Prayer

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1 John 5:14-15

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian.

We have the assurance that God answers our prayers.

- 1 John 5:14-15, "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*"
- 1 Pet. 3:12, "*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*"
- James 5:16, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

Prayer also does great good to the one who is praying.

- It gives renewed hope.
- It lifts one up in times of distress, heartache, and troubles.
- It comforts the heart, gives grace to the humble and lowly.

Prayer is the means of talking to God and expressing our hearts to Him.

Negatively: What prayer is not

It is not simply desire

Jesus taught his disciples to pray after a certain manner.

Matt. 6:9-13, "*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as*

we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

This is a short prayer which covers the general spectrum of adoration and request for our basic needs.

We must do more than simply desire. A lot of people have all kinds of wants and desires. We must ask for what we need.

- James 4:2, "*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*"
- John 14:13, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*"
- 1 John 3:22, "*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*"

Some will not ask. Their relationship is so improper with the Lord. They need to correct this condition.

Prayer should not be a vain repetition of words

Matt. 6:7-8, "*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.*"

Brethren, there should be some forethought about what we pray, and not be repetitious.

We should try to pattern our prayers after the inspired ones.

Eph. 3:14-21, "*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of*

Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Prayer should not be made for a show or in pretense (giving a false impression).

To curtail the problem of pretense or display, Jesus suggested that we pray in privacy.

Matt. 6:5-6, "*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*"

In Jesus' day some made a show of being devout but were guilty of stealing from widows. God is fully capable of detecting a hypocrite.

Other examples of hypocrisy:

- One who thanks God for His revealed Word, but does not study and teach His Word.
- One who thanks God for another opportunity for gathering together, but fails to attend regularly.

Through His teaching, Jesus empties our minds of all false and unworthy notions, and shows us how we ought to pray.

Positively: What prayer is.

The parables of Jesus show us what prayer is

Luke 11:5-8, "*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."

It is talking to God whenever there is a need

Psalms 119:62, "*At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.*"

It is coming to God in confidence

- James 2:23, "*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*"
- James 4:8, "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*"
- Heb. 4:14-16, "*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*"

It is coming to God as an adequate provider

Psalms 24:1, "*The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*"

It is approaching God with persistence

- 1 Thess. 5:17, "*Pray without ceasing.*"
- Rom. 12:12, "*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*"
- Luke 21:36, "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*"

What is the criteria of an effective prayer?

Walk in the light. 1 John 1:7-9, "*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

John 9:31, "*Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.*"

Pray in faith. James 1:6, "*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*"

Must ask for the right things. James 4:3, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*"

Must ask with perseverance.

- Luke 18:2-8, "*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?*"
- 1 Thess. 5:17, "*Pray without ceasing.*"

Is prayer really important?

The Scriptures emphasize its importance

- Eph. 6:18, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*"
- Phil. 4:6-7, "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"

The Bible emphasizes its power

- James 5:16, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"
- Isa. 40:28-31, "*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*"
- Rom. 8:35-39, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

What are some of the benefits of prayer?

We draw close to God

- James 4:8, "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*"
- Heb. 10:22-23, "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*"

It gives us renewed hope

Psalms 146:5-9, "*Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.*"

It gives is strength and comfort

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

God will forgive us in prayer

- 1 John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"
- Psalms 51:1-2, "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*"

God will bless us in prayer

- Heb. 4:16, "*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*"
- James 5:16-18, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*"

Conclusion

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

Prayer really works!