

Life in The Early Church

Studies on the 4 basics according to Acts 2:42

PRAYER



Maurice Barratt

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PRAYER

Prayer is the easiest and hardest of all things; the simplest and the sublimest; the weakest and the most powerful; its results lie outside the range of human possibilities – they are limited only by the omnipotence of God.

E.M. Bounds

Introduction

Consequences

This is the 4th volume in the early church series covering the four things the early disciples practised from house to house.

And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and **fellowship**, and in **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**.

Acts 2:42

I will cover the subject of prayer in this volume, and how the early church understood and practised it. Let me remind those who have not read the first three

volumes in this series of the amazing consequences that this lifestyle produced amongst the believers who had just been filled with the Holy Ghost.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 2:43-47

This is an amazing list of eight things that happened.

1. Fear came upon every soul

I do not believe this verse is talking about fear that came upon those outside the disciples. So many Christians do not like to think that we should fear God even though the bible teaches us that we

should. Here is a scripture to support my view that this was fear in the church ...and it says **great fear!**

And **great fear** came upon **all the church**,
and upon as many as heard these things.

Acts 5:11

Here are more scriptures that show that this fear of God is a good thing!

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking **in the fear of the Lord**, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts 9:31

Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and **you that fear God**, give audience.

Acts 13:16

Paul criticized people that had no fear of God.

There is no **fear of God** before their eyes.

Romans 3:18

We are living in a church age where the fear of God has become a despised thing and a thing to be

ridiculed. It does not seem to fit into the modern perception of our 'good, sentimental, and doting father, God'. I suggest the reader finds what David, the 'man after God's own heart', says about fear in his Psalms. Without a fear of God there will be no real move of God and history gives ample evidence that a fear of God in his people always precedes the signs and wonders with souls added to the church.

Lying Wonders?

It makes me consider whether the present day signs and miracles, which are not accompanied by the fear of the Lord, are 'lying wonders'. Antichrist will deceive the world, and church, with these lying wonders in the last days.

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

2 Thessalonians 2:9

Jesus himself talked about this fear to his disciples when he sent them to cast our devils and heal the sick.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather **fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

Matthew 10:28

2. Wonders and signs by the apostles

Wonders and signs were done by the apostles, not the believers! There is a teaching prevalent that states that all believers should cast out devils and do the commission Jesus gave to 11 men. But in the letters to the churches there is not one instruction or encouragement to do this which is very strange if all Christians were meant to practise the great commission in Mark 16. We must see what the bible teaches, and not what our denomination tells us. What we are told in church are often traditions of our denominations and not the word of God and this is a case in point. It is also very strange that there are no exhortations or instructions to save souls or evangelise in the whole of the New Testament from the Acts of the Apostles to Revelation. We are told to seek the Fruit of the Spirit (the character of Christ), not the Gifts of the Spirit (the power of God in miracles and healing. The Gifts of the Spirit are good and we need them for evangelism. When Jesus returns we will not need them. The character of Christ will remain through eternity (See 1 Corinthians 1-14 for Paul's teaching on this subject).

3. All that believed were together, and had all things common

There was a love between these early believers that caused them to treat their neighbour as themselves and they shared their resources as everyone had need. My goodness, wouldn't it be wonderful if this happened in our modern churches. So many large churches, costing millions of dollars, have ghettos in the very same city. Where is the love of God manifested? What an indictment against the things Jesus said.

4. They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple.

These new believers met daily in unity. They did not do their duty and meet one day a week for a service and maybe a midweek bible study. This was their new lifestyle not a new religion – duty and obligation did not come into it. There is no mention of tithing or musical instruments to aid any worship. How far have we strayed from this early church lifestyle. They still went to the temple in Jerusalem as the Old Covenant did not fully end until AD70 when the temple was destroyed and the animal sacrifices ceased. Paul said in Hebrews that it was ready to vanish away, showing that at the time he wrote these words he did not consider that the New Covenant had fully come to fruition. That is why Paul circumcised Timothy, made vows,

and kept the feast. When the temple was destroyed and animal sacrifices and the priesthood finished, the new Covenant was fully established and all the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant were made obsolete by the New Covenant.

In that he said, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old **is ready to vanish away.**

Hebrews 8:13

5. They had the Breaking of Bread from house to house.

The early disciples did not take communion once a month, as practised in most of America, or once a year as many churches in Africa. In the UK, most Evangelicals take it once a week. The early disciples did not know about the doctrine of substantiation, or think like modern Evangelicals, to them it was a living spiritual meal and means of grace when, by faith, they were receiving more of Christ's life into their bodies (see my book on Breaking of Bread). Where, oh where, do these denominations get their authority to practise these customs if not from the bible?

6. They ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

This must be the food they ate when they met from house to house, rejoicing in God's provision and all having a single undivided heart – unity.

7. Praising God, and having favour with all the people.

It is wonderful when the world stop calling Christians hypocrites and realise they have something real and authentic – even if they do not want it. As soon as believers become religious they alienate themselves from the common people and have to resort to 'Friendship Evangelism' and entertainment to attract, and deceive, people with a false gospel.

8. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Notice it was not because of evangelism – it just happened because God drew people to them. Please do not believe that I am against evangelism – after all, if Jesus gives us the gift of 'Evangelists' in the body what are they supposed to do – evangelise of course. I am talking about the general body of believers. (See Ephesians 4:11)

Prayer, one of the four things these disciples practised and the subject of this volume, brought

about these radical consequences. I have written many chapters in various books on the subject of prayer, both public and private closet prayer. I have also written three volumes on the subject of intercession (Footnote 1). Those reading this book can find out my teaching on this subject, so there is no need to repeat those teachings in this volume.

As this series is about early church lifestyle I am going to look at what Jesus prayed for his disciples and what the apostles said in their letters to the churches about prayer. I will also look at their prayers as an example of how and what we should be praying for as believers in Christ.

Footnote 1

'The Secret life of a Disciple' ISBN 1-904592-13-8 I have written three books on the subject of intercession.

Volume 1. Intercession - becoming the person God listens to. **ISBN978-1-904592-96-9**

Volume 2. Intercession - Paying the price for revival **ISBN 978-1-904592-99-0**

Volume 3. Intercession - Making his paths straight **ISBN 978-1-904592-83-9**

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PRAYER

PART 1

What did Jesus
Say About Prayer?

1

Pray for Those Who Hold us in Contempt

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Matthew 5:44

Before I look at what the apostles taught about prayer I would first like to discuss what Jesus

told the apostles about this subject. They were the ones who would teach us in today's world, and the principles must be the same even if the circumstances or cultures are very different. That is the beauty of finding biblical principles – they never change. If it was correct and godly to physically chastise a child 200 years ago then it is no different today under any culture, and if it was right for a woman to have authority over a man in the early church then it is correct today.

Do we really Believe?

Either we believe the bible is the word of God to us or we assimilate the current world view – exactly what the church do without exception in every age. Only a remnant refuse to bow the knee to Babylon, and in doing so are branded as heretics, hard-liners, fundamentalists, or whatever word is currently being used to insult them. I have been called all of these and many more. However, I am in good company according to Jesus.

You are blessed, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so

persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Matthew 5:11-12

Up the Mountain

A good place to start is to look at what Jesus taught his disciples about praying when he took them up a mountain; as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, chapters 5-7

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and **pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.**

Matthew 5:44

How do I pray for people who use me for their own ends and hold me in contempt and disdain. Well, Jesus said pray **for them** not **against them**, so I have to be careful I do not clothe my anger in nice religious words when I pray for them. Jesus' discourse in the Sermon on the Mount shows us how God reacts, what he does, and what he expects from us. We are to be like our Father in heaven. Therefore, it is a godly thing to do; that is, to pray indiscriminately for those who love us and those who hate us. If you think this is unreasonable then you

are correct, because God is never, ever reasonable to the world's thinking and the world's thinking is never ever reasonable to God.

Here is the whole context of Jesus' request to pray for these people. Read it slowly.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and **pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;** that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Therefore, be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:44-48

I have written about how difficult it is to pray in this way in my book 'Fulfilling the Law', and I use my wife, Joanna's, testimony. I have included it below.

I have come from a loving and stable background where I do not remember receiving any great

hurts from anyone, but Joanna's home life was dysfunctional and she was scarred and hurt, even by those very close to her. She was full of hate for some of her family members and had murderous thoughts in her heart. Through time she learned to forgive them and stop saying hurtful things about them. She even came to the point where she could "do good" to them in secret.

A few years ago Joanna shared with me that the very hardest thing she had to overcome was being able to pray for them – not only for God to bless them and for her to forgive them – that was relatively easy, but for them to be reconciled again. Why? Because this was not what she really wanted in her heart. To forgive was all right, but to pray that God would unite them as one, and for her to be vulnerable to further abuse and hurt, was a prayer that she could not pray for many years.

We often think we have forgiven people, when in fact it is simply because they are no longer in our lives. If these people came back into our lives maybe all the old hurts would be brought to the surface. It is often true that **we have not really forgiven, we have just forgotten the hurts.** This is not acceptable to God, for he wants to do a thorough job in our hearts. To pray for unconditional

Pray for Those Who Hold us in Contempt

reconciliation and unity is the only safe prayer to pray if you want your life to be perfect before God.

Christian perfection is to do with maturity in regards to the character of Christ and Paul always seems to point us to this spiritual maturity.

Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, **let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

Hebrews 6:1

PRAYER

A man who is intimate with God
will never be intimidated by men.

Leonard Ravenhill

2

Prayer & Fasting

Howbeit this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.

Matthew 17:21

Jesus said that certain devils will only be removed by prayer and fasting, so he expects us to fast and pray as our regular lifestyle, so that when we come to 'this kind' we have the authority to cast them out.

However, this kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting.

Matthew 17:21

The disciples of Jesus had cast devils out, and healed many people after Jesus had sent out 70 of them to do these things, and they came back rejoicing, saying that even the devils obeyed them and departed from people.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

Luke 10:17

Not an Option

However, Jesus' disciples did not fast when they were with him, and he gave the Pharisees the reason why, but he also told them the disciples would fast after he has risen from the dead (See Luke 5:33-35). It is not an option for disciples to give alms, fast, and pray. Jesus said of these three disciplines. 'When you fast, pray and give alms' and not 'if you fast, if you pray and if you give alms'. ^{Footnote 1}

Prayer is effective on its own and fasting is also a separate discipline. There seems to be no instruction in the Old or New Testaments to say

that if we fast we also have to pray at the same time, but it seems to be a natural thing to practice them together when dire circumstances come. The three above-mentioned disciplines of alms giving, prayer and fasting should be an unassuming part of every disciple's lifestyle.

