

1011 - The Doctrine of Prayer

Select Scripture

IV. The Need for Prayer - Part 2

Introduction...

Our subject, in our series on the theology of prayer, is the second message regarding the prayer life of Jesus, the supreme argument for prayer - or the **necessity** of prayer.

As I said last time - prayer is the **language of dependence**. If it is true that we are human - mere creatures, **dependent** upon God, it is natural for us to pray, because prayer is the **language** of dependence.

And maybe that's why people **kneel when they pray**, because to pray is to be dependent, and these are things that go together.

Prayer is the language of **guilt**. It is the language of **worship**. And so if we are to think of prayer from the standpoint of reason and feeling, we should very much **want** to pray. It is also an **instinct** of our human nature. We could also say that prayer is the **moral discipline** of the **soul**.

One of the **reasons** that God has us pray - is it is by **means** of prayer we are spiritually **disciplined**.

And so it is **reasonable** from the standpoint of our own spiritual **instincts** and from the standpoint of **reason** to pray.

Last time, I introduced this portion to you by declaring that Jesus Christ is **absolutely unique**.

It is **remarkable** when it comes to the **uniqueness** of our Lord Jesus Christ. Great music revolves around Him. There is no greater music than the music of **Handel's Messiah**.

Great **architecture** is consecrated to Him, and anyone who has traveled Europe and who has seen the great cathedrals of Europe, some of the **greatest illustrations** of architecture in the world know that those cathedrals were dedicated to Him.

Great **art** such as Raphael's "Madonna" or Munkacsy's "Christ Before Pilate", these are things that are consecrated to Jesus Christ. It is out of Him that these things have come.

In fact, it seems to me that **so deep** is our Lord's **impression** upon human history that it would be utterly **impossible** to account for it, were it not for the fact that Jesus Christ is **different**.

He is **not** like you and me. He is earth's Sovereign and divine spirit and **He prayed**...and to me that really **settles** the question of prayer.

It has been said prayer is our great **source of stability**. It is the source of **sustenance** and it is our **safety** spiritually.

A. The Preeminence of Jesus' Prayer Life...

Luke tells us in the chapter 5:16, that our **Lord's ministry** was **characterized by prayer** and prayer quite often.

Luke 5:16 But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

So many times - our Lord **carried out** His task, and He slipped off to pray.

Remember - He **is the eternal God** - and yet He finds it **necessary** to pray. Not only did He pray at these moments in His ministry, but when He chose the twelve, as we've already read in...

Luke 6:12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

He spent the **whole night** in prayer to God. It was of the **greatest** importance that He should select 12 apostles that had been **chosen** for that task from the beginning - **including** Judas Iscariot.

So at the point of the choosing of the Twelve **He prayed**.

And as we considered this last time - the **death** of our Lord did not **end** His praying. It ended His **earthly** praying, but it was the **door** to the ministry of prayer in His resurrection state.

And **ever since** our Lord has been at the right hand of the Father interceding - praying. Because it is **there** He ever **lives** to make intercession for us.

So you can see from this brief **review** of prayer in the life of our Lord, it is **true** that it is no **exaggeration** to say that prayer is the **breath** of our Lord.

The **highlight** of His ministry on the earth **was not** conference with men but conference with God.

I think it should be **obvious** to us - that if we are to **make any claim** to the authority to our Lord Jesus Christ for the various things that we're doing, we should **never** forget the fact that He prayed.

A. His Method...

We then moved on to the **particulars** of His prayer **methods**. And while the Bible tells us a lot about how often He prayed....there's not much regarding the method of His prayers,

But there is our Lord's **high priestly prayer** in the Gospel of John 17...which we touched on...

Now that is a **most unique** prayer. This is truly **The Lord's Prayer** -- if we were to select one text that is the Lord's Prayer that would be it, John 17.

And then we have our Lord's prayer in **Gethsemane** and we know precisely what He was praying about there. So - when it comes to our Lord's prayer methods - we saw at least - **three assumptions**, when it comes to prayer...

a. God Exists...

First of all, the assumption of our Lord in prayer is that **God exists**.

We are living in the day when men like to say, “*Prove it to me.*”

And our Lord proceeded on the basis of the fact that **God exists**. And the writer of Hebrews states that **specifically**.

Hebrews 11:6 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.

b. God is Personal...

The **second** assumption that Jesus had in his prayer life, is that **God is personal**.

