opportunity to dialogue with Him on His terms.

God the "Father" sits upon the throne of this universe having all things under His sovereign control and we ought to come before Him recognizing Him as the Holy God that He is (Heb. 4:16). Not until we become "sons of God" by the adoption of Christ through "faith" in His name can we have access to God and call Him "our Father" (Jh. 1:12-13). The Word "Abba" found in several places of the New Testament is translated to mean "Father" (Mk. 14:36, Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6). This word is used as a term of endearment that expresses warm affection and confidence in the One being addressed.

God is "hallowed" (which means HOLY) and until we have been made "holy" (I Pet. 1:15-16) by the blood of Christ, there is

no communion with the “Father.” Our God is a Holy Loving “Father” to His children Who bestows His grace and mercy upon those who repent and believe. Like the prodigal (Lk. 15:18) who returned to his “father,” God is willing and eager to receive and forgive His wayward children.

The Purpose of Prayer v.10

The “kingdom” to which Jesus referred is His spiritual “kingdom” that He rules in perfect righteousness. Just as God’s “will” is “done” in “heaven,” we need to seek for it to be “done in earth.” Unless we learn how to live in God’s “will,” life will be lived in total vanity. The primary purpose of prayer is to get God’s “will” done “in earth, as it is in heaven.” Apart from God’s WORD, we’ll never see the importance of doing God’s “will.”

Through studying Holy Scripture, we can learn how to think the way God thinks and make our petitions to Him based upon His promises. God speaks to us through His written Word and teaches us how to pray so that we may have a conversation with our Heavenly “Father.” A listener is one who merely hears what another person is saying and sometimes without ever saying a word in return. However, a conversationalist is one who joins in that which is being said, both listening and speaking. God has given His children the opportunity and privilege of communing with Him in Heaven by talking with Him as often as we would like and at the same time we can listen to Him speak to us from His Word. One of my favorite definitions of the Holy Scriptures is that it’s God’s printed voice. When you read the Bible, God is speaking to you from the pages of His written Word.

The Provision of Prayer v.11

This MODEL PRAYER teaches the believer to be utterly dependent upon God for his every “need” (Phil. 4:19). Life’s every necessity must come from God, from the very breath that we breathe to every mouthful of food that we eat. Just as “Israel” gathered “manna” one day at a time, we too must trust God to provide all our provisions (Ex. 16:15).

The sooner a believer learns how to trust God in “daily” dependence, the sooner he’ll learn to live the life of “faith” (Rom. 14:23b). Not only does God require us to come to Him in Salvation by “faith” (Eph. 2:8), but to trust Him to meet our needs “daily” and “live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). “Daily bread” not only refers to our physical provision, but to our mental, emotional, financial, material, and spiritual needs as well.

The Pardon of Prayer v.12, 14-15

Our “debts” are our sins and to sin against others is the same as sinning against God (Ex. 20). Our salvation is not based on our forgiveness of others because redemption is based upon the “finished” (Jh. 19:30) work of Calvary’s “Lamb” (Jh. 1:29). No man has ever been saved by his good “works” (Titus 3:5), but by the work of Christ on the Cross. Therefore, this passage is speaking of saved people and their obligation to “forgive” their “debtors.” Both words “debtors” and “trespasses,” refer to sinners who have wronged you. As sinners who have been saved by God’s grace, we always need to remember that we are nothing more than debtors to God for violating His laws.

If we have experienced God’s forgiveness, then we ought also to “forgive” one another (Lk. 17:3, Eph. 4:32, Col 3:13). Unconfessed sin in a believer’s life will clog up the channels of fellowship with God. An unforgiving heart is a heart filled with “sin” and needs to be confessed (I Jh. 1:9). At this point, allow me to pause and ask you a question, “Would you want God to deal with you like you deal with others who have wronged you?” Are you quick to “forgive” when someone sins against you or do you like to hold a grudge? Do you like to get even or are you willing to be gracious and extend mercy to those who have failed you and want another opportunity of fellowship? Failure to forgive others does not mean that you will lose your salvation, but it means that you will lose out on God’s blessings of righteous living and become subject to His chastisement (Heb. 12).

As Christians who know God’s forgiveness we are obligated to forgive those who sin against us if they have a repentant heart. In

fact, we ought to extend our forgiveness to them, but that does not mean that it will be received. Our example comes from Christ Himself. Not everyone receives God's forgiveness of their sin. If they did, no one would ever spend eternal torment in Hell. Only those granted a repentant heart (Acts 5:31) will enjoy forgiveness of sin. Likewise, Christians should rejoice in extending forgiveness to those who have wronged them; although, not everyone will want reconciliation.

The Protection of Prayer v.13

On the surface, this verse appears rather disturbing and for that reason we need to read it in keeping with the entire Bible. Don't forget that the Bible is the best commentary there is on the Bible. There may appear to be contradictions in Scripture, but when we study them in proper context, we discover there are none. The word, "lead," is better understood to mean "leave" or in other words asking God to rescue us from "temptation." The idea conveyed in this verse is asking Him to deliver us from "temptation" (Lk. 22:40). God will allow trials and tests to come our way, but He never leads anyone to sin or "into temptation." Satan is the evil one who "leads" us "into temptation" (Jam. 1:13-14). Whenever we find ourselves in a place of "temptation," we need to "pray" that God will give us "power" to overcome it and "deliver us from evil" which literally means "deliver us from the evil one" who is Satan (I Cor. 10:13).

We are about to bring this message to a close on the same note with which we began and that is the subject of power in prayer. God has promised to give us power through the indwelling Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. Believers should never doubt the reality or power of the Devil (Eph. 2:2). It's been said that Martin Luther once sensed Satan's presence so strongly that he threw an inkwell at him. You nor I are no match for the Devil; therefore, when he rings your doorbell, send Jesus to answer it.

Christ taught that we should not only be quick to ask for forgiveness in prayer, but that we should also seek God's protection in prayer as well as His power to live a triumphant Christian life. Satan knows that if Christians don't "pray," then

they'll become subject to spiritual failure. The power that we find in prayer is not from within ourselves, but from the Holy Spirit who indwells all believers. It's impossible for us to live a victorious Christian life because only the Holy Spirit can live it through us as we yield to His control. Because we are weak, we cannot help ourselves, but the indwelling "Holy Spirit" secures us in Christ and makes it possible to know God's protection through the dark valleys of life as we surrender to His "will."

Because of God's goodness and protection, we should not fail to praise Him. The most powerful prayer is one that is filled with godly praise and adoration. God's people need to stop all their complaining and go to praising Him for His eternal "kingdom ... power ...and ... glory."

Not only would the "hypocrites" of Jesus' day "pray" to "be seen of men," but they would also "fast" for public recognition (v.16-18). Fasting is often associated with prayer and it can have immense value for believers as it adds intensity to our prayers. However, it, like prayer, is a personal matter between the believer and God and should be done privately and not for public attention. Much can be said about prayer and fasting which is another message unto itself when the two are linked together for study (see chapter seven).

Prayer for the most part is SECRET FELLOWSHIP with God wherein a believer can honestly express himself and pour out his heart before the throne of his heavenly "Father." It's rather hypocritical for people to "pray" in public who do not "pray" in private. It's impossible to "pray" and touch base with God if there is willful sin in our hearts (Ps. 66:18, Isa. 59:1-2). Therefore, to be effective in prayer, God's people must confess their sins, learn how to think like God thinks, yield themselves to His "will," and seek for Him to be glorified in their lives. Power in prayer is not us having the audacity of thinking that we can move the Hand of God, but the Hand of God moving and changing us under total submission to divine sovereignty.

Chapter 2 The Exercise Of Prayer

“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. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matt. 7:7-11)

As we begin to think about the exercise of prayer, let's remember that the word, exercise, is used in various ways. However, perhaps the two most popular usages of the word are used to speak of a ceremony that is performed (such as a graduation exercise) or an activity that requires physical exertion (such as a gymnastic exercise program). When we think of the exercise of prayer, then both definitions can apply because it is a time when the Christian communes with God, but it is also a time of strenuous spiritual exertion. For example, let me ask a question. How many of you know that physical exercise is good for you and how many of you look forward to the exertion of practicing it daily (or in other words, following through it with)? If we were to be brutally honest, most of us would have to admit it's not something that we eagerly pursue because it takes a great deal of self-discipline, time, and effort. For that reason, I want us to think about prayer as an exercise that we ought to treasure and value to the point of being in the habit of practicing it throughout each and every day.

The doctrine of prayer is perhaps one of the most misunderstood and misapplied doctrines in the Bible. Prayer is not us telling God what He's going to do, but God telling us what we ought to do. Most Christians think of prayer as a BLANK CHECK that we are to fill in and hand to God for His

endorsement. As a result of this kind of thinking, we find many people who are spiritual shipwrecks on the sea of faith. Unfortunately, the attitude of most Christians regarding prayer is very poor. Many Christians feel like they just don't have time to pray or else they only take the time when something goes wrong in their lives and they want to send up a SOS to God and use Him as a crutch upon which to lean only in troubled times. However, with God prayer is considered a top priority for all His children to practice.

If you're a parent, I'm sure that you like to hear from your children whether it be by phone call, postal letter, email, personal visit, or whatever means of communication. Unfortunately, there are many children who only contact their parents when they want something and it's usually money or some material substance that they want. God likes to hear from His children and He likes to hear from us especially when we have learned how to properly correspond with Him in prayer. Prayer, like any other good thing, needs to become a HABIT, not just a mere ritual, but a routine time of communing with God. Spasmodic and haphazard praying will never get the job done that pleases God. Prayer needs to be a routine EXERCISE practiced daily and consistently throughout the day in or lives. Scripture tells us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We need to learn how to live in a constant attitude of prayer throughout each and every day.

The HABIT of continuous and sincere prayer is a spiritual EXERCISE that requires challenging work and a great deal of self-discipline. Any athlete who becomes good at his specialized sport will tell you that he must stay physically fit, EXERCISE, and constantly practice keeping up his skills. When it comes to prayer, far too many Christians don't pray because they're not willing to pay the necessary price of personal sacrifice. Like anything else that is worth the effort, taking time to pray is difficult and learning how to pray is even harder. I don't believe that the length of our prayers is nearly as important as the fact of our submission to God in prayer.

The prayer life of Christ Himself teaches us something about the work involved in true praying. Sometimes, Jesus would spend all night in prayer and before facing death on the cross, He

sweated blood through the pores of His skin during a season of prayer (Lk. 22:44). It was in the agony of Gethsemane that Christ found the strength to face Golgotha.

Prayer is a strenuous process of persistence and intensity that will prove beneficial in both time and eternity. To become physically fit, one doesn't go into a gym in just one evening and expect to come out fully back into shape instantaneously. It takes time and a vigorous training program to become physically fit. So it is, in learning how to commune with God through persistent prayer and learning how to "lean not unto thy own understanding" (Prov. 3:5) but upon God's promises in "faith" (Matt. 17:20).

The Persistence of Prayer v.7-8

In the Greek, the words, "ask ... seek ... knock" are all in the present tense which expresses continuous action. We know that our Lord is teaching us about prayer because when He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," He is teaching us something about how to commune with our "Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). ASKING implies submission and humility in persistent prayer. SEEKING implies surrender and sacrifice in probing prayer. KNOCKING implies steadfastness and intensity in pleading prayer. In the Amplified translation, it says, "keep on asking ... keep on seeking ... keep on knocking." Matthew Henry says that these three words, "ask ... seek ... knock" is simply saying, "pray, pray, and pray again."

To "ask" is simply acknowledging that we cannot help ourselves, but we need the intervention of God in our lives. To "seek" is to enquire what God's will is concerning the cares, concerns, and burdens in our lives. To "knock" is to yield, surrender, and commit to whatever the will of God is without reservation. God guarantees that any prayer that a believer prays will not be in vain if it's prayed in total submission to God's will. He says that if we "ask ... it shall be given" and "every one that asketh receiveth" free and clear without charge. There is nothing that we can do to make God do what we want Him to do or to force His Hand (so to speak). We can never purchase or merit an

answer to our prayers. Only when we learn to “seek” the will of God is when we “shall find” it as a result of His grace and mercy upon us. When we “knock” then “it shall be opened” and we’ll be able to discern God’s will and live in peace regardless of the circumstances of life.

The problem with us is learning how to pray right and unless we learn to “ask ... seek ... knock” for God’s will then we have not learned how to pray. Prayer is not simply an emergency SOS that we send up to God in troubled times, but “without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17) we are to stay on speaking terms with our Heavenly “Father” (Lk. 11:2) and talk with Him often throughout the day. Despite how we may feel or the circumstances of life, we are to keep on praying and be persistent in prayer. We are to TRUST our God each and every moment throughout the day and never take our eyes off of Him. We are to stay constantly on speaking terms with Him. This matter of persistent habitual prayer is specifically taught from the word, “importunity,” in the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 11:8) which means shamelessly. There is not anything that we cannot talk to God about; therefore, we need not ever be ashamed to pour out our hearts about any subject. Besides, He knows our hearts and minds before we ever utter a single word. We are to learn how to continually and shamelessly approach God expressing our absolute need of Him and His guidance because we are weak and feeble people.

This passage in chapter seven is giving additional instruction that Jesus began to teach back in chapter six (Matt. 6:5-15) on how we are to pray. Prayer should be accompanied by “faith,” otherwise all we’re doing is idle speaking and meaningless jabber (Heb. 11:6). Scripture admonishes us to “come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). The Bible teaches that a Christian can have “boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him (Christ Jesus our Lord)” (Eph. 3:11-12).

Nowhere in the Word of God does it teach that prayer will be easy, but in fact quite the contrary, it’s pictured as a struggle (Rom. 15:30, Eph. 6:18, Col.4:12). Prayer is actually a sacred struggle that requires effort, discipline, and personal surrender.

The Devil doesn't want us to pray because he doesn't want us to submit to the will of God. Therefore, prayer is a struggle, not because it is a time of worship and an activity of spiritual work, but because it is a warfare against the gates of Hell itself. When we think about the struggles of life, let us not forget that struggle produces strength and pain produces patience. The one who wrestles with an opponent grows stronger and God allows us to spiritually wrestle in prayer to make us "wait" upon Him and witness the power of the Lord (Isa. 40:31).

It's not prayer that has been tried and found wanting, but it is those of us who have not learned the persistence of prayer. Persistent praying should never be seen as badgering God until He gives us what we want. We sometimes have the attitude that if we can get enough people to gang up on God then we can get what we want. Have you ever heard someone say or infer, "I know that God is going to answer my prayer because we have so many people praying for me?" Or perhaps, you've heard it put this way, "I had such a good recovery because there were so many people praying for me."

Just stop and listen to that which is being said. Who is receiving the glory in a statement like that? Needless to say, it's not God because He's not even mentioned. Those who exhibit this type of attitude have not learned genuine praying, much less persistent praying. Being the depraved creatures that we are, we often like to think that our good works can merit our salvation or positive answers to our prayers. However, neither is the case. Most people don't think that God answers prayer unless it is answered in the way THEY want it answered. In other words, if God does not give them what they want, then He does not come through for them and yield to their demands. This kind of attitude portrays a person who is trying to boss God around instead of surrendering to His majestic sovereignty.

Heathen people pray to their false idols, gods, and deities. Christians are supposed to pray to the One True and Living God of Heaven and Earth. It's not OUR prayers that should receive the glory, but all glory is due to Almighty God regardless of the outcome. Those who exhibit a selfish attitude have not learned genuine praying, much less persistent praying. Praying

persistently is seeking the will of God in total submission resting in His sovereign control over all things. It's like grabbing the horns of the altar of incense in the Old Testament (which is a type or picture of prayer) and never letting go. We must remember that a person is not healed, has a good recovery, or has things turn out the way he wants it to because of what we have done. Every good and perfect gift (Jam. 1:17) comes from the Lord our God and for the Christian, it means that even death will be the means God uses to take us home to Heaven.