Good Examples

Two Old Testament examples would be of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra had to travel all the way from Babylon to Jerusalem with gold, silver, and precious stones to rebuild Jerusalem. There were robbers on this trade route, and they could only travel slowly because of the oxen pulling the heavily laden cart of treasures, and the women and children, so they fasted and prayed for protection.

So we fasted and besought our God for this:
and he was entreated of us.

Ezra 8:23

Nehemiah also fasted and prayed when he realised that the walls of God's city were broken down and the beautiful city of God was being neglected.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and

mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4

In the New Testament, when there were important decisions to be made or important work to do, they fasted and prayed. God had called Paul and Barnabas when they were fasting and praying which is significant and then they fasted and prayed again and sent them out to do what God had called them to.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 13:2-3

Footnote 1

See my book 'The Secret Life of a Disciple', chapters 5-15.

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PRAYER

To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.

Martin Luther

3

Men Ought Always to Pray

And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

Luke 18:1

And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.

Matthew 21:13

Jesus exhorted us to pray always. Christians seem to think that prayer is something we do at specific times and of course this is true – we go to prayer meetings for that specific purpose, but prayer is much more than this. Praying at specific times as a duty and discipline only makes us religious. Jesus was expecting prayer to be a lifestyle. In other words, we are expected to be in an attitude of prayer 24 hours a day.

And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that **men ought always to pray**, and not to faint.

Luke 18:1

Watch ye therefore, and **pray always**, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Luke 21:36

Understanding the Covenants

How can we achieve this in our busy everyday lives with work, wife or husband, children, and social media always begging us to engage in a connected world? I think one of the keys is to understand the difference between the Old Covenant and the New

Covenant in this respect. Under the Old Covenant the temple in Jerusalem was the house of God and people went into it to pray. While ever it was standing it was the place where God dwelt and where you went to meet God. Even the period between Jesus dying and the destruction of the temple in AD 70, it was still the place to pray.

Now Peter and John went up together **into the temple at the hour of prayer**, being the ninth hour.

Acts 3:1

Prophets Needed!

God sent his prophets many times when Israel had backslidden and forgotten what the temple should be used for. When Solomon had finished building the temple in Jerusalem he knew what it was for. His long prayer in 1 Chronicles 6 confirms that it was built as a house of prayer.

Then **what prayer or what supplication** soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands **in this house...**

2 Chronicles 6:29

When this present age has passed and Israel is restored for 1,000 years, with Jesus as their king, the physical temple in Jerusalem will again be a house of prayer. It has already been decided in the plan of God and prophesied by Isaiah to be fulfilled when Israel are again restored to greatness after Jesus returns to this earth.

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 **my house shall be called an house of prayer for all people**.

Isaiah 56:7

The Zeal of My Father's House

Jesus' only act of violence while he was three years on this earth was to whip people and cast them out of the temple.

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not

my father's house an house of merchandise.
And his disciples remembered that it was
written, The zeal of thine house has eaten
me up.

John 2:15-17

Jesus Will Again Do This!

It was an act of prophecy to show what he would do when he returns to earth shortly to purge his temple as forecast by the prophet Malachi. This was not fulfilled at his first coming, the prophet Malachi was prophesying it would be when he returns.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom you seek, **shall suddenly come to his temple**, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, he shall come, says the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of

Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

Malachi 3:1-4

When Jesus had cast them out of the temple he confirmed that it was built as a house of prayer and quoted Isaiah's statement.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, **My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?** But ye have made it a den of thieves.

Mark 11:17

I am a house of prayer

I have shown that while ever there is a physical temple of God then it should be a house of prayer. Therefore under the Old Covenant and in the Millennial reign of Christ this was, and will be, true. However, there is no physical temple in Jerusalem under the New Covenant. The disciples did not put up special buildings to worship God, pray, or meet together. It was 400 years later when Rome paganised the believers that they constructed buildings – temples to God. All religions need a temple to worship in – even Satanist have temples to worship their god. As

Jesus came to abolish religions and reconcile men to have a relationship with his father, it is reasonable to assume that the last thing he wants disciples to do is put buildings up as places of worship and prayer. Buildings are not evil – I am talking about calling them the house of God, temples, or tabernacles as many do. It is a misplaced and misleading name for buildings. After time they end up, on one hand as dead denominational graveyards or converted into apartments for rent, or on the other hand as entertainment centres, because the emphasis is to build the 'Church', meaning the organisation and buildings.

I am God's Temple

If what I have said is true we need to ask the question, 'where is the house of prayer now'? The bible is very clear that under the New covenant, God, the Holy Ghost, and Jesus are not with us but in us and that **we are now the temple of God**. We are the house of prayer.

Don't you know you are the temple of God,
and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

1 Corinthians 3:16

What? Don't you know that **your body is
the temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in

you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Corinthians 6:19

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

All these scriptures say that God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are **in us not with us**.

If this is true then I myself must become a house of prayer and my lifestyle must reflect this. I must be in an attitude of prayer all day long. I must be in communion with God in my heart when I am cutting the grass, chopping logs, making a meal, driving my car, or watching the news on social media.

House of Prayer or Den of Thieves

If I am not making my mortal body a house of prayer, by default it will become a den of thieves. This is of course frightening and worthy of serious consideration. It follows, if this is true, that I cannot live like the world to 'please myself'. I must deny myself so that the spirit of God is not grieved in

me. This will bring a fear of God, that is missing from the lives of Christians in today's self centred, self loving, and self indulgent Christianity.

PRAYER

Nothing brings such leanness into
a man's soul as lack of prayer.
Charles Spurgeon

4

Hindrances to Prayer

And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Mark 11:25-26

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

Psalms 66:18

There are many hindrances to pray and praying, and I believe Jesus revealed the main one to his disciples in his Sermon on the Mount discourse. The Lord's Prayer in Chapter 6 of Matthew's gospel covers many things we should pray for, but there is only one of them that Jesus comments on after the prayer is finished, and it is about forgiveness.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15

Jesus says the same in Mark's gospel:

And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Mark 11:25

It is quite serious because Jesus makes conditions to our praying. He says in both scriptures that if we do not forgive our brother, God will not forgive us. I do not believe this statement implies we will lose our salvation, I believe it means that we will have to

pay the price when we face Jesus at his judgement seat to account for deeds done in our bodies, or we will be chastised while we are still alive on this earth. For those readers who think that God does not chastise us as Christians I have put the words of Paul below.

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you are bastards, and not sons.

Hebrews 12:5-8

The Parables

Clearly, from Jesus' parables, there are rewards and punishments when we face him – not at the Great White Throne before God for salvation, but at the Judgement Seat of Christ to account for deeds done in our bodies since we became children of God. This is assessment for reigning with him in his kingdom for 1000 years.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he has done, whether it be good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10

Rebellion is Witchcraft

On my travels around the world I meet so many believers who have grudges against other Christians, and are not willing to change their attitude. They always feel they have justification for their way of thinking. Unforgiveness is rebellion, not weakness, and as such is sin, and sin always hinders our relationship with God and therefore our prayers, our communication with God, is hindered.

Any married person understands that when there is unforgiveness between partners it hinders the communication in the relationship, and so it is with God; many believers do not receive the answer to their prayers because they have unforgiveness in their heart. So many Christians believe they have forgiven, but in actual fact they have just forgotten because the person who hurt or wronged them is no longer in their environment. If the person who hurt them suddenly came into their lives again the hurt and resentment would still be in their hearts.

This is not good enough and God is not deceived. He looks at our hearts and not our minds – what we think. Very often what we think in our minds is very different from what we feel and think in the deep hidden recesses of our deceitful heart.

King David says in one of his Psalms that if we hold sin in our heart God will not hear us.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, **the Lord will not hear me.**

Psalm 66:18

It is so important to have clean hands and a pure heart if we want God to answer our prayers.

Treat Your Wives with Respect

Peter in the New Testament confirms this with a particular example that most Christians would not even consider, but it is the little foxes that spoil the vine of transparent relationships, and they all have a bearing on our prayers being listened to and being answered. Peter says that if a man does not treat his wife in the way he should then his prayers are hindered.

Likewise, you husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour

unto your wife, as unto the weaker vessel,
and as being heirs together of the grace of
life; **that your prayers are not hindered.**

1 Peter 3:7

What a challenge to any married man; that he should treat his wife as Peter instructs us.

Unanswered Prayer

I would think 90 percent of the specific prayers of Christians are not answered. They claim and state what they believe but the actual facts of their lives tell a different story. Fifty percent of Christian marriages will end in divorce. How many Christians are hooked on pornography, and I include those in the ministry as well. How many believers live lives of self indulgence when we are instructed by Jesus to deny ourselves and take up our cross. There are so many more examples to show that Christians are not living in obedience to the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles.

How many Christians pray for their unsaved husbands and children with no answers. We have to be honest with what we believe and what are the actual facts. Only then will we be able to see ourselves as God sees us and will be in a position for the Holy Spirit to do his work – which is to

reprove us of sin, righteousness and judgement to come.

Asking amiss

There is a part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus seems to say that if we ask, we will receive, if we seek, we will find and if we knock, it shall be opened to us. I have written whole chapters on this in my series on discipleship so I will not repeat it here. ^{Footnote 1} I will just say that this passage is obviously talking about prayer and it seems like it is unconditional for it says if we ask – pray – we will receive the answer we asked for. It seems all embracing for it repeats and says '**everyone that asks will receive** and **everyone** that seeks will find, and **everyone** that knocks, will have an open door'. However, there are no unconditional promises in the bible, all have a condition for us to fulfil before God will give us an answer, that is why so many prayers are not answered – the conditions are not fulfilled. In this passage in Matthew the condition is very clear. We will always receive that answer if we ask for '**good gifts**'. Here is the passage in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teaching.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto

you: for **every one that asks receives**; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven **give good things** to them that ask him?

Matthew 7:7-11

I will refuse my children if they ask amiss. For example; if they asked for money for drugs or a machine gun to kill their enemies at school. I am a good father and, although I want to bless my children, I will refuse their bad requests. So it is with God. He is a good father and will refuse our request, even if we pray in faith and believe we will receive. He will refuse our request if it will do us harm, is not in our best interests, or it is not according to his plan for our lives.

Learning the Hard Way

On the opposite side of the coin we have the situation that any father will understand. In some circumstances if our children keep asking, even

though we refuse at first, we will grant their request knowing that it will not be good for them but, because they do not listen to our first refusal, it is the only way they will learn. **They will have to learn and be taught the hard way.**

God will sometimes grant a request against his will if it is the only way we will learn our lessons, or because he can see our heart and why we are asking him to grant the request. Balaam is a good example of this. God told him not to go with the servant of Balak, but he asked God again and God apparently changed his mind and told him to go with them. But God was angry and would have killed Balaam if his donkey hadn't seen the angel and warned him (Read the story in Numbers 22). Praying to the creator of the universe, the all mighty and powerful God, is not a light thing. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowing how to approach him with our requests is vital if we want him to first listen to us and then answer us.

