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Prevailing Prayer to Peace



26 Lessons on Prayer

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Lesson 1

Seven Steps to Answered Prayer (Part 1)

Bible Texts: James 1:6-8; Joshua 1:8; Matthew 7:7,8; Mark 11:23,24

Central Truth: By faith we reach out to claim what we need, and we thereby create the reality of it in our life.

This two-part series on the subject of prayer deals with fundamental aspects of praying that gets results. If the believer will faithfully follow these steps in prayer, he can be sure of an answer.

Step 1: Decide What You Want From God

JAMES 1:6-8

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

The above Scriptures show us the importance of decisiveness. James said if a man wavers — if he cannot make up his mind — he is "*unstable in all his ways*" and he cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Often we are indefinite in our praying. When I ask people what they are praying about, they sometimes answer they don't know. One person said he was praying *just to be praying*.

Of course, there is one kind of prayer we pray to worship and have fellowship with God, but in this lesson we are dealing primarily with praying to get an answer to our prayers. If we are not careful, this *general* type of praying will carry over when we need to be *specific* about a certain need.

If you went to a grocery store and pushed your cart up and down the aisles without buying anything, people would think something was wrong with you. If you send a child to buy certain items and he buys just those things, he is being definite.

The same is true with prayer. It would be better to pray for two or three minutes and know what you are praying about than to pray aimlessly for two or three hours.

Decide what you want from God and be definite about it!

Step 2: Read Scriptures That Promise the Answer You Need

JOSHUA 1:8

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

In order to be successful in our prayer life, God's Word must be foremost. As we feed upon His Word, we build it

into our inner consciousness. Then, in time of need, we are prepared. We can use the appropriate Scriptures against the devil when he tries to make us doubt God and rob us of what we want.

In the wilderness when Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered with the Word. He said, "... *It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*" Then Satan took Him up on a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. He told Jesus if He would worship him, he would give all these kingdoms to Him. Again Jesus answered, "... *it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*"

Satan then took Jesus upon a pinnacle of the Temple and said to Him, "... *cast thyself down...*" Again Jesus answered with the Word, saying, "... *It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*" (Luke 4:3-12).

Jesus used the same weapon to defeat the devil that all believers have today: the Word of God. All we have to do in the face of temptation and doubt is to say, "*It is written.*" If the Scriptures are firmly implanted in our heart, we are prepared for any attacks of the devil.

In matters of guidance, search the Scriptures to see what God has to say about any situation. His Word plainly shows us His will. If the Scriptures don't promise us what we may be seeking, we don't have any business praying for it. We should not want anything that the Word of God says we shouldn't have.

On the other hand, when praying for things that are expressly promised in the Word, we can have complete confidence that God will give us what we need. Years ago I wrote in red ink on the fly leaf of my Bible, "The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it!"

Many people try to pray beyond their faith. It is the Word of God that gives faith. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). The reason people do not pray with confidence and faith is because they do not know the Scriptures well enough to know if what they are praying for is God's will. They may *hope* it is, but they don't *know* it is. As we read God's Word and learn His will, we can appropriate His promises for our every need.

Step 3: Ask God for the Things You Want

MATTHEW 7:7,8

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

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

In Matthew 6:8 Jesus said, "... *your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*" Yet in the next chapter, as we see in the verses quoted above, He tells us to ask Him for our needs. Therefore, even though He knows our needs, He wants us to bring them to Him and ask His help.

Step 4: Believe That You Receive

MARK 11:23,24

23 For verily I say unto you, That whoso ever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

The Amplified version of the above verse says, "... whatever you ask for in prayer, believe — trust and be confident — that it is granted to you, and you will [get it]."

To understand this better, we need to realize that there are two kinds of truth: sense-knowledge truth and revelation truth.

Some people think truth pertains to things they can see with their physical eyes. But we cannot see the things of the Spirit. They are not flesh; they are not material.

Everything we need is provided for us in the spiritual realm. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). Our needs have been provided for in Christ Jesus. We may not always be able to see them, but they are there.

When "sense-knowledge truth" contradicts "revelation truth," or the

Word of God, I start walking by revelation truth. I walk by what God says.

That which is in the spiritual realm is made real in the natural realm through faith. Faith grasps it and creates the reality of it in our life.

Therefore, when you pray, believe that you receive that which you are asking for and you shall have it. This is beyond our natural thinking. The natural mind cannot grasp it, but we are to walk by faith and not by sight.

Once while preaching in a small church, I got too warm. When I stepped outdoors after the service, my body was wet with perspiration. When the cold outdoor air hit me in the face, my throat started hurting, and by the time I reached the parking lot, I could hardly speak. The next day my chest started hurting and I couldn't speak above a whisper.

I started reading Scriptures on healing. With my Bible open before me, I prayed silently and said, "Lord, your Word tells me I am healed. If I asked my body if I were healed, the answer would be no. If I asked my feelings if I were healed, the answer would be no. If I were to ask the people around me if I were healed, they would say I was not.

"Your Word says God is truth and every man is a liar. So if I say I'm not healed, I am a liar. Your Word says that God cannot lie. Romans 3:4 says, *'God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.'* "

When time came for the evening service, I stepped up to the microphone and said I wanted to thank God that I was healed. The congregation looked at me as if I were crazy, because I was barely whispering.

I began to tell them what the Word of God says about healing. I showed them from the Word that I was healed. I told them what God says is true and that if I said I wasn't healed, I would be lying. I told them that I wanted them to stand and praise God with me because I was healed.

As we stood and began praising God, I hadn't said "hallelujah" three times until my voice came back. Then I preached my sermon with a strong, clear voice. That night the congregation saw an illustration of faith in action.

All we have to do is ask God for the things we want, and believe that we have them.

Memory Text:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7,8).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 2

Seven Steps to Answered Prayer (Part 2)

Bible Texts: Proverbs 4:20-22; Philippians 4:6

Central Truth: Thinking faith thoughts and speaking faith words lead the heart out of defeat into victory.

The previous lesson covered four steps to take to see our prayers answered:

1. Decide what you want from God. Be specific in stating your petitions.
2. Read Scriptures that promise the answer you need. Search the Bible for Scriptures that apply to your need.

Plant God's Word firmly in your heart so you will be prepared against Satan's attacks.

3. Ask God for the things you want. Make your wants known to God. Even though He knows what we need, it is His divine plan that we make our wants known to Him.

4. Believe that you receive. Develop a stubborn faith that refuses to look at circumstances — a faith that produces results.

In this lesson we will deal with three more steps to take to pray more effectively.

Step 5: Refuse To Doubt

Let every thought and desire affirm that you have what you ask. Never permit a mental picture of failure to remain in your mind. Never doubt for one minute that you have the answer. If doubts persist, rebuke them. Get your mind on the answer. James 4:7 says, "... *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" Doubt is of the devil. Resist it.

Eradicate every image, suggestion, feeling, or thought that does not contribute to your faith. Concentrate on things that contribute to your confession for what you need from God.

When our daughter, Pat, was 3 years old, a growth appeared in the corner of her left eye. It kept growing larger and larger until it was the size of the end of her little finger. It was a cause for concern.

I knew in my spirit that it was going to go away. Friends told us, "Oh, it probably will go away as she gets older." I knew when God healed Pat, they would say the growth would have gone away anyway, so I took her to an eye specialist for an examination.

He said Pat had a type of growth that would never go away without surgery. He suggested she be operated on, because the growth would become larger and larger until eventually it would hang down over her face. I thanked him for his diagnosis and left.

That night about 10:15 I prayed about it and said, "Lord, the doctor said an operation is necessary, but John 16:23 says, '*... Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*' I am standing on that Scripture. I have asked you, and now I believe you have done it. I believe tonight at 10:15 for my baby's healing. I thank You for the healing."

I got off my knees, and as I started to go to bed, the devil told me to turn the light on and see if the growth was gone. Immediately I resisted that thought. Several times during the night I was awakened with the same thought —

to go see if the growth was gone yet.

I said, "Satan, why should I get up and turn the light on to see if it's gone yet? I know it's gone, because I have God's Word for it."

The same suggestion returned the next morning, and again I pushed it from my mind. I kept saying Pat had received the healing the night before at 10:15.

When I saw her at breakfast, the growth was still on her eye, but the Bible tells us to walk by faith and not by sight. I ignored the physical evidence of the growth. I walked by faith and kept thanking God for her healing.

Every time our family gathered at the dinner table, I saw that ugly growth sticking right out at me. But I just kept thanking God for the healing which had taken place that night at 10:15 when I prayed and believed that I received.

I was so engrossed in thanking God for the healing that I really don't know when the growth left. A few days later we were driving along and Pat was standing on the front seat between Oretha and me. I turned to say something to Oretha and I noticed Pat's growth was gone. When I mentioned it to Oretha, she told me it had been gone for about 10 days.