God didn't design prayer as a means of us getting everything that we want, but as a means of teaching us patience and submission to His will. Only prayers that are prayed in accordance with God's "will", will He grant according to His good pleasure. First John, chapter five and verses fourteen through fifteen, makes it perfectly clear, **"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hearth us; And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."**

Oftentimes, God will deny our request because He loves us too much to give us everything that we want or something that will not be truly beneficial. We must learn to pray, not to get what we want, but what God wants. Through real genuine prayer, God's "will" and our wants become the same. In a matter of speaking, our text seems to verify that all prayer is answered in one way or another (Matt. 7:8). Just because we don't get what we "ask" for doesn't mean our prayers are not answered.

It might indicate that we "ask amiss" (Jam 4:3) according to the sovereign will of God for our lives. Neither can God hear our request, much less grant our request, when there is willful sin present in our lives. The psalmist reminds us that, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). Someone has said, "God doesn't bless us until He makes us bless-able." When something is wrong in our hearts and lives, God will not listen to our feeble prayers unless there be confession and repentance. Most often when we pray, the trouble is not with God, but with us (Isa. 59:1-2). It only takes one grain of sand to clog up a fuel line and immobilize an automobile. So it

is with unconfessed “sin” that clogs our prayer line and causes us to lose touch with heaven. This “sin” that we’re talking about which hinders prayer is not mere human weakness, but downright wickedness. Prayer is not for only perfect people because if that be the case then none of us could ever pray. However, if willful deliberate “sin” creeps into our lives, then we must “confess” it and be restored to fellowship with God (I Jh.1:9).

The Promises of Prayer v.9-11

To begin with, we must learn to come before our Heavenly “Father” as one of His dear “little children” (Jh. 13:33, I Jh. 2:13, 4:4, 5:21). It’s only natural for a little child to go running to his father in times of distress. Likewise, it’s common for little children to make requests of their father when they have a special favor or need. No loving earthly father will give his child a “stone” when they ask for a piece of “bread” or a “serpent” when they need a piece of “fish.” If we who are “evil” wicked sinners in need of a Savior know how to “give good gifts unto” our “children,” then “how much more shall” our perfect Heavenly “Father” give “good things” to us.

Just because God delights in giving us “good gifts,” doesn’t mean that He’ll give us everything we want and for which we ask. The mention of “bread” and “fish” symbolizes the basic needs of life. But, there are times when God says NO to our request because we “ask amiss” (Jam. 4:3). Sometimes a NO answer from God means that He has something better for us down the highway of life (Eph. 3:20). Those who believe in a name-it and claim-it type of praying have not learned biblical praying. Those who hold to such false doctrine act like spoiled brats who demand that God must give them whatever they ask. Basically, they are shaking their fist in the face of God, telling Him what He’s going to do.

God does love His children, but He does not spoil us rotten. Our God is very long-suffering with His children and pours out blessings upon us that we do not deserve. Therefore, when we

pray, do we TRUST God to give us what HE wants, wills, and deems BEST for us?

To most people, God is seen like a great big jolly Santa Clause who is supposed to come running with his bag of gifts every time we call. Others will try to plea bargain with God and twist His arm by reminding Him of their self-proclaimed goodness, their church loyalty, or their frequency of charitable giving in hopes that He'll pay them back by answering their prayers the way they want. But, I've got news for you. Our God cannot be bought with our carnal deeds. If God told you today that He would give you anything you asked for, what would it be? I believe S.D. Gordon had the correct answer when he said that if God was going to give him one blessing of his own choosing, he would say, "God, You choose it." Likewise, we need to be able to say in prayer, "God, you do the choosing because I choose what you choose," otherwise we've not learned the value of prayer nor have we learned how to pray.

It's hard for us to understand, but sometimes God's BEST for us involves hardship and suffering because suffering produces endurance, character, and hope (Rom. 5:3-4, Jam 1:4, I Pet. 1:6-7). Don't ever forget that our Heavenly "Father" is more interested in our HOLINESS than in our HAPPINESS (I Thess. 4:3). "Sanctification" is the divine work in a believer's soul whereby the holy nature received in the new birth is strengthened and one is made more like Jesus. Spiritual success with God is more than achieving the right "things," it's becoming the right person and waiting for God's timing to accomplish His perfect will. Therefore, God doesn't promise us immunity from suffering, but He does develop us spiritually in our suffering to make us more like Christ (Phil. 3:10). God's "children" soon learn in the schoolroom of prayer that "His thoughts are not your thoughts and His ways are not our ways" (Isa. 55:8).

A wise "Father" knows what his "children" need and exactly when they need it. For instance, an earthly father may not refuse to give his young son a rifle or keys to the car, but simply delay the giving of it until the son or daughter is old enough to safely use it. Likewise, our Heavenly "Father" often allows us to "wait" (Ps. 27:14) in patient "faith" (Jam. 1:3) in order to prepare us for

the blessing that He has in store for us. We need patience to not only let God answer our prayers, but to answer them in such a way that is pleasing to Him. Praying is not our way of getting things from God, it's God's way of getting what He wants from us. So much of what we call prayer is really a mockery to Almighty God. Mumbling a few words and rattling through a ritual is not necessarily earnest prayer. A pretty and nicely worded prayer may not necessarily be a sincere prayer.

Real prayer is learning how to TRUST God like a little child would trust his Daddy to take care of him (Heb. 11:6). "Faith" simply means that we can TRUST God to keep His Word and take care of us the way He sees BEST. Just because we have "faith" doesn't mean that we'll never have to wander in the wilderness like Moses or go into the fiery furnace like the Hebrew youth. But, it does mean that whatever TRIAL we face, God will give us the courage, wisdom, and strength to do so (Jam. 1:3). Whenever you sail through the seas of rough water, always remember that it's God's way of producing the qualities of Christian character.

"Faith" has been defined as waiting without worrying because "faith" and "patience" go together like hand and glove. We've not learned how to properly pray until we've learned the "patience" of "faith" (Rom. 5:3-5). Our submission to God in prayer is not a mere resignation to One Who is Stronger, but a loving TRUST in One Who is Wiser. One of the beauties of childhood is that there are no worries regarding the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, etc. "Children" depend upon their parents to care for them and as the spiritual "head" (I Cor. 11:3) of the home, it is the father's responsibility to be the provider (I Tim. 5:8). If earthly parents who are "evil" (sinful) "know how to" provide "good gifts" for their "children," then "how much more" does our Heavenly "Father" delight in giving His "children ... good things." In the same way that a little child learns to TRUST his Daddy to provide what is BEST for him, so must we learn to TRUST our God to do what is BEST for us.

In this passage, the necessity of food is mentioned, but another necessity of life is clothing which can certainly be included in the other "good things" mentioned in our text (Matt. 6:33). For the

Christian, God not only provides us PHYSICAL and SPIRITUAL food, but PHYSICAL and SPIRITUAL clothing. Being properly outfitted in the “armour of God” prepares us to do battle with Satan in prayer (Eph. 6:11-12). Since there is a great cosmic conflict taking place between God and Satan, we discover that prayer is nothing less than a holy warfare “against the wiles of the devil.” Some have called prayer a piece of the “armour,” while others have referred to it as the battle itself (Eph. 6:14-18). Once we are dressed in our spiritual “armour,” we do battle with “the devil” when we go to “praying.”

Prayer is not something that we WEAR, but it is what we DO. When a Christian prays, he throws the battle into God’s Hands, realizing that we are no match for “the devil” and without God’s supernatural power, Satan cannot be defeated. Victory over sin and Satanic attack must be won in the “closet” (Matt. 6:6) of prayer as we declare absolute dependence upon God. One of the hardest things for a Christian to do is to develop a proper attitude of prayer and a consistent sincere prayer life because that is what Satan doesn’t want us to do. He wants us to feel like we’re in charge of our lives and to depend upon our own ingenuity. He doesn’t really care how much spiritual activity we do in our own strength, but he trembles when he sees a believer serving and going forth in the “power” of the “Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:8). The battlefield of prayer is a fight from start to finish. As long as we’re swimming in the foul waters of this world, Christians are constantly going up stream against the tide. Therefore, we can expect Satan to battle us and try to hinder our prayers. He’ll try to keep us from praying by keeping us busy with other things and even when we do pray, he’ll try to cause our minds to wander and get side-tracked.

We could say that there is no such thing as an unanswered prayer that is sincerely prayed by a believer. God always answers a genuine prayer and sometimes, because of our failure in not knowing how to properly pray, He often answers, No to a specified request! However, the reason He answers, NO, is because God’s primary concern is for our spiritual wellbeing and that He be glorified. God’s desire is to make us the kind of people that He can bless and use for His Glory. We can come to

the church services every time the doors are open, but still be a disobedient people. As long as we treat God like a spare tire to use in emergencies, or a heavenly bellboy who is supposed to come running at our beckoning call, then we don't understand the character of God nor the beautiful doctrine of prayer. Prayer is NO magic lamp that always delivers us from life's rough roads, but it is God's anvil that forms us into His "image" (Rom. 8:29). Far too many people see PRAYER AS A BARGAINING CHIP USED TO COERCE God into giving them what they want in order to satisfy their selfishness and self-righteousness.

Like it is in many other areas of life, PRIDE keeps us from humbly coming to God and acknowledging our utter dependence upon Him. "Pride" (Prov. 16:18) blinds us to the fact that God is not primarily interested in what we do FOR Him, but how obedient we are TO Him (I Sam. 15:22-23). We must always be on guard not to let pride, disobedience, rebellion, the love of sin, and the lack of faith rob us of a sweet heavenly communion with God in prayer.

Let me ask of you a very personal question. Have you come to love that which God loves and have you come to want only that which God wants? Not only do we need to get into the Bible, but we need to get the Bible into us. I've hear preachers debate and raise the question, "which is more important, reading and studying the Bible, or PRAYER?" The answer to that question is that both are important. But, if we don't get into the Bible then we'll never get the BIBLE into us and learn how to pray as we ought, because we'll never learn the "mind" (Phil. 2:5) and will of God. The BIBLE is God's printed voice and we'll never know the will of God apart from it. The promises of prayer will never be realized by those who dabble at it, but by those who live in an attitude of persistent submission to the "will" of the "Father" (Lk. 22:42) and bury themselves in the Word of God (II Tim. 2:15).

Prayer is one of the means that God uses to conform us into His image as we progress in sanctification. We should never view prayer as a way to change God's mind because our God is immutable, meaning changeless. The doctrine of God's immutability is clearly taught for us in Holy Scripture (Mal. 3:6a,

Heb. 13:8). Since God is changeless, prayer does not change God, but God uses it to change the one doing the praying as we yield ourselves in total submission to the will of our Heavenly “Father.”

The apostle Paul is a good example of how God sometimes answers our prayers in ways that are not necessarily the way we request. Do you remember when he asked the Lord three times to remove his “thorn in the flesh?” God’s answer to him was, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul’s reply was, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (II Cor. 12:7-10).

Above all, we need to learn from the perfect example of Jesus when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane just before going to the cross, “not my will, but thine be done” (Lk. 22:42). In this passage, we see a lovely picture of the Incarnation. Jesus was completely God and completely Man. As a Man, He wanted to live just as much as any other man, but as God, He knew that His mission on earth was to “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). As a Man, He wasn’t looking forward to being spit upon, mocked, beaten, having nails driven through His hands, and fastened to a cruel Roman cross to die. Therefore, He revealed His humanity to us by saying, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.” But, it was not the Father’s will for the “cup” of suffering to be removed because Christ alone is the only sacrifice that could satisfy the demands of the Father in paying the penalty of our sin. Likewise, it’s not always God’s will that we escape the sufferings of this life. Until we have learned to pray, “not my will, but thine be done” then we have not learned how to pray biblically.

Chapter 3

The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy

truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (Jh. 17:1-26)

In other chapters, I've mention the model prayer that Jesus gave us in the sixth chapter of Matthew and again in the seventh chapter of Luke. Sometimes that model prayer has often been called the Lord's Prayer. But those passages could more appropriately be called the disciples prayer or the servants prayer because Jesus had no sin of which to ask forgiveness. As we have already seen, Jesus was giving us a lesson in how to pray. In the text that claims our attention in this chapter, we could rightly refer to it as The Lord's Prayer because we see the intercession of Christ to the "Father" on behalf of His disciples.

We recognize three positions that Jesus will fill which is that of Prophet, Priest, and King. His first coming was that of a Prophet as He spoke and represented God to sinful man. After His death, He is seated at the right hand of God the Father serving as our High Priest. When He comes again, He will come as King of

Kings and Lord of Lords. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus, who was about to soon ascend into the heavens and be seated as our Great High Priest, offered an audible prayer in the presence of His disciples as He “lifted up his eyes to heaven.” As we think of Mt. “Moriah” (Gen. 22:2), our minds go back to the time when “Isaac” talked with his father, “Abraham,” about the “lamb” for a “burnt offering” (Gen. 22:7). Our text finds us back on the slopes of Mt. Moriah and this time, our Heavenly Isaac knew that He was the “Lamb of God” (Jh. 1:29) prepared by the “Father” for sacrifice. As we study this chapter, it not only becomes the longest recorded prayer in Scripture, but is designated, The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus as He intercedes for all who will believe on His “name.”

Jesus Prayed for His Personal Glorification v.1-5

The exact location as to where this prayer was prayed is uncertain and not really all that important. It doesn't appear to be prayed in “Gethsemane,” but somewhere between the time Jesus and His disciples left (Jh. 14:31) the “upper room” (Mk. 14:15) and before entering the “garden” (Jh. 18:1) where He would be arrested. The prayer recorded in our text is not the same season of prayer that is mentioned by the other synoptic writers as having taken place in “Gethsemane” (Matt. 26:36-46, Mk. 14:32-42, Lk. 22:39-46). That was when Jesus only allowed His disciples to go just so far with Him into the “garden” while He prayed for the “cup” to “pass” from Him and each time that He returned He found the “disciples” asleep.

When “Jesus” began praying, He called out to the “Father” in complete humility and subjection. Please notice that “Jesus” even prayed with His “eyes” open looking “to heaven.” This just reminds us that the physical posture of prayer is not nearly as important as our spiritual posture of humility (Ps. 51:17). There's nothing wrong with us forming the habit of bowing our heads and closing our eyes when we pray. However, it's possible to “pray” just as earnestly and sincerely as we walk and as we

work. When Jesus acknowledged that the “hour is come,” He spoke of the moment of crisis at which time Christ was about to consummate His earthly ministry. The “hour” was not just the “hour” of His death, but the “hour” of His resurrection and exaltation at which time He would be glorified. That’s why He prayed, “glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” What Jesus wanted more than anything else was to “glorify” (honor or magnify) the “Father” through His own personal surrender to the divine plan of redemption. Likewise, our greatest desire in life should be for God to be glorified in our lives regardless of where that path in life may take us.

The conscious deity of Christ is clearly evident by the way He referred to Himself as “thy Son.” Jesus did not converse with His “Father” like a spoiled child who thought he had a claim on God’s attention. So much of our praying today lacks the respect and reverence that Jesus teaches us to exhibit when we come “boldly” before His “throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16). Our prayer life can never be right if it is not founded on a personal relationship with God through “faith” in His “Son.” Unless we come to the “Father” on the basis of Christ the “Son,” there can be no communion with God in prayer. By calling God, “Father,” Jesus profoundly declared His unique relationship as His “only begotten Son” (Jh. 3:16). No one can truly communicate with God in prayer without knowing Him as their Heavenly “Father.” However, the Sonship of Christ was even more unique than ours as believers because Jesus was God in human “flesh” (Jh. 1:14).