Demands

Another hindrance to prayer is not knowing the meaning of the word prayer. Put simply; prayer is a request. When I was a young man the word was used in this way: An old lady would perhaps say, "Pray help me across the road". It was just another

way to say 'please'. A demand is not a request. We pray amiss when we demand that God answers our request, or believe he is forced to honour his word. He is God and does not take kindly to demands.

Any father would chastise his children if they demanded from him and tried to use force of words to get what they wanted. I have heard of men who have gone into a hotel room and said that they will not leave until God answers their prayer. That is blackmail and wrong. We need to humble ourselves if we want to entreat God for our request not put ultimatums or arrogant statements fuelled by pride. This attitude is a hindrance to prayer being answered, **and may result in God giving us the answer to our request, but to our hurt.**

And he gave them their request; but sent
leanness into their soul.

Psalm 106:15

Not listening to God

It is not reasonable to expect God to answer our prayers if we are living in disobedience. I would refuse my children their requests if they were rebellious and consider myself a good father. Surely God is a good father and will not grant our requests when we do not obey his instructions. Proverbs has a frightening verse

that says our prayer will actually be an abomination to God if we will not listen to his word.

He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even **his prayer shall be abomination.**

Proverbs 28:9

Quality or Quantity

Jesus said the Pharisees prayed long prayers as though they would be heard for their much speaking, but he called it vain repetition. I have been to enough prayer meetings in my Christian life to know that in many churches after listening to some of the people pray, after a few times of listening, I could almost say it for them. They use the same phrases and scriptures and it seems to be that they are on 'automatic pilot'. It is easy to do this, of course, and I think we can all identify with this in some measure. Repetition is not wrong, the operative word in Jesus' sentence was vain (worthless or meaningless).

When people boast how long they pray, I am suspicious; the length of time praying is not related to the effectiveness of the prayer. Some of the most powerful prayers in the bible have been wonderfully brief and simple. Elijah only prayed a couple of sentences and the fire came down from heaven. Solomon's prayer of dedication, when the fire came

and consumed the sacrifice and the priests could not minister because God was present, could be said in a few minutes not a few hours. Spending long hours with God is wonderful because we need to develop a relationship with God (and that takes time) but our requests do not need to be long. After all, the bible tells us that God knows what we want before we even ask of him.

Therefore do not be like them: for *your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him.*

Matthew 6:8

Jesus criticised the Scribes and Pharisees for making long prayers and exposed their motive for doing so – that they could take advantage and steal widows' houses. Covetous faith preachers do the same and ask people to leave houses and lands to them, when it is the right of the children to have the inheritance of the fathers. These false prophets convince the gullible congregations with outward signs of piety and take vast amounts of money from naive believers. The jet air-crafts they buy certainly could not be purchases with the 'widows mites'!

**And he said unto them in his doctrine,
Beware of the scribes, which love to go in**

long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, **and for a pretence make long prayers**: these shall receive greater damnation.

Mark 12:38-40

Clear All Hindrances

If we want God to grant our requests we should diligently open ourselves up to self scrutiny and see if there are any hindrances that would stop God granting our request. We should always come in humility to God and not self confidence and pride.

Footnote 1

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www.barrattministries.org.uk or as a Kindle download from Amazon.

In Chapters 1-4 I discuss this passage in depth.

PRAYER

When the fire of prayer goes out, the
barrenness of busyness takes over.

George Carey

5

Prayer and Faith

And all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

Matthew 21:22

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:4

We cannot even approach God unless we believe that he exists. This seems obvious

but it is all about faith when we pray to God. Hebrews 11 states that we cannot please God without faith and I know from my experience, as a father and husband, that if I am pleased with my wife or my children they are far more likely to have their request granted than if I were displeased with them. God is our father and he is no different than you or I in this respect for we were made in his image.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, **and that he rewards those that diligently seek him.**

Hebrews 11:6

Faith Not Belief!

Notice the above verse doesn't just say we must believe in God. Belief in God does not prove faith in God, because the devils also believe, but they do not have faith. The second part of the verse needs to be operative as well and we must have faith that **he rewards those that diligently seek him.** If we did believe this second part we would diligently seek him before we asked our petition and I am sure we would receive more answers to our prayers if we did. Effort is required and no willy nilly, half

hearted, lukewarm prayer should expect to get an answer from Almighty God.

Nothing Wavering

James also challenges with another hindrance to prayer – unbelief and inconsistency. He tells us to pray in faith, and to be consistent if we want to receive an answer from God. The example he uses is asking for wisdom, and he says we will receive it if we ask in faith and not in doubt. He warns that if we are double minded we will receive nothing from God and we will be unstable in every area of our lives. Here is the passage:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and does not rebuke you for asking; and it shall be given him. **But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.** For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. **A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**

James 1:5-8

I am amazed how unstable most Christians are. They will pray 'in faith' and a few days later they

change their mind because doubt has come in and they stop praying and believing and turn to the plan B which was already in their mind before they asked God for plan A.

No Plan B

We only have true faith in God when we have no plan B. Think carefully about this because most Christians who pray for God to do something impossible have an alternative plan if he doesn't answer them and that is the very reason they do not get the miracles. They will not become vulnerable, and so, God lets them do what they have proposed to do if he didn't answer because they did not pray in faith. I suggest those who are reading should look again at the above verses from James and think about how you have prayed in your trials. Faith is having no plan B.

Sometimes we keep asking God for the same things because we do not really believe he will grant our request. If we really did have faith we would ask and then wait for the answer knowing it was already a fact. Most of the prayers of Christians who are terminally sick are prayed out of fear and not faith. Think about this before you dismiss it. A Christian who is ill should first pray and ask, "Why am I ill?" Not "Why am I not

healed?" There is a vast difference between these two questions.

Nothing happens by chance and there is always a spiritual reason behind every trial and every sickness. Most Christians will go out for prayer on Sunday and if they are not healed will go to the doctor on the Monday because they have more faith in the medical profession than they do in God's healing power.

Scary Facts

I think statistics will show that as many Christians die of cancer as those who do not believe in God, so something is certainly wrong with the faith of most Christians. They talk about faith but cannot exercise it when the test comes. **They only believe they believe**; for the evidence is abundant to prove that they do not have faith.

**Faith is the Evidence not the Belief,
the Substance not the Supposition.**

Without the evidence faith cannot be proved. In the book of Hebrews it says Faith is the evidence of things we believed. Things not seen have been manifested and we now have the evidence.

Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Abraham proved he had faith because he left Babylon and went on a journey not knowing the end resting place. He believed in God in Babylon, but when he obeyed God and left Babylon, he had faith because there was material evidence of his belief. Notice in the scriptures below it was what Abraham did that was his faith and not his believing in the instructions.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, **obeyed; and he went out**, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

Hebrews 11:8-9

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, **obeyed; and offered up Isaac**: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.

Hebrews 11:17

Faith is how we live not what we believe. Religion is about belief. God wants us to have a relationship with him, and consequently doing what he says. This is the life of faith. It is a walk, which is a movement, and not a belief. Even under the Old Covenant those who obeyed the law by faith were righteous before God. They walked by their faith in the law, the obedience to it and not the belief that it was good and God's instructions. There is so much difference.

It is personal and the scripture says so. We live by **our** faith, proved by how we live.

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall **live by his faith**.

Habakkuk 2:4

Paying the Price

All Christians believe the word of God but most will not pay the price to obey it practically in their lifestyle, thus proving they walk by sight and not by faith, which is the opposite to what Paul told the Corinthians.

For we **walk by faith, not by sight**.

2 Corinthians 5:7

For example: Jesus said we have to deny ourselves, but who wants to do this in our materialistic society in the prosperous west? In fact preachers on Christian TV tell us the very opposite – to bless self, and lead an indulgent, prosperous, and self satisfying lifestyle.

These preachers (false prophets) talk about faith all the time but have none themselves for they are not walking in obedience to Jesus' instruction, and that proves unbelief, not faith. How twisted and perverted God's people have become in their thinking and lifestyle, when suffering and self denial have become taboo subjects in the pulpit, yet the epistles are full of this teaching.

Suffering and Self Denial

You cannot separate suffering and self denial from the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, but who would dare to teach it today? No wonder there is a great falling away. It only shows the Man of Sin is soon to be revealed and the return of Jesus imminent. Thank God there is a plan and I am rejoicing that it will soon come to fruition.

Christians need challenging about these things for the world looks on and sees only religion and hypocrisy. Christians need to get to the place where they really do expect their prayers to be answered.

Most believers are only hoping that the answer will come and do not have the faith that gets results. **They believe that God can do it, but they do not believe he will** – this is to have no more faith than the devils for they **believe** in God and his power to create and give life but they have no **faith** because they are rebellious and disobedient. This brings me to my next point.

Faith and Obedience

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says in his wonderful book, 'The Cost of Discipleship', that those who believe are obedient and those who are obedient believe'. You cannot have one without the other. If you have faith you will act in obedience, and if you are obedient it proves you have faith.

If we are not being obedient to what the epistles and Jesus tell us to do and live by, then we do not have the confidence to pray in faith. For example; Paul, in Thessalonians, says that we should give thanks in all things. Do you?

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

He says the same to the believers at Ephesus.

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:20

All Working for Our Good

If I do not give thanks in my trials and disappointments, my mistakes and my sickness, then I am not obeying this instruction because it says in all things. It does not say in some things or in the good things. This is not easy to do but it proves our faith in what God says. If we know that all things are working together for our good it should be easy to thank God in the bad things as well. We do not pretend the bad things are good but we can rejoice that God always has a good end to whatever happens to us, and that is worth giving him thanks for.

And we know that **all things work together for good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Let us be Christians who really believe what Jesus and the Apostles said and act on it practically and demonstratively, not just believe it in our heads.

If we keep the belief in our heads we prove we only have mere religion and are no better than the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. Once you can cultivate the right attitudes and start to obey what Jesus and the Apostles teach then you will have the confidence to pray in faith and you will see answers to your prayers for sure.

PRAYER

The secret of praying is praying in secret.
Leonard Ravenhill

6

Ask What You Want

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 15:7

There are various scriptures in the bible that on first reading without the context would seem to indicate that we can pray for whatever we want and God will give it us. Many of the verses are words from the mouth of Jesus himself so we need to consider them seriously. Here is one of them.

... for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; **and nothing shall be impossible unto you.**

From Matthew 17:20

This was spoken in answer to a question "Why could we not cast the demon out of this boy?" Jesus told them it was because of their unbelief so it is clear they did not have the faith required.