We saw a miracle as a result of believing God and thanking Him for the answer, even though our physical senses told us it had not happened. *This is the realm in which the battle of prayer is fought and won.*

Our thoughts are governed by observation, association, and teachings. We must guard against every evil thought and doubt that comes into our mind. We must stay away from all places and things that do not support our confession that God has answered our prayer. (Sometimes this means staying away from churches that teach more doubt than faith.)

Philippians 4:8 says, *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. "*

Step 6: Meditate on the Promises

PROVERBS 4:20-22

20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

Meditate constantly on the promises on which you base your answer to prayer. See yourself in possession of what you have asked from God, and make plans as if it already were a reality. God will make His Word good if you will act on it.

God's Word says He hears and answers prayer. If the Word doesn't depart from before your eyes, you are sure to see yourself with the things you asked for. If you don't see yourself with them, God's Word has departed from before your eyes.

If you don't stand by the Word, God can't stand by you, even though He wants to. *The only way God works is through His Word.* He moves in line with His Word. He has magnified His Word above His Name! If you stand by

the Word, God will stand by you.

Many people pray and pray, but they don't pray according to the Word. John 15:7 says, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,*" Jesus didn't just say, "*// ye abide in me*"; He added, "*and my words abide in you.*" With His words abiding in us, we have a solid foundation.

Once I went to pray for an elderly evangelist in Fort Worth, Texas. Many people had been saved and filled with the Spirit under her ministry. Now, at the age of 82, she had been operated on, and her doctors had found seven cancers in her body. They just sewed her up and told her she didn't have long to live. Months had passed and, although bedfast, she was still alive.

When I talked to her, she said she was old enough to die, but I encouraged her to let God heal her first, because she could still win many souls at her age. Then I read Proverbs 4:20-22 to her and told her to visualize herself well and preaching.

When I saw this woman eight months later, she was busy holding evangelistic meetings! She came up to me after one of my services, threw her arms around me, and hugged me. It startled me, and she realized I hadn't recognized her. She looked different because she had gained weight. She appeared to be in excellent health.

She told me she was so glad I hadn't let her die. She had done what I had told her to do: She had begun to picture herself well, and now she was out working for God again. She said she had evangelistic meetings scheduled for the entire summer.

I later heard that this woman lived to be 91 years old. She didn't die of cancer. She enjoyed many more fruitful years for the Master. Before her healing, she had pictured herself dead, but I got her to see herself with what God had provided for her.

We have to see ourselves with the answer.

Step 7: Give God the Praise

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

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

The words "be careful for nothing" mean "in nothing be anxious." *The Amplified Bible* says, "Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything." As long as we fret and are anxious, praying and fasting won't do any good.

This verse says "with thanksgiving," and this comes after praying about the matter. We thank God for the answer *after* we have prayed.

The final step to answered prayer is to lift your heart to God constantly in gratitude and increasing praise for what He has done and for what He is doing for you now.

Make every prayer concerning your need a statement of *faith* and praise, not a statement of *unbelief*. You can do this just as easily as you can think thoughts of doubt and unbelief.

Thinking faith thoughts and speaking faith words lead the heart out of defeat into victory! Do not accept defeat. Do not be denied. It is your family right — your redemption right — to have what God has promised. It is

yours, and it will come. Accept it, and it will become a reality.

Andrew Murray said, "It is not good taste to ask God for the same thing over and over again. If, when you do pray again for something that hasn't materialized, don't pray for it in the same way, because that would be unbelief. Remind God that you asked for it and what His Word says, and tell Him you are expecting it. Then thank Him for it."

Often people undo their prayers! They get into unbelief and stay there, as if they were spinning their wheels.

During a convention once in Texas, I heard Rev. Raymond T. Richey lead in prayer for a man who was in the hospital, dying. After we prayed, we thanked God that He had heard us.

Brother Richey started to walk away from the pulpit, but then turned around and went back to the microphone. He asked how many in the congregation were going to keep praying for this man in the hospital. Nearly everyone raised his hand.

"What do you want to do that for?" Brother Richey asked. "We already have prayed for him. Now let us keep praising God because He has healed this man."

At the close of the service, someone came in and announced that the dying man had suddenly revived and was going to be all right. He had seen Jesus walk into his room and say, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." He had awakened and immediately was well. This had happened while we had been praying.

The Christian who practices these seven steps to answered prayer will discover great victory in his prayer life.

Memory Text:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 3

The Prayer That Unlocks Heaven

Bible Texts: John 16:23,24; Ephesians 5:20

Central Truth: The Name of Jesus is the access to the heart of the Father.

Lesson 3

We have a key that unlocks the door of our automobile. We may say that we unlock the door, but really it is the key that does it. We also have a key that fits the ignition. We couldn't start the car without this key. This key is the important factor in driving the car. We couldn't get anywhere without it.

The Name of Jesus

There is a key to prayer that will unlock the doors and windows of heaven and grant our every need. Without this key we can't get anywhere. This key is found in John 16:

JOHN 16:23,24

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Jesus is our Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, and Lord. He stands between us and the Father. No place in the Bible is it ever recorded that Jesus told His disciples to pray to Him. They always were told to pray *to the Father in Jesus' Name*. Therefore, if we want to be sure our prayers reach the throne of God, we must come according to the rules laid down in His Word.

In the above Scripture, Jesus said, "*In that day ye shall ask me nothing.*" He said this to His disciples before He went away. He was talking about His present position as Mediator, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Another translation reads, "In that day ye shall not pray to me." Jesus said to ask the Father in His Name. This is the key that will unlock heaven in our behalf.

We can tell Jesus how much we love Him, but when it comes to praying, we must ask the Father through the Lord Jesus. Ephesians 3:14,15 says, "*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*" It is not important which *church* we belong to, but it is important which *family* we belong to.

Overflowing Joy

John 16:24 says, "... *ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*" There is real joy in knowing that the Father will answer our prayers.

The beloved preacher Smith Wigglesworth worked for many years as a plumber before he began his full-time

preaching ministry. One time while installing plumbing in a large house, he noticed the owner kept coming in, looking at him, and then leaving. Finally she entered the room where he was working, sat down, and asked, "What in the world is it that causes that wonderful expression on your face? You look as if you are full of joy."

He told her that morning at breakfast his wife had told him two of their children were very ill. Before they ate, they went upstairs, laid hands on the children, and prayed for them. They were instantly healed and joined their parents downstairs for breakfast. Wigglesworth said it was wonderful to have such a wonderful Jesus.

He told the woman the Scripture says, "... *ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*" (Certainly our joy could not be full if our children were ill, but the Lord told us to ask Him for what we need, "*that your joy may be full.*")

The woman asked Wigglesworth if Jesus would save her and give her this wonderful joy, too. Wigglesworth assured her He would.

She accepted the Lord and started rejoicing. She asked Wigglesworth if she could keep this joy. He answered that the only way to keep it was to give it away. He told her she should tell all the women at her club meeting about her salvation. She did and all of them were saved. This is the way to keep it: Tell others about it.

If Wigglesworth had gone to work that day with two sick children at home, his joy would not have been full. He would have been worried. He would have looked distressed. Instead, he had a light on his face — a radiance that was obvious to all who saw him. Something seemed to flow out of him. What was it? It was the joy the Father has promised when we ask Him for our needs and receive in faith.

On another occasion Wigglesworth was in dire financial need. At that time he was in London visiting in the home of a wealthy man. Wigglesworth simply committed his financial burden to the Lord and refused to worry about it. He told no one. He knew the Lord would take care of it.

As he and his friend were out walking in the park, Wigglesworth was happy and singing, rejoicing in his spirit. His rich friend commented that he would give all he owned to have the same spirit of joy that Wigglesworth had.

Wigglesworth told him it wouldn't cost him anything; all he had to do was cast *all* his cares on Jesus. Wigglesworth explained that this is what he had done, and he was without a care in the world. He could be free and happy. He still did not mention his financial need to his friend, but instead talked of victory and joy in Christ Jesus.

One man had material wealth but no joy. The other lacked material things but was filled with joy. What was the secret? Wigglesworth knew the truth of the Scripture, "... *ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*"

Can your joy be full if you have great financial burdens pressing you? Can your joy be full if you have unpaid bills that are due? If you have asked Him to supply your needs and you believe "*ye shall receive,*" your joy can be full.

Joy That Precedes the Fact

Sometimes you have to have the joy before you will receive what you are praying for. If you are worrying and trying to figure matters out alone, you hinder God from helping you. You are carrying the burden instead of letting Him carry it. In fact, if you are worrying, it will do little good to pray, because you are not praying in faith.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6,7).

When I was holding evangelistic meetings, I often would drive straight through from California to Texas. My mother once told me that when she knew I was traveling, she prayed that the Lord would be with me. And she stayed awake at night worrying, waiting for the telephone to ring with news I had been in an accident. I told her she was wasting her time *praying* if she was going to stay awake *worrying*.