These words of Jesus not only affirmed His unique nature, but His unique mission in giving “eternal life to as many as” the “Father” had “given him.” The “Father ... hast given” His “Son” the “power (authority) over all flesh” including the giving of “eternal life.” Only Christ can give you “eternal life.” It’s not something that you can inherit, earn, nor merit. “Eternal life” is the possessing of “life more abundantly” (Jh. 10:10) that results from coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That, of course, is a work of God through the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. The sinner does not choose God,

but God chooses the sinner (Jh. 15:16). Adam did not go looking for God when he sinned, but it was God that went looking for Adam (Gen. 3).

In these verses of our text is found a clear picture of the beautiful and unexplainable doctrine of election. The doctrines of election (Eph. 1:3-14) and free will have been described as two rails of a railroad track that constantly run parallel, but never meet. Neither of these two doctrines will ever be reconciled in the mind of mortal man. Only God in His sovereignty is fully capable of explaining them. But, from the Holy Scriptures we know this much, that while not everyone will be “saved” (Rom. 10:9), God’s “elect” (Lk. 18:7, Rom. 8:33, Col. 3:12, I Pet. 1:2) will be. It’s not our job to figure out who the “elect” are, but to tell the story to everyone in the world of God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ. When that message falls upon the hearts of God’s “elect,” the Holy Spirit will cause them to believe (Jh. 16:8-15, Rom. 10:17).

Seven times in this chapter alone, Jesus spoke of believers as being “given” to Him by the “Father” (v.2,6,9,11,12,26). Election teaches the precious truth that each believer is God’s love gift “given to the “Son.” For that reason, we say that the redeemed church is the espoused “bride” (Rev. 21:2) of Christ, waiting for the great wedding day and the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9). The imagery is beautiful!

Man’s crying need today is to “know ... the only true God and Jesus Christ whom” He “hast sent.” To “know” Christ is to possess “eternal life” which is the very life of God Himself. “Eternal life,” like election, is a great mystery that no man can understand. All we can do is rejoice in it and thank God for it. Everyone will exist somewhere in eternity, either in heaven or hell. But, only those who have “eternal life” will spend it with God. God gives us “eternal life” so that Christ may be “glorified” through us to a lost world. If we profess to be “saved,” but fail to “glorify” God in our living and praying, then something is spiritually wrong with us.

The first part of Christ's petition was a request for His personal glorification. For over three years, Christ had "glorified" the Father in His ministry on earth and now that "work" (Jh. 4:34) of redemption was about to be "finished" (Jh. 19:30). During the final hours of completing the promised plan of salvation, Christ didn't want Satan to frustrate the divine plan and deprive God of the "glory" due His name. Please notice how the wording here is in the future tense as though the event of Christ's death had already occurred. With God, future tense is just as accurate as past tense. In the mind of God, Christ had been appointed from the "foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8) to come in the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4) and be the "propitiation" (Rom. 3:25) for our sin. The word "propitiation" refers to God's mercy seat that is pictured in the Old Testament when sacrifices were offered. It speaks of the only place where God can be appeased. Our sin can only be appeased in the sacrifice of Christ. This prayer of Jesus was not for any selfish "glory," but for the confirmation of all that God had promised, beginning in "Eden" (Gen. 3:23-24) all the way down through the ages.

Jesus prayed for the "Father" to restore Him the visible "glory" that He laid aside when He came to earth to die (Phil. 2:5-11) and "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Jesus never emptied Himself of His deity, but He did lay aside His heavenly "glory" when He was born in a manger and took upon Himself a body of "flesh" (Jh. 1:14). The only time on earth when His heavenly "glory" was revealed was on the Mt. of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13, II Pet. 1:16-18). "Before the world was," Christ was "glorified" and through His death and resurrection, He would be "glorified" again in triumph and victory over the cross and the tomb.

Jesus Prayed for His Disciple's Sanctification v.6-19

From within the context of this recorded prayer, it appears that the "men" to whom Jesus referred were His true original disciples (see my book on *The Twelve Disciples*). At the time of

this prayer, the original twelve disciples were soon reduced to eleven. However, we cannot help but believe that what Jesus desired for them, He desires for all believers. “Born again” (Jh. 3:3) believers have been “given” to Christ by the “Father” and evidence their conversion through obedience to the “word.” In fact, several characteristics of true believers are mentioned by Christ in His prayer. Let’s pay special attention to what Jesus said in these regards.

“They have kept thy word” v.6-7

Genuine Christian disciples have become convicted convinced believers in the Lordship and Saviorship of Jesus Christ. In order to keep the “word,” one must receive the “WORD” Who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jh. 1:1-5,14) as the revealed “grace and truth” of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In verse six of our text, “word” is translated from the Greek LOGOS just as it is from the first chapter of John when it refers to the incarnation of Christ.

“They have received ... and believed” the “words” v.8

In verse eight of our text, “words” is RHEMA in the Greek which means a saying or is referring to that which is spoken. This is teaching that the followers of Christ not only believe in His deity, but in all the truth that He spoke and is recorded in His written “words.” Christians believe that the written word of Holy Scripture reveals the Living Word and that the Bible is God’s printed voice, verbally inspired, inerrant, and infallible (II Tim. 3:16)!

“They” are “kept” by the power of God’s grace v.9-12

We should never underestimate God’s concern for the entire world, but at the same time, not overlook His special concern for His own. Just as a couple may have a great love for children in

general, they will have a most profound, powerful, and personal love for their own children. The “elect” (I Pet. 1:2) are those given to Christ by the “Father” to be His “peculiar people” (Titus 2:14, I Pet. 2:9) and chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). In this prayer, Jesus did not pray (entreat or intercede) for the world, but for His children. Jesus came into the world to die for those whom the Holy Spirit has called out of the world and granted faith to trust Christ as our Substitute for sin on the old rugged cross. Jesus has sent His “Spirit” into the world to “reprove ... of sin ... of righteousness ... of judgment” (Jh. 16:7-11).

The whole purpose of our salvation is for Christ to be “glorified” in us. As Christ prepared to leave this world, He committed the care of His followers to the protection of His “Father.” In verse eleven of our text, the word “keep” comes from the Greek TEREIO, meaning to persevere or hold fast. If a single one of God’s elect were to perish, then God’s glory would be tarnished, simply because He is responsible for keeping us and failure to do so diminishes His sovereignty. The reason why the “Father” can “keep” us “saved” is because we are “sealed” by the “Holy Spirit” (Eph. 4:30). In verse twelve, the word, “kept” is PHULASSO in the Greek which carries the idea to guard, to keep watch, or protect. There is not even the slightest possibility of a believer losing his salvation (Jh. 10:27-29, Rom. 8:24-39). Of all the twelve disciples, only one was “lost” and that defection was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Ps. 41:9, Jh. 13:18). “The son of perdition” spoke of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Jh. 12:4). This does not say that Judas lost his salvation, but implies that he was never saved to begin with. He was like many church members of today who make a profession, but never bear evidence of possessing the indwelling nature of Christ.

“They have” divine “joy” and are “not of the world” v.13-16

The Greek word, “world,” is KOSMOS which can refer to the universe in which we live or either to an ungodly system or multitude of people who are alienated from God. God’s indwelling presence equips us for the opposition, resentment, hatred, and persecution from the “world” (Jh. 15:18-21). It should come as no surprise to any follower of Jesus Christ that the “world” has no use for us. Just as they scorned and mistreated our Savior, we can expect the same treatment. What’s so very sad today, is that many who profess Christ cannot be distinguished from those who boast of living according to the standards of the “world.” I’ve preached for years that there is so much of the world in the visible church of today that you can hardly tell that the church is in the world.

Instead of taking us “out of the world” at the time of salvation, God has chosen to “keep” us in the “world” to serve as “salt” and “light” (Matt. 5:13-16). Since we are destined to remain in the “world” until our heavenly homegoing, God has chosen to use the testings and trials of life to spiritually strengthen us. It’s not within our power to “keep” ourselves secure. That’s only within God’s “power” (I Pet. 1:5). We are totally dependent upon God, not only to save us, but to “keep” us saved and protect us from the onslaught of Hell.

Once again, we come across the word, “keep” (TEREO), meaning to protect which reminds us that Christ has asked the “Father” to stand guard over us from the enemy of our souls. “From the evil” is better translated to read, “from the evil one or wicked one.” It’s hard for us to understand, but God gets “glory” out of keeping us in the “world,” allowing us to suffer conflicts, and seeing us through victoriously over the enemy.

In concluding this second petition made by Christ in this chapter, we need to notice how He prayed for His disciple’s sanctification (v.17-19). This Greek word for “sanctify” is HAGIAZO, meaning to hallow, be holy, consecrate, dedicate,

purify, or set apart. The sanctification that Jesus is talking about is NOT sinless perfection; otherwise, He would have never said, “I sanctify myself,” because He had NO sin. Sanctification is a life-long process that can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the study and application of God’s Holy “word.” Therefore, a “sanctified” believer is one who is growing in the “word,” and as a result is set apart by Christ and “sent” out “into the world” as a witness.

From our text, we can conclude that Jesus wants His disciples to be separated from sin and separated unto God. In conversion, God sets us apart from the “world” unto Himself. Keep in mind, that the “world” doesn’t merely speak of the planet upon which we live, but to an ungodly system that runs contrary to divine holiness.

Jesus Prayed for the Oneness of All Believers v.20-26

These verses prove that Jesus prayed for not only those disciples who were present with Him at the time, “but for them also which shall believe on” Him in the future. Those of us who are His followers of today are the believers for whom He prayed this prayer. Christ had His entire future New Testament Church in mind when He prayed this prayer. Just stop and think about that! If you are one of God’s redeemed children, then He was praying for me and you!! Today, He is serving as our Mediator at the right hand of God the Father and continues interceding for us when we pray!!! In this third petition of Christ’s prayer are discovered several requests uttered on our behalf.

Jesus prayed for the unity of believers v.21-22

Division within the “body” (Col. 1:18) of Christ must, no doubt, break the heart of God. Just as the “Father” revealed Himself through His “Son,” the “Son” wants to reveal Himself through His followers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Let me remind you that all true followers are born again believers who are birthed into the family of God by the Holy Spirit. In other

words, all genuine Christians possess the Holy Spirit. That's what makes us a Christian. If we are saved then we ought to be bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5). The old song expresses it so well when it says, "let others see Jesus in you, keep telling the story, be faithful and true, let others see Jesus in you." The desire of our Lord is for His "church" to know harmony in "Christ" like the "Father" and "Son" know it (v.11,22).

The oneness spoken of by Jesus describes our mystical union in Him through the new birth. Organically, this prayer has already been answered because the "church" is one body in Christ (I Cor. 12:12-14). Unfortunately, far too often believers don't act like they love Jesus or one another. Strife, anger, and discord has torn many local assemblies in factions and wrecked many testimonies. The merging of denominations, in and of itself, cannot and will not produce the kind of unity for which Jesus prayed. Spiritual unity comes from within by the work of the Holy Spirit and can never be achieved by human effort. Being one in Christ is the result of our transforming encounter unto "eternal life."

The "glory" that Christ has "given" us is our hope of glorification at which time we shall have face to face fellowship in His eternal presence (Rom. 8:30). Now, let's notice again how Christ referred to the fact that our future glorification is as good as done. He said in His prayer, "I have given them." That which God promises is as good as done.

Jesus prayed for the evangelization of the "world" v.23

Remember, evangelism is the telling of the good news of the Gospel and not everyone who hears with the external ear will hear with the internal "ears" (Matt. 11:15) of the soul and respond in faith. The Greek word that we find in this verse for "perfect" is TELEIOO and carries the idea of completion, not sinless perfection. Sinlessness will not be reached in this life, but only for the child of God in the life to come. The Christian's absolute state of perfection will not be realized until death at which time the sinful nature will be eradicated. Until then, God is in the business of sanctifying us that we may be "made

perfect.” The more we are conformed into His likeness, the more “the world” can see Jesus in us and realize God’s “love.”

God wants “the world” to “know” who Jesus is and the commission to do the telling has been given to the “church” (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 1:8). Nothing is more convincing of God’s power to save from sin than the testimony of a regenerated sinner. Being transformed into a “new creature” (II Cor. 5:17) “in Christ,” proclaims to the “world” that God “so loved” (Jh. 3:16) that He “sent” His “only begotten Son” to pay our sin debt.

Jesus prayed for the eternal gathering of His “elect” v.24-26

Heaven will be a place of “perfect” unbroken fellowship with God. The next great event on God’s prophetic calendar will be the second coming of Jesus Christ at which time all God’s redeemed people will be raised up to be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:16-17, Titus 2:13). When that time comes, we shall “behold” His “glory” like we’ve never done before.

Until we either meet the Lord in the air or in death, we must faithfully “declare” to the “world” what the mission of Jesus is all about. To “declare” God’s name (I Jh. 4:8) is to “declare” His “love wherewith” He “loved” Christ and “the world” (Jh. 3:16). God’s great desire for His “church” is for His “love” to be manifested in our lives. The “world” should “know” that we’re Christians by the way God’s “love” radiates from within us.

The entire life of Christ was a life of prayer, but in this text, is recorded a very special time of intercession. It was a time when Jesus prayed for YOU and ME as a born again believer. It gives us a little glimpse of what Jesus is doing now as He is seated on the “right hand” of “God” the “Father” (Rom. 8:34). We can take great comfort in the fact that today through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the High Priestly ministry of Christ, we are being represented before the throne of Almighty God (Rom. 8:26-27, Heb. 7:25).

Christ not only has “power” to save us from our sin, but to intercede for us, making our petitions known to our Heavenly Father. For over thirty-three years, Jesus lived a perfect life as

the GodMan. For over three years, Jesus fulfilled His divine role as Prophet, speaking to men for His “Father.” For over twenty centuries, Jesus has been serving as our Great High Priest, speaking to God on behalf of believers. When He returns, He will come as Lord of Lords and King of Kings forever and forever! Today, are you one for whom He is interceding and if He returned today, are you one for whom He would come and receive unto Himself?

Chapter 4

Conditions of Answered Prayer

“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.” (I Jh. 5:14-15)

It was Ron Dunn who said that, “only two things determine the answer to any prayer. First, the prayer must be according to the “will” of God. Secondly, the pray-er must be according to the “will” of God.” Andrew Murray, a great Scottish preacher who lived during the turn of the 19th Century wrote, “when we learn to regard it (prayer) as the highest part of the work entrusted to us, the root and strength of all other work, we shall see that there is nothing that we so need to study and practice as the art of praying aright.”

Believers need to realize that nothing lies outside the reach and power of prayer except that which lies outside God’s “will.” Learning how to pray in accordance with God’s “will” is a necessity if we’re to see the correct answers to our prayers. From our text, we discover the conditions of answered prayer emphasized in the principles, problems, and promises of prayer.

The Principles of Prayer v.14

This Greek word for “confidence” means assurance or boldness that guarantees us “access” to God (Eph. 3:12, Heb. 4:16). The “confidence” that we have in Christ is a result of the Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration and empowerment in our lives. Praying in “confidence” is the same as “praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). Only as we surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit can we know the will of God. The Holy Spirit not only empowers us for Christian service, but teaches us how to pray in God’s “will.” To pray in the power of the Holy Spirit is to know that He is making “intercession for us” because He not only

knows the “mind” of the Spirit, but the “will of God” (Rom. 8:26-27).

The primary purpose of prayer is to see God’s “will” done on earth and not man’s will done in heaven. True prayer is more than saying words, it is searching for God’s “will” and then yielding ourselves to it. Any petition that lies outside the “will” of God is doomed to failure. If we want God to answer our prayers, we must pray according to His “will.” God is not trying to make things difficult for us by requiring us to pray in His “will,” but is desiring what is best for us. From God’s Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit, believers can discover God’s “will” (I Jh. 3:22-24).