Name it – Claim it

Does that mean that all we need is faith to have our prayers answered? The 'Prosperity' and 'Name it and claim it' preachers say so. They use these very words of Jesus to say we can ask for what we want and all we need is faith. To them faith seems to be what answered prayer is all about. The problem with this belief is that it doesn't work – even with the faith preachers; their lives show that they cannot just pray for what they want and it will be granted them. One thing is for sure, they do not get rich because of their prayers of faith, for they beg their wealth from the gullible people who follow them. The only way to prove you can be rich by praying is to tell no one your lack or need

and demonstrate it by the supernatural answer. Faith preachers have private health care and armed bodyguards to protect them and so demonstrate they have no faith; their successful lifestyle has nothing to do with faith and everything to do with manipulation, deceit, mass hypnosis, and maybe occult power in some cases.

What did Jesus Mean Then?

Nevertheless Jesus did make these strong statements so we need to look at this further.

Here is another scripture that promised we can have what we ask for.

Whatever we ask, we receive of him.

From 1 John 3:21

However if we look at the context of these scriptures we find there are conditions (there always are, and always will be). Here are the verses surrounding this statement and it is obvious what the conditions are.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts

before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, **because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.** And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

1 John 3:18-23

It is obvious if we read this context that keeping the commandment to love one another is a condition we need to fulfil. It starts by saying we must love in our actions, and not just our words, to have an uncondemned heart that can apply the promise.

Greater Things Than Jesus Did!

In his gospel, John makes an amazing statement about doing greater things than Jesus did, but the context tells us that the condition again is that we love him and keep his commandments.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do

also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. **If you love me, keep my commandments.**

John 14:12-15

Meeting the Conditions First

We can never claim the promise if we do not meet the condition. Many believers do not keep Jesus' commandments, so they claim the promise in vain. John gives us another condition to answered prayer later in one of his letters. He says;

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us:** and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

1 John 5:14-15

The condition here is that we pray according to God's will. What a vast difference this makes. If it is not God's will to be famous and we pray to be famous 'in faith', why should God answer us when

it is not his will. It is not those who do God's work who will enter the millennial kingdom but those who do the will of God.

Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that does the will of my Father** which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? And in your name have cast out devils? And in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

Matthew 7:21-23

Abide in the Vine

In John 15 we have another condition for asking whatever we desire.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 15:7

There is nothing here about faith and yet the promise is that we can ask for what we want and it will

be done ... if we abide in the vine. This is a difficult condition; to abide, dwell, live in Christ. Not many people can say they abide in the vine. How do I base my assessment? Well, it is not difficult for Jesus says in the same passage that if we abide in the vine we will bear fruit. Fruit is the life of the vine – the life of Christ as Galatians explains. It is the character of God himself and I do not see many, who claim to be Christians manifesting this character. Here is the list of the fruit of the spirit. Modern versions have changed some of these words and they have a completely different meaning.

This list is from the AV. There are nine attributes to the character of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is:

Love

Joy

Peace

Long-suffering

Gentleness

Goodness

Faith

Meekness

Temperance

Galatians 5:22-23

The beatitudes have nine attributes as well and they are also the fruit we should manifest if we want our prayers answered. It is the whole character of God.

Here is the list from Matthew:

Poverty of spirit

Mourning

Meekness

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness

Merciful

Purity of heart

Peacemaking

Persecuted for righteousness' sake

Reviled, persecuted, and all manner of evil said against you falsely

Matthew 5:3-12

His Words in Us

Looking at the verse again we see there is another condition and this is that Jesus' words abide in us.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 15:7

This means that his words must live **in us**, not in our memory, but be alive in our heart so that we have an unassuming manifestation of his word (which is Christ himself) in our outward life. A knowledge of the bible is only to have the dead letter that kills if we do not have the very life of Christ abiding in us.

John, a few verses later, say the same thing.

You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, **that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain**: that whatever you shall ask of the father in my name, he may give it you.

John 15:16

The fruit according to this verse has to remain if we want to ask for anything of the father in Christ's name.

Out of Context

There is another verse that is taken out of context when people are talking about answers to prayer and used so many times in so many situations and yet is not applicable because people have not read the context. Here is the verse:

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 heaven.

Matthew 18:19

Reconciliation

It seems to indicate that if two or three people agree on the prayer then it will automatically be answered. However the context is not about prayer – a request, but about reconciliation. The verse is part of a passage about Church discipline and forgiveness. Read it through to see what Jesus is talking about.

Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and

whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. **For where two or three are gathered together in my name**, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:16-20

Talking About Forgiveness

The verses before talk about binding and loosing, and have nothing to do with casting out devils, it is to do with how we treat a brother who has wronged someone and will not acknowledge or repent of it. The subject carries on after the verse we are discussing showing that it is still in the context of being wronged and the forgiveness we should administer.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:21-22

To think that God wants to give us 'carte blanche' to ask for things that will take us away from holiness

and into pride, and self indulgent, is ludicrous. What father in his right mind would do this to his children? He would be deemed irresponsible in the extreme and accused of spoiling his children and making them selfish brats. God is a good father and the conditions are to help us, not deprive us of our supposed blessings.

What is the Answer?

For me, the secret to answered prayer is to be so much in God's will, and to think with the mind of Christ, so that whatever I desire is what Christ desires. Then I will see amazing answers to prayer because God does not want to work independently from man, he wants us to ask him for what he wills – what he has already pre-planned. When I am in God's perfect will, then every request will be answered and I will always be content with the answer.

PRAYER

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and **departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.**

Mark 1:35



Praying in Secret

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

John 6:15

Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount discourse, told his disciples to pray in secret. He wanted them to develop a personal relationship with their Father in heaven. For an intimate relationship to

develop we need time alone with the person we are getting to know. There is no substitute for praying and spending time on your own with God in private. This is what he told his disciples.

And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

Matthew 6:5-6

Praying to the Father

Praying in secret is not to petition God, or to pray general prayers, but to know God, his ways and his will for us. It takes many years to know the real God and not the God of the denomination we belong to. God hates religion and to get to know God is to realise that it is all about relationship. I have covered closet prayer in my series of books on the Sermon on the Mount if the reader is interested in what I have to say on the subject. ^{Footnote 1}

Jesus grew up like any other human being and he had to learn about his Father and cultivate a relationship with him. Maybe this seems almost like blasphemy if you believe Jesus was God and not his son, but the bible records that when Jesus was 12 years of age he stayed in Jerusalem without telling his parents and he explained the reason to them when they chastised him. He said he must be about his father's business. He wanted to know about his Father in heaven and the plan he had to fulfil.

And he said unto them, How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?

Luke 2:49

Back to the Father

When he left his disciples he told them he would be going to their Father and his Father, to their God and his God (this was after he has risen and did not have a human body any more in case the reader may think that it was as a human being he said these words).

Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto

my Father, and your Father; and to **my God**,
and your God.

John 20:17

In saying this, I am not trying to be contentious or tread on anyone's doctrines, I am trying to show that even Jesus had to cultivate a relationship with his Father and maintain it. I will present scriptures to show that he prayed alone, and often in secret, to prove my point. If Jesus was God then there was nothing to cultivate in any relationship for he would always know his own mind and plans.

And it came to pass, **as he was alone praying**, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

Luke 9:18

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and **departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.**

Mark 1:35

I often wondered why Jesus walked on the water to get to the other side of the lake when he could have been in the boat with his disciples. He broke a law of his father's creation when he did this, for the

laws of creation, as everyone knows, is that a person denser than water will sink, and he would never go against his father's laws without good reason. This miracle did not heal anyone, or feed anyone, and all it seemed to do was give the disciples the fright of their lives.

Desperate for Prayer

In the story in Matthew 24, Jesus waited behind and then sent the multitudes away. He went into a mountain to pray alone in the night. He had said to the disciples three days before that he was tired and they should depart into a desert and rest awhile. The crowd followed them and after 3 days Jesus realised they were fainting, because they had not eaten, and he did a tremendous miracle and fed them all. He realised they would not go away naturally so he sent all the disciples to the other side of the lake of Galilee in a boat and then dispersed the crowd.

If you read the story in the gospels he was not intending to join the disciples, he was passing them by. But as they were afraid he responded to their cries.

I believe he was so desperate to have a personal time with his Father, and it was a priority in his life, that he was willing to do this miracle of walking on water. He wanted time alone with his God.

And when he had sent the multitudes away,
he went up into a mountain apart to pray:
and when the evening was come, he was
there alone.

Matthew 14:23

What an example for us. Jesus was sinless and yet he needed this time alone with his Father in heaven.

A Challenge

Any believer who does not spend time alone with God does not want a relationship with him. However, they may have a religion and a belief mindset, but relationship with God? No! Are they God's children? They may well be but, as we all know, it is a fact that not all children have a good relationship with their parents. To suppose that all God's children have a close relationship is not logical or reasonable. If my children do not want to spend time with me we do not have an intimate relationship. We do have a relationship of course because of family ties but it may be good, it may be bad, or maybe just lukewarm. So it is with God and his children.

The indictment of Israel was that they worshipped God with their mouths, and in their minds, but not with their heart – the place where all good relationships reside.

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips honour me, **they have removed their heart far from me**, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.

Isaiah 29:13

Just Jesus and Me

If you want to share something personal with a friend you do not shout to them in public, you find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and share your secret or desire. How will you hear personal things from God in a crowded meeting with everyone listening. It is the closet that you pray your personal prayers and ask the personal questions and it is in the closet that God will speak personally to you.

Often when Jesus told a parable to the multitudes he later, in private, revealed its meaning. Here are two scriptures to support what I have stated.

But without a parable spoke he not unto them: and **when they were alone**, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Mark 4:34

And it came to pass, **as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him**: and

he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

Luke 9:18

It was on the Emmaus road that Jesus revealed to just two of the disciples the prophecies from the Old Testament and how they all referred to him.

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

Luke 24:32

Allow me to encourage all who are reading this book to be determined to spend time alone with God and get to know the difference between the God of your denominations or doctrines and the real God – only in the closet will you have this revelation. It will change your life and your whole thinking. It will free you from the religious spirit that has plagued God's people in all Church ages.

Footnote 1

My book covering prayer from the Sermon on the Mount is '**The Secret life of a Disciple**'

ISBN 1-904592-13-8 I have also written three books on the subject of intercession.

Volume 1. Intercession - becoming the person God listens to.

ISBN978-1-904592-96-9

Volume 2. Intercession - Paying the price for revival

ISBN 978-1-904592-99-0

Volume 3. Intercession - Making his paths straight

ISBN 978-1-904592-83-9

These are all available from the Barratt Ministries web site shop www.barrattministries.org.uk, and also from Amazon as a Kindle download.

PRAYER

When you can't put your prayer
into words, God hears your heart.