Prayer is more than that. "... *ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*" We should be full of joy even *before* we receive what we ask for because we have His Word that He heard our prayer.

EPHESIANS 5:20

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

Notice here that Paul tells us to give thanks for all things "unto God and the Father" in the Name of Jesus. Paul tells us to pray to the Father and not to Jesus. The Name of Jesus is the access to the heart of the Father in all our real praise and thanksgiving.

Someone said the way we pray doesn't make much difference. But if it doesn't, why did God inspire Paul to write the epistles? To say these verses are not important would make as much sense as it would to say John 3:16 isn't important. If we believe John 3:16 is important, we also must believe that all Scriptures are important and are for our instruction in walking with God. When you want to get an answer to your prayers, follow the teachings of the Word and pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus.

When many people pray, they conclude their prayer, "for Jesus' sake." However, we are not told in the Word to pray for Jesus' sake. We are taught to pray in the Name of Jesus. What is the difference?

If you went to a bank to cash a check for a friend, the cashier would ask you if you had an account there with enough money to guarantee the check. If you didn't, the cashier wouldn't cash the check. But if you had a check from a man who had an account in that bank, you would be able to cash the check.

The same is true when we go to God and tell Him to do something for Jesus' sake. We are asking it to be done to help Jesus on our credit. If I had a stomach ache, it would be foolish to ask God to heal me for Jesus' sake. It is *my* stomach that hurts. I don't want to be healed *for* Him. (We are the ones who need the help. He has the standing or credit, and we can come in His Name.)

It makes a lot of difference what our attitude is. The reason we fail many times in our praying is because our approach is all wrong. Sometimes we think God should answer our prayers because of our own merit or goodness.

When Peter and John ministered to the lame man at the Gate Beautiful, as recorded in the third chapter of Acts, the people who witnessed the miracle were amazed. They thought it was through some special power of these men that the lame man was healed. But Peter said, "... *why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?*" (Acts 3:12).

It isn't by our own power or holiness that we get an answer to prayer. We don't get our prayers answered

because we are good; they're answered because of Jesus. He has a standing in heaven. He is the only approach to the Father. We can't get there any other way. We come to the Father in His Name. Jesus gave us the right and the authority to use His Name. The key to seeing answers to our prayers is through the mighty Name of Jesus.

Memory Text:

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..." (James 1:22).*

Lesson 4

The Authority of Jesus' Name

Bible Text: Mark 16:17,18

Central Truth: Jesus gave us the power of attorney, the right to use His Name.

God hears and answers prayer. We might as well settle that. It works. Too often people just make a stab in the dark at praying. They call it praying and let it go at that. They *hope* something works out some way or other.

But we need to take our stand on God's Word and let heaven, hell, and earth know that God's Word is true and we believe it. We need to grow in prayer. Many times God condescends to meet us on an elementary level, but it is better that we grow spiritually and meet Him on His level.

The Bible teaches there is a similarity between physical growth and spiritual growth. *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"* (1 Peter 2:2). No one is born a fully grown adult. We are born as babies and grow up. No one is born a fully grown Christian, either. Christians are newborn babes and grow up. As we mature in the Word, our prayer life should improve.

When I was a child I prayed, "Now I lay me down to sleep..." But I don't pray that way anymore. I've grown beyond that. When we were spiritual babes we may have prayed certain ways, but God wants us to grow spiritually. God requires more of us now than He did a few years ago.

Believer's Rights in the Name of Jesus

MARK 16:17,18

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Prayer should be addressed to the Father in Jesus' Name. This is the key to seeing our prayers answered. In this lesson we will look at the rights we have in Jesus' Name.

Jesus gave us the power of attorney, or the right to use His Name. We use His Name when we pray for our individual needs and when we deal with the devil. He said, *"In my name shall they cast out devils..."*

When Jesus appointed the seventy disciples and sent them forth, *"The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name"* (Luke 10:17).

In Acts 16:16-18 we read where Paul cast an evil spirit out of a girl.

"But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

I once knew of a woman whose daughter was in a mental institution. This mother decided to pray the prayer of

faith for her daughter — exercising her authority in Jesus' Name and casting out the devil that kept her daughter bound. She asked 12 women who were strong in faith to go with her to the mental institution.

When they arrived at the padded cell where the daughter was being kept, the mother said to the attendant, "I want you to open the door and let me in, because I want to pray for my daughter."

"You can't do that," he answered. "She'll kill you. She's violently insane."

He argued he couldn't let her in because he would lose his job, but all the time he was unlocking the door. The mother stepped in and he locked the door again.

The insane daughter looked more like an animal than a human being. Her hair and nails had grown long, and she hissed and spat as an animal would.

While the 12 women outside prayed silently, the mother prayed out loud, commanding the devil to come out of her daughter in the Name of Jesus. She prayed like this for about 10 minutes.

Suddenly the daughter relaxed, looked up, and said, "Momma! Is that you, Momma?" She threw her arms around her and hugged and kissed her. That day she was dismissed from the institution as being well. This mother knew her rights. She knew the authority that was hers to cast out devils in Jesus' Name.

Jesus also said in Mark 16:17, "*In my name... they shall speak with new tongues.*" Every believer has the right to speak with tongues.

The next verse says that in Jesus' Name "*They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.*"

This doesn't mean, of course, we are to take up serpents and handle them just to try to prove something. It means that if we are accidentally bitten, as Paul was on the island of Melita, we can shake off the snake and claim immunity in the Name of Jesus.

We read in Acts 28:3-6 how Paul was shipwrecked. He picked up some sticks to build a fire and a viper came out and fastened on his hand. The people who saw this expected him to fall dead. When he didn't die and his hand didn't become swollen from the venom, the people knew they had witnessed a miracle.

I have heard of similar experiences in our day. A woman missionary in a foreign country was stung by a deadly scorpion. There was no antidote for the bite in those days; its sting always was fatal.

The missionary was shopping on the street when the scorpion stung her, and people watching expected her to swell up and die. But she just shook it off in Jesus' Name and didn't even get sick to her stomach. As a result, many of those people were saved.

The Scripture further says, "*... and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.*" Again, this doesn't mean we can drink something poisonous to try to prove a point. It means if we do accidentally, we can claim immunity in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Using the Name of Jesus

A number of years ago a religious denomination was holding a convention in Corpus Christi, Texas. After the people began to gather at the grounds where they were having the convention, some of them began to fall ill. Soon

about 20 or 30 people were desperately sick, and they began praying for one another.

As they prayed, someone had a revelation the water in one of the hotels was poisonous. This was in the days when they didn't have running water. They had a pitcher and bowl on a washstand in each room. This person cautioned the rest of the people not to drink any more water. The Lord answered prayer and everyone was healed.

They took a sample of the water to a nearby naval station. Laboratory tests showed there was enough poison in the water to kill a regiment of men. Under such circumstances we have a right to claim immunity in Jesus' Name.

Jesus said, "... *they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*" (v. 18).

Don't lay hands on someone and say, "*If it be the Lord's will...*" Lay your hands on them and claim their deliverance in the Name of Jesus. You have solid ground to stand on.

Jesus said, "*In my name...*" It is in His Name we can cast out devils. It is in His Name we can speak with new tongues. It is in His Name we can claim immunity if we accidentally are bitten by a poisonous snake or if we drink any deadly thing. It is in His Name we can lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. It is His Name that gives us authority to claim these things.

Notice He said *we* lay hands on the sick. We do the laying on of hands — not Jesus or the Holy Spirit. We lay hands on the sick person in Jesus' Name.

We are the ones who talk in tongues. I have heard people say, "But I'm afraid that was just me." Certainly that was you! You have the right to speak in tongues in Jesus' Name. You do the talking just as much as you lay hands on the sick person. The Holy Spirit gives you the utterance; you do the talking.

This is our right in the Name of Jesus. It belongs to everyone, not just someone especially called. The ordinary child of God has as much right to use the Name of Jesus as anyone.

Let me call your attention to something else here. We do not have to struggle for faith. Some people think if they just had enough faith, they could do these things. But notice this passage of Scripture does not say a word about faith. Jesus didn't say, "If they have enough faith..." He said, "*These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall...*" He went on to enumerate our rights through His Name.

We do not have to struggle for faith. It is simply a matter of claiming our rights and boldly using what we know belongs to us.

The Name of Jesus belongs to me as much as my hands and feet belong to me. When I awaken in the morning, I don't pray for God to give me faith to get up and walk. I just get up and walk because I know my feet are there! The Name of Jesus is as much mine as my hands and feet are mine, and I can use His Name.

There are people who pray and pray, but the results do not prove their prayers are of any value. If you don't get results when you pray, you need to reexamine your methods. If you aren't *expecting* results when you pray, there is no need to pray.

The Business of Prayer

Just as businesses expect to make a profit, so we should expect to profit when we pray. If a business was not making a profit, its management immediately would begin to reevaluate its methods and make necessary changes.