He did not pray to the **integrating factor** in our experience, or a 'higher power.' He prayed to a **personal** God.

He did not talk to the **life essence** - or the **good**, the **beautiful** and the **true** - NO - He prayed, “**Father,**” the God that He prayed to was a God who existed and He existed as a person.

c. God Can Be Counted On...

Now the **third** thing that Jesus assumed is that the universe is both **faithful** and **flexible**, in that, we can count on God - He assumed that we **could count on things** in this universe.

That is, it is **possible** for a God who **controls** the affairs of this earth to **intervene** in ways that we do not completely understand.

He **assumes** that **God existed**. He assumed that **God is personal**...and He assumed that God can be counted on...

So, the universe is **faithful** and **flexible**. It is **possible** for God to intervene...

With that - I want to pick up where we left off - and to **further** our understanding about the need for prayer - let's look at...

B. His Practices...

Now, let's just **detail** a few things that characterized our Lord's Prayer life.

1. Were Reverent...

First of all, his prayers were **reverent**. Isn't it a striking thing that Jesus the Son of God **got down upon his knees to pray**?

Now in the Garden of Gethsemane, He not only got down upon his knees but he **actually** after he had been on his knees for some time, he **fell upon his face** in the most **total**, most abject picture of **dependence** upon God.

We like to think - because we think that **we're pretty much in control** of our affairs - that we are our **own** providence - but He did not believe that. His prayers were **reverent** so he kneeled.

He **fell upon His face** and then He lifted His heart to God and said, "**Father**," recognizing that He was the Son.

He not only prayed Father. He prayed **Holy Father**. And then he prayed **righteous Father**.

All of these are expressions **designed** to stress the fact that God is the supreme and controlling force in His life, so His prayers were **reverent**...

2. Were Scriptural...

Second, our Lord's prayers were **scriptural**.

I've noticed this about the **prayers** of the Bible. **Many** of the prayers of the Bible are scriptural, not just our Lord's.

For example, **Jonah**, when he was in the belly of the great fish, he did not sing out, "Abide with me." No - what you find in Jonah 2 from about verse 2 - 9, which represents his prayer, it is almost **totally composed** of **phrases** from the word of God.

Now he did not **read** that prayer. There was **no one inside** the belly of that great fish to stand by his side and hold the lamp while he read the prayer.

So he did not use some **prayer book** when he prayed. Those were phrases that were **common** to him. He **knew** them. He'd **studied** the Scriptures that he had.

And **apparently** had studied them fairly **widely**, because those phrases come from **several sections** from the word of God.

And I have noticed from **experience** in dealing with the souls of people in my years of pastoral experience -- that when Christians are in **trouble**, or **disturbed**, or in **perplexity**, when they are in the midst of **tragedy**, they do not go to **songs** in our hymn books.

When they are in **difficulty**, it is the **word of God** to which they appeal and which **strengthens** and **encourages** them.

And when a man **gets down** upon his face before God and he has **none** of the phrases of the word of God, well then his language is **lacking** for the life of prayer.

Take the Model Prayer... "*Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.*"

Now if you go through that **short simple prayer** and if you will look at the **phrases** of that prayer and **compare** them in your concordance. You don't have to **know** Hebrew and **Greek** to do this.

In your concordance with other phrases in the Bible, you will **discover** even that prayer is largely a prayer composed from **truths** of holy Scripture, **phrases** of holy Scripture. An amazing thing.

Just **think** of His prayers when He died. "*My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken me.*" That's a citation - that's a quotation from Psalm 22...

"Father into thy hands I commit my spirit." That's a quotation from Psalm 31:5.

Almost **all** of those petitions that He uttered, are **statements** from Scripture. He made Holy Scripture the **food**, the **daily** food, the daily **meditation** of His life. His prayers were **scriptural**.

Arthur T. Pearson, one of the great Bible teachers of the beginning of the 20th century, said, "*A scriptural form of expression ensures or promotes the scriptural frame of mind.*"

And what I'm saying to you **Christians** who are sitting listening to me, very plainly is this, "*Read your Bibles. Study your Bibles.*"

And you will **discover** that you have the things that will **help** you in your life of prayer.

3. Were Regular...

Third, our Lord's prayers were **regular**.

Luke 22:39 And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him.

He was accustomed to doing this...