Anonymous

8

Prayer, Temptation & the Last Days

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Ephesians 6:18

Jesus gives a model prayer for the Church in Matthew 6 and we all know it as 'The Lord's Prayer'. In it there are many things he wants the

church to pray for – it is not a private prayer for it always says 'give **us**' or '**our** father', and not my father or give me. I have written about this in my books that cover the Sermon on the Mount. ^{Footnote 1} Look through it below and you will see it is the corporate prayer of the bride of Christ for it is all about the coming kingdom and reign of Christ and his bride.

After this manner therefore pray
Our Father which is in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the
glory, for ever.
Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13

He tells us many things we should pray for but the most difficult to perhaps understand is the verse that says 'Lead us not into temptation' – or testing, because God does want to test us and it is a good thing. God tempted Abraham and Joseph according to scripture. God wants to test us to see if we are

obedient. The first thing God did after creation was to tempt Adam and Eve by putting a tree in the garden, telling them not to eat of it, even though it was desirable fruit – he wanted to test them and it certainly was a temptation because they fell for the devil's suggestions and disobeyed God. The only way God can prove our love for him is through our obedience and so we have to be tempted to see if we really do love him.

Count it all Joy

James in his letter says, count it all joy when you are tempted or tried.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into different temptations.

James 1:2

I therefore do not think he is asking the church to pray that it is not tested by God. Jesus is referring to the last days when he will try or tempt the whole world. He is telling the church to pray that they will be worthy to escape this terrible time just before he brings the Kingdom to earth. Prayer for his kingdom to come on earth is prayed for in the verses preceding this strange verse. I will bring scriptures to substantiate my reasons for believing it is the

prayer of the Church to be worthy to escape this testing that will come upon the earth soon.

The first is in the letters to the churches just before Jesus comes to judge the earth. It is in the part addressed to Philadelphia, one of the 2 churches that overcame and did not have an indictment against them. Only two of the seven churches were not asked to repent. He called it the 'hour of temptation'.

Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you **from the hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Revelation 3:10

This next scripture is in the passage where Jesus is talking about the last days and his sudden and unexpected return to earth.

So likewise, when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (the

giddiness and headache cause by drinking to excess), and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. **Watch therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things** that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Luke 21:31-36

Think about this the next time you say the 'Lord's prayer' (for a full explanation of this verse in the Lord's prayer see my book "The secret life of a disciple") ^{Footnote 1}

Resist Temptation from the Devil

However, Jesus does tell us to pray that we will not enter into temptation from our adversary which is a completely different prayer. We are tempted of the devil and we should pray that we do not fall for his suggestions and temptations.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that you enter not into temptation.

Luke 22:40

Prayer and the Last Days

Whenever Jesus talked to his disciples about the days before he would return to earth he always gave them a warning. He said many times, "Take heed" or as we would say today, "watch out" because many will not be ready and will be caught out when they should be 'caught up'.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And Jesus answering them began to say, **Take heed** lest any man deceive you.

Mark 13:3-5

Jesus says again in verse 23:

But **take heed**: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light...

Mark 13:23

And yet again in verse 33 and this time he tells them to watch and pray.

Take heed, watch and pray: you know not when the time is.

Mark 13:33

He ends this passage about the last days with another two exhortations to watch:

Watch therefore: for you don't know when the master of the house is coming, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, **Watch**.

Mark 13:35-37

Paul, in the last chapter of Ephesians, and I believe alluding to the last days before Jesus returns, encourages the saints to stand in the evil day that is coming and to put on the whole armour of God. He ends the passage with an exhortation to watch and pray. The two key words so often used when talking of the last of the last days.

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles

of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore ...**Praying** always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching** thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

From Ephesians 6:11-18

Be Prepared

If ever there was a time when the church of God should be preparing herself as a bride adorned for her husband it is today. Unfortunately she is preparing to take over the world and she will do it soon – the One World Church – because all denominations are forgetting to contend for the faith that was once delivered and are promoting unity at any cost.

Let me encourage the readers of this book to do as Jesus and the Apostles told us. Let us be alert and vigilant and most of all **watch and pray**.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude 1:3

But the end of all things is at hand: therefore be sober, and **watch unto prayer**.

1 Peter 4:7

Footnote 1

The Secret life of a Disciple
ISBN 1-904592-13-8

PRAYER

Part 2

How did Jesus
pray for himself & his
disciples?

9

Jesus & His Prayer Life

Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one's heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Jesus prayed to his father and his God. He cultivated a relationship with his father as any son would do. He often prayed a 'great while before day', as the bible puts it.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Mark 1:35

Solitude

He always seemed to withdraw from the crowds and find a place of privacy, so it is not surprising that he told us to go into our closet and pray in secret.

And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Luke 5:16

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luke 6:12

But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

Matthew 6:6

My observation and understanding is that so many Christians find it hard to be honest when they pray. By that, I mean that they say things that they think they should pray and are frightened to be honest with God. If you are angry or disappointed then it is not wrong to tell God because he knows the feelings of your heart anyway, whatever you may say with your mouth. Jesus sets us an example of this in the garden of Gethsemane. He told God what he really wanted and not what was expected of him. He asked God to take away the cross and find another way.

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will... He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done ...And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

From Matthew 26:39-44

It seems to me that Jesus was praying for an hour in agonising prayer and God was not granting his request because when he went to the disciples and

found them asleep he chastised them for not being able to stay awake and pray for one hour with him. He wanted them to pray with him but also to keep their eyes open – you cannot watch with your eyes closed. The guards were already on their way to arrest Jesus and so he distanced himself from the disciples.

And he came to the disciples, and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could you not **watch** with me one hour? **Watch and pray**, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Matthew 26:40-41

Nevertheless

When Jesus realised that God was not going to answer his request he said something that we all need to learn to say. He said, "nevertheless". In other words, despite this, not what I want but what you want. If only Christians would say this when God does not answer their prayers instead of praying again and again and then giving up and losing their faith. God allows every single circumstance that comes our way, not Satan, so take a deep breath and say – 'nevertheless, your will be

done'. This is victory talk, whatsoever the results, because you have put yourself in God's perfect will and things will work together in the end for your good, as it did with Jesus. After the cross there was a resurrection.

Jesus had to pray this prayer three times before he had the final victory, so take heart and get real with God, submit to his will and you will see wonderful things happening in your life and circumstances.

Prayer for his Disciples

How did Jesus pray for his disciples and what were his prayers for them all about? His prayer for Peter, just before Peter denied him, is very revealing. When Jesus prophesied that Peter would betray him he told Peter he had prayed for him, but not that he would not fail. He said, "I have prayed that your **faith** does not fail", which is another thing entirely. He knew Peter would fail and foretold it, and did not seem concerned about this failure. It seems his concern was that Peter's faith didn't fail; and it didn't, for Jesus' prayers were always answered because he always prayed according to his Father's will.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold,
Satan has desired to have you, that he may
sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you,

that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.

Luke 22:31-32

Another time in his ministry Jesus told his disciples that he would pray to the Father that he would send them the Holy Ghost and that he would not leave them. Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us and I can only believe he is still praying this prayer for all those who accept him as Saviour. How many Christians receive the Holy Ghost but he does not remain in them after the initial experience and they become flat and carnal in their experience instead of being **full** of the Holy Ghost.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, **that he may abide with you for ever.**

John 14:16

Keep Them from Evil

In his prayer in the upper room, after the Passover meal and then the first Communion, Jesus prayed for his disciples that they would be kept from the evil of the world. This was an important prayer and we should pray it for ourselves and also for one

another, because the love of the world makes us the enemy of God according to James and John; it is spiritual adultery.

...I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil.

From John 17:15

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:15

You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world **is the enemy of God.**

James 4:4

Praying for Lost Souls

What has amazed me over the last few years is that Jesus didn't pray for 'the world' or for sinners to repent. To pray for 'lost souls' seems to be fundamental evangelical doctrine but I haven't been able to support this practice from scripture.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which you have given me; for they are yours.

John 17:9

It seems as if Jesus has done all that is needed for the salvation of the world by being the sacrifice for the sin of the whole world. He is at the right hand of God at this present time interceding for his bride, not for sinners to repent. His instruction was not to pray for sinners to be saved but to go into the world and preach to them and those who believe would be saved and those that reject would be damned. The results are not in our hands – the mandate is to preach the truth, not to save souls. The Church, because it wants the kingdom, the power and the glory, have turned the great commission in Mark's gospel to 'win the world for Jesus before he comes'.

Winning Souls

When Jesus said, "Preach the gospel to all the world", he never mentioned winning souls or saving the world for him. The church should take their eyes off building the church and let Christ do it, as he promised he would, and simply go and tell the whole world the gospel message. In the Acts of the

Apostles this is what they did and multitudes were added to the church.

And he said unto them, Go into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature. He
that believes and is baptised shall be saved;
but he that believes not shall be damned.

Mark 16:15-16

What About the End Time Harvest?

There is nothing in the New Testament about an end time harvest. When Jesus was talking about the last days he warned of a great falling away of the church and a great deception. Peter and Paul also confirmed this in their letters to the churches. To Christianise the world is Catholic theology. It is not biblical and nothing more than the ethos of Babylon.

If you look at the word 'harvest' in the New Testament, including Jesus' parables, it is always for judgement just as the natural harvest is – to gather in the grain and then to separate the wheat from the chaff. The wheat is gathered into barns and the chaff burned. Harvest is not a representation of soul winning, but of the reaping for the judgement as scripture will show. (This is not the book to talk more about this so the reader

can check scriptures about the harvest to see that this is the case.) It is the sowing of the seed that is a representation of evangelism. The harvest is God's work not ours and he said that the angels will do the reaping, at the end of this present age, not the church.

The enemy that sowed them is the devil;
the harvest is the end of the world; and **the reapers are the angels.**

Matthew 13:39

There is however, one instance where Jesus did tell his disciple to pray to God that he would send labourers into the harvest.

Pray therefore, that the Lord of the harvest,
that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Matthew 9:38

The Lost Sheep of Israel

However, in the context, Jesus is talking about the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It was time to gather in. This was before the cross and his commission to the disciples was to preach to Israel alone.

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, **Go not into the way of the Gentiles**, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 10:5-6

His commission after the cross is entirely different and included the Gentiles that we preach to throughout the whole world.

PRAYER

Part 3

Praying in the Early Church

10

The Apostles – Men of Prayer

On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour.

Acts 10:9

The apostles and the early believers were people of prayer. The very basis of this series is the early

church lifestyle and one of the four fundamentals was prayer. We neglect it at our peril. It does not need a prayer life to be religious but to have a relationship with God it is essential otherwise we are kidding ourselves that we know God. We may learn all about God but to **know** God is an entirely different thing and only a secret closet prayer life can develop a relationship with God.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and **in prayers**.

