Chapter Five

Prayer

**This section of our study looks at prayer. It has been said that prayer is an indicator of our faith. When our faith is strong, we are in close communication with God. When God is absent in our lives, we do not pray as we should. Prayer is confirmation to ourselves that we believe in God and that God will reward those who serve Him faithfully.**

**Prayer is a privilege that no Christian should take for granted. We must realize that when we pray, God listens. Imagine that; the same God who created the world, and sent His Son to die on the cross, will take time to listen to your prayers. You might think that with billions of people on earth and millions might be praying at any given moment, that your prayer might be squeezed out. Think again. God is powerful enough to do what He has done, and He is able to do all things. We must know that God can listen to everyone (including you and me) individually.**

**When we begin our prayer, God is attentive. God does not have the same problems that we encounter in life. God does not have distractions. Sometimes a wife will tell her husband several things; but if he is watching TV or listening to the ball game, he might not hear a word she says. God is not distracted. This is one of the most amazing things for me to comprehend. I can talk to God. What's more amazing to me is that He listens to me.**

**We must also understand that in order for God to hear us, we must be in a right relationship with Him. Several passages teach us that God does not hear the prayer of sinners. God only listens to those who have submitted to His will. We will notice in this study that our prayers must be according to His will. Notice the following verses.**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NKJV) Rejoice always, {17} pray without ceasing, {18} in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**How can we go through life by praying all the time? Let me try to answer it this way. We all have our lives and the elements that fill them. We have jobs, families, and responsibilities. Prayer is not limited to a private time and place. We should seek out time for solitude and devotion to God. But, when we are on the job, we are not allowed to stop what we are doing all the time to bow down in prayer. I think this idea of "pray without ceasing" means to have the attitude of prayer always in your mind.**

**Look at it this way. You are working on the job and things do not go right (as usual). Someone does something you think is dumb and you in your frustration call that person an idiot. All of a sudden, you realize that God would not be pleased with your thoughts and words. You realize you just made an error in the sight of God. You immediately ask for forgiveness from God, and you correct your behavior (in this case, you would apologize to this dummy).**

**We have to be constantly reminding ourselves that people are watching us. We have told them that we are Christians, and they want us to fail. When our actions go beyond the limitations of God's laws, we are failing the One whom we are trying to please. We must be aware of our actions and words at all times. We can never be caught off guard. We must set an example for others to see. Remember that we are the only bible that some people will read. We must mirror the word of God in our lives. Prayer helps us accomplish this.**

**There are several types of prayer. All are important. Let's look at some of these.**

**Praise**

Psalms 150:1 (NKJV) Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

**"Praise the Lord". We have heard this our whole lives. Many so-called religious people have used this phrase so often that it seems to have lost some meaning. Also, since they have misused the phrase so much, we tend to shy away from it. We should not be ashamed to say "Praise the Lord". There are a lot of reasons that we have to praise the Lord. Look at the many ways that praise is used in the following verses.**

Psalms 18:3 (NKJV) I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.

Psalms 113:3 (NKJV) From the rising of the sun to its going down The Lord's name is to be praised.

Psalms 50:23 (NKJV) Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

Psalms 34:1 (NKJV) I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psalms 71:6 (NKJV) By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You.

Psalms 7:17 (NKJV) I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

Psalms 21:13 (NKJV) Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise Your power.

Psalms 22:22 (NKJV) I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

Psalms 28:7 (NKJV) The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him.

Psalms 52:9 (NKJV) I will praise You forever, Because You have done it; And in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.

Psalms 67:3 (NKJV) Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.

Psalms 86:12 (NKJV) I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

Psalms 102:18 (NKJV) This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

Psalms 106:1 (NKJV) Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

Psalms 111:1 (NKJV) Praise the LORD! I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.

Psalms 111:10 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

Psalms 112:1 (NKJV) Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who delights greatly in His commandments.

Psalms 119:171 (NKJV) My lips shall utter praise, For You teach me Your statutes.

Psalms 135:3 (NKJV) Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV) to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

Psalms 138:2 (NKJV) I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

**The idea of praise is to glorify God for what He has done and who He is. This goes beyond the idea of thanksgiving, which will be discussed later.**

**When we look at the glorious nature of God and see the work of God in nature, we are compelled to give honor to Him. We notice that God alone is worthy of praise. We might want to show our appreciation to people or give them the honor due them for something they did, but this is not praise in the spiritual sense. God wants us to praise Him. He wants this praise for Himself, not others. Remember that God said that He was a jealous God, when He was giving the Ten Commandments.**

