

Prayer

Michael L. Riddle

Introduction:

1. In Luke 11, the disciples who had seen, on many occasions, Jesus' example of prayer, asked him to teach them to pray.
2. Prayer is an essential part of our relationship with God, and the scriptures have much to say about our prayers.
3. Let's examine some of what the scriptures teach concerning our prayers.

Discussion:

I. The Power of Prayer

- A. If we are going to make a study of prayer, it is essential for us to be fully convinced of the fact that there is power in prayer.
- B. James in his epistle mentions several ways in which we can see the power of prayer. Note the statements made by James in chapter 5:15-18 that express the power of prayer: Prayer of faith shall save the sick; sins forgiven; effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much; Elias prayed for rain to be stopped and it was
- C. A great example of one who believed in the power of prayer was good king Hezekiah:
 - a. Hezekiah prayed for deliverance from the threats of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:14-19, 35-37)
 - b. Hezekiah prayed for life to be extended (2 Kings 20:1-6);

II. Elements of Acceptable Prayer

- A. Many people struggle with knowing what they should be praying for/about. The scriptures reveal many elements of acceptable prayer to God.
 1. Ephesians 6:18 - Supplication (petition or request for ourselves or others) – part of the armour of God is to pray for strength, and to pray for our fellow soldiers of Christ
 2. Philippians 4:6 – in everything by prayer and supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your request be known – pray for everything, and rejoice, that you be not anxious.... This leads to peace (:7)
 3. James 1:5 – Petition – if you lack wisdom to deal with trials, ask God and he will provide
 4. 1 Tim. 2:1-2; 2 Thess. 3:1-2 – Supplication, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks for all men... Intercession (in essence the same as supplication but specifically on behalf of others; an intercession)

III. The Model Prayer

- A. Many people confuse the Lord's Prayer and the Model Prayer. What we have recorded in Luke 11 is what could be called the Model Prayer as Jesus taught his disciples to pray.
- B. Here, as we see many times throughout the life of Christ, his disciples found Jesus praying (Luke 11:1). They had observed Jesus' outstanding example of prayer, and wanted him to teach them to pray as he did.

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- a. Mark 1:35 – after spending the previous day healing the sick of the town, he got up early and went to pray
 - b. When it came time to select his 12 men to do the work of teaching all men – he prayed all night to God before making his selection (Luke 6:12-13)
 - c. Before his transfiguration, he took Peter, James, and John with him to the mountain to pray (Luke 9)
 - d. Here in Luke 11, his disciples who were Jews that'd heard prayer their whole life, ask Jesus to teach them to pray
 - e. Jesus prayed for his disciples in John 17
 - f. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed earnestly (Luke 22:41-45)
 - g. On the cross, Jesus prayed Father forgive them for they know not what they do.
- C. As we read Luke 11:1-4 and take note of each phrase the Lord uses, we learn much about prayer.
1. Our Father in heaven
 - a. We are praying to God the FATHER (not Jesus, Mary, some saint, angels, etc.)
 - b. Shows reverence/respect/fear of God
 - c. Gives him the preeminence
 - d. Recognized he his heavenly, not like an earthly father
 2. Hallowed by thy name
 - a. Holy, precious, reverend is the name of the Lord (Ps. 111:9)
 - b. His name above all other names. Say this boldly.
 - c. In him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17:28)
 3. Thy kingdom come
 - a. At this time, the church was yet to be established
 - b. Now that it has been established (Acts 2), we can still pray about the church's existence (thankful that it came to pass, etc.)
 - c. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Pray for it!
 4. Thy will be done
 - a. God's will, NOT our own will
 - b. See James 4:13-15
 5. Give us day by day our daily bread
 - a. Daily prayer, Christianity is a daily religion
 - b. God gives us the bread (general term for those things we have need of)
 - c. God knows before we ask, but expects us to ask (Matt. 6:8)
 6. Forgive us our sins
 - a. God alone can forgive us
 - b. Baptism washed away our sins when we became a Christian, prayer does afterwards
 - c. For we also forgive others their debts
 - i. Forgiveness is conditional on our forgiveness of others (Matt. 6:13-14)
 - ii. Our prayers are thus hindered when we fail to forgive others
 7. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
 - a. God cannot tempt us (1 Cor. 10:13)
 - b. Tempted when drawn away of our own lust's and enticed (James 1)

IV. Conditions of Acceptable Prayer

- A. Contrary to the world's understanding of prayer, God does not hear all prayers. The scriptures very clearly reveal that there are certain requirements that must be met in order for our prayers to be acceptable to God. Let us examine some of these requirements.
- B. We must pray ***in faith***
 1. Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:21-22)
 2. James describes the one who prays without faith - A double minded man, unstable in all his ways (James 1:5-8) – Don't pray for wisdom if you don't intend to use it or accept what God provides
 3. If we are going to pray to God, we must be fully convinced He has the power to answer our prayers.
- C. We must pray ***with sincerity***
 1. Jesus teaches in Matthew 6 that we are NOT to pray to be seen of Men (:5)
 2. (:6-8) They have their reward (being seen) Go off alone to pray, God who sees in secret will reward openly.
- D. We must pray ***with humility***
 1. Similarly, Jesus instructs that we are to pray with humility. Pharisee and Sinner (Luke 18) – we ought to realize our need for God when we pray
 2. James dealt, in general, with the Christian's need for humility in chapter 4 vs. 6 & 10.
- E. We must pray ***according to God's will***
 1. Furthermore, when we pray, it is not to be that our will be done, but God's. ("thy will be done")
 2. 1 John. 5:14 ,15 Whatever we ask according to his will, he hears.
- F. We must pray ***without vain repetition***
 1. Not only are there positive conditions of acceptable prayer, but also negative.
 2. One of those negative conditions is found in Matthew 6:7.
 3. Paul instructed the Corinthians that when we pray, we are to pray with spirit AND with understanding. The second of those prohibits the use of such vain repetitions.
 4. Our Catholic and Protestant friends would do well to grasp this principle (I.e. Book of Common Prayer, Prayer Cards, Catholic Prayer Books, etc.)
- G. We must ***be righteous***
 1. Finally, in order for our prayers to be acceptable, we must ourselves be righteous.
 2. Peter makes this point very clearly in 1 Peter 3:12!
 3. James says the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"
 4. One cannot be saved from their sin by saying a sinner's prayer – calling on the name of the Lord requires obedience.

Conclusion:

1. This lesson has been a basic look at the topic of prayer, we could take a much deeper look at prayer, but it is something we need to be reminded about.

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2. Prayer is perhaps the most underutilized “tool” that God has provided us with for our lives upon this earth. Let’s heed the words of the apostle Paul to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).