Industry demands the best technical education. It demands men trained to do their jobs. Christians, too, should make a business of prayer — the greatest business there is — God's business.

Prayer is of the utmost importance. From a practical side, Christianity is a living faith in touch with the living God who hears and answers prayer.

Simply talking into the air is not prayer. Taking up 20 minutes on Sunday morning giving God a homily on what His duties are toward the Church is not prayer. Giving the congregation a lecture is not prayer.

We should pray for results. If we pray and we see no results, it shows we have the form without the power.

All things God has provided are offered to us through prayer, and if we do not have them, it is because we have not made our prayer connection.

If you are praying without seeing any results, seek to find the trouble. Is God untrue? No, He's not! Is the day of prayer and miracles over? No! Have we been depending upon the promises of a God who has gone bankrupt? No! There is something wrong somewhere, isn't there? Is it because we are not known in the Bank of Heaven?

Let's seek to find the cause and uproot any doubt and unbelief. Let's pray to the Father as Jesus taught us to pray — in Jesus' Name — because Jesus stands behind His Word.

When we come according to God's Word, our prayers cannot fail.

Memory Text:

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name,

I will do it" (John 14:14).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 5

The Prayer of Agreement

Bible Texts: Matthew 18:18-20; Deuteronomy 32:30; Romans 8:26

Central Truth: There is tremendous power as two or more agree in prayer concerning anything they may need.

Of the many prayer promises in the Bible, perhaps none is more significant than Matthew 18:19. Yet many dedicated Christians go through life having a knowledge of the Word — having read and even studied Matthew 18:19 — without really appropriating it in their own lives.

God didn't put all of the promises about prayer in the Bible just to fill up space. They are there for our benefit. They are there for us to act upon.

To get the full impact of what Jesus is saying in Matthew 18:19, let's look at the verses preceding and following it.

MATTHEW 18:18-20

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 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.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Notice the phrase in verse 19: "*...it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*" The strongest assertion one can make in the English language is to say "I shall." In this Scripture Jesus promised, "*... it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*" He also said, "*If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*" (John 14:14).

P. C. Nelson was a Greek scholar who did all his personal Bible reading and private devotions from the Greek New Testament. He said the Greek translation is more beautiful than the English, but it has a number of idioms that cannot be translated into English and retain their full meaning.

Dr. Nelson said the literal Greek rendering of Jesus' statement is, "If you shall ask anything in my name and I don't have it, I will make it for you."

Authority To Bind and Loose

Matthew 18:20 says, "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" We usually apply this Scripture to a church service. Of course, it can refer to this, but what Jesus really was saying here is wherever these two people are who agree, He is right there with them to make their prayer good.

Jesus was bringing out the fact that whatever we bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Heaven will back us up in what we do on earth. We have the authority to loose

and to bind.

Instead of using this authority, however, too many people allow the devil to blind them. They think they can't help it if they are defeated and depressed. They think there is nothing they can do about it. But they *can* do something about it by acting on this Scripture: by agreeing in prayer with just one other believer.

During 1957, our nation experienced an economic recession. Oregon was a state which felt the recession quite desperately. At that time I was holding a revival in Salem, Oregon. As I preached on the subject of the prayer of agreement, a couple in the church decided to claim this promise and make it work for them.

They owned a piece of property which they had been trying to sell for two years with no success. With times so difficult, it seemed impossible to sell it, yet the couple agreed in prayer that they would be able to sell it with the Lord's help.

When the man visited the real estate agent, he was told that since they hadn't been able to sell the lot when times were good, there was little hope they could sell it now. The agent did suggest that the man talk to a client who previously had been interested in the lot. The agent wasn't too optimistic, but he said if this client didn't buy the lot, he would try once more to sell it.

Remembering Jesus' promise concerning the prayer of agreement, the man approached the client, offering to sell the property at the same price they had discussed before. This time the client said he would take it.

For two years this couple had been in financial trouble, desperately needing to sell their lot. They could have had the money all the time if they had only exercised their authority by agreeing in prayer that *"it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."*

Instead of believing with their hearts and saying with their mouths, the couple had been praying that God would do something about it. They now realized that *they* should have done something about it. (We have our part to play. When we make our move, God will then move.)

Multiplied Prayer Power

DEUTERONOMY 32:30 30 How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?

We may be mighty in prayer alone, but we can be mightier with someone joining us. We read in the above verse that one can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight. With someone agreeing with us in prayer, we can do ten times as much as we can do by ourselves. A lot of people don't need to be involved; just a husband and wife will do — just two.

I once read a book by Dr. George

W. Truett, who for many years was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. One chapter of his book deals with this subject of agreeing in prayer.

He told that when he was a young seminary student, he would go out during the summer and conduct revival meetings. Once when he was preaching under a brush arbor in West Texas, a tall rancher came up to him after the sermon one night and asked if he believed the New Testament. Dr. Truett answered that he did. Then the rancher

asked if he believed everything in it. Dr. Truett answered that he surely did. The rancher asked him if he believed Matthew 18:19. Dr. Truett said he didn't know offhand what Matthew 18:19 said, but whatever it was, he believed it.

The rancher quoted this verse of Scripture to Dr. Truett and told him he was the first preacher they had ever had who really believed it. He asked Dr. Truett to agree with him that his ranch foreman and family would be saved the next night. He promised to have them in church. Dr. Truett said he would agree for their salvation.

This big fellow, who towered over him about 6 feet 6 in cowboy boots, then grabbed his hand and shook it. He said, "Lord, I've finally found someone to agree with me. I've been looking for someone for years. This little preacher and I agree that John and his family will be saved tomorrow night."

After a sleepless night of doing battle with the devil, Dr. Truett went to the meeting the next night. He saw the rancher come in, followed by the other man, his wife, and three children.

Dr. Truett preached a fiery, evangelistic message and gave the invitation, but he couldn't seem to move the man toward the altar. Finally he told the Lord that he had done all he could do; he was going to sing one more verse and turn it over to Him.

On the next verse of the invitation hymn, the oldest child, a girl about 13, went forward. She knelt at the altar. Then one of the other children followed. Finally all three children were praying at the altar. Then the mother went forward and finally the father followed.

At the conclusion of the service, the rancher grabbed Dr. Truett and said he knew if only he could find someone to agree with him, it would work. He asked Dr. Truett to agree with him about his neighbor.

At this point, Dr. Truett said if the rancher had asked him to agree with him that the sun would rise in the West, he would have agreed. He was ready for anything! He said he was young and didn't know any better. He said we get our heads educated at the expense of our hearts, but simple people just believe God's Word and receive results.

For two weeks the meetings continued. Every night the rancher asked Dr. Truett to agree with him for another family, and every night that family was saved. It works.

The Holy Spirit in the Ministry of Prayer

ROMANS 8:26

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The Greek translation of the last phrase of this verse reads, "with groanings which cannot be uttered in articulate speech." Therefore, this verse includes groanings and praying in tongues.

In connection with this, Paul said, "*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful*" (1 Cor. 14:14). *The Amplified Bible* reads, "... my spirit [by the Holy Spirit within me] prays-----"

Notice in Romans 8:26 that we don't know what we should pray for. We can't possibly know in our natural mind how to pray as we should because there are so many things known only to God, but "*the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.*" The Holy Spirit will help us and will make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be

uttered in articulate speech.

This doesn't mean it is something the Holy Spirit does apart from you. That would make the Holy Spirit responsible for your prayer life, and He isn't. *You* are responsible for your prayer life. Notice that this verse says that He "*helpeth*." He isn't sent to do your praying for you. He is sent to help you in every aspect of your life, and especially your prayer life.

There are some things that come out of your heart that can't be expressed in words. It is the Holy Spirit helping you as these groanings come out of your spirit and escape your lips. It is the Holy Spirit in the ministry of prayer.

I do most of my praying in tongues. For example, my son might have problems I know nothing about. I tell the Lord I don't know how to pray for him as I ought to, but I am looking to the Holy Spirit to give me utterance. I might pray for him an hour in tongues. I might have a revelation, or God might show me the answer. But whether there is a revelation or not, we can pray that way because we know it is Biblical.

This kind of praying in the Spirit gets the job done when nothing else will. The Holy Spirit makes intercession through us to the throne of grace.

Memory Text:

"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" (Matt. 18:19).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 6

The Six Most Important Things in Prayer (Part 1)

Bible Texts: John 16:23,24; Mark 11:24-26; Acts 27:25

Central Truth: "There is something about believing God that will cause Him to pass over a million people to get to you." — Smith Wigglesworth

Many times I have asked people, as they got up from praying, what they believed. Often they have answered, "Well, I *hope* God heard me." I tell them He didn't.

In His Word He says, "If you *believe* you shall receive," not "If you *hope* you shall receive." He didn't say to "keep on keeping on" until you get the answer. He said when you pray you should believe you receive.