**You might be compelled to think of some songs that we sing about praise to God.**

**Think about this. We might sing with all our might "Praise the Lord", but we might hold back from speaking "Praise the Lord". If God is worthy of praise (and He is), we should declare it. We must also be careful not to over-use the phrase.**

**Confession**

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Sin separates us from God. If we have sin in our lives, we must be willing to acknowledge that sin, and ask God to remove it from our record. We have this privilege. If you will remember, there were several Old Testament prophecies that talked about the days or time when God would "remember their sins no more". They did not have this privilege under Old Testament law. The Day of Atonement was to remind them of their sins and teach them humility because they were not worthy of God's blessings.**

**There is a psalm that was written presumably by David. This was written after his sin was exposed, and the dead child was the ultimate price to pay for his sin. Psalm 51 is this prayer. Read the entire chapter. We will notice a few things about this prayer.**

Psalms 51:3-4 (NKJV) For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. {4} Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight; That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

**When we sin, we sin against God. We must feel sorrow in the fact that we let God down. We have gone against the wishes of God. God wants us to be saved. He made it possible for us to be saved. It is up to us, to stay in a saved condition. We must be willing to admit that we are wrong. Some people have a hard time admitting this. There is always blame placed somewhere else; "the devil made me do it", "he is a victim of economic poverty", "they did not know any better", "society failed them".**

**Another thing to consider here is that we must call sin what it is. Sin! How often do we hear someone say "they made an error in judgement", or "they made a mistake", or "they are just sowing their wild oats". Society thinks that sin is too harsh a word. Many will say that there is no such thing as "sin". Well, the Bible says, "sin is transgression of the law" in 1 John 3:4. The law that we are concerned about is God's law. To break a law or violate a command (any phrases you want to use here) is nothing more than sin. David is not the only person to acknowledge his sin.**

Nehemiah 1:6 (NKJV) "please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned.

Daniel 9:5 (NKJV) "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.

**We must ask for forgiveness of our sins, from a sincere heart. If we try to offer excuses, then God will not forgive us. " I sinned, Lord, but...” But what? Is there any excuse that will justify sin? No! We are always quick to place the blame elsewhere. We might tell our boss the truth that we did not do what he asked, but we will be quick to explain why it did not get done. Sometimes we feel that we must give more information than what was asked. Like the following example.**

**Sylvia asked Val " Where are you going?"**

**Val answers " I'm going to the mall to buy a pair of shoes, because my old ones were torn when I was doing yard work that I had put off for a while".**

**Why was all of this extra information put in? Sylvia only wanted to know where Val was going. She did not ask why or for what reason. The correct answer by Val would be " I'm going to the mall".**

**We are afraid that if we give a simple answer, there will be follow-up questions. We try to anticipate those questions and answer so that the questions do not have to be asked. God does not want to know the reason that we sinned. God does not consider if we think that there were circumstances that caused us to sin. God only wants us to admit that, " I have sinned". I think that we throw in the excuses to ease our own conscience.**

Psalms 51:17 (NKJV) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart; These, O God, You will not despise.

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NKJV) For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

**We must convince God of our sorrow. Since God knows all things, we cannot assume that he knows what we are asking forgiveness for. We might only be asking for forgiveness for one act that we did. We might try to place all sins under a generic prayer. If you commit a specific sin, you must ask for specific forgiveness. God has told us that He knows our thoughts and the intent of our hearts. We must mean it when we ask for forgiveness.**

Psalms 51:7-9 (NKJV) Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. {8} Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. {9} Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

Isaiah 1:16-20 (NKJV) "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, {17} Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. {18} "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. {19} If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; {20} But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

**The blood of Jesus washes our sins away. We access this blood initially when we are baptized. After baptism, if we commit sin, we are once again separated from God; but if we will confess our sins, this blood of Jesus can cleanse us. We do not have to be baptized again. We must confess and repent of our unrighteousness. When we are cleansed, we are once again placed in a relationship with God. We are allowed to be called a Child of God again. Also, the spiritual blessings are now, ours to enjoy again.**

Psalms 51:12-15 (NKJV) Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. {13} Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You. {14} Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. {15} O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

**Once we understand that our sins are forgiven, we should be happy to declare to the rest of the world the joy we have in Christ. God has made it possible for me to have salvation. God has provided a way for others. We as Christians must want others to have this same joy and have the same blessings.**

**Petition**

1 Samuel 1:17 (NKJV) Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him."

**A petition is a request. We can do this individually or collectively. Here is another reason I think God is so special. Not only does God listen to my prayers; He also answers them. I may not always recognize those answers, but He does answer them. What other god may or can do that? There is no god but God.**

Psalms 66:19 (NKJV) But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Psalms 66:20 (NKJV) Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, Nor His mercy from me!

