

PRAYER

Prayer is communication with God. It is the means (vehicle) by which we have communion and fellowship with him.

Prayer is not a monologue (a long speech made by one person), but it is a dialogue (a conversation between two or more people). Therefore prayer should not just consist of us talking to God for the purpose of making our petitions known to him, but we need to take the time to listen to him and allow him to speak to us.

Prayer is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 4:26 *“and to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.”*

THERE IS A UNIVERSAL NEED FOR PRAYER:

O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. (Psalm 65:2)

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. (Scripture Isaiah 56:7)

THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS ARE PRECIOUS TO GOD:

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. (Revelation 5:8)

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a gold censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (Revelation 8:3).

CHRISTIANS ARE ADMONISHED TO PRAY THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE:

Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. (I Chronicles 16:11)

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Matthew 7:7)

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41)

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18:1)

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24).

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Ephesians 6:18).

Pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17).

GOD'S PROMISE TO ANSWER PRAYER:

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. (Psalm 91:15)

Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. (Isaiah 58:9)

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24).

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God. (Zechariah 13:9).

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7).

EXAMPLES OF PRAYERS THAT WERE ANSWERED IN SCRIPTURE:

Moses:

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them. (Exodus 15:24-25)

Hannah:

For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. (I Samuel 1:27).

Solomon:

And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou has built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. (I Kings 9:3)

Elijah:

Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that has turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the tone, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. (IKings 18:37-38).

Hezekiah:

Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, that which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib King of Assyria I have heard. (II Kings 19:20-21).

Jehoshaphat:

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, it is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him. (II Chronicles 18:31).

Ezra:

So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us. (Ezra 8:23)

Zacharias:

But the angel said unto him, Fear not Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. (Luke 1:13)

The early church:

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

POSTURES IN PRAYER:

The posture of our body is not what is important in prayer; it is the posture of our heart. However, the bible gives different examples of different postures that were taken during prayer at various times. They are as follows:

Bowing:

And the man bowed down his head and worshipped the ord. (Genesis 24:26)

And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. (Exodus 4:31).

Kneeling:

And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. (I Kings 8:54)

For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven. (II Chronicles 6:13).

On the face before God:

And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. (Numbers 20:6)

And he said, nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? (Joshua 5:14)

Standing:

And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven.... (I Kings 8:22)

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25)

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (Luke 18:11).

Although there is a place for public prayer, private devotion is imperative for the believer. There must be a time when we as Christians draw away from everyone and spend quality time in prayer before God.

Jesus Christ himself found it necessary to spend time alone at various times to pray to his father. How much more then do we as believers need time apart with God?

EXAMPLES OF PRIVATE DEVOTIONS:

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he (Jesus) went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. (Mark 1:35).

And when he (Jesus) had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. (Mark 6:46)

But so much more went there a fame abroad of him (Jesus): and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities: And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. ((Luke 5: 15-16)

And it came to pass in those days, that he (Jesus) went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12).

(Although our main devotional life is private, there will inevitably be times of public and/or unified prayer).

Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heave. (Matthew 18:19).

And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. (Luke 1:10).

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Acts 1:14).

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord thou art God which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. (Acts 4:24).

CAUSES OF FAILURE IN PRAYERS BEING UNANSWERED:

Secret sin:

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. (Psalm 66:18)

Indifference:

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. (Proverbs 1:28)

Neglect of Mercy:

Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. (Proverbs 21:13)

Despising the law:

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination. (Proverbs 28:9)

Blood-guiltiness:

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear you: your hands are full of blood. (Isaiah 1:15).

Iniquity:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2).

Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. (Micah 3:4).

Instability:

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. (James 1: 6-7).

Self-Indulgence:

Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:3)

Not in accord with the divine will of God:

And he said Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. (Exodus 33:20).

But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee: speak no more unto me of this matter. (Deuteronomy 3:26).

Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Are ye come to enquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you. (Ezekiel 20:3).

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me, and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. (II Corinthians 12:8-9)

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER:

Contrition: (Humility)

If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (II Chronicles 7:14)

Whole-heartedness:

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

Faith:

Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (Mark 11:24).

Righteousness:

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16).

