

Prayer

I. Review of Previous Teaching on Prayer

A. Prayer Quotes

1. I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything but it came at some time; no matter at how distant a day, somehow, in some shape, probably the least I would have devised, it came. (Adoniram Judson)
2. Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth; help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart. (Martin Luther).
3. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men . . . and so we ought to be men of prayer. (E. M. Bounds)
4. Our ordinary views of prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer as a means for getting something for ourselves; the Bible idea of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself. (Oswald Chambers)
5. There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. (Brother Lawrence)
6. It is in the field of prayer that life's critical battles are lost or won. We must conquer all our circumstances there. We must first of all bring them there. We must survey them there. We must master them there. In prayer we bring our spiritual enemies into the Presence of God and we fight them there. Have you tried that? Or have you been satisfied to meet and fight your foes in the open spaces of the world? (J. H. Jowett)

B. Pray

II. Prayer - Bits and Pieces

A. When praying, beware of wrong motives, self-exalting methods, unforgiveness, and – if you are a husband – unloving treatment of your wife.

1. Wrong Motives in Prayer:
 - a. **James 4:3** . . . You do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.
2. Self-exalting Methods:
 - a. **Matthew 6:5-8** . . . "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and

on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. [6] "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. [7] "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. [8] "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

3. Unforgiveness:

a. **Mark 11:25-26** . . . "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. [26] ["But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."]

4. A Husband's Unloving Treatment of His Wife:

a. **I Peter 3:7** . . . You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

B. Pray for grace and strength to resist temptation, to keep your faith strong and your mind focused on God, and pray to endure the day of trouble.

1. Pray for Grace and Strength to Resist Temptation (to keep your faith strong and your mind focused on God):

a. **Luke 22:40-46** . . . When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." [41] And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, [42] saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." [43] Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. [44] And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. [45] When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, [46] and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

2. Pray to Endure the Day of Trouble:

a. **Matthew 24:15-20** . . . "Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet,

standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), [16] then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. [17] "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. [18] "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. [19] "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! [20] "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

- C. Pray about fears and concerns. Lay them on God and receive His peace.
1. **Philippians 4:6-7** . . . Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (*with the short view and long view in mind*) let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 2. Consider: "to pray with thanksgiving" is best done when we keep both the short view and long view in mind.
 3. Consider: Giving up anxiety requires faith in God's goodness (provision and protection), because you will not lay your burden on Him if you do not trust Him to care for you.
 - a. Faith: **Isaiah 26:3-4** . . . The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. [4] Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.
 - b. Laying your burden on Him: **I Peter 5:7** . . . casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
- D. Pray for your enemies or anyone who seeks to harm you in some way.
1. **Matthew 5:44-46** . . . "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [46] "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
 2. **Romans 12:14** . . . Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- E. Pray for healing when sick
1. **James 5:13-15** . . . Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. [14] Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

[15] and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

- F. Trust the Holy Spirit to pray on your behalf when your heart is burdened by the need to pray but you lack the words to express what you want to pray.
 - 1. **Romans 8:26-27** . . . In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; [27] and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

- G. What we want and what we think God wants for us influences our prayers.
 - 1. We pray best when we want what God wants – which requires knowing what God wants as stated in the scriptures and taught to us by those who have lived a godly life for many years.
 - 2. We pray wisely when we understand God and His ways – how He works in us and with us – so that we ask for what we truly need – which is most often of a spiritual nature – not for what will feed our old nature, or what we already have, or for what God has given us to do.

- H. Putting off unholy passions and distracting interests is one important key to praying without ceasing, for our passions and interests distract us from God and the things that matter to God.
 - 1. And when we are distracted from God and those things that matter to God, our prayers will mostly be focused on earthly, temporal, and physical needs – be they pressing needs or things we long for.
 - 2. We may set aside a consistent time to pray, but even here our prayers will not go much beyond what is on our mind or our list.
 - 3. This level of spiritual development cannot nurture love for God or love for the people and things that matter to God. And as I have said already, love for God and for the things that matter to God is a significant help to unceasing prayer.
 - 4. So once again, the further we go in putting off unholy passions and distracting interests the closer we draw to unceasing prayer.

- I. What about prayers that go unanswered, or at least are not answered according to the way we prayed them?

1. If prayer is a means or method of getting what we want from God or what we believe we must have for whatever reason, then unanswered prayer becomes a problem for us. It will leave us in or with a situation we did not want to deal with, or it will leave us with a sense of disappointment with God for not doing what we believed He should have done.
2. If prayer is a means or method of laying out before God what we want or believe to be best in any given situation, and if we then leave it to God to decide what the most loving, best answer is to our prayer, then unanswered prayer is either a reason for continued prayer on that issue or an occasion to accept God's dealings with us and look for what God wants to do in and/or with us.
 - a. Both Jesus and Paul experienced unanswered prayer.
 - b. In regard to Jesus' unanswered prayer, God was working out our redemption through Jesus' suffering and death.
 - c. In regard to Paul's unanswered prayer, God was providing a daily means of nurturing humility in Paul (**II Corinthians 12:7**).
3. Daniel experienced having the answer to his prayer delayed twenty-one days because the forces of evil resisted the one who was bringing God's answer to Daniel's prayer. It was Michael, one of God's chief angels, who came to the aid of the one bringing God's answer so it could get through to Daniel's. I am not certain how this fits into any clear understanding of unanswered prayer, but I do understand that we are in a way between God and the forces of evil who now have dominion here on the earth, and it is possible that this war can impede the answer to our prayers just as it delayed the answer to Daniel's prayer (**Daniel 10:10-14**).
4. I do believe that unanswered or other answered prayers are not the real problem we face. The real problem we face is the question of faith in God. Do we trust God to both know and do what is best for us, and those we love, and those we care about?

J. The perfect Jesus, prayed, often, all night sometimes, early in the morning, the night before the cross, and on the cross. His example is ours to follow.

III. Conclusion

A. My own experience.