Acts 2:42

Jesus, Our Example

The disciples of Jesus were aware of the time Jesus spent with his father in prayer, and it was an example to them, so they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. They knew that John the Baptist had also been a man of prayer and taught his disciples to pray.

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

Luke11:1

Even before they received the Holy Ghost they were people of prayer.

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

Let me take you through the Acts of the Apostles and see how prayer was in everything they did. In the next chapter I will also look at what they prayed for because we should be praying in the same way and for the same things.

Angry Pharisees

When the man was healed by Peter and John at the gate of the temple the religious Pharisees were angry and threatened them. The Apostles reported the incident to the others who had accepted Christ and they immediately lifted up their voices in prayer. They did not ask God for protection from the Pharisees and those who were persecuting them but that they might have boldness to preach all the more. We are so soft in the First World and are terrified of persecution, offence, or criticism. The modern church is so politicly correct that they have

no real effect on their societies and have to resort to unscriptural 'Friendship Evangelism'. They neither have the power of God to do signs and wonders nor the boldness to preach truth. They have lost the power of true prayer and most prayer is for selfish gain; a bigger church, more converts, financial blessing, status and self worth, because converts convert into money if you can get them to tithe!

After they had prayed for boldness it says the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, you are God, which has made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, Who by the mouth of thy servant David has said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold

their threatening: and grant unto your servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of your holy child Jesus. 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 spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:24-31

Priorities in the Ministry

There arose a problem with the early believers between the Hebrews and the Greeks. The Grecian believers claimed their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The apostles did not sort the problem out themselves because they had a higher priority – teaching the word and **prayer**, so they delegated this task to others.

So many men in the ministry do not prioritise what they should be doing and spend more time in business and committee meetings, running all sorts of social programmes, and general church activities than they do in prayer and teaching. Ministry for God is a very focussed calling and these early apostles knew what it was all about. I have heard people, and

there are many slogans on Facebook, saying that if a Pastor is not willing to clean the toilets in the church and serve coffee he shouldn't be in the ministry. I would challenge that from scripture by saying if he does do those things he is only a deacon, for these are the jobs a deacon should be doing. Where do they get these erroneous beliefs from? Certainly not the bible.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, **It is not reason that we should leave the word of God**, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But **we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

Acts 6:2-4

The believers chose seven men to do this work and the apostles laid hands on them and prayed. (Notice the order for choosing deacons – the believers chose the men; and the Apostles, who were not chosen and ordained by men but set by God in the church, prayed for them.) The consequences of all this were wonderful. The word of God increased and disciples were multiplied and even a great

number of priest were obedient to the faith. If the Apostles had served at tables I wonder if the same results would have happened – I think not.

Whom they set before the apostles. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:6-7

By Name or Experience?

It seemed as if whenever the Apostles met new believer they asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost. This does not seem to happen these days. Many Pentecostal churches would find it hard to prove they were Pentecostal by experience and do not challenge people to use the gifts of the spirit. Many believers have been in the church for years yet not been challenged with this question. Many churches are Pentecostal in name only and have lost the power of the Holy Ghost. Other Charismatic Churches are leading people into an experience of 'the spirit' but the manifestations do not seem to be holy so I am not sure which spirit they are manifesting.

Oh, for a true move of the HOLY ghost.

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, **prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:** (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:14-17

When Peter was in prison, ready to be martyred, the disciples prayed without ceasing for him. Read the passage below.

Peter therefore was kept in prison: but **prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God** for him ... And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened

not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, You are mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

From Acts 12:5-16

What Were They Praying?

Have you ever thought of what they were praying for while Peter was in prison? Maybe I will surprise you, but I do not believe they were praying for his deliverance. Here is my reasoning.

1. James had just been killed with the sword and Peter was in prison waiting to be martyred the next day. The Apostles clearly counted it a great honour to suffer for Christ, and indeed they were all martyred. They expected to suffer for Christ.

2. When Peter arrived at the door no one believed it was him and thought it must be his ghost. If they were praying for deliverance and Peter came to the door they would immediately praise God that he had answered their prayers. It is not reasonable to

think they prayed and when the answer came did not believe it.

3. I cannot believe they were praying in unbelief for a miracle of deliverance. I believe they were praying for God to strengthen Peter and that his faith would not fail, and that is why they were surprised because they expected him to be martyred.

A Better Resurrection

We have come a long way from this attitude because we are not willing to suffer for Christ. We always want deliverance, comfort and an easy way out of any situation. The list of the faithful in Hebrews shows us there is another way. These examples of faith were looking for a 'better resurrection'. I will leave the reader to decide what this means.

...others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom

the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

Hebrews 11:35-39

Desperate for Prayer

When Peter was in Joppa he prayed in a strange place and at a strange time. It is recorded that he went up on to the roof at the sixth hour. This is midday and the last place a man would be in a hot country. I suspect most people in the city were having their 'Siesta' and I believe this was the very reason that he chose this time and place – no one would be around. Only 'Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun', but Peter was a man of prayer and he found a time and place to be alone. Thank God he did for this time he fell into a trance and saw the vision of Cornelius coming to him. Cornelius was the first Gentile to accept the gospel and this was a turning point in the new church which opened the way for the Gentiles. Never underestimate the power of secret prayer.

On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter

went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour.

Acts 10:9

Prayer & Fasting

The church prayed along with fasting and laying on of hands when sending out people to minister.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 13:2-3

They prayed and fasted when ordaining elders in all the churches – again with fasting. I have never known fasting to accompany the ordaining of an elder in all my days as a minister. Yet we have a precedent in scripture.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had **prayed** with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Acts 14:23

Men in the ministry are men of prayer as I have shown. Theology degrees and bible knowledge are no substitute for a life of prayer and fasting. Change of character is instigated and initiated in the closet. Understanding God is only possible in the closet. That is why it is rare to have men of God today that were like those in the Acts of the Apostles or the rare men of God through the church age. There are modern examples of these kind of men but they are rare and not always popular. Men like John Wesley, Leonard Ravenhill, A.W. Tozser, E.M. Bounds and David Wilkerson.

Jesus said, "Beware when all men speak well of you for that's what they did of the false prophets". This would include most of the modern faith and prosperity preachers on TV who seem, in my eyes, to be more business men than men of the closet – just saying.

PRAYER

Prayer is always in danger of degenerating into a glorified gold rush. How to get things from God occupies most books.

A.W. Tozer

11

The Epistles & Prayer

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day.

2 Timothy 1:3

You would think that the letters to the churches would be full of encouragement to win the lost and to pray for sinners to repent, but these exhortations are strangely missing from the Apostles' letters to the early church.

Just as Jesus did not tell the Apostles to win the lost, these instructions are also missing from the pen of the writers of the Epistles. I can't find even one of the letters encouraging the believers to win souls or evangelise. I believe this is because God sets Evangelists and they work outside the church (go into all the world). When believers meet together it is not to evangelise but to build one another up in the knowledge of God and to develop the character of Christ. Once a person accepts Christ as saviour they need to change from the mindset of the world to the mind of Christ and that is what the letters to the churches are predominantly about – building the bride.

Pray Always

Let me go through some of the things the Apostles did tell us to pray about. In Ephesians 6, Paul had been talking about the armour of God that protects us and he encourages the Ephesians to pray always. Christians should be people of prayer, yet often the prayer meeting at Church is the least attended of any meeting. My father said the prayer meeting is the true size of the church, and not the Sunday morning service, and I believe it is a good barometer of the spiritual condition of any church. Of course, Paul was not talking primarily of prayer

meetings he was taking about a personal lifestyle of prayer and this is sadly neglected in most believers today including those in full time ministry. He exhorts us to pray for all believers.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication **for all saints.**

Ephesians 6:18

In the next verse he asked the believers to pray for him for boldness to preach the gospel. We should therefore pray for those whom God has set to go out of the Church to preach the gospel (apostles and evangelists). Today there are few evangelists who will boldly preach the gospel without compromise and most preaching of the gospel is inside the church anyway and not in the world as instructed. Ministers are frightened to preach the true gospel because of the pressure of political correctness and so we don't pray for boldness to preach any more.

...and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, **that I may open my mouth boldly,** to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Ephesians 6:19

Paul, in his letters, also asked the believers in Colosse and Thessalonica to pray the same things for him.

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:3-4

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.

2 Thessalonians 3:1

Brethren, pray for us.

1 Thessalonians 5:25

Paul exhorts the believers at Philippi to have a care free life knowing that God is in control of everything and to let any requests be made to God with thanksgiving.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Philippines 4:6

Paul exhorts those in Thessalonica to pray always

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same
with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2

Prepare the Bride

The following verses from different letters are all about developing the mind of Christ and growing in the stature of Christ and not a mention of evangelism or witnessing to the lost. It is all exhortation to be ready to meet Christ as his spotless bride. This seems quite natural to me for as soon as a woman is engaged to be married she starts to prepare her 'bottom drawer' and watches what she eats so as not to put on weight, and so on. As soon as a believer realises that they are espoused to Christ then it should be natural for them to prepare themselves and be conscious of this every single day until the marriage.

Sadly, I do not hear sermons about preparing the bride for Christ's return. The sermons seem to be about our self worth and not a mention of Jesus' return for a spotless bride. The talk is of enjoying

this present life and then escaping the tribulation. All this is contrary to the word of God. Paul warned the Corinthians about this but the modern believer does not heed his warning.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him.

2 Corinthians 11:2-4

Here are the scriptures on Paul's prayers for the church. They are all about having the character of Christ, our future husband.

Now **I pray to God** that you do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that you should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

2 Corinthians 13:7

And **this I pray**, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That you may approve things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Philippines 1:9-11

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, **do not cease to pray for you**, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Colossians 1:9-12

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and **I pray God** your whole spirit

and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.

Romans 12:12

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing **I have remembrance of you in my prayers** night and day.

2 Timothy 1:3

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

1 Timothy 2:8

Wherefore also **we pray always for you**, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Always **in every prayer of mine for you all** making request with joy.

Philippians 1:4

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing **I make mention of you always in my prayers.**

Romans 1:9

Cease not to give thanks for you, **making mention of you in my prayers.**

Ephesians 1:16

We give thanks to God always for you all, **making mention of you in our prayers.**

1 Thessalonians 1:2

I thank my God, **making mention of you always in my prayers.**

Philemon 1:4

What and Who Should we Pray For?

Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Hebrews 13:18

You also helping together by **prayer for us**, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

2 Corinthians 1:11

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation **through your prayer**, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:19

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in your prayers to God for me**.

Romans 15:30

But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that **through your prayers** I shall be given unto you.