When you believe you receive, you don't have to pray all night long. You can go to bed and sleep peacefully, knowing God has heard you and will answer your prayer. It's the most wonderful thing in the world to be able to pillow your head on the promises of God and sleep like a baby. Everything around you might be in turmoil, but in the midst of it you can have peace.

This lesson deals with the six most important things the Christian should know about prayer.

Number 1: Pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus

JOHN 16:23,24

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

When Jesus spoke these words, He was here on earth. He was talking about the day in which we live.

He had not yet gone to Calvary. He had not died and been buried. He had not risen from the dead. The New Covenant was not in force. His blood had not been carried into the Holy of Holies. (His blood is the seal of the Covenant.)

Man had the promise of redemption, but had not received it. Eternal life had been promised, but had not been provided. None had the New Birth — they only had the promise of it, because the New Birth is available only under the New Covenant.

This New Covenant was prophesied about in the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, men's hearts never were changed. That's the reason they kept on sinning. They couldn't help but sin.

Some of the greatest saints of the

Old Testament sinned. After they were forgiven for one sin, they would commit another. Their natures were all wrong; their hearts were all wrong. They only had a covering for their sins.

But God promised in His Word that He would take that old heart out of us and give us a new one. He said He

would put a new spirit in us (Ezek. 11:19). This became available under the New Covenant.

In John 16:23,24, Jesus told His disciples that after He went to Calvary and was raised from the dead, people were to pray to His Father.

Prayer based on legal grounds should be addressed to the Father in the Name of Jesus. We are not supposed to pray to Jesus. This was His instruction.

The disciples asked Him, while He was here on earth, to teach them to pray. He taught them to say, "Our Father...." We refer to this as the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), but it is not New Testament prayer.

This prayer didn't ask a thing in Jesus' Name; His Name wasn't even mentioned. *This prayer was prayed under the Old Covenant.* Under the New Covenant, which was sealed with the precious blood of Jesus, we are to pray to the Father in Jesus' Name.

Now let us focus our attention on the word "whatsoever" in John 16:23. Often we say we are believing for an answer to prayer "if it is God's will." But this verse makes no such condition. On the contrary, it says, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*" It must have been His will; otherwise, He wouldn't have said it!

Why did Jesus say, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*"? The answer is found in verse 24: "*... that your joy may be full.*"

Our joy certainly can't be full if we are out of work and our children are hungry. Our joy can't be full if our bodies are racked with pain. Our joy can't be full if there are problems in our home.

Jesus said the Father would give us "*whatsoever*" we ask so our "*joy may be full.*"

But there is a secret to success with this kind of praying. The key is in the words, "*Whatsoever ye shall ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME....*" We are to address our prayers to the Father in the Name of Jesus.

Number 2: Believe You Receive

MARK 11:24

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Smith Wigglesworth once said there is something about believing God that will cause Him to pass over a million people to get to you.

God is a faith God. We are faith children of a faith God. He works on the principle of faith.

We are saved by faith: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph. 2:8,9).

We walk by faith, not by sight. It is the prayer of faith God listens to. He said you can have the desires of your heart if you believe you receive them. You have to believe first, however.

Most people want to receive and then they will believe. But it is the other way around: *The believing part comes first.*

I am convinced that if people would quit praying repeatedly about some of the things they pray about and begin

thanking God for the answer, the answer would come right away. But they keep on praying in unbelief.

If a person asks for the same thing again, he doesn't believe he received it the first time he asked. If he believed he had received it, he would be thanking God for it, and it would be made manifest.

The faith Jesus was talking about in Mark 11 is heart faith — a spiritual faith — not head faith. We get used to walking by head faith. But we are to believe in our heart that we receive what we are praying for, even though we do not see the answer with our physical eyes.

This also is true of physical healing, but it seems more difficult to practice faith for physical healing than for anything else, because we have the body, with all its feelings and symptoms, to contend with.

Most people will believe God has healed them when they can see their condition has grown better, or when the symptoms are gone. Anyone can believe what he can see. What Jesus was teaching here is that we should believe when we pray and *then* we will receive.

For many years I have practiced this kind of faith, and Mark 11:24 has been my standby. I have experienced it in my own life as I have prayed for the desires of my heart, believing that I receive them. It is true not only for healing, but also in every other area of life. No matter what the need may be — material, spiritual, or financial — this is the way we receive.

Smith Wigglesworth said some people are ready to give up if their prayers aren't answered immediately. But, he said, this proves that they never believed God in the first place.

Often God permits our faith to be tried and tested right up to the end. When you believe God, you can stand firm, even though you are tested.

I have been there and I know by experience. I learned many years ago to laugh all the more when the going gets rough. I don't always *feel* like laughing, but I make myself laugh right in the face of the devil. I smile and say that I believe God.

When Paul was on a ship bound for Rome, a great storm arose. Because the ship was in danger of sinking, the crew attempted to lighten it by throwing cargo overboard. This didn't help the situation, and the storm continued, night and day, for "many days." Finally the crew and passengers gave up all hope that they or the ship would survive. However, right in the midst of the storm's fury, Paul addressed them, saying he believed God:

ACTS 27:25

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

You and I may not have to face a storm-tossed sea, but we do have to face storms in life. We, too, can stand with the faith of Paul and announce that we believe God.

Number 3: Forgive When You Pray

MARK 11:25,26

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

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Before we can expect an answer to our prayers, we must forgive any who may have wronged us. We cannot hold a grudge — we cannot keep an unforgiving spirit — if we want our prayers to reach God's throne of grace.

Prayer will not work in an unforgiving heart. No one can have an effective prayer life and have anything in his heart against another. You cannot have hatred in your heart. You cannot have revenge in your heart.

You are not responsible for that other person's life. You are responsible only for *your* life. What is in another person's heart can't hinder you, but what you have in your heart against him can hinder you.

We must watch our inward man with all diligence. We cannot afford to allow a root of bitterness, a bit of envy, or a spark of revenge to get in there. It will wreck our spiritual life. It will stall our prayer life. It will mar our faith and eventually it will shipwreck us.

A fellow once wanted me to pray that he never would have any more trouble with the devil. I told him I didn't know anyone who was free from trouble with the devil, least of all me.

We can't pray that we won't have any more trouble with the devil, but we can learn to take authority over him: *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

God prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. Jesus is there right in the presence of the devil. Right in the presence of the enemies of doubt and despair, we can sit at the table of victory and deliverance with Jesus. In the face of adverse circumstances we can believe we receive.

Memory Text:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 7

The Six Most Important Things in Prayer (Part 2)

Bible Texts: Romans 8:26,27; 1 Corinthians 14:14,15; Jude 20; 1 Corinthians 14:4

Central Truth: When we allow the Holy Spirit to pray through us — to help us in our prayer life — we will see amazing answers to our prayers.

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

— Ephesians 6:18

Dr. James Moffatt's translation of Ephesians 6:18, quoted above, says, "praying at all times ... with all manner of prayer. ..." Another modern translation says, "praying with all kinds of prayer."

The *King James Version*, even though it does not say "all kinds of prayer," says "*praying always with all prayer*," inferring that there is more than one kind of prayer. If there were not, it merely would have said, "praying always," and would have stopped there.

How desperately our nation needs prayer. How desperately the church needs prayer. How desperately we individuals need prayer. Nothing can take the place of prayer for meeting the needs of our family.

In our last lesson we discussed three points in our study of the six most important things the Christian should know about prayer. They were: (1) pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus; (2) believe you receive; and (3) forgive when you pray. This lesson will cover the last three points in this topic.

Number 4: Depend Upon the Holy Spirit in Your Prayer Life

ROMANS 8:26,27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:14,15

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Christians everywhere pray with the understanding, but not all pray with the Spirit (pray in tongues). Many do not know it is even possible to do so.

Some in their haste and their ignorance of the Scriptures have said that tongues have been done away with. But if that were true, how are we to "pray with the spirit" today? Surely the Corinthian Christians didn't have a means of praying that we can't have. We have the same means available to us today.

Paul said that when he prayed in an unknown tongue, his spirit prayed. *When you pray in tongues, it is your spirit praying by the Holy Spirit within you.* Likewise, your groaning is the Holy Spirit within you groaning.

I sometimes have been so burdened in prayer that I didn't have adequate words to express my feelings. All I could do was groan from somewhere 'way down deep inside me. Paul says these groanings that escape our lips come from our spirit — our innermost being. When this happens, it is the Spirit helping us pray, as we see in Romans 8:26.

According to the late P. C. Nelson, the literal Greek translation of Romans 8:26 says, "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered in articulate speech." Articulate speech means your regular kind of speech. Speaking with tongues is *not* your regular kind of speech, so this verse includes speaking and praying with other tongues.

Paul said the Holy Spirit would help us in our prayer life. Why? "...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us..." (Rom. 8:26).

We do not always understand everything concerning what we are praying about, but the Holy Spirit does. When we allow Him to pray through us — to help us in our prayer life — we will see amazing answers to our prayers!