God’s Word reveals God’s “will” by unveiling His precious promises to His saints that should be claimed in patience and by faith. While many of life’s answers are spelled out clearly in Scripture, there are many concerns that are not directly covered and we must depend upon the Holy Spirit for direction.

Praying in the “name” of Jesus simply refers to praying according to God’s “will” through the intercession of Christ (Jh. 14:13-14). There is no way to reach God the “Father” except through God the “Son” (Jh. 16:26). Just because we ask God for something, doesn’t mean we’ll always get what we want (Matt. 21:22). Remember that the secret to asking, believing, and receiving is to believe the same thing God believes. This means that a genuine prayer of faith must be rooted in the “will” of God.

Today’s name-it and claim-it theology is not biblical. Prayer is not trying to get God to do something that He doesn’t want to do, but it’s having Him glorified in and through our lives. Scripture teaches that prayer doesn’t change God (Heb. 13:8), but it changes the one doing the praying by conforming (Rom. 8:29) him to God’s “will.” George Muller said, “prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness.

The Problems of Prayer v.15a

The key word in considering the various problems in our prayer life is “if.” Prayer is not optional for a believer, it’s something that God expects His children to do. At the time, Jesus gave His disciples the model prayer, He didn’t say, “if” ye pray, but “when ye pray” (Matt. 6:7). However, there are certainly hindrances that come our way that can keep us from an effective prayer life.

In living the Christian life, we must realize that we have an “enemy” (Matt. 13:39) and our “adversary” (I Pet. 5:8) will do everything possible to keep us from praying. I’ll be the first to admit that Satan often tries to get me side-tracked when I’m trying to concentrate during my prayer time. We must put forth a deliberate effort to stay focused when meditating on the things of God.

After listing all the parts of a believer’s “armor,” we’re told to use them in “prayer and supplication” (Eph. 6:18). “Prayer” and the “Word of God” are the only two defensive pieces of “armor” given the Christian in his warfare against Satan, our enemy and adversary. The more violently the enemy attacks, the more earnestly we ought to pray. Since effective Christian ministry within the Church is dependent upon prayer, the “Devil” uses all his power in getting us to neglect it. Spiritual warfare is either won or lost on the battlefield of prayer. Scripture warns us of things used by Satan to rob us of the assurance that God will “hear us.”

An unconfessed sin hinders prayer Isa. 59:1-2

Carnality is perhaps one if not the main cause of prayerlessness in the life of a believer. We’ll never be able to lay hold of heaven, unless we let go of the world (Ps. 139:23-24). It’s impossible to pray in the Spirit and walk after the flesh at the same time. The flesh can say it’s prayers, but unless the Holy Spirit dominates the throne of our hearts, we cannot truly pray our prayers.

An unyielded spirit hinders prayer Jam. 4:3

God doesn't honor the request of a selfish saint. Selfish praying is sinful praying and for that reason so much of our praying is "amiss." If our prayer does not bring glory to God, then it's in vain. Unless we're totally yielded to that which God wants in our lives, then whatever attempt we make at praying is not biblical praying.

An unforgiving attitude hinders prayer Mk. 11:25

God not only sees what we do and hears what we say but He knows the motive behind it all. If we've hurt a brother, then we need to repent and seek his forgiveness so that God can hear us when we pray. A bitter spirit will kill our prayer lives.

An unbelieving heart hinders prayer Jam. 1:5-7

Unfortunately, we have too often made prayer nothing but a religious ritual in our church services. Week after week we pray for God to bless us in our unfaithfulness and faithlessness. God won't honor anyone who wallows in the filth of the world on a Saturday night and plays church on Sunday morning. Many professing Christians of our day substitute a feeble prayer for a life of godly obedience. The basic cause for so much prayerlessness is unbelief and the root cause for unbelief is sin in our lives. Most people find it easier to sit around saying prayers than getting up and putting feet on their prayers. For example, it's easier to pray for God to meet the financial needs of our local church than to give our tithes and offerings.

The Promises of Prayer v.15b

The secret to answered prayer is for the pray-er to accept the promises of God's Word and pray in accordance to God's "will." Without seeking and knowing the mind of God, it is senseless to pray. Unless the Holy Spirit guides us in prayer and the Lord Jesus intercedes to the Father, we have not prayed.

To pray according to the “will” of God, we must pray according to the Word of God. It’s a waste of time to pray about something that God has made perfectly clear from His Word. For example, there is no need for a Christian to pray about whether to marry an unbeliever because the Bible says, “be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (II Cor. 6:14). There’s a time to pray, but there’s also a time for action when we put God’s truths in practice through daily obedient living. We need to remember that the Book of James is dealing with not only believing right, but behaving right. There are many churches and individual Christians who have a good doctrine, but make no attempt at living what they claim to believe.

God has given His children the heavenly privilege of conversing with Him in prayer. But, in order to have an effective prayer life, we must do more than merely act spiritual. We must be genuinely committed to God in obedient holy living (I Sam. 15:22). Robert Murray McCheyne once said, “what a man is in his prayer closet is what he is.”

It’s possible to preach to a congregation, teach a Sunday School class, sing beautiful songs, or even talk to a lost person about Christ without being right with God yourself because these acts are person to person encounters. However, it’s impossible to pray without being right with God, because prayer is a person to God encounter and no man can fake it with the Almighty (Jam. 5:16). Unless the heart is acceptable to God nothing we do will be acceptable to Him. One’s personal life and prayer life are inseparably connected.

God is not all that interested in the mechanics or gestures of our worship, but in the disposition of our hearts. That is why Scripture says that those who worship the Lord, must do so in “spirit and in truth.” When Paul spoke of “lifting up ... holy hands” (I Tim. 2:8), the emphasis is not so much on our “hands,” but upon our holiness. The life of the pray-er must be a “holy” life walking in personal fellowship with God seeking God’s “will” above his own. Being honest before God, let’s ask ourselves if such a description fits us. Are we more concerned in what God wants or in what we want?

Chapter 5

A Sinner's Prayer

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit. *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.” (Ps. 51:1-19)

On the back of many Gospel tracts, it's common to find (what some people call) the sinners prayer. Let me make one thing clear. There are no "magic" words to say, repeat, or pray that will bring salvation to your soul. I remember at some point and time in one of my pastorates, a woman who had two small children came to me one day supposedly being concerned about their salvation. She told me that, "they had not prayed the prayer." We are not saved by saying a ritualistic prayer. In fact, we are not saved by praying any prayer. What does the Bible say? Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Eph. 2:8-9 tells us "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." I'm sure that we can find instances in the Bible that we can refer to as a sinner's prayer, such as when the "publican ... smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk 18:13). Another beautiful occasion is found in the subject matter of this chapter.

The words recorded in our text are believed to be those of David after Nathan the prophet rebuked him for his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah (II Sam. 12:1-7). Like a wall that had been erected between David and God, his sin had disrupted his "fellowship" (I Jh. 1:3) with the Almighty. Being burdened and crushed by the weight of his sin, David cried out to be restored to fellowship with God.

David not only pleaded for mercy, but also acknowledged his need for cleansing. More than anything else, he wanted "a clean heart" and a renewed "right spirit" with his God. He wanted the assurance of God's forgiveness and "presence" in his life like he had once known before.

David's Prayer of Repentance v.1-9

We are reminded from David's prayer that this matter of repentance is not a once in a lifetime happening for the Christian. Daily, we need to examine our hearts to see if sin has raised its ugly head and hindered our fellowship with Christ. If so, then we

need the Grace of God to humble ourselves before Him in repentance.

David cried out for “mercy” (v.1)

As David approached God, he began his petition with a plea for “mercy.” Asking God to “have mercy upon” him was requesting for God to respond to him in a way that he did not deserve. His request was based on the “lovingkindness” of God like an appeal made by a child to the parent.

David’s plea was probably based on God’s covenant made to him earlier in his life (II Sam. 7:8-17). Grace has been defined as God giving to us what we don’t deserve and “mercy” has been defined as God withholding from us what we do deserve. No man should ever want what he deserves from God because “all” (Rom. 3:23) of us deserve Hell. Only God’s “mercy” withholds His hand of wrath from repentant believers. David’s plea for “mercy” was based on the “lovingkindness” that God expressed in his covenant to him as the king of Israel.

Even though a believer sins, like David, God relates to us as a loving “Father” (Gal. 4:6, Heb. 12:5-11). He does not disown us nor abandon His promises made to us when we “sin” (Rom. 8:33-39). But, although He despises our sin, He still loves us and restores us to “fellowship” when we “confess” (I Jh. 1:9).

“According” to God’s “tender mercies” (compassion), David asked for his “transgressions” to be blotted out. “Blot out” means to remove, erase wipe out, or to get rid of. It was his way of asking God to clear the account of his sin just like a creditor would cross out the record of debt owed by the debtor. In so doing, no new document or receipt was written to show that a payment was made, but the previous record was simply scratched out as though it never existed (Ps. 103:12).

David’s sins were extensive and severe, but he pleaded with God to erase them from His record of memory. For a believer, God forgives and forgets those “trespasses” that we confess unto Him (Col. 2:13-14). When a child does something wrong, a

parent has either the option of showing compassion or discipline. As a child of God, our Heavenly Father has the same options, and in the case of David, he recognized and confessed his sins and begged God for “mercy.”

David requested cleansing from his “sin” (v.2)

Genuine repentance desires complete cleansing and a forsaking of “sin.” David did not merely call what he did a mistake, but he declared it to be “sin.” For repentance to be genuine, it must be personal as it was with David. I call your attention to the way he referred to himself with the words, “me ... mine” and “my.” We like to talk about other people’s sins, but not our own. We like to think that our sin is not as bad as someone else’s. We like to think that God can forgive us, but not the other person. I’m reminded of the song that Stuart Hamblen wrote many years ago entitled, It is no Secret. He penned the words referring to God, “What He’s done for others, He’ll do for you.” David pointed his finger at himself and asked God to “wash me” and “cleanse me from my sin.” Real sorrow from sin will cause one to face up to it and humbly “confess” it.

The KJV word “thoroughly” literally means through and through and can be translated thoroughly or completely. It was David’s way of describing how he wanted God to “wash” (Jh. 13:6-10) him from his “iniquity.” Iniquity in this verse refers to a willful violation of God’s laws. David wanted God to “cleanse” him vigorously and completely from his sin. He wanted even the stain of his sin to be removed and for that reason he asked for a thorough cleansing. Sin includes all manner of shortcomings and failures in the sight of God whether deliberate or not.

David confessed his sin (v.3-4)

The first step in repentance of sin is contrition (brokenness) followed by confession, which is merely agreeing with God about our wrongdoing. It's been said that before God can ever use a person, then He must first break that person. That was true of David and it's still true today. In expression of his sorrow for sin, David acknowledged his "transgressions" (rebellion). This demonstrated his genuine attitude of repentance before God. When these sins were committed, David was not merely some immature lad, but a grown man who had become ruler over the nation of Israel. He did not try to shift the blame of his sin on someone else, but took full responsibility for his actions.

True confession of sin is not some insincere admission of guilt, but a real consciousness of one's sinfulness before Almighty God. Wherever David went or whatever he did, the thought of his sin was "ever before" him. The shame and remorse of his unconfessed sin loomed over him constantly and he could not escape its haunting presence. Unfortunately, in our culture of today, sin is more publicly flaunted than it is despised. People get on national TV and boast about their adultery, fornication, living together outside of holy wedlock, and having illegitimate children. When people don't see anything wrong with their sin, they tell you a great deal about themselves.

Although, his sin involved Bathsheba and Uriah, he stated that "against" God "only" had he "sinned." When we "sin ... against" others, we must realize that it is ultimately "against" God that we "sin." Simply because, it's with God that we must eventually deal regarding the issue of sin. There is really no such thing as private sin, because all sin is against God regardless toward whom it is directed. It is because of our sin that Christ became our Substitute in suffering the wrath of God in our stead on the cross. We must recognize ourselves as sinners in need of a Savior and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only acceptable sacrifice and payment for our sin.

Up to this point in our text, David has used four different words to describe the disobedience of sin. First, (v.1,3) he refers to sin as "transgressions" which means to step over God's

boundary line and rebel against Him. Secondly, (v.2) he refers to sin as “iniquity” which speaks of something that is altogether wrong. Thirdly, (v.2,3,4) he calls his wrongdoing “sin” and admits that he has sinned which literally means missing God’s mark of holiness. Fourthly, (v.4) he calls sin that which is “evil” meaning that which is wrong in the eyes of God.

David realized his depravity (v.5-6)

The sin nature of David existed since the very time of his conception. His being conceived “in sin” didn’t mean that his birth was illegitimate or that he was born out of wedlock. It spoke of his human depravity from his very beginning and how he was a sinner by nature from conception in his mother’s womb.

Sin has been programmed into the human race from generation to generation. David’s mother bore him into a world of “iniquity” just like our mothers did us. This in no way excuses us from our sin, but it does remind us of our sinful conditions that stand in constant contrast to God’s holy truth and pure wisdom. Man’s sin problem cannot be solved by treating only the symptoms, but by a change of heart brought about through the power of God’s Spirit in the new birth.

David sought a solution (v.7-9)

First of all, David asked God to “purge” him “with hyssop” so that he could “be clean.” In the Old Testament, Israelites used “hyssop” for purposes of ritual cleansing, such as in the case of lepers (Lev. 14:1-7). David’s plea was no doubt for internal as well as external washing since he sinned with his flesh and bore the guilt of it in his soul.

Secondly, David asked God to once again let him “hear joy and gladness.” Apparently, his sin had dulled his spiritual senses, taken the song out of his heart, removed the spring out of his step, and caused him to lose the “joy” of his “salvation” (v.12). The “broken ... bones” to which he spoke must have referred to the crushing effect of Nathan’s rebuke concerning his adultery with Bathsheba. A broken bone can be a very painful thing and

take some time to heal. When God breaks us, it hurts, but it's for our good. Instead of being able to sing the sweet songs of Zion that had once caused him to "rejoice," his sin was painful to him which caused him to be remorseful and sorrowful.

Thirdly, David asked God to remove his "sins and blot out all" his "iniquities." Asking God to "hide" his "face from my sins" was David's way of seeking forgiveness and restoration. David was well aware of the fact that God knew all about his horrible sins. But, he desired for God to forgive his sins and blot them out of His divine remembrance (Ps. 103:12). Only God could do that and restore the peace that he had previously known.

David's Prayer of Renewal v.10-11

Spiritual renewal is sometimes known as revival. We need to realize that revival is something that can only happen to a Christian. There must be at least a spark of life before one can experience renewal. Where there is no life there is deadness and a dead person needs resurrection and not renewal. Therefore, let's understand that both salvation and revival is a sovereign act of God. Only God can orchestrate either of these graces in the life of a sinner.

David prayed for a "clean heart" and a "right spirit" (v.10)

The scriptural use of the word, "heart," is not referring to the physical organ of the body that beats in the cavity of one's chest. It's talking about the center of one's life and emotions, or in other words, the inner person. If the core of one's being is not "right," then one's life cannot be "right" (Prov. 23:7). Just as only God can "create" something from nothing, He alone can make the dirty wicked "heart" of man "whiter than snow" (Isa. 1:18). The words of the songwriter expressed it so well when he asked and answered the question, "What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus."

To have a "right spirit" is a term that comes from the Hebrew word KUWN, meaning steadfast, firm, or fixed. David had entertained sinful thoughts and carried out some dreadful sins.

But, now the desire of his heart was for God to “renew a right spirit within” him. He wanted a restored “fellowship” like he had previously known as a young shepherd boy that would be steadfastly fixed upon God.

