

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: Prayer: Luke 11:1-13

Prayer- NT:2171 properly, a wish, expressed as a petition to God, or in votive obligation:

KJV - prayer, vow.

Real Prayer

There is all the difference in the world between saying prayers and praying. Scores of men pray who are not religious in the sense that the word is ordinarily employed. All aspiration is prayer and all real prayer is the spontaneous expression of the soul's hunger.

Prayer is a kind of door to the treasure house of God, and it is of infinite importance that we should know how to open that door and enter into possession of the wealth of God.

Do not let us degrade prayer. I have heard people talk about prayer as if it were a kind of errand-boy sent to fetch something. Prayer is something more than simply talking to God. It is not only getting but giving, not only speaking but listening.

Private Prayer

The means to this end are, first of all, the one which Christ commands when He says, "Enter into thy closet and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father who seeth in secret" (Matthew 6:6). Private prayer, the quiet isolation in the chamber, where we may look into our own souls and weigh the value of things passing in the balance of eternity, where we may speak to God and feel how blessed to get away from the world, and how awing the fact is "Thou has searched me and known me; Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising," and then to pour forth our desires for holiness and for conformity to His unutterable glorious way. Oh! surely without such habits as these the whole religious life must become shallow, mechanical; a thing of opinions, doctrines, disputes, rather than the abiding blessedness of those who are in communion with God.

The priority of prayer (v. 1). We usually think of John the Baptist as a prophet and martyr, and yet our Lord's disciples remembered him as a man of prayer. John was a "miracle baby," filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born, and yet he had to pray. He was privileged to introduce the Messiah to Israel, and yet he had to pray. Jesus said that John was the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:28), and yet John had to depend on prayer. If prayer was that vital to a man who had these many advantages, how much more important it ought to be to us who do not have these advantages!

John's disciples had to pray and Jesus' disciples wanted to learn better how to pray. They did not ask the Master to teach them how to preach or do great signs; they asked Him to teach them to pray. We today sometimes think that we would be better Christians if only we had been with Jesus when He was on earth, but this is not likely. The disciples were with Him and yet they faded many times! They could perform miracles, and yet they wanted to learn to pray.

But the greatest argument for the priority of prayer is the fact that our Lord was a Man of prayer. Thus far we have seen that He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21), before He chose the Twelve (Luke 6:12), when the crowds increased (Luke 5:16), before He asked the Twelve for their confession of faith (Luke 9:18), and at His Transfiguration (Luke 9:29). The disciples knew that He often prayed alone (Mark 1:35), and they wanted to learn from Him this secret of spiritual power and wisdom.

If Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, had to depend on prayer during "the days of His flesh" (Hebrews 5:7), then how much more do you and I need to pray! Effective prayer is the provision for every need and the solution for every problem.

Pattern for prayer (vv. 2-4). We call this "The Lord's Prayer," not because Jesus prayed it (He never had to ask for forgiveness), but because Jesus taught it. There is nothing wrong with praying this prayer personally or as part of a congregation, so long as we do it from a believing heart that is sincere and submitted. How easy it is to "recite" these words and not really mean them, but that can happen even when we sing and preach! The fault lies with us, not with this prayer.

This is a "pattern prayer," given to guide us in our own praying (see Matthew 6:9-15 for the parallel). It teaches us that true prayer depends on a spiritual relationship with God that enables us to call Him "Father," and this can come only through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:1-7).

Lyndon Johnson's press secretary, Bill Moyers, was saying grace at a staff lunch, and the President shouted, "Speak up, Bill! I can't hear a thing!" Moyers quietly replied, "I wasn't addressing you, Mr. President." It is good to remind ourselves that when we pray, we talk to God.

True prayer also involves responsibilities: honoring God's kingdom and doing God's will (Luke 11:2). It has well been said that the purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. Prayer is not telling God what we want and then selfishly enjoying it. Prayer is asking God to use, us to accomplish what He wants so that His name is glorified, His kingdom is extended and strengthened, and His win is done. I must test all of my personal requests by these overruling concerns if I expect God to hear and answer my prayers.

It is important for Christians to know the Word of God, for there we discover the will of God. We must never separate prayer and the Word (John 15:7). During my ministry, I have seen professing Christians disobey God and defend themselves by saying, "I prayed about it and God said it was all right!" This includes a girl who married an unsaved man (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), a fellow living with a girl who was not his wife (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8), and a preacher who started his own church because 9 the other churches were wrong and only he had true "spiritual insight" (Philippians 2:1-16).

Once we are secure in our relationship with God and His will, then we can bring our requests to Him (Luke 11:3-4). We can ask Him to provide our needs (not our greeds!) for today, to forgive us for what we have done yesterday, and to lead us in the future. All of our needs may be included in these three requests: material and physical provision, moral and spiritual perfection, and divine protection and direction. If we pray this way, we can be sure of praying in God's will.

Persistence in prayer (vv. 5-8). In this parable, Jesus did not say that God is like this grouchy neighbor. In fact, He said just the opposite. If a tired and selfish neighbor finally meets the needs of a bothersome friend, how much more will a loving Heavenly Father meet the needs of His own dear children! He is arguing from the lesser to the greater.

We have already seen that prayer is based on Sonship ("Our Father"), not on friendship; but Jesus used friendship to illustrate persistence in prayer. God the Father is not like this neighbor, for He never sleeps, never gets impatient or irritable, is always generous, and delights in meeting the needs of His children. The friend at the door had to keep on knocking in order to get what he needed, but God is quick to respond to His children's cries (Luke 18:1-8).

The argument is clear - If persistence finally paid off as a man beat on the door of a reluctant friend, how much more would persistence bring blessing as we pray to a loving Heavenly Father! After all, we are the children in His house with Him!

The word translated "importunity" means "shamelessness" or "avoidance of shame." It can refer to the man at the door who was not ashamed to wake up his friend, but it can also refer to the friend in the house. Hospitality to strangers is a basic law in the East (Genesis 18:1 ff). If a person refused to entertain a guest, he brought disgrace on the whole village and the neighbors would have nothing to do with him. The man in the house knew this and did not want to embarrass himself, his family, or his village; so he got up and met the need.

Why does our Father in heaven answer prayer? Not just to meet the needs of His children, but to meet them in such a way that it brings glory to His name. "Hallowed be Thy name." When God's people pray, God's reputation is at stake. The way He takes care of His children is a witness to the world that He can be trusted. Phillips Brooks said that prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His highest willingness. Persistence in prayer is not an attempt to change God's mind ("Thy will be done") but to get ourselves to the place where He can trust us with the answer.

Promises for prayer (vv. 9-13). The tenses of the verbs are important here: "Keep on asking .. keep on seeking .. keep on knocking." In other words, don't come to God only in the midnight emergencies, but keep in constant communion with your Father. Jesus called this "abiding" (John 15:1 ff), and Paul exhorted, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). As we pray, God will either answer or show us why He cannot answer. Then it is up to us to do whatever is necessary in our lives so that the Father can trust us with the answer.

Note that the lesson closes with an emphasis on God as Father (Luke 11:11-13). Because He knows us and loves us, we never need to be afraid of the answers that He gives. Again, Jesus argued from the lesser to the greater if an earthly father gives what is best to his children, surely the Father in heaven will do even more. This even includes "the good things of the Holy Spirit" (compare Luke 11:13 with Matthew 7:11), blessings that in the Old Testament were reserved only for a special few.