

Scriptural Prayer

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1/27/2008

Introduction

God speaks to us through His word; Christians communicate with Him through prayer. In this lesson, let us consider several important aspects of scriptural prayer.

Prayer Involves Faith

Meaningful prayer comes from a heart that places its trust in God. A confident prayer life is built on faith in God's redemptive plan and pattern (Heb. 11:1, 6; cf. James 1:5-8; 5:14-16).

Hebrews 11:1 ... 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (NASB95)

Hebrews 11:6 ... 6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (NASB95)

James 1:5-8 ... 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (NASB95)

James 5:14-16 ... 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. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (NASB95)

Prayer Involves Worship

Prayer is an expression of adoration and praise. Before heaven's throne, angels hide their faces and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:1-3). In like manner, disciples should manifest a deep reverence for God (Ps. 8:1-9; 29:1-2; 95:1-6).

Isaiah 6:1-3 ... 1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his

feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.” (NASB95)

Psalm 8:1-9 ... 1 For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of David. O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength Because of Your adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease. 3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. 9 O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth! (NASB95)

Psalm 29:1-2 ... 1 A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in holy array. (NASB95)

Psalm 95:1-6 ... 1 O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the Lord is a great God And a great King above all gods, 4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. 5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. 6 Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. (NASB95)

Prayer Involves Confession

Proper realization of God’s holiness demands an acknowledgement of our unworthiness (Isa. 6:5). While sin harms self and others, ultimately it is an offence against God (Ps. 51:4).

Therefore, let us humbly confess our transgressions (1 John 1:9), and make necessary corrections (Ezra 10:1-4).

Isaiah 6:5 ... 5 Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” (NASB95)

Psalm 51:4 ... 4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge. (NASB95)

1 John 1:9 ... 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NASB95)

Ezra 10:1-4 ... 1 Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly. 2 Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and

have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. 3 “So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 “Arise! For this matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act.” (NASB95)

Prayer Involves Thanksgiving

Sinners have no right to spiritual blessings, nor any claim upon divine mercy. Nevertheless, God has provided a way of escape from the curse of sin. If we render obedience to the gospel, He will graciously accept us as His own. Ingratitude is characteristic of the ungodly (Rom. 1:21); believers, in contrast, live thankfully (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Romans 1:21 ... 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (NASB95)

Ephesians 5:18-21 ... 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (NASB95)

Colossians 3:17 ... 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (NASB95)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ... 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (NASB95)

Prayer Involves Dedicated Action

Prayer is no substitute for good works. Christ wept over Jerusalem in compassionate prayer, and afterwards entered the city to give His life a ransom for many. We arise from bended knee, and bend our backs in strenuous effort. Authentic prayer leads to dedicated action (Exod. 14:13-18; Josh. 7:6-15; Heb. 5:8-9; James 1:25).

Exodus 14:13-18 ... 13 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. 14 “The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.” 15 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. 16 “As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land. 17 “As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. 18 “Then the Egyptians will know that I am the

Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”
(NASB95)

Joshua 7:6-15 ... 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord God, why did You ever bring this people over the Jordan, only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! 8 “O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? 9 “For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?” 10 So the Lord said to Joshua, “Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? 11 “Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. 12 “Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. 13 “Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the Lord, the God of Israel, has said, “There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.” 14 ‘In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the Lord takes shall come near by households, and the household which the Lord takes shall come near man by man. 15 ‘It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.’ ” (NASB95)

Hebrews 5:8-9 ... 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (NASB95)

James 1:25 ... 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (NASB95)

Prayer Involves Proper Request

God’s holy and wise purpose does not permit Him to grant every petition just as it is asked. Several hindrances to answered prayer are mentioned in the Bible: iniquity and sin (Isa. 59:1-2; 1:15), disobedience and rebellion (Jer. 14:10-12; 1 John 5:16-17), self-promotion and self-righteousness (Matt. 6:5-6; Luke 18:11-14), unbelief (Heb. 11:6; James 1:5-8), unforgiveness (Mark 11:25-26), wickedness (Ps. 66:16-20; Prov. 28:9), and worldliness (James 4:1-4).

Isaiah 59:1-2 ... 1 Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you

and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (NASB95)

Isaiah 1:15 ... 15 “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. (NASB95)

Jeremiah 14:10-12 ... 10 Thus says the Lord to this people, “Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the Lord does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account.” 11 So the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. 12 “When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence.” (NASB95)

1 John 5:16-17 ... 16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. (NASB95)

Matthew 6:5-6 ... 5 “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. (NASB95)

Luke 18:11-14 ... 11 “The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 ‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ 13 “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ 14 “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (NASB95)

Hebrews 11:6 ... 6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (NASB95)

James 1:5-8 ... 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (NASB95)

Mark 11:25-26 ... 25 “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.”] (NASB95)

Psalm 66:16-20 ... 16 Come and hear, all who fear God, And I will tell of what He has done for my soul. 17 I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue. 18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; 19 But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer Nor His lovingkindness from me. (NASB95)

Proverbs 28:9 ... 9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination. (NASB95)

James 4:1-4 ... 1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. 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. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (NASB95)

More positively, God has promised to answer our requests when we believe that we will receive what we ask (Mark 11:22-24), when we ask in Christ's name (John 14:13-15), when we abide in Christ and His words (John 15:5-7), when we obey the Lord's commandments (1 John 3:21-22), and when we ask according to His will (1 John 5:14-15).

Mark 11:22-24 ... 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. (NASB95)

John 14:13-15 ... 13 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (NASB95)

John 15:5-7 ... 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (NASB95)

1 John 3:21-22 ... 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. (NASB95)

1 John 5:14-15 ... 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (NASB95)

Conclusion

Prayer is a request to a personal God who hears and answers in the way that He deems best. Trusting in God and rendering obedience to His word, let us avail ourselves of the awesome power of prayer (James 5:16; Phil. 4:6-8; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).

James 5:16 ... 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (NASB95)

Philippians 4:6-8 ... 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving 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. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (NASB95)

1 Peter 5:6-7 ... 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (NASB95)