John 18:2 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

Now when the men **asked Judas** where Jesus was, he looked at his watch he said, "Ah, he'll be in the garden of Gethsemane praying about this time."

Even **Judas** knew where you could expect to find Him. His prayers were **regular**.

Now I'm not going to **contend** that you must pray at **night**, or always in the **morning**, or necessarily that your day is totally lost if you have not had one time of prayer during the day.

There **may be** a **day** in which you can get by **without** God. I **doubt** it, but nevertheless, I'm not going to **legalistically** contend that you should pray **everyday**.

When I look at the Word of God, the impression I get is that the apostles, our Lord, the prophets and others **daily** looked to the Lord.

We do have commands that tell us to **pray without ceasing**....meaning at **frequent intervals**, of course.

Maybe that means **you** could miss a day. But I **do** think that our Lord's prayers were **regular**....

4. Were Fervent...

Fourth, his prayers were **fervent**. He prayed, we read in the Garden of Gethsemane in the most **vivid** illustration of the earnestness of His prayer, in an agony. His prayers were **fervent**.

It seems to me again if a man **is** a man of God, his prayers should be **fervent** and not mechanical.

Now I've had **funeral services** with men of different **ecclesiastical** persuasions. And there are several - which almost without exceptions - have **ministers** who simply, perfunctorily go through the **motions** of prayer.

Now it's **possible** to **read** a prayer in earnestness...don't **misunderstand** me. I'm not speaking about those who **read** prayers. It is possible to read with a great deal more earnestness than some -- I hear -- **reciting** a prayer.

But I've notice about **certain ones** that they just pray mechanically - as if they just want to get home 10-15 seconds sooner.

No - our prayers should be in **earnest**. They should be **fervent**.

5. Were Definite...

Fifth, his prayers were **definite**. I do not think our Lord got together with the Lord and just prayed, as we often pray, of course.

He **did not pray** about sin but as we often do, "Oh God," as we conclude our prayer and, "forgive us our sins in Jesus name. Amen."

Concluding in their prayers - **many times** we just hear - "Forgive our sins in Jesus name. Amen."

That's the **broadest** kind of prayer which is really **meaningless**. I think God **likes**, just as our Lord prayed definitely, He likes to hear us pray **definitely**.

Think about how Jesus prayed regarding the **cup**. Now there was **no question** in the Garden of Gethsemane **what** the cup was. The cup was that cross death.

No question but that when he said, "Oh Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me," He was **referring to death**. That was a **specific** prayer...and ours ought to be **specific** too. His were.

His prayers were also both **public** and **private**. And I think the **stress** in our Lord's praying is on the **private** side of His prayer, but He did pray in the presence of the apostles and others.

But He **never** said let's have a **prayer meeting** and let's all pray to our Father in heaven.

Now while our Lord **prayed privately**, He told us to enter into our **closets and pray**. Don't take that **literally**....that can be a little suffocating - especially in our closets...

But it is in a **private place**. And so our Lord's prayers were public and private. Have you ever noticed what Jesus did when He came into the **cities** where He was?

When Jesus came into **town** the **first** thing He did was to ask where the **nearest mountain** was. Just as you and I might ask where the nearest **motel** is. Prayer was **so much** a part of His life.

Now **that's not** in the Bible in case you're wondering - but I think I can see our Lord looking around as He entered the villages, "Now where will make a nice place for private petition to God."

C. The Purpose of His Prayer...

Third, the **purpose** of His prayer...

1. For Proclamation...

First of all, our Lord prayed for the **proclamation** of the word of God. Turn to a passage for this

This is a very interesting little section and I want you to notice how Jesus here prays in the light of his preaching.

Mark 1:35-38

35 In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

36 Simon and his companions searched for Him;

37 they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

38 He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for."

The **implication**, it seems to me, is **obvious**. He **prayed**. He got up **early** in the morning before day. He went out and he **prayed** in the light of the fact that he was going to **preach the word**.

Luther said, "He who has **prayed well** has **studied well**."

If you hope that someday to **preach the word of God**, if you feel that God has **given you** a spiritual gift of **teaching** or **evangelizing** or **pastor teacher**, then you will **never** be effective in the preaching of the word if you do not pray before you preach.

Now know I can speak from my **personal** experience that when I have prayed I usually sense that God is with me **as I preach**...even though the audience doesn't always think that....

Sometimes **when I know** that I'm speaking in the **power** of the Spirit, **they** don't recognize it all.

