

# PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

Lk. 18:1

## Int.

1. Aim: To discuss some of the principles of prayer to help us understand more about our prayer life.
2. Lk. 18:1 "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint:"
  - a. Luke is the only writer who records this parable
  - b. Purpose of this parable --- that men ought to always pray and not to faint. Faint = Give up, lose heart
  - c. Persistence in prayer is a valuable lesson we all need to learn
3. One of the greatest blessings enjoyed by Christians in this life is the privilege of PRAYER, by which we can approach God.
  - a. Someone has said: "The secret of all failure is prayerlessness."
  - b. III. Of the Power of Prayer
4. Paul frequently exhorted Christians to be diligent in their prayers...
  - a. "praying always with all prayer and supplication..." - Eph. 6:18
  - b. "Pray without ceasing" - 1 Thes. 5:17
5. Yet Jesus knew that people would tend to become slack in their prayers - Lk 18:1 -
  - a. I ought to pray
  - b. I ought always to pray
  - c. I should not faint in praying
6. This lesson will be about some of the basic principles of acceptable prayer.

## Discussion

### I. CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

#### A. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN FAITH"

1. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." - Mt 21:22 -- Trust that God will hear
2. Otherwise, prayer will not be answered - Jas.1:5-8 NKJV "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."
  - a. Wavering = means doubting - the opposite of trust
  - b. Faith = trust in God's ability to answer
3. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of"
  - a. Prayer changes people
  - b. Or rather, we should say that prayer RESULTS in these changes, for it is God who brings about the changes.
  - c. Prayer coupled with the knowledge of God's truth and in harmony with it has and always will change the life of that person who trusts in Christ and is trying to follow His Word !
4. Is our faith weak? Then increase it with the help of God's Word - Rom. 10:17
5. An Acceptable prayer must be offered in faith

B. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN THE SPIRIT OF HUMILITY"

1. I imagine an arrogant prayer? It is impossible.
2. Ps. 138: 6 "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off."
3. Notice the example of the Pharisee and the publican **Luke 18:9-14**
4. As quoted by James: - Jas. 4:6b "...Wherefore he saith, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

C. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S WILL"

1. God answers prayer that is offered "according to His will" - 1 Jn 5:14 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:"
2. Jesus provided the example for us in His prayers at Gethsemane - Lk 22:42 NKJV "saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.."
3. Many prayers are unanswered because we are more concerned with OUR will, rather than GOD'S will! - Jas. 4:3 NKJV "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." - W.E.B. "You ask, and don't receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it for your pleasures."
4. Prayer is not for the purpose of getting our will done in heaven, but rather, it is for the purpose of getting God's will done on earth.

#### D. IT MUST BE OFFERED "BY THOSE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD"

1. 1 Pet 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."
2. The prayers of the righteous person are effective - Jas. 5:16 "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."
3. Then in the next 2 verses he gives an example - Elias
4. But those continuing in sin He will not hear! -
  - a. Prov. 28:9 "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."
  - b. I sa. 59:1-2 "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."
5. If we expect God to hear us when we pray then we must hear Him when He speaks in His word. We must be righteous people.

#### E. IT MUST BE OFFERED "WITH PERSISTENCE"

1. Jesus illustrated this with the parable of the persistent widow - Lk 18:1-8
2. The virtue of persistence is demonstrated in the prayers of:
  - a. Jesus at Gethsemane - Mt 26:44 "And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."
  - b. The early church - Acts 2:42 "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

[These are the conditions that make prayer acceptable to God. But it might be helpful to also notice a few...]

## **II. BARRIERS TO PRAYER**

### **A. UNCONFESSED SIN**

1. Ps 66:18 "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:"
2. The BASIS for prayer rests upon our being in fellowship with Him; such fellowship is broken if we do not confess our sins to Him!

### **B. IMPROPER TREATMENT OF OTHERS**

1. How we treat others has a bearing upon whether God will hear our prayers!
  - a. How a husband treats his wife - 1 Pet. 3:7 "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."
  - b. Hinder = means to cut down, interrupt,
  - c. If a husband and wife are fussing and fighting then it will hinder their prayer life.
  - d. Also true in any relationship we have with our fellow human beings
2. We must correct our relationships with others (if possible) before we can expect God to hear our prayers!
3. If we desire to receive forgiveness for our sins we must forgive Mt 6:14-15
 

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

[Finally, it is important to bear in mind that God answers prayer in various ways...]

### **III. ANSWERS TO PRAYERS**

#### **A. "REQUEST GRANTED"**

1. God may answer "YES" , and grant the petitions we ask of Him
2. Such will be the case the more we try to do His Will in our lives - 1 Jn. 3:22 "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

#### **B. "REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT YET"**

1. God may grant our request, but in time and according to His purpose for our lives
2. Ecl. 3:1 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"
3. We must not attempt to tell God as to the time when our prayers should be answered.
  - a. We are not omniscient
  - b. We do not always understand when we need certain things.
  - c. We must trust God to know the time of when our prayers will be answered.
4. We may not be ready for the answer and God is preparing us for its greater use and joy.
5. So we may think God is saying "NO", when He is really saying "YES, BUT WAIT"

C. "REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT"

1. Sometimes God says "YES" but answers in a way differently than we anticipated
2. Remember, God's thoughts and methods are often much different than ours -
  - a. I sa. 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
  - b. God knows what is best for us at all times.
3. Like asking God for strength and perseverance...
  - a. He may give us trials to bear
  - b. Which in turn develops the virtues we prayed for!
4. We should be careful and not dictate to God HOW to answer our prayers...
  - a. Limit the "HOW" and we might be limiting the "RESULT"
  - b. For example, the way some pray for the sick, they limit God as to how He might restore them
5. Illustration - Prayer Answered - "He Asked - God Gave"

D. "REQUEST DENIED"

1. Often God says "NO"
2. But we must trust that God, who knows all and what is best, would do so only if granting our request might not be for our good - Heb. 12:5-11
3. A loving father does not always give everything that a child requests. A child may request to play with a razor blade. God will always say "no" to us when what we request is dangerous or risky. God in His wisdom and knowledge knows that sometimes NO is the best answer.

4. We may not fully understand, but we can still fully trust Him!
5. "I have lived to thank God that all my prayers have not been answered." Jean Ingelow [NDT p. 505]

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The ability to pray to God and receive answers in our lives is truly one of the greatest blessings we can have as children of God!
2. Understanding and applying the principles discussed in this lesson will assure greater success in having our prayers answered.
3. Principles of Acceptable Prayer: ABC'S CBA'S
  - a. Five Characteristics of Acceptable Prayer
    - (1) In Faith
    - (2) In Humility
    - (3) In Harmony with God's will
    - (4) Righteous life
    - (5) With Persistence
  - b. Barriers to Prayer
    - (1) Unconfessed sin
    - (2) Improper treatment of others
  - c. Answers to Prayers
    - (1) Yes
    - (2) Wait
    - (3) Different than the request
    - (4) No

4. "Prayers should be the key of the day and the lock of the night." - Old English Proverb
  
  5. Lk. 18:1 "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint:"
- 

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - March 9, 2008 - Sunday Morning  
Evans Church of Christ  
515 Gibbs Road  
Evans, Ga. 30809  
706-855-1249  
evanscoc@bellsouth.net  
www.evansgachurchofchrist.org