

Worship 5 - The Avenue of Prayer

(Number five in a series of ten)

Introduction

When writing to the church in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul gives a direct command to them, and being inspired of the Holy Spirit, passes the command on to us today. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says: "Pray without ceasing." The opportunity to approach our Creator is one that we simply cannot take lightheartedly. However, far too many people in the world today, even in the church that Jesus Christ established, do just that. Many do not understand what prayer is and, therefore, pervert this avenue of worship and praise. However, since Paul tells us to pray constantly, we must realize the importance of the action. Since we are told to spend much time in prayer, we cannot be careless and must strive to pray only as the Lord would have us to pray. Let us define exactly what prayer is, examine how we must pray, and then understand why we must pray.

Definition

Prayer is the avenue through which we can approach our Creator. God gives us the opportunity to talk to Him and Him alone, to ask of Him the blessings that we seek. We need to realize that one of the blessings God gives us as his children is the ability to talk to Him. The church needs the help of the Almighty God, so God has given us the ability to ask Him for help. Also, each individual needs the help of the Almighty, and God has given us an avenue through which we are able to approach Him.

In addition, God listens to us and answers our prayers if we are faithful to Him. Peter said in 1 Peter 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." Here we learn that God will hear our prayers if we are faithful to Him.

How Do We Pray?

Realizing the seriousness of prayer, knowing that Paul has commanded us to pray in frequent intervals, and, most importantly, knowing that the Almighty God has established this form of communication: Let us turn to a portion of the inspired scriptures in order to find instruction in approaching the God of heaven. In Matthew six, Jesus Christ laid a pattern that we must follow when we are speaking to God in prayer. Let us examine Matthew 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."

We must Pray to God

Foremost, we pray solely to our God and Creator. Some people in the denominational world and even in the church of our Lord and Savior pray to Jesus Christ the Son. This passage leaves no room to make such error. For one to misunderstand this passage, he shows no desire to

understand the scriptures. Here Jesus Christ in no way gives us authority to pray to Him. But rather He tells us we should only pray to the Almighty God. We learn that we pray to God only and only to God. Jesus Christ shows us that we must approach God the Father when we pray. We must Pray by the Authority of Jesus When fulfilling commands given by the Almighty God, it stands to reason that we must do them as the Bible instructs us. The apostle Paul says in Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him." Prayer is no exception to this rule. We must pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ taught us how to pray, and in the model prayer by example we learn that there are some things we must pray for.

First of all, Jesus Christ prayed that only the will of the Father be done. While we are praying for God's help, we must pray that God's will shall be done.

Secondly, we see that Jesus Christ requested of God daily necessities.

Thirdly, and finally, let us examine the parallel passage in Luke 11:2-4:

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

Here we learn that Jesus Christ requested of God the forgiveness of sins. In combining the two passages, we see that there are at least three basic things for which we are obligated to pray. We pray that the Lord's will be done, that our needs be met, and that our sins be forgiven.

_____Why Must We Pray_____

The Almighty God is omniscient (all-knowing) and, therefore, knows our needs. Also, God will have His will done no matter what mankind desires. Finally, the grace of God will constantly forgive the faithful Christian. Then a question arises: Since God knows our needs, then why must we pray for them? There are at least three reasons why we need to pray:

To Acknowledge the Existence of God With modern threats to the church by the atheists, the belief in the existence of a superior Creator is becoming less popular. To that end, we constantly need to be reminded, for our own sake, that the Almighty God does exist. For the Psalmist said, "The fool said in his heart, there is no God..." (Psalm 14:1A).

_____For Worship and Praise_____

Prayer is one of the five avenues of worship. We are directly commanded to worship, admire, and adore the Almighty God. Luke listed prayer as an avenue of worship in Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Research of the verse will show that all five acts of worship appear in this one verse of the Bible. Also, this verse shows us by example that we need to praise God in prayer. The Lord shows us by His example that we need to praise God verbally in our prayers. Jesus said, "Hallowed by thy name." in His model prayer. Also Paul commanded the church in Thessalonica and, thus, the church today to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul showed us repeatedly throughout his epistles by example that we need to pray constantly to God. Since prayer is an avenue of worship, then one reason we need to pray is to exercise that avenue.

To Realize That We Need His Help Without God, we are nothing. Without God, man has no meaning. True happiness is found only by those that walk in the way of the Lord. Without God

there is no happiness, there is no joy, and there is no meaning to life. Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, we read of a vivid picture of a world without God. The picture portrays a life that is vain, meaningless, and hopeless. The writer shows us that without God, there is no rest. He

concludes the whole book by saying simply in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

We need God and we must realize this need. In researching why we must pray, we see that it is not for God, but it is for us and for our needs. We need God! We need to know that God exists. We need to praise God because man is an instinctively worshiping creature. We pray because we need God, not because God needs us.

_____Conclusion_____

Prayer is an opportunity for man by which he can approach his Creator. Prayer is something that is done by righteous Christians to God, through Christ, according to God's word. And, finally, we need to pray because we need God.

WORSHIP

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