They'd go out and say, "Well Pastor was pretty dull today or that was a poor message." Now I'm not talking about **you personally**, I'm just speaking about my **wife**.

Well, the point is - if you are to be **effective** in the teaching of the word you **must pray**.

Now, of course, this **also** holds true for **your own** individual **witness** of the word of God, as it particularly applies to the **proclamation** of the word. And our Lord **prayed before** He preached.

A prepared **heart** will make a prepared **sermon** - someone has said.

2. For Salvation...

Second, He prayed for **salvation** of the elect. Turn to John 17...which is Jesus' High Priestly Prayer...

John 17:6-12

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

7 "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You;

8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

9 "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;

Now, look at that, "I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;"

John 17:20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

Jesus, so far as we know, did not pray for the lost **indiscriminately**.

If he did, **they would have been saved**. He prayed for **his elect**. He **did not** pray for the world.

Some of you are looking at me as if it's the **first time** you've ever realized that's what He said. It's been there in the Bible for 2,000 years... turn back a little to John 10...

And it was He who was **responsible** for it. I do not pray for the **world**. I pray for those who are **going to believe**. Our Lord is concerned about **His elect**.

Don't forget, because He also said in...

John 10

11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,
15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

So, in reply to the unbelieving Jews...

25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.

26 “But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

And with Him saying what He said in verse 26 to these **unbelieving Jews** He was speaking to, “But you do not believe Me **why?** -- Because you are **sinners**, because you are **rebellious?**

No, that would be true of all of us!. You do not believe me, “because you are not of My sheep.”

How about that? You do not believe me because you are not of My sheep. He is saying you don’t believe Me because you are **not of the elect**.

But, that’s the way the **elect respond** -- My sheep **hear my voice** and I **know** them and they follow Me and **I give eternal life to them**. And they shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

So, Jesus prayed for the **salvation** of the **elect**...

3. For Preservation...

He prayed for the **preservation** of the **saved**.

Luke 22:31–32

31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;

32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

He **prayed for Peter** and ever lives to make intercession **for us** now. He prayed that we might be saved and he prays that we would be **kept**. That’s why true salvation can never be lost!

He is our Great High Priest who has **accomplished** sacrifice for us, and He has prayed that we would come.

And now that we have come and have life, He prays that we would **have life forever**. He is our **guarantee** of eternal life, past, present and future.

4. For Dedication...

He prays for the **dedication** of the saved. It’s **astonishing** that Jesus Christ was troubled over the future enough to pray, but He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and is concerned about **our** future.

And I think He is **so concerned** that He prays regarding our **own** dedication. Turn back to John 17

17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

18 “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

19 “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Set them apart by Your word. He also prays for the **jubilation** of the saved. That is that they might be happy and joyful in their faith...

He prayed for protection from the evil one, for the **unification** of the saved, vs. 20 and 21. That we might be one.

And he prayed for the **gratification** of the saved, vs. 24...He **wants us** to see His glory and be satisfied!

Isn't it interesting Jesus asks **nothing** for Himself in a **selfish** way? He **never** prayed for forgiveness of sins, for he had no sins for forgiveness...

...but he **never prayed about** Himself -- **EXCEPT** - that God might be **glorified** through Him.

He prayed, I'm sure, for His **daily bread**. He may have prayed for **other** things such as wisdom, but primarily - **all** was a prayer directed toward the **glorification** of God.

That was His **preeminent** concern.

Conclusion...

Well, what were the **issues** of our Lord's Prayer? Of course, they **were all answered**. That's obvious. Jesus said **you always hear My prayers** in John 11, standing in front of Lazarus's tomb.

But on the **human** level, our Lord's prayers were the **means** whereby He **fulfilled** His office of **prophet, priest and king**.

It was by **reason** of His prayers that He was able to **walk in the light** and give us instruction in it.

It was by **reason** of His prayer that He was **able** to offer the once and for all sacrifice, for it was by divine **enablement** that He was **enabled** to **offer up** his **human** nature as a **sacrifice** for our sins.

And it was by prayer that He is **able** to be the King. In German - the word for king is *der Konig*.

Konig is a word that comes from the German word *kernin*, which means “*to be able*.” And so the King is one who **is able**.

And our Lord is the King, the One who is **able** by **virtue** of the fact that as a man He **perfectly** prayed to God.

And His prayer life points without question to the **necessity** of a **similar** life for us...