

JOY AND GLADNESS IN PRAYER (Study Two)

Last week's conclusion is this week's commencement: 'Prayer is nothing else than the opening up of our heart before God'. John Calvin; *Institutes*, IV, 353.

Last study mentioned; Psalm 54: 2 *Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth: (ESV) O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.* Formerly betrayed by enemies (Psalm 52), David, despite all he had done, is now betrayed by some from his own tribe and there is a slur on his character. He directs his prayer: *O God. Personal cry; hear my prayer ... my mouth.* Prayer involves a human source for God gives us the ability to pray. Communication emphasises, *prayer ... words of my mouth.* David's assurance **verse 4**. – **CHS**: 'All other weapons may be useless, but all-prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun. ... When his case had become dangerous, David could not afford to pray out of mere custom; he must succeed in his pleadings or become the prey of his adversary'.¹

Last five Psalms, 146 – 150, begin and end with; *Praise the Lord - Hallelujah.* Praise is both a plural summons and personal; **146: 1 – 10**.² Isaac Watts: *I'll Praise my Maker while I've breath.* Verse 5, the final Beatitude in the Psalms; both individual and *Jacob* as the people of God then and now. Verse 6, the Creator and faithful One; **2 Timothy 4: 16 – 18**. Verse 10, an eternity of Praise, cf. **Revelation 19: 5 – 10**.

P.T. Forsyth; 'If you are not praying toward God you are toward something else. You pray as your face is set – toward Jerusalem or Babylon'.³ As the people of God we have access to Him through our high priest **Hebrews 4:14 - 16**. This means joy and thanksgiving for we can come with boldness to God and without fear. PTF suggests: Read Scripture and turn it into a prayer – Speaking with God discovers us safely to ourselves – Force yourself to say to God exactly where you are wrong – Pray as your actual self, not as some fancied saint – it is the Christ at prayer who lives in us, and we are conduits of the Eternal Intercession. Be real!!

We pray to the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit for we are weak, but our weakness is a help more than hindrance to prayer. We are in the Father, and in the Son, and they are in us; living relational unity in the Holy Spirit, the basis for all prayer; **John 14: 16 – 20**. There is often a stark contrast between prayers for help and healing with prayers of thanksgiving and joy.

¹ C.H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, Vol. 111, Baker, 1984, 9

² Marcus Loans, *The Voice of the Psalms*, NCP, 1987, 99

³ PTF, *The Soul of Prayer*; in Harry Escott, *PTF and the Cure of Souls*, 72

Do our needs cancel out joyous celebration? Jesus, throughout his ministry was not doing his own thing. Not please bless my plans; but was always doing his Father's will: **John 6:38- 40 & 4:34**. He taught the disciples to pray, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. In the garden of Gethsemane as Jesus faced the cross, *My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will* Matthew 26:39. To pray according to the will of the Father is to know that He hears what is asked; that in His purposes we obtain that request and rejoice in Him, not in circumstances. *And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him: 1 John 5: 14 & 15.*

Preparation for prayer: the joy of rest in prayer to the Father through the Holy Spirit.