

Prayer

- I. Review of Previous Teaching on Prayer
 - A. Last Sunday we looked at intercessory prayer for all people, including those in authority. We looked at one significant goal of this kind of intercessory prayer as being the salvation of as many as possible. Then we concluded that part of this study by talking about how anger and dissension on our part greatly influences our thinking and our character – which in turn, hinders our prayers for those with whom we are angry or in conflict with.
 - B. We also looked at honesty in prayer – which is the second of the three important characteristics of prayer – humility, honesty, and persistence.
 - C. And as I said I would do each Sunday during this series, I reminded us that all prayer is a form of fellowship and communion with God. And it is my goal to encourage all of us to treat prayer as something that can grow from being primarily need to being both need based and fellowship based.
 - D. Today, we will look further at intercessory prayer.
 - E. Prayer

- II. One Thought Concerning Honesty In Prayer.
 - A. Do our prayers depend on faith alone, or faith and holiness?
 - 1. **Mark 11:20-24** . . . As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. (21) Being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered." (22) And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. (23) "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. (24) "Therefore I say to you, **all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.**
 - 2. **John 14:12-13** . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **believes** in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. (13) **Whatever you ask in My name**, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
 - B. There is no doubt that faith is inseparably linked to prayer. And there are many who teach that it is our faith that drives God to answer our prayers. However, here is where honesty prevails or dishonesty enters.

1. Those who make faith the single or primary requirement for getting answers to prayer, end up treating faith as if it is a tool to get what they want. In other words, our faith in prayer becomes greater than God, or at least so influential with God that as a result of praying in faith, God responds as we ask.
 2. Not only is this prideful on our part, it is dishonest. According to the scriptures, faith and holiness are twins when it comes to prayer, and both are vital to need-based praying.
- C. Let me give you five examples from scripture to show you that righteousness is also a requirement for answers to need based prayers.
1. **Deuteronomy 1:45** . . . Then you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you.
 2. **Psalms 66:18** . . . If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear.
 3. **Proverbs 28:9** . . . He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.
 4. **James 4:3** . . . You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.
 5. **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.
- D. As can be seen from these verses, holy living on our part is inseparably linked to answered prayer. Therefore, putting faith and righteous living together in relation to prayer is being honest with God's word and with God himself.
- E. Now you may be wondering why this kind of dishonesty is a problem or why I am bringing it to your attention?
1. First, dishonesty in thinking our faith is the primary driver behind God's answers to our prayers leads to thinking we can control God when in fact, our position before God is always one of subordination where we are to be willing, cheerful, and humbly submissive.
 2. Second, when we elevate faith over righteousness in relation to prayer, we are nurturing the lie that God cares more about using us in His service or meeting some pressing need we have than about the quality of our relationship with Him and how we are treating the people around us.
 3. Finally, regardless of what is often taught or implied in Christian circles today, there is no faith in God without an honest pursuit of

righteousness in the life, and there is no righteousness in the life without faith in God.

III. Prayers of intercession for Christian workers and Christians in general

A. Intercession for Christian Workers

1. Scriptures urging prayer for Christian workers

a. **I Thessalonians 5:25** . . . Brethren, pray for us. (*general*)

b. **II Thessalonians 3:1-2** . . . Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; [2] and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

(1) The rapid spread of the gospel

(2) The glorification of the gospel – the acceptance of the gospel by sinners – unto repentance and salvation. Note: **Acts 13:48** . . . When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

(3) Rescued from perverse and evil men – those who persist in doing what is sinful and so have an attitude and action of opposing those who teach or encourage doing good.

c. **Ephesians 6:19-20** . . . and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

(1) Utterance given to the evangelist to make plain or clear or understandable the gospel message – **I Corinthians 2:3-5** . . . I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, [4] and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

(2) Boldness in speaking – **Acts 4:31** . . . And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

(3) These two requests are directed toward seeking the work of the Holy Spirit in the speaker for the sake of the message and the hearers. *Therefore, better the anointing of the Holy Spirit than a skillful communicator or orator.*

- d. **Hebrews 13:18-19** . . . Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. [19] And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner. (*general request for prayer based on having a good conscience*)
2. Example prayers from scripture:
 - a. For boldness. **Acts 4:29-31** . . . "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, [30] while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." [31] And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.
 - b. For release from prison: **Acts 12:1-5** . . . Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. [2] And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. [3] When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. [4] When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. [5] So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.
3. List of things to pray for in relation to Christian workers
 - a. (1) Personal spiritual growth, (2) purity of heart and holiness of life in private, in the home, and in public, (3) honesty with self and before God, (4) meekness, humility, and patience like that of Jesus Christ, (5) a growing understanding and application of God's word, (6) greater faith, (7) a stronger more vibrant prayer life, (8) grace and strength to endure hardship and suffering, (9) the attitude and behavior of a servant (10) healthy, loving relationships with immediate family members and co-workers, (11) a growing intimacy of fellowship with God.
 - b. (1) wisdom in evangelizing the lost and teaching the believers, (2) boldness and zeal, (3) the anointing of the Holy Spirit for the work of evangelism and discipleship, (4) clearly conveying the message that God is to be kept supreme in the life of the Christian, (5) making God's word practical and applicable to the hearers, (6) discernment in understanding the culture, history, biases, and

other needful information of those they are speaking to, (7) listening and understanding what they are hearing,

IV. Conclusion