

PRAYER - THE TELEPHONE TO GLORY

“The world has lost the right of prayer, and saints have failed to pray. What loss sustained beyond repair. How blind of heart are they. The Father speaks through His word, He talks no other way. And to converse with Him, our Lord, we must take time to pray.”

INTRODUCTION

1. The modern church has lost the right of prayer. It is secondary in people's religion.
2. Yet, it is the Greatest Act of Faith in Christianity.

I. THE POSITION OF OUR BODY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ACCEPTABLENESS OF OUR PRAYERS.

1. It is alright for us to stand and pray.
 - A. I Chron. 23:30: The Levites were to stand daily praying.
 - B. Luke 18:9-14: “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Note: Jesus said he was standing and went down to his house justified.

2. It is alright for us to pray lying down.
 - A. Matt.26:36-39 - Jesus fell on His face to pray.

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, ‘Sit here while I go and pray over there.’ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed,

saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.'"

B. Mark 14:35 - Jesus fell on the ground to pray.

"He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him."

3. It is alright to pray while kneeling.

A. Solomon knelt to pray.

(1) II Chron. 6:13-14: "(for Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and he stood on it, knelt down on his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven), and said: 'Lord God of Israel, there is no God in heaven or on earth like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.'"

B. Ezra knelt to pray.

(1) Ezra 9:5: "At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God."

C. Daniel knelt to pray.

(1) Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days."

D. Jesus knelt to pray.

(1) Luke 22:41: "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed."

E. Stephen knelt to pray.

- (1) Acts 7:60: “Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

F. Peter knelt to pray.

- (1) Acts 9:40: “But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.”

G. Paul knelt to pray.

- (1) Acts 20:36: “And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.”

Note: The Bible does not bind a particular position of the body.

II. HOWEVER, OUR PRAYERS ARE NOT HEARD BECAUSE OF THE CONDITION OF OUR HEARTS.

1. Because of Iniquity.

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” (Ps. 66:18; Isa. 1:15).

Isa. 59:1-2: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.”

I Pet. 3:7: “Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

2. Because of Unbelief.

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:6; Matt. 21:22; Heb. 11:6).

3. Because of Our Lusts.

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:3; II Tim. 3:4-5).

4. Because We Refuse to Forgive Others.

“And whenever you stand prying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26).

5. Because We Neglect to Obey God’s Commandments.

“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.” (Prov. 28:9).

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (I Pet. 3:12).

6. Prov. 28:9: “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.”

7. Prov. 15:8: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.”

8. Prov. 15:29: “The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”

9. I Pet. 3:12: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

10. I John 3:22: “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

11. I Tim. 2:8: “Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”

III. GOD HAS NEVER TOLD AN ALIEN SINNER TO PRAY - FOR WHAT SHOULD AN ALIEN SINNER PRAY?

1. Not for God to Love Him.

- A. John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
2. Not for Light Apart from the Word of God.
 - A. Ps. 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
3. Not for the Holy Spirit.
 - A. John 14:16-17: ““And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, but it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.””
4. Not for Christ to Come Unto Him.
 - A. Matt. 11:28-30: ““Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.””
5. Not for God to be Reconciled to Him.
 - A. 2 Cor. 5:20: “Therefore we are ambassadors from Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”
6. Not for Grace.
 - A. Titus 2:11: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”
7. Not for Conversion.
 - A. Ps. 19:7: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”
8. Not for Faith.
 - A. Rom. 10:17: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
9. Not for Salvation.

- A. Acts 11:14: “Who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.”
10. Not for the New Birth.
- A. I Pet. 1:22-23: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”
11. Not for God to Send the Power to Save Them.
- A. Rom. 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”
12. Not for God to Purify Their Hearts.
- A. James 4:8: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”
13. Not for God to Free From Sins.
- A. Rom. 6:17-18: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
14. Not for Religion.
- A. James 1:27: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”
15. Not for Remission of Sins.
- A. Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”
16. Not for Repentance.