David prayed for God’s restored “presence” (v.11)

David pleaded with God for “mercy” and forgiveness so that he be “not ... cast ... away” from His “presence.” To be cast away from God’s presence is a matter of suffering the judgment of God which David begged God to avert. Although, we all deserve nothing but God’s judgment, we can experience “mercy” because of His marvelous saving sovereign “grace” (Eph. 2:8) and redeeming “love” (I Jh. 4:7).

Not only did David want forgiveness of his sin but a renewed and continued fellowship with his God. The Holy Spirit has always been a part of the Trinity and existent from the “beginning” (Gen. 1:1-2). However, the Holy Spirit took on a new dimension in the New Testament following the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ (Jh. 14:16-18,26). When a Christian sins today, God does “not” take “away” the indwelling Holy Spirit from us, but it does “grieve” the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30-32) and robs us of spiritual fellowship and blessings. It can also cause God to chasten us back into subjection (Heb. 12:5-11) because “whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

David’s Prayer of Restoration v.12-19

Repentance, renewal, and restoration are all acts of God’s grace upon hell deserving sinners whom He has chosen to redeem. God’s ideal plan for man was interrupted by sin in the Garden of Eden. The paradise that God gave man in creation can only be restored by the accomplishment of Jesus Christ on the cross. The “first Adam” got us in a whole peck of trouble, but the “last Adam” came to get us out and restore that which sin interrupted (I Cor. 15:45).

David prayed for a restored “joy” (v.12-17)

When we sin against God, we rob ourselves of the “joy” of the Lord in sweet fellowship and heavenly communion. Walking and living in the center of God’s will gives the Christian a “joy” that is unspeakable and a peace beyond human comprehension. If Satan can rob us of that fellowship, then he has robbed us of our “joy” that the world knows nothing about. It’s a “joy” living for the Lord and a “joy” serving Him by serving others. It’s a “joy” being able to pray and talk to the One and Only God of all creation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

David cried out that he once again wanted to “teach transgressors thy ways” and see people “converted” to the Lord. If we lose our testimony, then we lose our effectiveness as a witness for the Lord Jesus. Therefore, David wanted God to deliver him for his “bloodguiltiness,” or in other words from the shedding of innocent blood. No doubt, he was referring to the blood of Uriah the husband of Bathsheba that he had placed on the frontlines of duty in the battlefield with the intent of having him killed.

It was David’s desire to once again “sing aloud” and “praise” the Lord in sweet fellowship like he had known before his downfall. God had ordained the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, but if it amounted to no more than mere ritual, then God could not be please with less than heart-felt obedience (I Sam. 15:22). David proclaims that “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

David prayed for a restored “Zion” (v.18-19)

In the Old Testament, “Zion” often referred to the city of Jerusalem. As king of Israel, David felt the responsibility of leadership in the nation. He realized that his sin as well as his repentance could have a profound effect upon the kingdom over which he ruled. In other words, his restoration could prove to be a spiritual blessing to the people over which he ruled.

Herein is a reminder to not only the leaders of our nation, but to the entire Christian community of how important our testimony for Christ is in our nation. A prayer of godly repentance can not only be beneficial to the individual who is praying it, but to one's family, and even the "land" in which they live. With that thought, I'm reminded of II Chron. 7:14, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

We need to learn, like David, that sin disrupts a believer's fellowship with God and its tentacles can be far reaching into even the land in which we live. It not only affects us spiritually, but it also inflicts physical, psychological, and emotional pain. Therefore, the desire of every believer should be a longing for unbroken fellowship with God and a consistent testimony before our peers.

To guard against unbroken fellowship, we need to resist temptation and have the same attitude toward sin as does God Himself. When and if sin hinders our fellowship with God, then we must learn, like David, that confession is the first step to renewal. For us to have a restored fellowship, there must be a repentant spirit and heart-felt remorse for our sin. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. Instead of resenting it, we ought to welcome it and thank God for granting it to us.

This prayer of David recorded in Psalm 51 shows his request before God for the Lord to clean the dirt out of his heart and renew him to a place of spiritual joy. Perhaps, we as Christians have not committed the same exact sins as did David, but we all, can relate to him as we feel the guilt of remorse for having somehow failed our Lord. "All" of us "have sinned" and "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Repentance and restoration will lead the backslider to a place of spiritual usefulness and blessing, just like it did for King David (Acts 13:22).

Chapter 6

Intercessory Prayer

“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. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and

understand thy truth. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. And whiles I *was* speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I *was* speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” (Dan. 9:3-21)

The recorded prayer of Daniel in our text is considered to be one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture. This chapter begins by telling us that Daniel had been studying the Book of Jeremiah (v.1-2). Bible study and prayer must go together (Acts 6:4). Reading the Bible without prayer results in spiritual coldness and prayer without reading the Bible leads to fanaticism. Daniel was especially interested in the seventy years of Babylonian Captivity that had been foretold by Jeremiah the

prophet (Jer. 25:11-12, 29:4-10). At this time, Daniel was over eighty years of age, meaning that he was taken captive while a teenager and that the seventy years were near completion.

Although, there was no Jewish temple where prayer was offered in Babylon nor had there been one in existence since the destruction of Jerusalem, Daniel remained faithful all through these years in spending time with God in prayer. The spiritual things that Daniel had been taught in his youth apparently remained with him down through the years. Don't forget, that it was Daniel's faithful prayer life that got him thrown into a den of lions as is recorded in the sixth chapter of this Book that bears his name. Most likely it was the same year that this particular prayer is recorded. Daniel was a great prayer warrior (one who wages war in prayer) who did not apologize for his intercession with God. This intercessory prayer in our text is an Old Testament model of confession and supplication which God has ordained for the accomplishment of His will within His people.

Confession v.3-15

In preparation for prayer, Daniel fasted and clothed himself in "sackcloth and ashes" (v.3). Biblical fasting is a means of showing God how serious we are about our prayer petitions. Fasting is a denial of the bodily appetites for spiritual purposes. It can be a blessed discipline demonstrating how much we mean business with God. Fasting was never given as a command in Scripture, but was looked upon as something over and above what was required (II Cor. 11:27).

Taking off his royal robes of the Persian Court that signified power and authority, Daniel dressed in "sackcloth and ashes" that were traditional signs of mourning and tokens of humiliation. "Sackcloth" was a coarse cloth often used as a sack for grain. "Ashes" were merely smeared to the "sackcloth" as a symbol of grief.

When I was a child, it was customary for people to wear black to funerals, but all that has changed down through the years. This

is just a reminder of how customs change, but the truths of God's Word remain the same. For Daniel at this time in his life, these garments spoke of his sorrow for the way Israel had sinned against God. None of this was done for show, but to reveal the sincerity of his heart. It simply teaches us that successful prayer begins with the attitude within our hearts. Daniel came before God much like Christ came to us (Phil. 2:1-11). He took off His robes of glory and dressed in garments of humility. He set aside His own rights and became a "mediator" (I Tim. 2:5) for sinful man.

As Daniel prayed, he associated himself with the sins of Israel and acknowledged his oneness with them (v.4-6). Marveling at God's grace, he praises Him for being so "great" and "awesome" (DREADFUL). He came before God with thanksgiving upon his lips and an attitude of worship in his heart. His attitude is one of a petitioner (beggar) rather than one who is demanding his rights from God. Prayer is not answered based on what we claim or demand in Jesus name (Jh. 14:13-14), but on the basis of God's grace and mercy.

Daniel did not merely say that THEY have sinned, but "we have sinned ... committed iniquity ... done wickedly, and have rebelled ... by departing from" God's "precepts and ... judgments." It's interesting to note, that Scripture doesn't record a single sin committed by Daniel. This doesn't mean that he was sinless because he wasn't and he readily identified himself with the sins of his people. However, he did live a godly life of separation in a heathen society.

When Daniel approached God in prayer, he didn't try to cover up the shameful facts because that is impossible to do in the sight of our omniscient God. We might be able to hide our sin from each other, but not from God (Num. 32:23). It's time for us to quit calling our sins a mistake or making light of them, but see sin for what it is in God's sight. If we want God to withdraw his judgment from us, then we too had best recognize that there is sin in the camp and be ashamed of what it is doing to us individually, to our homes, and to our church family (Rev. 2:4-

5). Unless we get rid of our grudges, animosities, carelessness, jealousies, resentments, selfishness, pride, and sour attitudes, we'll never know how to truly "love" (I Jh. 3) our brethren much less obey God.

Daniel recognized that God's judgment upon Israel during the Babylonian Captivity had been a fulfillment of earlier prophecies which resulted from their disobedience (Lev. 26:32-39, Deut. 27:15-26, 28:63-68). Within sixteen verses of this chapter, confession of sin is made over twenty-two times. Each time that it is mentioned, Daniel does not excuse himself, but uses the personal pronouns, "we" ... "us" and "our." If we ever see real revival, we're going to have to humble ourselves and confess our sin.

Daniel appealed to God based on His Holy "righteousness" and not on the merit of Israel (v.7-16). When we read the words, "confusion of face," it refers to the shame felt by the people. Today, the shame of sin has been lost not only by people outside the church, but inside as well. We can only attribute this to a withdrawal of the Holy Spirit Who convicts of "sin ... righteousness ... and of judgment" (Jh. 16:8). Instead of making excuses for our sin, we should be ashamed of violating God's Word and breaking God's heart.

Israel had done nothing worthy of God's blessings, but had done everything deserving of His judgment. Just as God had delivered Israel from Egyptian Bondage, Daniel pleaded for God to deliver them from Babylonian Captivity. He confessed that all the evil that had befallen Israel was because they had broken the "Law of Moses."

Until we acknowledge our worthlessness and God's "righteousness," we'll never enjoy a spiritual relationship with Christ. We need to come to grips with the fact that our own personal "righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Apart from the "imputed ... righteousness" of Christ, it's impossible to be right with God (Rom. 3:26). The word, "righteousness," simply means to be right with God. From our text, we not only learn that lost sinners need to get right with God, but wayward,

backslidden believers. I remind you of what John wrote in the Book of Revelation to the church of Ephesus that “left” their “first love.” Christ told them to “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:4-5).

Supplication v.17-19

Daniel admitted that God had been just in bringing punishment upon Israel during the years of captivity. Like Israel, we are deserving of everything bad that comes our way. But, because of God’s “great mercies,” He allows us to experience His grace when He grants us a heart of repentance that will turn us to Him (Lam. 3:22). The reason Daniel prayed for the “desolate ... city” of “Jerusalem” is because God had promised to rebuild it after the captivity (Jer. 29:10-14, 30:10-24, Isa. 44:28). Therefore, in faith Daniel was merely laying hold of God’s great promises found in His Word. Likewise, we need to learn the Word and trust God to fulfill His “will” (I Jh. 5:14-15). We can hold God to His Word because He is faithful to fulfill it. That which He says, He will do.

Daniel concludes his prayer by asking God to “forgive” their “sin.” Until we have learned how to pray for forgiveness, we haven’t learned how to pray (Matt. 6:15). If we don’t come before God with “clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps. 24:4), then we can’t come before him at all in prayer.

Christians need to pray for the church just as Daniel prayed for Israel. In Daniel’s prayer, he inferred that God’s name was in jeopardy if He didn’t fulfill His promises to Israel. We also, must recognize God’s “judgment” (I Pet. 4:17) upon the modern-day church and seek forgiveness of sin and restoration of fellowship (Rev. 3:14-22). The church doesn’t belong to us, it belongs to Christ. She is His “body” (Rom. 12:4-5) and “bride” (Rev. 21:2); therefore, her survival is dependent upon Him. Today, Christ is concerned about His “bride” because she’s spiritually sick and

for the most part, doesn't even seem to realize it. However, there is coming a day when she (the bride) shall be presented to Christ "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26).

In Conclusion

At the conclusion of this recorded prayer, God interrupts Daniel by giving him the great vision of the seventy weeks (v.20-23). The Lord showed Daniel that the seventy years of Babylonian Captivity was only a type of a longer dispersion which would last seven times as long. Through the angel Gabriel, God revealed a time frame in which future prophecies would hinge. There are many various eschatological views pertaining to these seventy weeks of Daniel, but I'll refrain from getting off on that subject, and merely stick to my subject at hand.

When Daniel was praying, God answered his prayer. When we pray, we must do more than go through the motions of saying words, we need to expect answers. It's not necessarily the length of our prayers that count, but the condition of our hearts when we pray. This recorded prayer of Daniel is relatively short like most all the recorded prayers in Scripture (only a few minutes in length). The issue is not how long we pray, but that we get serious with God when we pray. Before we become critical of written prayers, let's remember that God's Word has several recorded prayers prayed by some of God's greatest spiritual giants. Some of the recorded prayers in the Bible are those of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:5-11), Ezra (Ez. 9:5-15), and Jesus Himself (Jh. 17). In fact, Daniel's prayer is very similar to the one prayed by Solomon when he dedicated the temple (I Kings 8:22-53). Daniel's prayer was not a public prayer, but a private prayer of intercession.

Intercessory prayer means for a believer to plead with God on behalf of someone else. In Daniel's case, he was making his petitions for the nation of Israel. As he confessed the sins of Israel, he also assumed guilt and admitted to God that they had

been a rebellious people. Not only did he confess their sins, but in supplication, he humbly begged God for mercy and forgiveness. Like Israel, we have rebelled against our God. We have not kept His Word and are covered with shame. God is waiting for us with outstretched arms anxious to extend His mercy to every repentant saint and sinner.

Chapter 7

Prayer and Fasting

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, *Here I am*. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the noonday: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and

thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.” (Isa. 58:1-11)

This message is not intended to be an exhaustive in-depth study on the subject of “prayer and fasting” (Mk. 9:29). However, the Bible does speak on the subject and we need to hear what it has to say. In the critical hour in which we live on the world scene, perhaps it would do us good to consider returning to the practice of “fasting” along with “prayer” if the Lord so impresses us.

Prayer and fasting are two subjects that are often found grouped together in the Word of God (Acts 10:30, 14:23). They are frequently connected with a great need in the life of some individual or nation. Although, Scripture does sometimes link prayer and fasting, they are not always mentioned together (I Thess. 5:17,25). People can pray without fasting, but generally when people fasted for biblical purposes, they also prayed (Neh. 1:4).

Fasting has been called praying to God without using words. It is a method whereby believers can demonstrate their feelings to God and humble themselves before Him (Ps. 35:13). For most Christians of today, fasting has not been a part of their private devotional life. Sometimes people may fast for health reasons, but the type of fast that we’re going to talk about is abstaining from food for spiritual reasons.

God used the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah (Isa. 1:1), to call Israel to heed the voice of God and get right with Him so that divine judgment could be averted. The theme of chapters 58-59 of Isaiah deals with how sin hinders the manifestation of God’s glory among His people. Isaiah was called to expose Israel’s wicked ways and explain why God rejected their religious acts of worship. Inward “wickedness” and outward “religion” (Jam. 1:26) is sheer hypocrisy and it hurts the cause of Christ as much as anything. Religious members of a local assembly who curse, lie, cheat, steal, and live immoral lives bring reproach on their profession of Christ. Man’s external veneer of godliness is nauseating to God when the “heart” (Ps. 44:21) is not sincerely

right with the Lord. Most of the churchanity that God sees today makes Him, figuratively speaking, sick to His stomach (Rev. 3:16). Unfortunately, on many occasions, the Old Testament people of Israel were as nauseating to God as the Laodician church of today.

Isaiah was commissioned to serve as God's spokesman for the condemnation of Israel's sins. (v.1). It's nothing uncommon for God's messenger to be called to proclaim an unpopular message. Preaching against sin and godless religion will usually always bring down the bitter displeasure of the majority. However, God's messengers are required to be faithful in lovingly declaring the whole council of God regardless of the day in which they live or the circumstances involved (II Tim. 4:2-5). It's never been ease to serve as a "chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15) of God and be commissioned with a divine assignment from the Almighty.