If I know specific details about what I'm praying for, I can believe when I pray, and I will receive them. However, sometimes there are things we know we need to pray about, but we do not know how to pray for them. The Holy Spirit knows, and He can help us. (It is easier to have faith for needs like rent and groceries because we know what we are praying for. But there are other situations in life that aren't so easy to pray for.)

There have been times in my own life when I have told the Lord I didn't know exactly how I should pray concerning my children. When I know there is a problem, I begin praying in tongues, and most of the time before I get through, I have the answer.

Number 5: Pray the Prayer of Intercession

This point ties in closely with Number 4. Romans 8:26 says, "... the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The prayer of intercession is not for you. *An intercessor is one who takes the place of another.* You are interceding for another.

Every Spirit-filled believer can expect the Holy Spirit to help him intercede. This intercession can be for someone's salvation, healing, etc. It even includes praying for things or people we don't know about, but the Holy Spirit does.¹

After a time of praying in the Spirit we will know whether we were praying in tongues for ourselves — to build ourselves up spiritually and worship God, which is discussed in the next step — or we were interceding for others.

On occasion — and sometimes over a period of time — I have had a burden of intercession before I even knew for whom I was praying. I can tell when I am in intercession or travail for someone who is lost.

(When you take the place of a lost person in intercession, you will experience that same lost feeling in your own spirit. As you pray in the Spirit, interceding for the person, the Holy Spirit will deal with his heart and bring him under conviction of sin.)

Number 6: Edify Yourself by Praying in the Holy Spirit

JUDE 20

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith praying in the Holy Ghost.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself_

There is one phase of speaking with tongues in our prayer life that is neither praying for someone else nor interceding for anyone else. It is purely a means of personal spiritual edification. It aids us spiritually and edifies us. We all need this kind of praying. We cannot help others — we cannot edify others — unless we ourselves have been edified.

Praying in this manner has a threefold value. First, it is a means of spiritual edification. It affects us individually. Second, it is a means of praying for things about which we do not know. Third, the Holy Spirit helps us make intercession.

Speaking in tongues is not only an initial evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling; it is a continual experience for the rest of one's life. It is to assist in the worship of God. It is a flowing stream that never should dry up. It will enrich your life spiritually.

Memory Text:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..." (James 1:22).

Lesson 8

Interpreting Our Prayers in the Spirit

Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 14:13-17,27,28

Central Truth: Every believer can interpret his prayers in the Spirit, thus gaining spiritual understanding of them.

Praying in the Spirit is not something that belongs only to ministers. It belongs to every believer.

Much has been accomplished through those who have yielded their prayer lives to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to pray through them. But we would see even greater results if more Christians prayed in the Spirit.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:13-17

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

God, speaking through the Apostle Paul, said, "*Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret*" (v. 13). God certainly is not going to tell us to pray for something we can't have.

I am convinced that every believer should be able to interpret his own prayers, even though he never may interpret a message in tongues publicly. I believe that a person can *interpret* without being an *interpreter*. (I will explain this point more fully later in this lesson.)

Would the Spirit of God tell us to pray for something we couldn't have? The fact that He has told us to pray that we may interpret means He has made this available to every believer.

Therefore, every believer should be able to pray in tongues (pray in the Spirit), because we are encouraged to do so in the Bible. Likewise, we should pray that we also can interpret what we have prayed in tongues, because the Word encourages us to do this, too.

Notice *why* God wants us to do this. In First Corinthians 14:13 we read that those who speak in an unknown tongue should pray that they may interpret. Two of the next verses begin with the conjunction "for." A conjunction is a connecting word. That means Paul was continuing what he had said.

Verse 14 reads, "*FOR if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.*" If we could interpret our prayer in tongues, our understanding no longer would be unfruitful. It would be fruitful.

Sometimes it would be helpful for us to know what we are praying about when we pray in the Spirit. There are

some things we pray about that we need to understand. It would help us if our minds were enlightened about them. However, I would never interpret prayers in which we edify and build ourselves up. Those are merely prayers of worship and praise, and they do not need to be interpreted.

Praying With the Spirit and With the Understanding

Verse 15 continues Paul's teaching: *"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also...."* There is a further meaning to this verse than the one we have generally accepted.

First, it means we can pray both ways: with the Spirit (in tongues) and with the understanding (in our own language).

But it *also* means that if we pray to be given the interpretation of what we pray in tongues, we may pray in the Spirit and afterwards God may give us the interpretation. If this happens, we will understand what we have prayed about in tongues, and we can pray with our understanding in our native language.

I have prayed in this manner since 1938. In those days, we didn't have any teaching along those lines. Some even thought that once a person was filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, it wasn't necessary for him to speak in tongues ever again! (Sadly, many Christians still do not rise above this level today.)

After I was first filled with the Spirit, I would find myself praying in tongues when I was praying, and I would stop, because I wasn't sure if it was right or not. However, about a year later as I studied the Word, I saw that it was all right to pray in tongues; that this blessing is for us today.

Similarly, I interpreted my prayers long before I did any interpreting in public. I know from experience the difference it makes in one's prayer life.

Some of my first experiences along this line came when I was a new believer. I was deeply in love with the Lord and would seek Him and wait on Him. While praying about my services and the sermons I was to preach, the Spirit of the Lord would move upon me and I would interpret what I had just prayed in tongues.

One day while praying in the Spirit, I began to interpret my prayer. I found out that I was praying about the girl I was to marry! I also learned that we would have two children, the older a boy and the younger a girl. I was not prophesying; I was interpreting my prayer in tongues. I would pray a few words in tongues and then pray the interpretation.

At that time I was a single man of

21 and I was so wrapped up in spiritual things that I didn't have time for girls and dating.

The farthest thing from my mind was the thought of marriage! But everything came to pass just as the interpretation indicated. I got married that same year. When we were expecting our first child, I knew it would be a boy. In fact, we only picked out a boy's name.

When we were expecting our second child, I knew it would be a girl, so we picked out only a girl's name. Some of our relatives were skeptical and asked, "What if it isn't a girl?" I said, "I'm not going by 'what ifs.' " When the baby was born, it was a lovely daughter.

Tongues and Interpretation: For Public or Private Use?

As was mentioned earlier, the fact that one may interpret tongues does not mean he is an interpreter. The two are related, but they are not the same thing.

To illustrate, an automobile, a truck, and a bus are totally different vehicles, yet they are all motorized forms of transportation. Just because a person owns an automobile and drives it does not mean he is a trucker. Even if he owned a truck, that would not necessarily mean he could drive it. And because a man is a bus driver does not mean he is a trucker. They are different yet related. The same is true of tongues and interpretation.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:27,28 27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

In verse 28 we read, "*But if there be no interpreter ...*," or if no interpreter is present. This infers that there are those who are interpreters.

We make a great mistake by thinking that tongues and interpretation is just for public use. There is a public side to it under certain circumstances, but as we see from the passage of Scripture above, its main use is private.

As I said, I interpreted my own prayers long before I interpreted publicly. When I began to interpret my prayers in private, it was like driving that car. When I began to interpret publicly, it was like driving that truck: It was partly the same, but it was different. To interpret publicly, one stands in a different office, on a different plane, in a different area.

When I first interpreted my prayers, that was all I could interpret. I could not interpret anyone else's prayers. I could not interpret *a message in tongues*. Later, however, I received *the gift of interpretation*.

Notice that the Scripture does not say, "Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may have the gift of interpretation." It says, "*Let him ... pray that he may interpret.*" Interpret what? Interpret his prayer. Why? So he can "*pray with the spirit, and ... pray with the understanding also.*" This would not make him an interpreter; it would make him one who prays in the Spirit.

Even after I received the gift of interpretation and became an interpreter, I still couldn't interpret what people prayed in their private times of prayer, but I could interpret all *public* utterances. (I still can interpret public utterances, although I don't always do it. Often there are several present who have the interpretation, and I allow someone else to give it forth.)

I have learned by experience that when someone speaks in tongues publicly, I can interpret their message in tongues if I respond to the Spirit. In First Corinthians 14:27,28, Paul infers that an interpreter can do this. He said, "*there be no interpreter ...*," inferring that some are interpreters, having the gift of interpretation, while others do not.

An interpreter might not be present in a meeting, and if no interpreter is present, the person giving the message in tongues should be silent. This implies that an interpreter always could interpret the messages.

In my own prayer life, I do not always interpret all the prayers I pray in tongues — only as the Lord wills and as it is necessary.

In Romans 8:26 we read, "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should*

pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groan-ings which cannot be uttered."

If you don't know what to pray for as you ought, you can pray in the Spirit and then interpret. Then you will know what you prayed for. Then you will be praying "*with the spirit, and... with the understanding also.*"

I am convinced that every believer should pray in the Spirit and "with the understanding" — not just pray a prayer out of his understanding, but pray the interpretation so he can understand his prayers in the Spirit.