- A. Acts 17:30-31: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, but raising Him from the dead.”

17. Not for God to be Willing to Save.

- A. I Pet. 3:9: “Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”

18. Not for Sanctification.

- A. John 17:17: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

B. God will not set aside positive law to answer prayer.

- (1) Moses - (Numbers 12:13-14) So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, ‘Please heal her, O God, I pray!’ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again.’”
- (2) Rich Man - (Luke 16:19) “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ...”
- (3) Cornelius - (Acts 10:) Peter told him what he had to do.
- (4) Paul (Saul) - (Acts 9:) Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ”

C. Obedience to the Gospel is Essential to Salvation.

Heb. 5:9: “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”

- (1) Hearing.
- (2) Believing.
- (3) Repenting.
- (4) Baptizing.
- (5) Living Faithful.

Note: Not one single man has ‘prayed through,’ yet at Mourner’s Bench.

IV. PRAYER IS THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOD AND MANKIND.

1. When the Disciples saw the Lord on His knees, they said, “Teach us to pray.”
2. Jesus said: “In this manner, therefore, pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (Matt. 6:9-13).

THIS PRAYER OF THE LORD’S IS A MODEL

- A. It is addressed to God.
- B. There are three petitions for God’s great purpose.
 - (1) Hallowed be Your name - Universal Worship.
 - (2) Your kingdom come - Pray having come now.
 - (3) Your will be done.
- C. Three petitions for themselves.
 - (1) Give us our daily bread.
 - (2) Forgive our debts.
 - (3) Do not lead us into temptation - but deliver us.
- D. Doxology: Yours is the power and the glory forever. Amen.

V. WHAT WE GET OUT OF PRAYER DEPENDS UPON:

1. Firstly, What We See in God.
 - A. Some people pray as if God were only a delivery boy.

Versteeg says: “Consider the person who prays only for things. It is only when he needs something that he prays. He thinks of God only as a present help in trouble. He

offers up petitions but never devotions to the everliving and true God. A man who sees in God only a way to get what he wants cannot possibly grow in grace. Neither can the man who sees in God only a sort of cosmic wrecking crew, ready to rush to the scene of any collision, any disaster.” (Amer. Pulpit Series Book Five, p. 48).

- B. Some people pray as if God were limited by their prejudices.

“If the God you pray to is just one who stands for your views, who has your tastes and favors the color of your skin and is strong for your social group, you may pray with an easy conscience - but it will also be an unenlightened conscience. “They profess that they know God,” Paul wrote in Titus, “But their very minds and consciences are unclean.” Many people are primitive in their praying because they have belated concepts of God. The way they pray breaks down all that is fine within them. It ruins them. They lose their souls in prayer.”

2. Secondly, What God Sees in Us.

- A. David could say in Ps. 139:1-6: “O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.”
- B. David says further of those God blesses: “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”
 - (1) What is there in your life that God can get hold of for prayer?
 - (2) What is there in you He can do business with?
 - (3) What basis is there for mutuality, for co-operative fellowship?

3. Thirdly, Whether We have Faith Not in Prayer, but in God.
 - A. “When you pray, let your interest be not in prayer but in God, not in a form but in a friend, not in saying something, but in being with Someone. Else you may get nothing out of prayer, or just a pious habit - or even a lost soul.” (Ibid, p. 53).