We discover that not only did the New Testament apostles find it difficult to preach, but so did the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah was called by God to deliver a message of rebuke to God's chosen people of the Old Testament. His assignment was to "cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." When it says that Isaiah was to "cry aloud" it means that he was to preach a profound message with a serious tone in his "voice." In other words, he was to sound a signal of alarm with his words just like one would use a ram's horn as a "trumpet." His message was not merely verbalized with his lips, but with the strength of his throat and lungs and feeling in his heart.

The purpose of the message was to "shew" the "people their transgression, and ... sins." The word, "transgression," means to revolt or rebel against God's law which they had done. "Sins" speaks of the actual ways in which they had rebelled against God. People have never liked to have their sins exposed and name-called, but that is exactly what God told Isaiah to do regarding Israel. Their great sin that he stresses in our text is a reliance upon a mere formal ritual of religion apart from a

sincere “heart” (Ps. 37:36-37) devoted to God. He especially addressed the subject of fasting because of how it was being mistreated and abused.

Israel’s Sinful Condition v.2-5

Despite their spiritual rebellion, Israel continued to pretend to be a righteous “nation” (v.2). Our text records the state of Israel, at this particular time in their history, to be one of outward formal religion and also internal “wickedness.” These Israelites regularly attended temple services and kept their Old Testament “ordinance.” They meticulously followed the prescribed forms of Jewish worship. However, something was bad wrong. Their lives bore no evidence of godliness and holiness.

They prided themselves in knowing the ways of God intellectually by keeping the ordinances, but at the same time, they lived in self-deception and delusion. Hypocritically, they carried out “the ordinance of God” and “daily” took “delight” in their religious activities. That which was true in the days of Isaiah is sadly true today in the modern institutionalized church. We live in a society that has reduced the church (Matt. 16:18) of Jesus Christ to no more than a social club, community center, or civic organization. It has become acceptable to identify with some denomination, but living according to the “holy” (Rom. 12:1) standards of God’s Word is entirely a different matter. Instead of seeing the church as a “redeemed” (I Pet. 1:18) “body” (Eph. 1:22-23) of “born again” (Jh. 3:3) sinners, it’s being looked upon as a social gathering for the religiously elite.

Israel’s self-righteous attitude is reflected in their misunderstood concept of what it meant to biblically “fast” (v.3). They seemed to think that by appointing a periodic “fast,” they could atone for their spiritual insincerity. There’s nothing wrong with fasting, but God didn’t give His people fast days, but feast days. It’s generally believed that the only prescribed “fast” required of Israel under the Mosaic Law was on the “day of atonement” (Lev. 16:29, 23:24, Num. 29:7).

The word “fasting” doesn’t appear in reference to the “day of atonement.” But, the term “afflict your souls” is thought to refer to “fasting” all throughout Scripture. In our text are found the words, “afflicted our soul” (v.3) and “afflict his soul” (v.5). “Afflict” is the Hebrew word ANAH which refers to humble or weaken one’s selfish appetite. More than likely, the “fast” recorded by Luke while Paul was enroute to Rome was the “day of atonement” which usually falls toward the end of September (Acts 27:9).

Biblical fasting is an outward expression of the soul, but during Isaiah’s time, Israel had turned it into a mere form of religion. Their reason for fasting was wrong because it had been turned into nothing more than a religious ritual. They even boasted openly of the fact that they fasted, rather than allowing it to be a private matter between the individual and God (Matt. 6:16-18). A spiritual fast should be a time of self-humiliation, but instead the people were proud of their fasting.

God is not obligated to do anything for us just because we fast or go through any other type of religious observance. If one’s spiritual activity is only an outward show and only for one’s own pleasure, then it’s meaningless and unacceptable to God. Man has always loved to go through the motions of external religion because it’s easy and produces a spirit of self-gratification. But, what God wants is for His people to “obey” Him (I Sam. 15:22-23). As we see from Israel, it’s possible to practice religious activity without having a heart that’s in tune with God. That which most people need to do is lose their religion and come to transforming faith in Jesus Christ. Our church houses today are filled with people full of religiosity, but bear no “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-26).

This external righteousness of Israel resulted in “strife and debate” rather than a drawing near to God (v.4). Instead of growing in their “love” (Mk. 12:30-31) for the Lord and for one another (I Jh.3:14), they became violent and contemptible. Israel fasted in an attempt to cover up their other offenses before God, just like many people who attend a church service to save face

before their peers. But, God wasn't impressed with Israel nor did He fail to see the true condition of their heart. They did not fast to gain the attention of God, but of men.

Fasting and acting wickedly don't go together no more than church attendance and ungodly conduct. If you regularly are exposed to the teachings of God's Word and it doesn't change your life for the better, then there is good indication that all you're doing is going through the motions of religious exercise. If people come to church services week after week and remain hateful and troublesome, all they're revealing is their own hypocritical heart (Matt. 23:13-33).

God doesn't object to fasting, however, a legitimate "fast" is an expression of worship that will draw one nearer to God (v.5). This "fast" that was being practiced by Israel had not been "chosen" of God. The Hebrew word for "chosen" is BACHAR which means acceptable, selected, or elected. Their outward fasting didn't reveal the true inward condition of their heart. They were only putting on a public show, like many churches today who have a "form of godliness but" are "denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:5). God has never called us to draw a crowd by means of entertainment, but to be faithful declaring His Word (II Tim. 4:2) and seeking to live "holy" (Rom. 12:1-2).

The only kind of fast that is pleasing to God is one that He has "chosen." God's "chosen ... fast" is more than outward conformity, but internal attitude. One can "bow down his head" and put on "sackcloth and ashes" without having a true humble spirit within. The wearing of "sackcloth" was a sign of mourning or humiliation and the applying of "ashes" symbolized one's worthlessness. As I've stated previously, both were common practices in Biblical days (Neh. 9:1, Esther 4:3, Dan. 9:3). However, if fasting is not motivated from a right heart, it will be a meaningless activity, just like anything else we do for the Lord. Bowing "down the head" and spreading "sackcloth and ashes under" us is no automatic remedy for our "sins," no more than walking down a church aisle or going under the baptismal waters.

Israel's Divine Remedy v.6-7

A genuine spiritual fast is one that is ordered of the Lord (v.6a). The fast that God has chosen for His people is one that is spiritually liberating. What Israel needed was not merely to go through the outward form of some religious practice, but to honestly search their hearts before the Lord. In the fast that is chosen of God, He calls upon His people to recognize the importance of self-judgment. In other words, fasting is not simply denying oneself of a little food, but learning to live a life of self-denial, examining our hearts, and confessing our sins.

Instead of going around looking like you're half-starved to death with a pious look on your face and self-righteous words in your mouth, God wants us to stop sinning and live holy. A genuine fast will cause us to see the wickedness within our hearts and demonstrate our faith to God. For the very same reason God rejected Israel, He is rejecting religious church members of today. If we come to a church service filled with pride, evil, self-righteousness, and sin in our hearts, God cannot bless us. If all we do is go through a form and never draw closer to God, then our worship is in "vain" (Jam. 1:26).

As we think about God's chosen fast, let's pause to examine some Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments that show how fasting for spiritual purposes is biblical. Fasting is a Bible doctrine that dates back to the Old Testament and is supported by the teachings of Christ Himself (Mk. 2:18-20). When Moses received the Ten Commandments, "he did neither eat bread, or drink water ... for forty days and forty nights" (Ex. 34:28). Elijah was also supernaturally sustained for "forty days and forty nights" (I Kings 19:8). Nehemiah "wept ... mourned ... fasted ... and prayed" before rebuilding the Jerusalem walls (Neh. 1:1-4). Daniel received wisdom, guidance, and divine revelation after "fasting" (Dan. 9:3,12). David said that he "humbled" his "soul" with "fasting" which deepened his relationship with God (Ps. 69:10). Esther and Mordecai called a "fast" and God delivered the entire Jewish nation from disaster (Esther 4:3-16). The mighty revival call recorded in the Book of Joel beckoned the people to "fast" and "repent" (Joel 1:14, 2:12-

15). After hearing God's message through Jonah, the people of "Nineveh ... proclaimed a fast" (Jonah 3:5). The prophetess Anna "served God with fastings and prayers night and day" when Jesus was an infant (Lk. 2:36-37). Following His baptism, Jesus spent "forty days" without anything to eat (Lk. 4:1-2). Cornelius was "fasting" when he received God's call to send for Simon Peter (Acts 10:30). The beginning of the mission's program in the New Testament church began after they "fasted and prayed" (Acts 13:2-3). Elders in the early New Testament church were ordained after they had "prayed with fasting" (Acts 14:23). During a storm at sea, Paul and the crew "continued fasting" for fourteen days (Acts 27:33).

Throughout the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, God has directed His people to pray and fast (Matt. 6:6-7, 16-18). Whenever it was done biblically, God often released His supernatural power to accomplish whatever was necessary. Prayer apart from fasting is more commonly practiced by God's people, but fasting along with prayer is biblical. Just remember, biblical fasting is simply doing without food for spiritual purposes. It's more than a physical test or mental exercise. It's not a means of changing God's mind because that never happens, but a means of helping us discover His will and live in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Prayer and fasting played an important part in shaping Israel's history. After a season of prayer and fasting, they saw a great victory over the Philistines after suffering twenty years of oppression (I Sam. 7:5-6). Another time when Jehoshaphat was king and a coalition of Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites joined forces against Judah, they won a remarkable victory without ever fighting in battle after proclaiming a fast (II Chron. 20:3). God even averted the judgment from King Ahab when he temporarily turned from his evil ways and fasted (I Kings 21:27-29). When Ezra began his dangerous journey from Persia to Judah carrying much wealth, he "proclaimed a fast" for a safe journey (Ezra 8:21).

On at least two separate occasions, Jesus instructed His followers on how to fast (Matt. 6:16-18, 9:14-15). Jesus Himself fasted immediately after His baptism (Matt. 4:2), thus setting for

us an example to follow. But, in keeping with the instructions of Jesus, there is no record of His disciples ever fasting until after the death and resurrection of Christ. Fasting was not only a sign of grieving over sin, but mourning in death (I Sam. 7:6, II Sam. 1:12, 12:16, 21-23). As long as Jesus was physically present in the midst of the disciples, it was considered a time of festivity with the “bridegroom.” But, once the “bridegroom” (Matt. 9:15) was taken away in death, it would become a time of fasting. Scripture tells us that Paul “neither did eat nor drink” for “three days” after his conversion on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:9) and apparently often practiced fasting all during his ministry (II Cor. 6:5, 11:27).

Fasting is meaningless unless the heart is right with God and when one is right with God, he will be right with his fellow man (v.6b-7). Characteristics of godly fasting is learning how to be merciful and loving to others as God has been to us. Unless we be loosed from the “bands of wickedness” through the confession of our sins, we’ll be held captive in spiritual bondage by the deception of Satan. Unless we know God’s forgiveness, we’ll not know how to forgive ourselves, and until we forgive ourselves, we’ll have trouble forgiving others (Matt. 6:14). Now, I’m well aware of how some people say that we don’t need to forgive ourselves. I realize that above all we need God’s forgiveness and without that, forgiving ourselves is useless. But, what I mean is that when God forgives us, we shouldn’t allow the Devil to haunt us with guilt from our past. Many believers are carrying heavy burdens that are too heavy for them to bear, simply because they aren’t surrendered to the Lordship of Christ as they ought to be. God’s desire is “to let the oppressed go free” so that those under the “yoke” of satanic oppression can know spiritual liberation.

When we draw nearer to God it will be evidenced in how we want to “love” and help others who are in need (I Jh. 3:17). The closer one gets to God the more conscious he will become of the needs of others. Godly “love” will cause us to share our “bread” with the “hungry,” help shelter the “poor,” and “cover” the “naked.” There’s no way we can have an intimate walk with God without having “compassion” for others (Matt. 9:36).

To profess Christ, but turn your back on people in genuine need is not a true display of Christianity. When one has a heart for God, he should have a heart for people. It's impossible to be hateful and unlovely and be correct in our theology all at the same time. But, just like the Israelites who were playing religion, many today are doing nothing but playing church on Sunday and living like the devil from Monday through Saturday. Religion has become nothing but a satanic cover up for multitudes of people. What sinful man needs is to lose his religion and discover a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Israel's Assured Result v.8-11

The result of genuinely turning to God in repentance, fasting, and prayer is spiritual restoration (v.8). When sin is renounced, God will hear His people, but when they do not hearken to His call, He will not respond to their call (Prov. 1:24-33, 15:29, 28:9). Let's not forget that it is God Who gives us the desires of our hearts (Ps. 37:4). God does not honor and bless disobedience. God will not manifest Himself in a sinfully disobedient people. Only when God's people "repent ... and return" back to Him from their waywardness, will He promise to bless them (Joel. 2:14). Only God can "give repentance" to His people that will evidence itself in a change of heart (Acts 5:31).

Notice the word "then" in our text because it emphasizes God's expectation of grace that we must meet in order to experience the outpouring of His blessings. There are five promises listed in this text wherein God will pour out His blessings on His obedient people.

First, He promises "light" in the midst of darkness (v.8a). It's been said that surrender to God polishes the window of the soul which permits the favor of God to shine in and our "light" to shine out (Matt. 5:14). When there is "light" there is warmth. There is a spiritual warmth from the sunbeam of God that penetrates the soul and reflects "the light of the world" (Jh. 8:12) to others.

Secondly, God promises "health" for the healing of our wounds (v.8b). Believers find themselves in continual combat against the

enemy of our souls. Whenever we get battle scarred from suffering satanic attack and experience physical distress, the Great Physician stands ready to minister “comfort” to our hurts (Acts 9:31) and bind up our wounds.

Thirdly, the Lord promises the protection of His “righteousness” (v.8c). I call your attention to the KJV word, “rereward,” which means rearguard. God’s “righteousness” shall lead us forth and His “glory” will be our rear protection. In other words, we are fully encompassed in God’s protective care over us. He has us completely covered and surrounded with His loving presence.

Fourthly, God promises to “answer” when we “pray” giving guidance and blessing when we bless others (v.9-10). The word prayer is not actually used in our text, but it is most definitely implied in the words, “call” and “cry.” Our prayers can only be heard when we are in “fellowship” (I Jh. 1:5-8) with God and when we “cry” out seeking His “will” (I Jh. 5:14-15). When our “yoke” of sin is removed, then the way is clear for God to hear us (Ps. 66:18). If we would receive of Him, “whatsoever we ask,” it will be “because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (I Jh. 3:22).

Fifthly, the Lord promises to “guide” us and “satisfy” our personal needs (v.11). Sinful man can in no way make himself right with God, but we can get right with God through “faith” (Eph. 2:8) in the “finished” (Jh. 19:30) work of Calvary’s “Lamb” (Jh. 1:29). The blessing of a soul made righteous is not only the assurance of God’s watchcare over him in this life (Matt. 6:25-34), but a home in heaven when he dies (Jh. 14:3).

Closing Thoughts on Fasting and Prayer

At various times in history, there has been a renewed interest in fasting. Today, in the midst of spiritual apathy and complacency there seems to be a new thirst growing among some of God’s people to see the slumbering church wake up and seek the face of God through prayer and fasting. Some of the great saints from past church history practiced fasting, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and David

Brainerd. It's said that John Wesley fasted when he felt the power of God waning in his life and a coldness coming over his heart. Oftentimes, we look upon these well-known saints as super-duper spirituals. However, the truth of the matter is that they were made from the same dirt of the earth we are made from. The main difference between them and many of us in the church of today is that they lived surrendered lives to God and humbled themselves before the Lord in prayer and fasting.