Memory Text:

"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret" (1 Cor. 14:13).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...*" (James 1:22).

Lesson 9

Tongues — A Flowing Stream of Praise

Bible Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 5:18,19; John 7:37-39

Central Truth: Speaking with tongues is a flowing stream that should never die out, but will enrich the life spiritually.

Having studied in the last two lessons the necessity and value of praying in tongues, let us now take a closer look at the kinds and uses of tongues.

Tongues — One of the Nine Gifts of the Spirit

I CORINTHIANS 12:7-11

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

In these verses are listed the nine gifts, manifestations, or ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself.

Three of these gifts are gifts of *inspiration*, or utterance: prophecy, divers kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. These vocal gifts are designed as an inspiration in public worship. Of them, the gift of tongues is the most prominent.

Tongues with interpretation is distinctive with this dispensation. All the other gifts of the Spirit were manifested in the Old Testament. Even in the life and ministry of Jesus, all the other gifts were manifested except tongues and interpretation.

Because tongues and interpretation is distinctive with this dispensation, it is manifested more frequently in the Church than the other gifts.

"Divers kinds of tongues" are supernatural utterances given by the Holy Spirit. They are languages never learned by the speaker, and they are not understood by him. Usually they are not understood by the hearers, although there are exceptions to this. There have been times when the words someone speaks in tongues have been understood by someone present.

A minister once told me of an experience he had had while preaching at a mission station in Mexico.

He said, "I preached for about five nights with the local missionary interpreting my sermons into Spanish. One night a Mexican woman came forward to receive the Holy Spirit after I had preached. The power of God fell on her and she began to speak in the most perfect English I had ever heard. I could understand everything she said. She had never been to school a day in her life, and her native tongue was Spanish.

"Hearing her speak in my language

— English — a language she had never learned, was one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever had. It really did something for me. I never have been the same since."

Another instance in which tongues was understood by a listener but not by the speaker involved a woman missionary to India.

While home on furlough, she attended a service at a Bible institute. One of the students gave a message in tongues, but no interpretation came. While everyone waited and wondered why there was no interpretation, the missionary stood and said, "That student was speaking one of the dialects of India. I understood every word that was said. The message was for me, and that is the reason no interpretation was given. Through this message God spoke to me, telling me He wanted me to go back to India and telling me what He wanted me to do there."

Tongues — The Initial Evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Speaking in tongues always is manifested when people are baptized in the Holy Spirit: *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4).

I do not argue, however, with those who claim to have the Holy Spirit even though they never have spoken in tongues. After all, the Holy Spirit does a work of regeneration when a person is born again, and the Bible tells us that *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* (Rom. 8:16).

Many years ago, as a young pastor hungry for the deeper things of God, I came to the conclusion while reading the New Testament that if I received the same Holy Spirit that the disciples did on the Day of Pentecost, I wanted the same accompanying sign. And if I didn't have the same sign — speaking in tongues — I had no scriptural evidence that I was filled with the same Holy Spirit they were filled with.

Thank God, I did receive that same Holy Spirit and did speak with tongues as the Spirit gave utterance.

Smith Wigglesworth once argued that he already was filled and baptized with the Holy Spirit, even though at that time he had not spoken in other tongues.

When he heard that some people in an Episcopal (Anglican) church were speaking in tongues, he went to see about it. He found that the pastor, his wife, and many of their members had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

They asked Wigglesworth, "Do you have the Holy Ghost?"

Wigglesworth replied that he did.

"Well, have you spoken with tongues?" they asked.

"No, but I'm just as much filled with the Holy Ghost as you are!" he replied.

After a while, however, Wigglesworth began to see the necessity of speaking in tongues. He went to the Episcopal rectory to ask the pastor to pray for him, but he wasn't home.

The pastor's wife, however, said, "I'll pray for you."

Wigglesworth said, "Lay your hands on my head and pray that I'll get the tongues."

"You don't want the tongues," she said. "You want the Holy Ghost. The tongues will take care of themselves."

Wigglesworth argued, "But I already have the Holy Spirit!"

"Never mind, just kneel down there," the pastor's wife said. She was tired of arguing with him.

Wigglesworth knelt, and as hands were laid upon him, the power of God came over him and he began to speak in other tongues. He later said, "The Holy Ghost settled all my arguments for me. I had been arguing and discussing the subject with them every day that I had the Holy Ghost just as much as they did. In a moment's time I saw that I really never had been filled with the Holy Ghost. I had had some wonderful experiences as a minister as God blessed me and anointed me to preach, and many had been saved and even healed, but I never had been filled with the Holy Ghost until then.

"When you get an experience inside the Word of God, you have an experience outside the realm of argument. Before, I only had an argument, but now I have an experience with God."

There are different purposes for ministering in tongues in a public assembly and speaking with tongues in your prayer life as a Spirit-baptized individual. However, the *essence* of tongues is the same, and the *source* of the tongues — the Holy Spirit — is the same in both cases.

Tongues in the Believer's Prayer Life

The Spirit-baptized believer does not have to stop speaking in tongues after his initial experience. He can continue to use tongues in his private prayer and worship to God even though he may not be used to minister in tongues in public.

The late Howard Carter, who founded the oldest Pentecostal Bible school in the world in England, said, "We must not forget that the speaking with other tongues is not only an initial evidence or sign of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, but it is a continual experience for the rest of one's life to assist in the worship of God. Speaking with tongues is a flowing stream that should never die out, but will enrich the life spiritually."

Sometimes we become satisfied and we feel we have "arrived" spiritually, so to speak, because we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and have spoken in tongues for a while.

A pastor once told me about a young man in his church who had been seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He attended the church's revival services every night, and finally one night he received. After that he stopped attending the services. When the pastor asked him about it, he said, "Why, I finally got through!" But we don't ever get through. That experience is just the beginning.

EPHESIANS 5:18,19

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Paul wrote these verses to the born-again, Spirit-filled believers in the Church at Ephesus. He told them to "*be filled with the Spirit.*" He told them to be drunk on the Spirit, not on wine. The Greek says, "be being filled"; in other words, maintain a constant experience. Keep drinking of the Spirit.

Then Paul gave the Ephesians the characteristic of the Spirit-filled life:

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart

to the Lord."

A psalm is a spiritual poem or an ode. It may or may not rhyme, but there is an element of poetry about it. It is given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the spur of the moment. It can come by tongues and interpretation or by prophecy.

JOHN 7:37-39

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Water is a type of the Holy Spirit. Jesus stood at the last day of the feast and told the people to drink of the Spirit. He was encouraging us to stay filled with the Spirit. By doing so, we can overcome the devil and the sins of this world, and we can live a life that is pleasing to Christ.

"... walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Memory Text:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 10

Prayer on a New Dimension

Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 14:2,4,18

Central Truth: As we pray in the Spirit, our spirit is not bound by human limitations.

Some people ask, "What is the use of speaking with tongues?" There also are those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit and have spoken in tongues but see no reason to continue to speak in tongues in their daily prayer life.

Evidently God thought that speaking in tongues is very important, because He inspired the Apostle Paul to devote an entire chapter in the Bible — First Corinthians 14 — to this subject.

Although all will agree on the utmost importance of prayer, where in the Bible can we find an entire chapter on prayer? The paying of tithes and offerings is another important subject; we could not carry on the work of God without money. But where in the Word of God do we see an entire chapter given to the subject? Water baptism also is important. But again we do not find an entire chapter devoted to the subject.

What I am saying is that God does not put unnecessary things in His Word. He has not filled the Bible with unimportant subjects. Therefore, the teachings on the subject of speaking in tongues are vital and necessary to every successful Christian.

Speaking Secrets to God

1 CORINTHIANS 14:2,4,18

2 For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself_

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.

In verse two, when Paul said, "*For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God,*" he was not referring to ministering in tongues in a public assembly; he was talking about a Spirit-filled believer talking in tongues in his private prayer life. (This also includes praying in tongues during prayer services at the altar in church, because we go there to talk to God.)

Paul continued, "... *howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.*" Mof-fatt's translation of this verse says, "... he is talking of divine secrets in the Spirit." God has divised a way whereby we may speak to Him super-naturally! In the Spirit, we speak divine secrets to God!

While I was holding a meeting in Mesa, Arizona, the pastor told me the story of a young Jewish boy. He didn't have too many friends, so one of the boys in the church befriended him and invited him to go to church with him.

At first the Jewish boy refused, saying that he didn't believe in Christ. However, he began thinking that maybe he shouldn't be so obstinate, because this Christian boy was the only one who had been kind to him. So he agreed to

go with him.

During the service, a woman stood and gave a message in tongues. No interpretation was given. The pastor told me, "I waited for a few minutes, but finally when there was no interpretation to the message in tongues, we went on with the service. As I was shaking hands with the people at the conclusion of the service, the Jewish boy asked me, 'Who was that lady who was talking to me?'"