4. Fourthly: The One Praying Must be Humble, Teachable, Believing.
 - A. Humble - Because of your sense of need and your awareness of God’s ability.
 - B. Teachable - Because you realize how limited is your knowledge of the facts and values of life.
 - C. Believing - Because of your confidence that there is help available beyond the human.
 - (1) These were the characteristics of David in Ps. 139-23-24.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
 - (2) “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 3:14)

VI. WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

1. Luke 18:1: “Men ought always to pray.”
2. I Thess. 5:17: “Pray without ceasing”
3. Prayer ought to be more than occasional.
 - A. Principal Jacks in the book The Legend of Smokeover tells the story of another man who said that:

“Thirty years ago he said a prayer and made up his mind never to say another ‘It all turned on that.’ The prayers were - this is how he put it to me - ‘O Lord, I expect you to look after my interests for the rest of my life, and, believing that you are a gentleman and that you won’t forget, I’m never going to worry again.’ Well, he lost his three sons in the war, and went clean off his chump. He’s written a book called The Great Forgetter, proving that God has no

memory, and that unless you keep reminding Him of what you want Him to do for you, He forgets it all and does nothing.”

B. Spurgeon speaks of prayer as a Bell Rope.

“Prayer pulls the rope below, and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give but an occasional pluck at the rope. But he who wins with Heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously, with all his might.”

4. We should pray at all seasons.

A. Pray when you're Happy.

B. Pray when you're in Sorrow.

C. Pray when you're Tempted.

D. Pray in the Morning, Noontide, Evening, All the Time.

Illus. “How earnestly the prophets and the apostles, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Samuel, Joshua, and David in his fall, sought God and found Him. How earnestly Christ sought God in prayer, in the desert place before it was day, on the mountain top, in the garden of Gethsemane, and in the last hour on the cross. If God is not real to you, how earnestly have you sought Him in prayer.” (Macartney, *Greatest Texts of the Bible*, p. 38).

VII. GOD ALWAYS ANSWERS PRAYER.

1. His answers are: Yes, No, Wait.

2. The answer to prayer is conditional.

A. Pray for HEALTH - Must obey the laws of health.

B. Pray for SICK - Use medicine, doctors, etc.

C. Pray for WISDOM - Must study.

D. Christ's prayers for UNITY have yet to be answered.

Note: “Prayer is not a labor-saving device, but a task-producing one. For when you pray you have to do something about it. You have to get off your knees and onto your feet.”

VIII. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REWARDS OF PRAYER?

1. It lets God into our lives.
2. This in turn brings new courage and new power.
3. Prayer is a means of helping others.
 - A. Paul continually remembered his converts in his prayers.
 - B. Paul asked that the churches remember him in their prayers.
4. We are to pray: Earnestly - Expectantly - Persistently.

IT IS OUR TELEPHONE TO GLORY AND WE NEED TO USE IT--

LIVING THE WAY WE PRAY

I KNELT TO PRAY WHEN THE DAY WAS DONE,
AND PRAYED, "O LORD, BLESS EVERYONE."
LIFT FROM EACH HEART THE PAIN
AND LET ALL THE SICK BE WELL AGAIN.

AND THEN I WOKE ONE DAY,
AND CARELESSLY WENT ON MY WAY.
THE WHOLE DAY LONG I DIDN'T TRY
TO WIPE A TEAR FROM ANY EYE.
I DIDN'T TRY TO SHARE THE LOAD
OF ANY BROTHER ON THE ROAD.
I DIDN'T EVEN GO TO SEE
THE SICK MAN JUST NEXT DOOR TO ME,
YET ONCE AGAIN WHEN DAY WAS DONE,
I PRAYED, "O LORD, BLESS EVERYONE."

BUT AS I PRAYED, INTO MY EAR
THERE CAME A VOICE THAT WHISPERED CLEAR,
"PAUSE, HYPOCRITE, BEFORE YOU PRAY.
WHOM HAVE YOU TRIED TO BLESS TODAY?
GOD'S SWEETEST BLESSINGS ALWAYS GO
BY HANDS THAT SERVE HIM HERE BELOW."

AND THEN I HID MY FACE AND CRIED,
"FORGIVE ME, GOD, FOR I'VE SIMPLY LIED.
LET ME LIVE ONE MORE DAY
AND I PROMISE FAITHFULLY
I'LL LIVE THE WAY I PRAY."

--LET US PRAY--