Philemon 1:22

Surely when believers meet together to pray we should use the bible as our basis and example of how to pray and what to pray for, otherwise we just bring our 'shopping list' each week before God. From my experience most of the prayers are not answered. Yet believers will come week after week and pray

the same prayers. This is ritual and religion and we must break out of this if we want to model our gatherings on the early church. All the examples of prayers in the epistles that I have used have nothing to do with culture, or the time lived in, so we have no excuse not to follow this pattern set for us.

PRAYER

Prayer makes a godly man, and puts within him the mind of Christ, the mind of humility, of self-surrender, of service, of pity, and of prayer. If we really pray, we will become more like God, or else we will quit praying.

E.M. Bounds

12

Prayer for Afflicted & Sick Believers

True prayer is measured by weight, not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length.

C. H. Spurgeon

James asked the believers if any of them were afflicted and then tells us to pray for them. We must not see this affliction as sickness because,

although it is included in the definition of the word, he covers sickness and how to pray for it in the next verses. We need to look at what affliction will cover in this context.

Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.

James 5:13-16

Affliction in 'Strong's' concordance says – to suffer (endure) evils (hardships, troubles), and I think this is what James is meaning. Here are some scriptures to show what is meant by afflictions.

Affliction in Egypt

Israel were slaves in Egypt and were ill-treated by the Egyptian masters. Moses describes it as affliction.

And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and
afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage.

Deuteronomy 26:6

Naomi's loss of her husband was to her an affliction.

I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty: why then call ye me

Naomi, seeing the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has **afflicted** me?

Ruth 1:21

The Prophet Isaiah saw Jesus in his pain on the cross and those who caused it saw him as though God had afflicted him.

Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ... He was oppressed, and he was **afflicted**, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

From Isaiah 53:4-7

Hagar, the wife or concubine of Abraham, was hated by Sarah and it was considered an affliction.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael; because the LORD has heard your **affliction**.

Genesis 16:11

When we have hardships, setbacks, and maybe even persecution, God tells us to pray, he does not

say lay hands on the afflicted – he just says pray, because affliction is part of our lot as a disciple. Maybe that will surprise you but let me bring scripture to show this is the case.

The Burden of Leadership

Moses called the burden of leadership an affliction. How many of those in leadership today feel the cost and burdens of their calling?

And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore have you **afflicted** our servant? And wherefore have I not found favour in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people upon me?

Numbers 11:11

How should we Pray?

I don't think we should always pray for deliverance because it is part of our lot as a disciple of Christ. Paul told Timothy a young minister to endure hardship.

You, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:3

Jesus said we should rejoice when we are persecuted.

Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Matthew 5:11-12

Christians Need Backbone

On occasions we need the faith to go through our trials and not always expect to be delivered out of them. This is what gives us backbone and the qualities of a soldier. The Church is full of chocolate soldiers that melt in the heat of the sun. Here is what Paul thought about afflictions:

For our light **affliction**, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

2 Corinthians 4:17

How that in a great trial of **affliction** the abundance of their joy and their deep

poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

2 Corinthians 8:2

And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much **affliction**, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

1 Thessalonians 1:6

Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our **affliction** and distress by your faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:7

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in **afflictions**, in necessities, in distresses.

2 Corinthians 6:4

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the **afflictions** of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.

Colossians 1:24

That no man should be moved by these **afflictions**: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

1 Thessalonians 3:3

Prayer for the Sick

James, in his letter to the churches, now addressed those that are sick amongst believers and tells us how we should pray for them, but I have yet to find a church where they practise his directives. Traditions are so strong that they so easily supersede the word of God and become 'The Word of God' to those who follow them.

There is a big difference in how we should pray for unbelievers who are sick and how we should pray for those who have accepted Christ and are sick. The great commission in Mark's gospel is clearly a commission to unbelievers and not the Church, for we are told to 'preach the gospel' and this should be done outside of the Church (Jesus said go into all the world to Preach the gospel). He said that 5 signs would follow if we did this. One of them was that those commissioned would be able to lay hands on the sick and they would recover.

Every Christian knows this scripture and they apply it to believers without any scripture to do so. We often get the order wrong. The gospel is for outside the church but we ask sinners to come in to be preached to. We pray for both the sick unbelievers inside the church and the believers in the church the same way as we are commissioned

to pray for unbelievers outside the church walls. Of course, I am not intimating that God cannot heal believers in this way because he honours our faith. However, this does not vindicate that we have the correct procedure or method. God's word is always the yardstick and should be our doctrine.

Laying on of Hands

I can't find any scripture in the epistles that indicate we should lay hands on those that are sick in the church.

There are instances of laying on of hands in the Acts of the Apostles for many other things but not for healing. They laid hands on the men they were ordaining as elders or when sending out the apostles.

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 13:3

They also laid hands on people to receive the holy Ghost

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:17

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied.

Acts 19:6

Paul was not Sick!

Ananias did lay his hands on Paul that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost, but this was not an infirmity of Paul – he was not sick. God had blinded Paul when he revealed himself to Paul on the road to Damascus.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 9:17

God never treats his own children like the devil's children so where in the New Testament is the teaching for believers? It is in the book of James and he tells us quite plainly in chapter 5 when he says, "Is there any sick among you?" He is talking to believers and he then gives implicit instruction for what to do. Let me go through his instructions

for they are far different than just laying hands on a person.

1. Call for the elders of the church

He does not say the elders should call for anyone who is sick to come to the front of a church and have hands laid upon them. If you are really sick then to call the elders would be to have them come to your home.

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church;

James 5:14a

2. Pray over them and anoint them with oil.

There is no mention of laying hands on them.

...and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

James 5:14b

What does it mean to anoint someone? We do not have to postulate because the bible is quite clear on the matter. Anointing in the bible is not to smear some oil on the forehead but to pour a quantity

over the head and let it run down the face on to the shoulders and on to the body. A horn of oil was used in the Old Testament and would hold a considerable amount of oil.

The Anointing Oil

David had been anointed so he knew the procedure and describes it in one of his psalms referencing the anointing of Aaron as an example.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is
like the precious ointment upon the head,
that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's
beard: that went down to the skirts of his
garments.

Psalm 133:1-2

I don't think I would like to go through all that for just a minor ailment like a nose bleed, headache or a bad cold. I think James was talking about serious or terminal illnesses.

To smear the head of a person and call it anointing is as foolish and unreasonable as to sprinkle a baby and call it Water Baptism. The word from the Greek is 'Baptizo' (which does not mean to dip or fully immerse, that would be the word 'bapto'). 'Baptizo

means to immerse and stay in the substance as you would pickle a vegetable so that the vinegar would, after a time, permeate the whole vegetable. How can sprinkling symbolise this or how can a smear of oil on a forehead symbolise anointing? Let us be consistent with our symbols. If we insist on full immersion in water why would we compromise on anointing with oil? I know exactly why – people follow the doctrines of their denomination and not the bible; Jesus called these the traditions of the elders.

Anointed – Chosen of God

In saying all this I am not trying to belittle what Christians do in ignorance, for I know God honours their faith, but when we know what the bible says and do not follow it we are in rebellion and have no excuse. Proper anointing symbolised that the person is chosen of God and covered by this anointing – and that's what the anointing is all about. It has nothing to do with feelings and the power of God. There is no such thing as an anointed sermon or to feel the anointing. What people mean when they use these phrases is they feel the presence of God on a sermon or in the meeting but it is not an anointing.

Anointed means a person or object is chosen of God for his purpose and can be a vessel of honour

or of dishonour. King Cyrus, a despot, was one of God's anointed vessels, for he was chosen of God for his purposes. However, he was never a child of God before or after God has used him to send God's people with the treasures Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the temple in Jerusalem back to its rightful place. Under the new covenant there is no mention of believers anointing with oil a building or any implement, only of people who were already chosen for God's purpose.

Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God.

2 Corinthians 1:21

Oil is one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit and so it is demonstrating to angels and devils that the one being prayed for is a chosen child of God.

3. They will be restored and healed.

The prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up.

James 5:15a

It does not say the 'prayer' but the 'prayer of faith'. It is no use praying if you do not believe a miracle will happen. Praying in doubt will not

cause God to answer your prayer. James says the effectual prayer of a righteousness man achieves much, and he uses Elijah as an example. Not his prayer for the fire, which was very brief, but the prayer for the rain which was intercession and he had to pray seven times before the results he was praying for materialised. It says 'the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much'. This means that the disinterested prayer of a righteous man will not avail much, and the fervent prayer of an unrighteous man will achieve even less. We need the two element if our prayer is to be answered – righteousness and fervency.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

James 5:17-18

4. His sins will be forgiven.

James says 'if he has committed any sins, so we cannot say that he is suggesting that a sickness is always because of some sin; although of course it could be. Sin always has physical consequences.

We have the righteousness of Christ, but anger will cause problems in our physical body and so will bitterness, resentment and any other negative spiritual attitude.

...and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

James 5:15b

5. Those attending have to confess their faults

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.

James 5:16a

This healing cannot be for the sick person alone for it includes those who are praying, so it must mean the healing of the faults that are being confessed. James uses the words 'faults' not sins, so what does this mean?

'Strong's concordance says this word 'fault' is a lapse or deviation from the truth and uprightness. The modern dictionary definition is – 'an unattractive or unsatisfactory feature, especially in a piece of work or in a person's character', or 'a misguided action or habit'. It seems James is not so much talking about sins, as such, but imperfections in our character, and

he says we should pray for one another that these imperfections will, with God's help, be perfected.

For example; maybe one has a weakness with food or some other desire that they battle with, maybe another needs to confess they are not as patient as they know they should be. Another of those gathered may need to confess that they have a problem with judging people. It takes humility to confess these things to others but it is good for us and keeps us from pride which is always a hindrance to answered prayer. James says confess your faults one to another so it is not just the person who is sick but everyone present, including the elders who are called.

All for One and One for All

The bible says if one member suffers then the whole body is suffering, so if one member in the church is sick does this mean the whole church is sick. Think about this?

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

1 Corinthians 12:26

I am sure if we practised this according to James' instructions we would see a lot more healing in the

body of Christ for, from my observation, as many bible believing Christians die from serious illnesses as do the unbelievers, so something is clearly wrong with out methods and mentality. Let us start to read our bibles and practise what we are told to practise, and escape from the traditions of our denominations and over 2000 years of men's interpretations.

PRAYER

When we become too glib in prayer we
are most surely talking to ourselves.

A.W. Tozer

13

Other Prayers

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

2 Timothy 1:3

In this last chapter I will look at three other things we are instructed to pray for in the letters to the churches.