Eating is necessary for human survival, but it's also gotten a lot of people in serious trouble. Eve ate a forbidden piece of fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6). Prior to the flood in Noah's day, the people were preoccupied with "eating and drinking" (Matt. 24:38). Under Aaron's leadership at Sinai, the people "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" (Ex. 32:6).

Eating is one of the most basic physical things that we do and it's only natural for the body to get hungry. When Jesus saw the great multitude that had come to hear Him, He recognized their need for food, had "compassion" on them and miraculously multiplied the "loaves" and "fishes" (Mk. 8:1-9). Cafes, cafeterias, and restaurants by the thousands are all over the place. Even in the average church building of today, the center of much attention often focuses on the kitchen of the fellowship hall or family life center.

Without proper nourishment, we'll soon die, but by depriving ourselves of food in a fast, we acknowledge before God that our spiritual man must be nourished as well as the physical. When we deny the natural for the supernatural, we demonstrate to God the value that we place on His divine intervention in our lives. As a result of practicing a true spiritual fast, we ought to be demonstrating submission and devotion to God and a hunger for His "will" in our lives. In other words, just as the body hungers for physical food, the spiritual man hungers for God's will.

For some people, fasting may not be safe because of their particular medical condition. If severe health problems exist it may be best to first consult your doctor before fasting for an extended period of time. People with health difficulty, such as diabetes, may want to observe only a partial fast by substituting something they prefer for something less preferable. People who

fast merely to lose weight, do not necessarily practice a biblical fast; although, losing weight may be good in caring for the “body” of a Christian which is “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (I Cor. 6:19).

Entering a spiritual fast is not merely starving oneself and it’s more than mere self-denial or abstinence of food. Biblical fasting is doing without food with a spiritual goal and reason in mind. While on a fast it’s good spending time meditating upon God’s Word and talking to God in prayer during the period that would ordinarily be spent eating. Your prayer time may consist of personal, family, church, or national concerns as well as the concerns of friends or acquaintances (Lk. 22:45, Acts 6:4, 12:5, Eph. 6:18, I Pet. 4:7). When we fast, our total attention should be on what God wants and not to get something that we want. Prayer and fasting is wrong when we use it as a bargaining tool with God and try to manipulate Him. Scripture strongly condemns fasting for the wrong reasons with improper motives.

Prayer and fasting demonstrates to God that one is willing to set aside the appetites of the body and concentrates on seeking His favor. It shows God just how serious we are in making our petitions and that God’s will is more important to us than the food which keeps alive. It acknowledges to God that we cannot live “by bread alone” (Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4:4). It intensifies our prayers and shows God just how earnest we are in our praying (Jude 20). It helps to promote spiritual growth by humbling us and allowing us time to examine our hearts and “confess our sins” (I Jh. 1:9). It’s a personal matter between the individual believer and God alone and should be practiced only as we are led by the Holy Spirit. It’s nothing to brag or boast about! In fact, it should be a rather secretive venture between the individual and God.

There are several types of fast implied from the Scriptures. There is the food fast when one goes without eating like Jesus did following His baptism (Lk. 4:2). The food fast is the one that people seem to think about most often when the subject comes to mind. However, another type of fast is what we call an absolute fast. This means that a person goes without eating any food or taking any drink. This is what Ezra did when he mourned the

faithlessness of God's people in exile (Ez. 10:6). Once again, this must only be practiced under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Much can be said about this fast, but let me simply say that it must be done cautiously because the body can go longer without food than it can water. Therefore, if an absolute fast is practiced, there are dangers involved and perhaps certain guidelines to follow. The third fast that I mention is the abstaining of sexual relations in marriage. This of course involves the mutual "consent" that Paul expounded upon in his epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 7:5).

A fast may be for one meal, one day, or a more extended period as the Lord may direct. Depending upon the length of one's fast will determine the type of food and drink to eat or avoid. Some people will totally abstain from food and water for a whole day. Others will refrain from food, and drink only water or juice. Usually, the normal maximum of an absolute fast is no more than three days because any longer period could cause physical injury to the body (I Cor. 3:16, II Cor. 6:16).

The absolute forty day fast mentioned in Scripture were all supernaturally sustained. Unless God supernaturally intervenes in such a fast, one will die simply because the body cannot go without food or drink that long under normal conditions. The body can go a long time without food, but only a short time without water. A fast longer than three days should only be a partial fast where the diet is merely restricted of certain foods.

We need to understand that revival, like salvation, is a sovereign work of God alone. As we study the various national revivals that have occurred in history, we discover that God has burdened the hearts of His people to pray for divine intervention. Sometimes, along with prayer, there has been fasting. For many church people, revival means an annual event or yearly ritual of aisle walking to the front of the church. In my pastoral years, it was not uncommon to see people walk to the front of the church at the close of a service only to return to their seat meaner than ever.

A true spiritual awakening cannot be scheduled on the calendar and will transcend anything imaginable to man. Most of us have never seen that kind of revival. Perhaps some of you, like myself,

have seen little spirts of revival. Maybe it was in one's own individual life or in some corner of a congregation, but never on such a larger scale. The kind of revival that I'm talking about will rekindle our spiritual flame and ignite our hearts with the love of Jesus Christ. Genuine spiritual awakening will last longer than a week and will interrupt more than our weekly schedules. People will get down to business with God in prayer like never before.

Biblical revival will manifest the presence of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit in the lives of Christian people. True revival will produce a restored fellowship with God and a reconciliation with the fellow men whom we have wronged. Has the time yet come when God has burdened us for revival to the point where we would pray and fast? Do we really and truly spiritually hunger for revival as we do for the physical food that we eat? If so, then God's people need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and enter a time of prayer and fasting upon His leadership. We can't force it because it must be from God.

If you've never considered prayer and fasting, then perhaps the Lord might lead you to consider it. If you don't feel led, then don't! However, prayer is mandatory while fasting is not. One thing is for sure, God wants His children to pray. Whatever you do, follow God's direction for not only your own personal wellbeing, but for the good of your family, local assembly, and nation. The Bible makes it perfectly clear that spiritual power is often linked to a godly scriptural fast (Matt. 17:14-21).

When a demon possessed boy was brought to the disciples, they were unable to help him, but Jesus intervened. A disciple asked about their powerlessness and Jesus referred them to prayer and fasting. Maybe one reason the modern-day church no longer practices fasting is because we are content with being powerless Christians. Just stop to think about it. Compare how much eating is done when Christians gather together to how often fasting is ever mentioned.

Chapter 8

Being a Watchman on the Wall of Prayer

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which* shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn *to be* meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness. Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.” (Isa. 62:6-12)

Back in my days of pastoring, I remember the Southern Baptist Convention provided some materials and launched The Watchmen’s Prayer Ministry. I took part in this and tried to lead the church that I pastored in a doctrinal study on prayer. This chapter is part of what I used in that emphasis.

I call your attention to Isaiah, chapter sixty-two, and verses six through twelve. These verses deal with the remnant’s return to Jerusalem from Babylonian Captivity. This chapter calls our attention to the “watchmen” who were posted on the “walls” of a city. Let’s look as to why this was done and how it applies to the admonition of Christ for us to “watch and pray” (Mat. 26:41). In biblical days, it was not unusual for a city to post “watchmen.” These “watchmen” would stand guard and warn the occupants of

the city if danger was apparent by an oncoming enemy or they would announce if a messenger approached with good tidings. This is the way it was in the ancient city of “Jerusalem” for the purposes of protection and proclamation.

Usually, the twelve hours of the night were divided into several “watches” (Ps. 63:6). The Jews had a three-fold division in their “watches” (Judg. 7:19) while the Romans (see my book, ***On What Day of the Week was Christ Crucified***) had four watches (Mk. 6:48). However, there were times when a “watch” would be posted “day and night.” Such was the case with Nehemiah when he rebuilt the city walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity (Neh. 4:9, 7:3). From the context of this chapter, we discover that God is still calling out spiritual “watchmen.” We not only need to “watch” for dangers that creep up around us. But, we need to pray as did David, when he asked the Lord to, “set a watch ... before my mouth, keep the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

The Commissioning of the Watchmen v.6-7

Just as the Old Testament “watchmen” would cry out to the occupants of a city, New Testament “watchmen” must cry out to God in prayer. In similar fashion to the way “watchmen” were appointed for the protection of a city, God has assigned spiritual “watchmen” whose primary concern is to pray. God’s people of today ought to be interceding today on behalf of the spiritual decay that we find in the family structure of our nation and the apostasy within so many local churches. I need not have to tell you that our land is in a mess and the spiritual condition of our leaders is deplorable for the most part. We need to be praying as never before that God would move once again in the flames of spiritual awakening in our midst and accomplish His will among us.

Like the “watchmen” of long ago, prayer “watchmen” of today should not “hold their peace day nor night.” Literally, this means that “all the day and all the night, always they shall not be

silent.” The thought of continual persistent intercessory prayer is clearly conveyed in the Bible. From what is taught in Scripture, it appears that the watchman’s task was a very important position even to the point of being responsible for men’s lives (Ezek. 33:6). Watchmen who failed to carry out their job correctly and who didn’t take it seriously were described as “blind ... ignorant ... dumb dogs” that “cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” (Isa. 56:10). I’m afraid that God’s spiritual “watchmen” of today are much like these watchdogs that Isaiah described who went to sleep on the job. Many of God’s sentinels are sleeping when they are supposed to be on duty just like the disciples when Jesus went into Gethsemane to wrestle with the tempter in prayer (Matt. 26:36-46).

All believers in Christ should see themselves as “watchmen” appointed by God. The reason why we have been commissioned with such a privilege is because we have a “Mediator” (I Tim. 2:5) Who as “sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12). “Without ceasing” (Rom. 1:9) we are to constantly “make mention” of God’s promises in prayer. In other words, God’s prayer “watchmen” are His rememberancers. We are to stand upon God’s promises that He has made to us and take them to our Lord in prayer. “Not silence” literally means that we are to pray so earnestly that we give Jehovah “no rest.”

Although Christ’s work of salvation is “finished” (Jh. 19:30) and He is at rest today in that regard, He is still at “work” (Phil. 1:6) in carrying out His plan for the ages. This is apparent in the way Stephen saw Jesus “standing” (Acts 7:55-56) as if risen with intent to help him. John wrote that Christ “walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” (Rev. 2:1) demonstrating His ability to supply the needs of His church.

By the fact that Christ “sat down” at the Father’s “right hand” tells us that redemption is complete and that we have an “Advocate with the Father” (I Jh. 2:1). But, by the fact He also stands and walks tells us that He is still active and not only hears, but answers prayer. Upon the throne of this universe is God Immortal Who promises to never “slumber nor sleep” (Ps.

121:4). From the presence of Christ, there is a continuous putting forth of power in answer to prayer and according to His eternal purposes.

The Commitment to the Watchmen v.8-9

God promises His protection to those who will place their trust in Him. These verses show a balance between human intercession and divine intervention. Without prayer, God's people get weaker and without God's intervention the enemy gets stronger. God's "watchmen" are to pray until God fulfills His promises to His children. For years Israel had been silent before Lord and such silence reveals a self-sufficient attitude. When Jesus came, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Jh. 1:11). Like the nation of Israel, the church of today is growing more complacent everyday with little regard for the things of God. Many church congregations are no more than religious lodges.

God commands His people to "watch and pray" (Mk. 13:3) so that we might be on guard against enemy attack as we also stand "watch" for the Lord's return (Matt. 24:42-43, Acts 20:31, I Cor. 16:13, Col. 4:2, I Thess. 5:6). The most common Greek word found in the New Testament in this regard is GREGOREUO. It means to give strict attention to, be cautious, to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly over-take you (Matt. 25:13, 26:38-41, Mk. 13:33-37, Mk. 14:34-38, Rev. 3:3). As you can tell, there are numerous verses in the New Testament where God tells His people to "watch." We have an enemy which is the Devil and we need to stay constantly on "watch" against his attack. Only through prayer and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit can he be overcome in our lives.

God promises His provision when His people trust Him and take Him at His Word. By the power of "his right hand," God will provide for our needs. The "right hand" of God speaks of the operative energy of His divine nature. Through prayer we are to

seek His “will” (I Jh. 5:14-15) and draw strength from Him. In response to His power evidenced by answered prayer, we should be quick to “praise the Lord.” Always remember that prayer involves more than turning in a grocery list to God. Prayer involves praise, thanksgiving, and confession as well as petition and intercession.

The Confirmation for the Watchmen v.10-12

God confirms that His hand will be upon the “watchmen” when they “lift up a standard for the people.” A “standard is an ensign or banner under which a delegated group of people gather. In war, a commander would raise his “standard” to collect his troops and remind them of their allegiance. The New Testament church is likened to an army (II Tim. 2:3-4) and has been directed to lift up our Redeemer’s “standard” so that the world may know Him (Isa. 11:10).

God’s New Testament church has the responsibility of preparing the way for the second coming of Jesus Christ just as John the Baptist prepared the way for His first coming. Just as surely as Jesus Christ came the first time, He is coming again. He came the first time as the Suffering Servant like the prophet Isaiah foretold (Isa. 53:1-12). The Jews were expecting a ruler to deliver them from Roman oppression, but instead Jesus came as their promised Messiah to deliver from spiritual darkness. As a result, the nation of Israel shouted, “crucify him, crucify him” (Lk. 23:21). Until Jesus comes, we are to be alert, remain watchful, beware of sin and slothfulness, and be on guard against Satanic attack lest we cause others to stumble on their way to Jesus.

Are You A Watchman on the Wall of Prayer?

If you are a Christian, are you committed to a life of prayer? Do you ever let a day go by without praying, without ever communicating with God? Have you ever formed a habitual

prayer life? Has sin broken your fellowship with God? Have the walls of prayer been silent too long in your life?

I'm afraid that if the spiritual "watchmen" of our day don't wake up, God's judgment is going to continue to fall upon our local churches (I Pet. 4:7, 17). With that being the case, we'll see more and more local assemblies close their doors. God warned the church at Ephesus that they would suffer extinction if they failed to "watch" (Rev. 2:5). As I've already pointed out, this word "watch" means to give strict attention to, be cautious, be active, to take heed lest through remission (pardon) and indolence (laziness) some destructive calamity overtakes us. We need to be as sincere in what we do for the Lord as the world is in what it does for the Devil. It's time for the sleeping church to wake up from her "slumber" and soberly report for duty standing guard and remain alert (II Tim. 4:5).

Like never before, the churches of our land stand in need of a mighty heaven sent revival. History reveals where there has never been a spiritual awakening apart from prayer. Do you want to see God move in our midst? Are you willing to become a "watchman" on the wall of prayer? If we really believe that Jesus is coming again, are we warning the lost of the "night" (Jh. 9:4) of coming judgment? We are living in days of apostasy within the organized church. Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? It's not a time for God's "watchmen" to nod and doze because our enemy is wide awake making a bid for the souls of men and a last-ditch effort to cripple the testimony of every local church. Don't allow Satan to make you a defeated Christian. I challenge you to become the kind of spiritual "watchman" that God has called you to be.

Chapter 9

The Privilege of Prayer

“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?” (Lk. 11:1-13)

Just think about it. Very few people have access to a well-known person, such as the president of the United States. If I called the White House, told them my name, and that I wanted to speak with the president, do you think that I would get through?

Not on your life! Most likely, the person answering the call (if a human even took the call) would no doubt hang the phone up on me quicker than you could blink an eye. However, every born again believer who is walking in fellowship with the Lord has the privilege of talking with God in prayer through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. We also have the privilege of being taught how to pray by our Lord Himself through the pages of Holy Scripture as the Holy Spirit reveals it to our hearts.

