

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER

The Bible has many *encouragements*, and even some *commands* to pray. God must consider prayer important, for according to Herbert Lockyer in *All the Prayers of the Bible*, there are 650 definite prayers, and 450 recorded answers. We have likely all had answered prayers as Christians, prompting some to say “Why do we need encouragements to pray?” Probably we wouldn’t if we prayed more earnestly, and more regularly. We are naturally inclined to be on the lazy side regarding prayer; hence we get into trouble easily.

PURPOSE OF PRAYER

We might take a moment to examine some of the purposes of prayer, for there are more than one to be sure. Perhaps number one is *communion with God*, for prayer is *conversation* with the Almighty. When people get into deep trouble, even as unbelievers, they pray, or get someone else to pray for them. The story is often told of several people gathered at the hospital where a loved one is in serious condition. The doctors have done about all they can do. One of the relatives asks “What can we do now?” The answer: “We can pray”. Looking shocked, the relative says “Oh no! Is it *that* serious?” Well, for the true Christian it is always *that* serious. Prayer should be primary and urgent in our lives. Sadly, it often isn’t; so we need encouragement.

Not only communion or fellowship with God, but *repentance toward God*. This is really the beginning of the Christian life, and it is never something we can forego.

Help in our daily walk is another purpose of prayer. In the Lord’s Prayer (so-called), Jesus says “**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil**” *Matthew 6:13*). We cannot fight the enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil by ourselves. God protects us from our enemies. We need to praise Him for that daily!

Intercession is another purpose of prayer. We must pray for others, and their needs. Salvation, physical healing, marriage problems, family problems, etc...

Our daily needs, covered under our Lord’s words, *our daily bread*. Sustenance such as food, shelter and clothing, and all that we should need.

Urgent needs. Someone is in desperate shape, for physical healing, finances, salvation, housing, etc... We need to be praying for them.

Last, but not least, *thanksgiving*. We must be grateful for that which God has *already* provided. Even when a prayer is not answered just exactly like we think it should be, we must remember that God is sovereign, and that He works according to His own purpose. Remember **Romans 8:28**

“**And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**” We need to be asking according to His will.

SOME ENCOURAGING PRAYER VERSES IN THE BIBLE

1) ALWAYS PRAY. “**And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me**

of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1- 8). This is an importunate prayer; a stubborn prayer; a persistent prayer; an urgent prayer.

2) THIS MANNER *"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" (Matthew 6:9-15).* Often called *The Lord's Prayer*, this really *The Model Prayer*. It has the main features of prayer needed. It is a concise, but *perfect prayer*.

It is worth noting that just before this prayer, our Lord says *"And When thou prayest"* (Matthew 6:5; *"But thou, when thou prayest"* (Matthew 6:6); *"But when ye pray"* (Matthew 6:7); then He says *"After this manner therefore pray ye"* (Matthew 6:9a). That is, He *expects* His sheep, His People to pray. A non-praying Christian is an oxymoron; a misnomer; an impossibility. You may not pray as you ought, but you will pray if you know Christ.

3)LORD TEACH US TO PRAY *"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" (Luke 11:1-4).* This is a considerably shorter version of the prayer found in *The Sermon on the Mount*, yet here we see clearly it is the same model prayer. Our emphasis here is that Christ is *the prayer teacher*. We may say that, at least part of the time, the Holy Spirit is *the prayer sayer*. *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).*

4) WATCH AND PRAY *"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me" (Matthew 26:36-46).*

How sleepy we sometimes get as we attempt to watch in prayer. For the disciples, this was an urgent time. They just didn't comprehend what Jesus would go through, or even what *they* would go through. Hard as it may be for the flesh, we must learn to bear with Him in prayer. Turn off the TV and video games, put down the novel and spend more time with the Lord.

5) PRAY WITHOUT CEASING *“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing.

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

Quench not the Spirit.

Despise not prophesyings.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Abstain from all appearance of evil.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Brethren, pray for us.

Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (1 Thessalonians 5:15-28).

These short admonitions from Paul are very vital. Some think he was speaking of praying for a specific thing, but not necessarily, in light of the other verses regarding prayer. It is important we endeavor to be in an attitude of prayer all the time, even when we cannot physically pray.

6) NATIONAL DELIVERANCE *“And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 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. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place” (2 Chronicles 7:12-15).* I hear all the time that we *cannot* apply these instructions to the church because it was specifically for Israel after Solomon completed the temple. Some would have us so shut up to eras and dispensations, that nothing would apply to us but the Gospels, and not all of them. But, application can often be made of principles God has set forth in His word, in both testaments..

First, He is saying *My people*. Who are His New Testament people? Of course it is *His church*.

Second. *Which are called by My name*. In the New Testament that is a Christian (called by *His* name). Originally it was possibly a name of shame to the world. But a true follower of Christ is an honorable person, redeemed by His grace, washed in Christ's blood..

Third. *Humble themselves and pray*. Recognizing our smallness; our corruption; our weakness in His sight, so that we may bow down before Him, worship, love and adore Him as the song *His Name is Wonderful* says. Pray! Again, so important if you desire God's help.

Fourth. *Seek My face*. Seeking His smile, His approval. His grace. His love. His care.

Fifth. *Turn from their wicked ways.* The only hope for a people, an individual, a nation, a church is to put away wickedness. As long as we continue to play games with God, we will get nowhere.

Sixth. *Then will I hear from heaven.* God has no trouble hearing. As if He was in the same room with us. He is!

Seventh. *Forgive their sin.* How wonderful! No one can forgive sin but God. That is why they tried to kill Jesus when He said “**Thy sins be forgiven thee**” They knew what He was claiming.

Eighth. *Heal their land.* If we follow this pattern, couldn't God heal our land? Can we not pray for this very thing? Is He not able to do these things? Nothing is impossible with God!

7) ASK “***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***” (Luke 11:9-10). This is found in one of the sections on importunate prayer. I understand that the Greek means “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.” This is the persistent, importunate, prayer. We often give up, but we must keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking. He compares His concern for His children to show that He cares about them in the following verses. “***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?***” (Luke 11:11-13).

GOD CARES ABOUT HIS CHILDREN!!!

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