1. Prayer with Thanksgiving

We are told to bring our prayers to God and accompany them with thanksgiving. Prayer is a request, and a request accompanied by thanksgiving is a way of entreaty. As a father I would always give more consideration to the request of my children if they thanked me before they made their petition. Surely God is a good father and would do the same if we are sincere and are not trying to manipulate God with our thanks. He sees our heart so the correct words without the correct attitude will not deceive God, but the sincere heart-felt thanks from a grateful heart will always touch the heart of our heavenly father.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known unto God.

Philippians 4:6

Continue in prayer, and watch in the same **with thanksgiving**; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.

Colossians 4:2

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and **giving of thanks**, be made for all men.

1 Timothy 2:1

2. Prayer for Israel

Paul, in his letter to the Gentile believers in Rome, told them that his heart's desire was that Israel should be saved and he prayed accordingly. We also should pray for the people that God chose as his wife. Through this nation God had a son who became our saviour, Lord and future husband. One day soon Jesus will return to earth and will plead with his mother, Israel, to return to her husband and be reconciled again to God.

Praying God's Will

We should therefore pray according to the will and plans of God that he will accomplish this and Israel will be saved 'in a day' as Isaiah puts it. I believe it will be on the Day of Atonement as this prophetic feast has not been fulfilled yet. Passover and Pentecost have clearly been fulfilled by Jesus when he died on the Passover Feast and he sent the Holy Ghost on the Feast of Pentecost. I believe he will, as God's High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, leave

the temple in heaven and reveal himself to his own, just as Joseph did to his brethren, on the Day of Atonement sometime in the near future.

Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

Isaiah 66:8

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Romans 10:1

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love you.

Psalms 122:6

3. Pray for Interpretation of tongues

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, Paul tells us how to operate the nine Gifts of the Spirit and tells us to covet the best gifts. He explains that the best gifts are not the miracles, healings, and faith gifts that are needed for evangelism, but the gifts that edify the believers – the vocal gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues with interpretation.

I live in England and I have heard it quoted that there are 1,000,000 tongue speaking Christians in the United Kingdom. But from my observation I estimate that barely 1 in a 100 would be able to interpret if someone spoke in tongues. Why is this when Paul says that tongues spoken in public are not profitable unless accompanied by an interpretation? In fact, Paul says that if there is no one that can interpret it is better to speak in a language they can all understand than an unknown language that cannot edify, exhort, or comfort them. That is why Paul gives clear instructions to pray that you may receive the gift of interpretation if you speak in tongues; yet how many have prayed for this? I have never heard a minister exhort this prayer in all my 66 years of attending church services.

All Mixed Up

Christians so often neglect important instruction in the bible whilst they spend time seeking and praying for things they are not instructed to pray for because of the traditions of their prayer meetings and the dogma of their denominations. Let me challenge every one who reads this chapter, and who speaks in tongues, to pray for the gift of interpretation so that you can build up the

believers. Read carefully Paul's instruction in the following passage from Corinthians 14.

I would that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, **except he interpret**, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? Likewise, except you utter, by the tongue, words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For you shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaks a barbarian, and he that speaks shall be a barbarian unto me. For, in as much as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, **seek that you may excel to the edifying of**

the church. Wherefore let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14:5-14

Women and Prayer

Before I close this last chapter on prayer I would like to make an observation and challenge the men who call themselves disciples of Jesus. The world has seen a tremendous shift in the relationship between men and women during my lifetime. From women being dominated beyond what the bible teaches, we now have the situation where women have not only been freed from this oppression but have swung the pendulum so that women are not only equal with men in authority, but in many cases feel superior, especially in spiritual matters, from men which is against the whole teaching of the Old and New Covenants.

Christian men and women need to see that in relationship there is an equality. I call this the horizontal relationship where no one is above the other. In these relationships, pastors and flock, bosses and workers, Christ and the church, are all equal. This can be summed up in the word 'oneness'

or 'unity'. Jesus said 'I and my father are one' and he also said that he would be in us and we would be in him and we both would be in the father so that we are all one. That is, in unity. Scripture supports this.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Galatians 3:28

However, in authority there is a clear order, for equality with authority makes a mockery of the word. Authority means inequality. I call this the vertical relationship, and no one is equal in these relationships. So a boss is the head – or authority of the workers, and the pastor the authority of the flock, and a man is in authority over his wife and Christ is the authority of the church.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

1 Corinthians 11:3

It seems, in my experience, that the church prayer meetings generally have more women than

men attending them. It was certainly true of my father's church. It also seems that women claim to be the 'prayer warriors' much more than men do (check out your Facebook Christian friends). They also seem to predominate the talk and practice of intercession. Therefore, it begs the question, 'Are women better at praying than men, and are their prayers more effectual?' I have no statistics to quote, but if this is true it is certainly not in line with biblical statistics.

The modern statistics of women praying and interceding more than men is more of an indictment against the men for not taking their responsibility. This seems to be a trend in modern churches where we have more and more women in leadership and ruling over men (which is against God's order). Again, I am not criticizing the women, I am criticizing the men for not taking their role as leaders. The great prayers in the bible were men. It was Elijah who prayed when the fire fell. It was Abraham who prayed and interceded for Lot. It was Moses who prayed and interceded for a whole nation. I could compile a long list including Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, David and so on. Men would dominate any list of great pray-ers and prayers in the bible.

There is a verse in the Old Testament that has been quoted to me as a precedent for women to be the intercessors.

Yet hear the word of the LORD, O you women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.

Jeremiah 9:20

This is a lone scripture, and does not mention prayer. Women can certainly show their emotions easier than men, but there are many scriptures where the men are asked to wail and weep before God, so it is not a prerogative of women to weep. Men, not women, were usually called to pray and repent for the nation for they were the head of the families, the tribes, and nation.

Here is one of many scriptures that asks men to repent and weep before God. I think men in this age have forgotten how to weep before God and maybe that is why the world is in such a mess and the church powerless to do anything about it.

Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare your people, O LORD, and give not your heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

Joel 2:17

In conclusion to this part of the series, and in light of the tremendous times we are living in, prayer is of vital importance to every true believer. We are on the brink of World War 3, which will usher the One World Government into power, and in my estimation we are not very far from a One World Church. Most of the Protestant denominations have moved back to the Babylonian, Catholic church. Other denominations are moving swiftly in the same direction even if they do not know it. Their modern doctrines are Jesuit inspired and the bible translators under the umbrella of the United Bible Societies, are all guided by them. The whole world is becoming a Sodom and Gomorrah and genderless – which always brings the judgement of God. If ever there was a time for true Christians to pray, weep, and intercede for the return of Christ it is this generation.

I make no apology for challenging the men of this generation to rise up and take their position as leaders and to have a boldness that the early church had. Away with a watered down gospel message, friendship evangelism, entertaining services and carnal lifestyles. Let us begin to pray and intercede as never before that the bride of Christ will make herself ready for the return of Jesus.

PRAYER

Prayer will become effective when we stop using it as a substitute for obedience.

A.W. Tozer

Postscript to the Whole Series

But speak the things which become sound doctrine.

Titus 2:1

This 4th book ends the series of 'Early Church Life' based on the scripture in Acts chapter 2. I have been looking at the 4 things they participated in when they met from house to house. Let me remind you of them. Here is the verse of scripture this part of the series is based upon.

And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and **fellowship**, and in **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**.

Acts 2:42

These four things are being less and less understood by the church in general and the practice of them has become polluted and distorted.

Breaking of Bread

The Breaking of Bread in many churches has become just an addition to the service and is dispensed with as quickly as possible because it takes time away from the worship, announcements, and 'the word'. I remember a fellow minister who had this attitude before he realised the importance of this 'means of grace'.

He told me of a time when he was walking to his church on a Sunday morning with his sermon going through his head. He suddenly realised it was the monthly communion that week. He thought, "Oh no, it will take time off my sermon". He was really disappointed that this was the week they took the 'Lord's Supper'. You see, they only went through the motions of what should have been an exciting and much looked forward to time of feeding on the Bread of Heaven – Christ himself.

What minister teaches that you can drink the cup of devils as Judas did or you can eat and drink damnation if you do not understand what you are doing? How can the members of a church understand if they are never taught these things?

No wonder Christians are weak and sickly and may have died physically before their time. Many more have died spiritually but still go through the motions as if they were alive. How sad.

Fellowship

Fellowship has all but been lost in so many churches and has gravitated to socialising in most cases. People do not build themselves up in the most holy faith whilst drinking coffee in the time after the service. It is rare for believers to discuss the sermon or the bible, and most of the questions and talk is of the world, its pleasures, and delights. The first question my dad, who was a pastor, asked a believer when he met them was, 'What has God been saying to you today?' We were always ready to share what revelation we had received personally from God in our quiet time or from the word that had just been preached. In the churches I have preached in over the last 45 years I have found that as soon as the service has finished Christians switch their minds to carnal mode. The conversations in the coffee rooms can be as much about the latest Hollywood blockbuster as about Christ and his dealing with them.

I have exposed some of the erroneous teaching in book 3 of this series that pervade the church. It

has all been prophesied, of course, and only goes to show we are in the last of the last days.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

2 Timothy 4:3

Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Titus 1:9

The Apostles Teaching

Let me repeat what I said in volume 3 of this series. ^{Footnote 1} We need another reformation to complete what Martin Luther started. We need to come out completely from the teachings of the Catholic church which are, by their own admission, the teachings of Babylon, with its child sacrifice, paedophilia, and worship of Satan at the highest levels. She will soon be judged. All religions, including Christianity, are mind control systems to control people. What we need is for people with a personal relationship with God to come out and be

counted and 'prepare the way of the Lord'. Jesus' return is preceded by the fall of this counterfeit One World Religion and I believe it is not too far in the future.

If I seem too judgemental then I suggest you look at God's people in the Old Testament and see how easily they were seduced into all these practices when they went cold towards God. They passed their children to Molech through the fire and worshipped Asteroth, goddess of sexual perversion, and Baal. Why would we think that God's people would not do the same in any age when the woman Jezebel has seduced them. The Church of Thyatira in the book of Revelation were certainly infiltrated with this woman and her ways.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Revelation 2:20

It is time to wake up and repent, and turn from our wicked ways, and prepare a people fit for the Lord. That was the message from John the Baptist and that should be our message to prepare the way for his second coming.

And he (John the Baptist) shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Luke 1:17

Prayer

Without a personal relationship with God, that only comes about by praying in secret, then we can never return to the life of the early church and the unassuming righteousness that Jesus talks about in his Sermon on the Mount. Without this personal prayer life we will not change as individuals and we will not be able to challenge the body of believers to come out from the system of Babylon.

My prayer is that after reading these first four books in this series you will be challenged and motivated to change your thinking and actions to conform to what the bible teaches and that you may be lights in this dark world and backslidden church.

Footnote 1

Volume 3. The Apostles Doctrine. Preface

The first three books in this series are available from Amazon as a paperback or Kindle download.

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