There are two passages in the New Testament that are often referred to as the Lord's Prayer and it's called the Lord's Prayer because the Lord Jesus is the One teaching us how to pray. The first passage is recorded in the 6th chapter of Matthew, verses 5-15 (see chapter one). The second passage is our text found in the 11th chapter of Luke, verses 1-13. The one recorded in Matthew is found in a sermon and the one in Luke is given in response to a question. Both are very similar, but are worth studying individually and separately in detail. Some of what I wrote in chapter one will be repeated in this chapter. I've chosen to repeat myself in this instance because I believe repetition of thought can be a way of learning.

The setting of our Scripture text finds Jesus in a season of prayer Who is not only the Master Teacher on the doctrine of prayer, but on every doctrine throughout Scripture. As the "disciples" observed Jesus "praying," they requested that He "teach" them how to "pray." When Jesus conversed with His Heavenly "Father," He did so NOT in ritualistic ceremony, but in simple realistic power. The power of prayer (I remind you) doesn't lie so much in what we say as it does in what we are. By that, I'm referring to our total surrender to God in faith believing that He knows best for us. I personally believe that the more time we spend with God in His Word and in prayer, then the more we will be conformed into the image of Christ. For prayer to be more than mere lip service, it must come from a holy life that recognizes the holiness of God (Ps. 66:18).

The Teacher of Prayer v.1

“Nicodemus” recognized Jesus as a “teacher come from God” (Jh. 3:1-2). Christ’s “disciples” not only saw Him as their “teacher,” but as the sovereign “Lord” of their lives. In salvation, the sinner submits to Christ as Lord of life as well as Savior of soul (Acts 16:31). There is no other kind of salvation than Lordship salvation when the sinner bows his knee to Christ as Lord and Master. That doesn’t mean that the Christian will never again struggle with acknowledging Christ as Lord of life, as we learn from the lives of the twelve (see my book on *The Twelve Disciples*), but God does chasten His own when we stray (Heb. 12:6-7).

The request of Jesus’ “disciples” should be our same request even today. When we stop communicating with someone, we lose contact and often barriers are built up. Oftentimes, such feelings as anger and dislike are expressed by refusing to speak with a particular person. Christians need to know how to talk with their God effectively so that we can have the assurance that He hears us. The art, privilege, and power of prayer can only be taught to us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Without the Holy Spirit and the intercessory work of Christ, real prayer (communion with heaven) is an impossibility (Rom. 8:26-27,34).

The entire life of Christ was lived in an attitude of prayer and constant submission to the “Father.” The sweet secret heavenly communion of Christ with His Heavenly “Father” equipped Him for the agony of death that He faced on the cross (Matt. 26:39, Lk. 22:42). May God help us to learn the value of prayer as Jesus knew and loved it (Heb. 4:14-16) so that we also may be equipped when it comes time to “walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Ps. 23:4).

The Secret of Prayer v.2-4

Prayer is NOT optional for the child of God, it is a mandate. It is mandatory if we are to maintain fellowship with our Heavenly Father. I remind you that union and communion are two different things. Relationship is one thing and fellowship is another.

People in the same family are bound together in so far as union is concerned, but may have nothing else in common and may never even speak to one another. Communion (fellowship) means that we have not only a common tie that binds us, but we enjoy one another's company. There are some believers who are living in a backslidden condition (out of fellowship with God) who must experience the Hand of God's chastisement.

What Jesus is saying in these verses is actually a command. Jesus did not say "if you choose to pray," but "when ye pray." God expects us to remain in fellowship with Him and on speaking terms with Him. Prayer should be a habit with every believer, just as it was with Christ (I Thess. 5:17). Prayer can be called communicating with God, or secret fellowship with God (Matt. 6:5-8). It's a sin to pray just to be "seen" and "heard" of men as we see from the 6th chapter of Matthew. Public prayer has its place, but private prayer helps to qualify us for public praying. The Christian is to avoid "praying" in "vain repetition" which is the use of needless, empty, and meaningless words. Neither can we "pray" with willful sin present in our hearts (Matt. 6:14-15). God doesn't "forgive" us based on us forgiving others, but based on Christ's shed blood for our confessed sin. However, an unforgiving spirit will most definitely hinder our prayer life.

We need to notice that the Model Prayer or what we often call The Lord's Prayer in Matt. 6 and the Disciples Prayer or what we also call the Servant's Prayer in Lk. 11 was not given for the use of ritual, but rather as a model from which we can learn how to "pray" (Matt. 6:9-13). Genuine prayer involves the condition of son-ship (v. 2a). The disciple's prayer is only for the family of God and should not be seen as a meaningless ritual or ceremony. The first step in "praying" an effective prayer that reaches beyond the ceiling to the throne of glory is to personally know God as your loving Heavenly "Father" through faith in Jesus Christ. Before we can say "Our Father," we must know what it is to have received the "Spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15-16).

There is a significant difference between saying our prayers and "praying" our prayers. Prayer to the One and Only Living God is more than just wishing or desiring something. We've never learned to "pray" if we haven't learned to speak personally

to God as our Heavenly “Father.” To merely believe in the existence of God by intellectual assent will not give you access to His heavenly throne or guarantee you an audience with the Lord of Glory. Even the “devils believe” (Jam. 2:19) that there is a God, but do not know Him in a personal relationship like those in the redeemed body of believers. To know God as your “Father” means that you have an intimate personal relationship with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ our “mediator” (I Tim. 2:25). God desires to have fellowship with His redeemed people and prayer is a vital part of that relationship

Genuine prayer involves the condition of sanctification (v.2b). “Hallowed be thy name” is a phrase that reminds us how God is set apart as holy, righteous, and almighty. Since God is “Hallowed” (set apart), then those who approach Him must be set apart from the world. Because God is “Holy” (Isa. 6:3), we need to be careful how we use His name and take extra precaution that we never take it in “vain” (Ex. 20:7). God is not the man upstairs nor the hound of heaven as people sometimes like to refer. In our heathen culture of today, conversations are filled with profanity, but we must remember that profanity is the opposite of sanctification. We must be careful not to use God’s name carelessly.

Genuine prayer involves the condition of subjection (v.2c). The words, “thy kingdom come” expresses total submission to God’s “will” as He rules over His spiritual kingdom of believers. We ought to want God’s “will” in our lives more than anything else and unless our wills are submitted to God’s “will,” then our praying is in vain.

Genuine prayer involves the condition of consecration (v.2d-3). A submitted believer is a consecrated believer as they learn to pray “thy will be done,” seeking God’s will and not man’s will. God does not heed our selfish request, but desires for His heavenly “will” to precede what we conceive to be our earthly needs. God’s “will” is to be more important in our lives than even our “daily bread.”

Genuine prayer involves the condition of love (v.4). Prayers are often hindered because of unconfessed “sin” (I Jh. 1:9) and because we fail to “forgive” others. Our hearts must always be

tender towards God and our fellow man. We cannot expect God to be sensitive to our prayers when we hold hate and grudges in our hearts. God commands us to “forgive” those who repent just as He has forgiven us when we seek His forgiveness. The Devil is the one who wants us to harbor bitterness in our hearts; whereas, God is the One Who delivers us from that heavy weight. As I pointed out from chapter one, God does not lead us into sin, but He is the One who leads us out of it.

The Manner of Prayer v.5-10

The word “importunity” in the KJV simply means shamelessness. In the NKJV it is translated “persistence” and “impudence” in the ESV that speaks of boldness (Heb. 4:16). This does not give us the right whatsoever to make demands upon God or trying to badger Him to the point of giving us what we want. God promises to answer our request when we seek His “will” unashamedly and insistently. This means that our prayer life should be one of a continual asking, seeking, and knocking for God’s “will.”

Prayer is not to be an occasional matter in the believer’s life, but habitual and regular. Just as we need “daily bread” for the body, we need spiritual bread and daily communion with heaven for the soul. The story in these verses is not painting a picture of us badgering God until He gives us what we want, but persistently seek the will of God until we find it. Regardless of the time of day or night, God is never too busy to hear our feeble request. A continual asking, seeking, and knocking for God’s will is a guarantee that one will find it. It may not be what you thought it would be, but a surrendered heart will rejoice in finding it.

The Simplicity of Prayer v.11-12

As soon as a child is born, he begins in his own way to “ask” things of his parents. By his cries, he will let you know if he’s hungry or needs a diaper change. It’s needful for the child of God to maintain a childlike spirit of humility (Lk. 18:16). Our prayers

should be as simple as a little child's request of his earthly parents. No earthly father with ordinary human feelings would dare give his child something hurtful in place of needful food (v.11-12). Can you even begin to think of any loving parent who would substitute a "stone" for "bread," a "serpent" for "fish," or a "scorpion" for an "egg." That tells us how God would never answer our request if it might bring hurt or harm upon us (Jam. 1:17) in the long term. God has the best interest of His children and we must learn to trust Him in simple child-like Faith to give us what He knows best.

The Effectiveness of Prayer v.13

There is no loving parent who does not enjoy giving gifts to their children. If we who are "evil," born with depraved natures, "know how to give good gifts unto our children," then how "much more" does our "heavenly Father" give His children even better gifts. God is the Greatest Giver there has or ever will be. **John 3:16 declares, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** Not only is God the Greatest Giver, but He gave the Greatest Gift that could be given, "his only begotten Son." For God to wrap Himself in a body of "flesh" (Jh. 1:14) and step out of Heaven as the "Son of man" (Acts 7:56) to be our Savior from the penalty of sin is love beyond measure. Then, on top of that, just before Jesus was nailed to the old rugged cross, He promised to send the "Holy Spirit" to indwell His people (Jh. 14:16-31).

Every child of God possesses the indwelling "Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13-14) at the very time of regeneration. The "Holy Spirit" is the third person of the Godhead Who convicts us of our sin, plants faith in our heart, and births us into the kingdom of God. Just think about it. The same "Holy Spirit" that impregnated the virgin Mary with Baby Jesus, impregnates our hearts with the truth of God's Word and births us into God's eternal family, the "household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Through the "Holy Spirit," God makes spiritual blessings available to the

believer. Because of the “Holy Spirit,” God can accomplish things in us and through us that human effort cannot accomplish.

Prayer does not change the mind of God, but it puts the believer in focus with the plan, purpose, and will of God (Heb. 13:8). God doesn’t give us all that we “ask” because we sometimes “ask amiss” (Jam. 4:3). For our prayers to be effective, we must seek the “will” of God and believe by faith that God knows what is best for us. To pray in Jesus “name” means to pray in accordance with His “will” and to want the same things that God wants (Jh. 14:12-14). Prayer is not getting God to want what we want, but for us to want what He wants which is our submission to His “will” (I Jh. 5:14-15). Prayer does change people and the one it changes most is the one doing the praying. It does not change God, but God uses prayer to change us as the Holy Spirit molds us into His image.

This “disciples” prayer taught by our Lord is not a formula, but a pattern that teaches us how to “pray.” It teaches us that we need to reverently and respectfully address our Heavenly “Father” like a humble submissive little child. It teaches us that praise should be offered for He Who is “Hallowed” and that our petitions should be made for His “will” to be done on “earth” as it is done in “heaven.” It teaches us that without fail we should acknowledge our sins, shortcomings, weaknesses, faults, and failures.

In summary, this Lord’s Prayer teaches us how to include adoration, petition, and confession in our season of prayer. Adoration includes praise and thanksgiving unto our God for Who and What He Is. Petition includes making our request known to God, expressing faith and confidence in His Sovereign authority and power. Confession includes acknowledging our sins and seeking God’s forgiveness wherein we fail Him.

If the Christian wants his prayers answered, then he must know how to “ask ... seek ... knock.” Asking is simply taking the time to breath out our requests to God and acknowledge our need of Him. Seeking is not praying only when it’s convenient, but putting forth an effort to pray regularly, routinely, and “without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17). Knocking refers to praying habitually and implies consistency and earnestness as we let go of our will

and trust the Lord in simple child-like faith for His “will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”

An honest study of Holy Scripture clearly shows that the modern-day name-it and claim-it petition is not a humble acceptable prayer before God. We have no business strutting up to the throne of grace like we own the place and telling God how He’s going to run His program. The child of God must rely on his Heavenly Father’s wisdom in granting our request and trust Him. It is God Who makes demands of us and not us who make demands upon God. God doesn’t spoil His children like many earthly parents by giving them everything they want. However, He does “teach” us to submit to His “will” in making our request and trust Him for the results. Coming “boldly unto the throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16) does not mean that we tell God what He’s going to do, but that we can approach God in confidence without hesitation or embarrassment as we make our request known unto Him and seek His “will” for the outcome.

Final Thoughts

I've already mentioned in this book that I've chosen to be repetitive on purpose. In fact, the most repetitive thing that I've deliberately tried to emphasize is that for our prayers to be effective we must be submissive to God's will. Our prayer life ought to be one of surrendering to what God wants even though we cannot understand it. By faith we learn to trust Him and yield our wills to His will. Learning how to pray right is part of how the Holy Spirit molds us into the image of Christ Who set the supreme example of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane just before going to the cross to die for the sins of His people.

I'll never forget when I was going through one of the darkest periods of my life. God brought to my mind **Prov. 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."** There's an old song that took those words and put them to music and I found myself singing it to myself time and time again. It was written by John Stallings and it goes like this, "Learning to lean, learning to lean, I'm learning to lean on Jesus. Finding more power than I'd ever dreamed, I'm learning to lean on Jesus." We may enter into our prayer closest with a heavy heart, but when we exit we ought to leave that burden at the feet of Jesus.

I'm still learning how to lean on Jesus in faith and trust Him each step of life's journey. Therefore, I take Him at His Word and pray for Him to take my hand and lead me according to His precious will all the way HOME. It was E.M. Bounds that said, "The most important lesson we can learn is how to pray." I will always be asking my Lord, as His disciples of yesteryear asked Him, "teach me how to pray" and help me to be submissive to His will regardless of the outcome. We are indeed living in troublesome days and are waiting in great expectation for Christ's return. Jesus has promised in the Book of Revelation to "come quickly" and John wrote, "even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). I pray that He will come soon!

**“To be prayerless
is to be
Christless,
Godless,
and on the
high road
to
destruction.”
...J.C. Ryle**

**“Prayer
should always
interest
Christians.
It is the
very
life-breath
of
true Christianity”
...J.C. Ryle**

**“Praying
and
sinning
will never live together
in the same heart.**

**Prayer
will consume sin,
or sin will
choke
prayer”**

...J.C. Ryle

**“We are not
likely
in this day
to
err
on the side of
praying
too
much”**

...J.C. Ryle

**“People
who don’t
believe
that prayer matters,
are
people
who
simply don’t
pray”**

...R.C. Sproul

Prayer From An Anonymous Source

Most holy and merciful Father, we acknowledge and confess before You our sinful nature – prone to evil and slothful in good – and all our shortcomings and offenses against You. You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from Your ways, in wasting Your gifts, in forgetting Your love. O Lord, have mercy on us, who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased You. Teach us to hate our errors, cleanse us from our secret faults, and forgive our sins for the sake of Your Dear Son.

And O most holy and loving Father, send your purifying grace into our hearts, we beseech You, that we may henceforth live in Your light and walk in Your ways, according to the commandments of

Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

John Calvin's Four Rules of Prayer

God Should Be Approached

#1

Reverently

#2

With A Contrite Heart

#3

With All Rights Relinquished

#4

With A Confident Hope In Him

Praying May Consist Of

Praise-Praising God For Who He Is

Confession-Confessing Our Sins

**Thanksgiving-Giving Thanks To God For
Who He Is And What He Does**

**Petition-Making Request For The Needs Of
Others**

**Intercession-Speaking To God On Behalf Of
Others**