Matthew 7:7-8 (NKJV) "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. {8} "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

1 Timothy 2:8 (NKJV) I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

James 1:6 (NKJV) 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.

John 14:13 (NKJV) "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

**Some religions may teach that our every desire will be met when we pray in Jesus' name. Because God said that it will be given, or that you will find what you seek, many interpret this to mean that our every wish will come true. But notice the following verses to see the qualifiers to having request or petitions come to pass.**

1 John 3:22 (NKJV) And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

**It is because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.**

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV) Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. {15} And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

**If our prayer is for God to be glorified, then He will be. If our prayer is for our own glorification, it will not be done. We must pray for the salvation of souls. A preacher might pray for the ability to preach better. If it is for the reason that people will honor him for being a good preacher, that prayer will be answered negatively. But if the preacher asks that he preach better so that souls can hear the gospel and be converted, he is asking for something that is within God's will, and that prayer will be answered positively.**

**For what should we pray? What is the nature of our request or petition?**

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**We pray for forgiveness.**

James 1:5 (NKJV) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

**We pray for wisdom.**

James 5:14-15 (NKJV) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. {15} And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

**We pray for others and their deliverance from oppression and other problems. We pray for the Divine intervention to help the sick and afflicted.**

1 Timothy 2:1-3 (NKJV) Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, {2} for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. {3} For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

**We pray for all men. We pray for our government and leadership of the world’s nations.**

Matthew 5:44 (NKJV) "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

**We pray for ourselves. We pray for others. We pray for wisdom. We pray for our spiritual leaders. We pray for our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We pray for governments and world leaders. We pray for our enemies.**

**Thanksgiving**

Philippians 4:6 (NKJV) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

**We should give thanks for all the things that God has done for us. We should thank Him for our lives, families, our livelihood, and our world. We should be thankful for beauty and happiness. Most of all, we should be thankful for Jesus Christ and His church. We should thank God for His help. I sometimes see the bumper sticker: "God is my co-pilot." This bumper sticker is wrong. God is not a co-pilot. A co-pilot is there to help the pilot. Sometimes to fill in when the pilot cannot fulfill his duties. God is not a standby helper. God is our pilot. He leads us and we follow. He sends us and we go. If anyone is the co-pilot, it is us. Those who are Christians are the hands and feet of God to the world we live in. Like I said earlier, we are the only bible that some people will ever read.**

Psalms 100 (NKJV) Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! {2} Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. {3} Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. {4} Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. {5} For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

Revelation 4:11 (NKJV) "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Revelation 5:9 (NKJV) And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

**Yes, we have much to be thankful for.**

**Commitment**

Proverbs 16:3 (NKJV) Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.

**Of all the attributes of prayer, this one is most especially needed. We must commit ourselves to God. We must devote our time to do His will. This is a life-long endeavor. We must put our hearts into it.**

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

**The commitment is our lives, our bodies, our very being. This is presented to God. We let God take over our lives. We acknowledge as Jesus did; "Thy will be done".**

**We commit ourselves by becoming like Him. When we do this, we will see what the will of God is. We commit to God our salvation, our souls, our spirit, and our life.**

2 Timothy 1:12 (NKJV) For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

1 Peter 4:19 (NKJV) Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Psalms 31:5 (NKJV) Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

**We can do this because we have the promise of God that this will accomplish God's will. God will save us (if we are faithful). Our work is not in vain (if God controls it).**

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Job 5:8 (NKJV) "But as for me, I would seek God, And to God I would commit my cause;

Psalms 37:5 (NKJV) Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

**Prayer has many parts. In order to be good at anything, one must learn how, and then practice. Professionals in any field, have to practice their profession. Why do professional athletes have a pre-season? Why do they have mini-camps? Several years ago, I heard of a professional golfer who was fined for not going to instructional training.**

**We must put prayer into practice. As often as we think about it. When we open our eyes in the morning, we should pray. As we prepare for our daily routine, we should pray. As we eat, we should pray. As our day winds down, we should pray. As we close our eyes to go to bed, we should pray. We should, as the song reads, "pray all the time". We should do as 1 Thess 5:17 says; "pray without ceasing".**

**Not every prayer has all of these parts. There are prayers for different types of occasions and needs. There are prayers for a particular purpose, and there are prayers that are appropriate in assemblies, and other prayers for your private needs. Sometimes, there are prayers that are not appropriate at given times. It is like thanking God for sending the rain. If you are in a drought stricken area, yes; if you are in a tropical rainforest in monsoon season, no.**

**Prayer is one of the greatest privileges that God has given us. There is no monetary charge for it. We should take advantage of it. Our spiritual well being depends on it. Pray as often as you can and you will be better for it.**

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