"At first I didn't understand what he meant. He went on to explain, 'That lady who got up in the service and talked to me spoke my language [Hebrew] and even called my name. She told me what I had been thinking. She told me that Christ was the Messiah and that I should believe on Him.'

"He seemed to resent her talking directly to him in front of the crowd. I said to him, 'That dear lady is a widow who has only about a fifth grade education. She takes in washings for a living. She speaks no language but English.'

"Then I called the woman over and introduced her to him so he could see for himself that she was a very uneducated woman.

"The following Sunday night the Jewish boy was back in our services again, and that night he gave his heart to Christ."

This young Jewish boy received Christ as his Messiah and Savior as a result of a humble widow who yielded to the Spirit's operation through her to speak to a lost boy.

Spiritual Edification

First Corinthians 14:4 says, *"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself..."* This means that he builds himself up spiritually. Jude

20 says, *"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."*

This does not say that praying in the Holy Spirit will give you faith; it says it builds you up "on your most holy faith." It is a means of spiritual edification.

While I was a young pastor of a community church out in the country, I stayed with one of the couples in the church. The wife was desperately ill with an ulcerated stomach and could eat nothing but baby food and a few raw eggs mixed in milk. She even had trouble keeping that on her stomach.

Then she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I was not present, but she told me about her experience of being filled with the Spirit and speaking in other tongues.

No one laid hands on her to pray for her healing, but from the moment she received the Holy Spirit, she was instantly healed and could eat anything she wanted.

Surely no one could find fault with an experience that can bring both healing and blessing. This woman was a believer, a wonderful child of God, a dedicated Christian. By praying in tongues, she built herself up on her most holy faith, and her faith began to operate.

I have seen this happen many times. I have seen people with incurable conditions receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speak with tongues, and become healed instantly. We had prayed for some of these same people with the laying on of hands before, but they had failed to receive their healing.

We know that speaking with tongues is a real spiritual boost to a person. It edifies him — it builds him up.

New Dimensions in Praise

Speaking with tongues is a way we can magnify God. We read in Acts 10:46 concerning Cornelius and his household, "*For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God....*"

I ministered for several years before receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. During those years, I had some wonderful times in prayer, but often I went away from my place of prayer disappointed, even though I was blessed. I felt as if *something were missing*.

I would try to tell God how much I loved Him, using all the descriptive adjectives at my disposal. But I would exhaust my vocabulary. In my spirit I felt I had not said what I wanted to say. This was because my spirit wanted to pray apart from my understanding: "*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful*" (1 Cor. 14:14).

All this changed after I received the Holy Spirit and prayed in tongues. I can now communicate with God on a new dimension. My spirit is no longer bound by earthly vocabularies; it can soar beyond the limitations of human speech. My spirit is enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit to say what it wants to say.

I cannot begin to estimate the worth of praying in the Spirit in my life. For many years, I traveled on the evangelistic field, having to spend much time away from my family. Again and again the Holy Spirit alerted me to needs in my family. I would be awakened in the night by the Spirit's urging me to pray concerning a problem that had arisen at home. I immediately would go to prayer, saying, "I don't know what is wrong — I don't know the source of the trouble — but You know everything."

I would ask the Holy Spirit within me, who is my Helper, to help me pray about this situation, whatever it might be, in the way it should be prayed for. Then I began praying in tongues.

I have prayed as much as six hours in tongues. Often the Lord let me know what I was praying about and what the answer to it was. Whether or not He did, I knew my praying was right, and in a few days I would see how it worked out.

Praying in the Spirit has been such a blessing to my life that I want to encourage Christians everywhere to make it a part of their prayer life, too. I want you to know the joy of fellowshiping with the Lord in the Holy Spirit. I want you to allow the Spirit to help you with your praying. I want to invite you to come on in and communicate with God supernaturally.

God wants to **do so much more for** you. He wants to communicate **with** you in a better way.

Memory Text:

"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth ..." (1 Cor. 14:14).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...*" (James 1:22).

Lesson 11

The Prayers of Petition and Consecration

Bible Texts: Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; Luke 22:42

Central Truth: God is concerned about everything that touches us, and He has made a provision to meet our needs through prayer.

In the *King James Version*, Ephesians 6:18 reads, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...*" Moffatt's translation reads, "Praying.... with all manner of prayer." Yet another translation says, "Praying with all kinds of prayer...."

In today's lesson we will look at some of the different kinds of prayer in the New Testament.

Just as numerous games are classified as "sports," different kinds of prayer often are lumped together under the general category of "prayer."

We need to realize that just as different rules govern each game, different principles, rules, or spiritual laws also govern different kinds of prayer. In sports, the rules that apply to baseball do not apply to football.

A visitor from Europe was taken by his host to see an American baseball game in New York City. He didn't know much about the game, because it is not played in his country, and he had to ask a number of questions because he didn't understand the terminology. He was accustomed to sports that were quite different and he knew the same rules didn't apply in all cases.

Likewise, spiritually, the principles that apply to one kind of prayer may not apply to another, and you can become terribly confused if you try to apply the wrong rule to a certain kind of prayer.

The first kind of prayer we will study in this lesson is the prayer of petition.

The Prayer of Petition

MATTHEW 21:22

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

MARK 11:24

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

By far the most frequent prayer of Christians is the prayer of petition. We always are petitioning or asking God to do something for us. This is scriptural, of course, because He told us in Matthew 21:22, "... *ask in prayer, believing.*"

The prayer of petition must be a prayer of faith. It primarily concerns an individual's desires, needs, and problems. It is you praying for yourself, not someone else praying for you or agreeing with you in prayer.

When you pray the prayer of petition, believe that you receive. If you will do that, you will have what you ask for. God is concerned about our needs and He wants to meet them for us.

Notice that in the Old Testament, God promised His people more than spiritual blessings; He promised them that

they would prosper financially and materially. He told them He would take sickness away from their midst, and He would give them long life: "... *the number of thy days I will fulfil*" (Exod. 23:26). God also told them that if they would keep His commandments, they would eat the good of the land (Isa. 1:19).

God is just as interested in His people today as He was then. He is concerned about everything that touches our lives. He promised us in Third John 2, "*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*"

Jesus said, "*If ye 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?*" (Matt. 7:11). We must realize that it is God's will that our needs — spiritual, physical, and material — be met.

Some people think they should conclude every prayer with the words "If it be thy will." They claim this is the way Jesus prayed. However, Jesus prayed this way on only *one* occasion, when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

By contrast, when He stood at Lazarus' tomb, He didn't say, "If it be thy will." Instead, He said, "I thank You because You hear me always" (John 11:41-43). Then He *commanded* Lazarus to come forth.

The prayer to raise Lazarus was a prayer to change something. Anytime we pray to change something, we do not need to put an "if" in our prayer. If we do, we are using the wrong rule, and the prayer won't work. Instead, we need to claim God's promise for our petition and *believe* that we receive it.

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane — the prayer in which He put an "if" — was a prayer of consecration.

The Prayer of Consecration

LUKE 22:42

42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ prayed the prayer of submission, consecration, and dedication: "... *if thou be willing... nevertheless not my will...*" He wanted to do what the Father wanted Him to do.

It was not a prayer of petition. It was not a prayer to get something or to change something. It was a prayer of consecration.

When we consecrate our lives for God's use, to go anywhere and do anything He wants us to do, we pray this kind of prayer. In a prayer of consecration and dedication we pray, "If it be thy will."

When it comes to changing things or getting something from God, however, we do not pray, "If it be thy will," because we already have God's Word concerning it. *We know* it is His will that our needs be met.

Memory "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*" (Eph. 6:18).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *-But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 12

The Prayer of Worship (Part 1)

Bible Text: Acts 13:1-4

Central Truth: As yielded hearts pour out praises to God, the Holy Spirit will manifest Himself in their midst.

As we noted in the last lesson, most of our prayers are the petition type of prayer.

Too many of us are like the little boy who prayed, "Lord, my name is Jimmy, and I'll take all You'll gimme!" This seems to be the only kind of prayer we know anything about. And if it is the only type of prayer we are praying, I wonder if the Lord sometimes doesn't get a bit tired of hearing just "give me" prayers.

We need to take time to wait on God and to minister to Him — time when we are not asking Him for anything — time when we are not petitioning Him.

Not only do we need to minister to the Lord in our individual prayer lives, but we also need to do it as a group. We read of a group in the New Testament who held such a service:

ACTS 13:1-4

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 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.

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

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Today when Christians gather for a church service, we usually minister to one another. Our services are designed that way. Few of our songs minister to the Lord; we minister to one another in song. Even when we sing special solo numbers, we are not ministering to the Lord; we are ministering to one another.

Our prayers are primarily petitions. We petition the Lord to move in our midst, to manifest Himself among us, and to meet our individual needs.

When the minister stands to speak, he doesn't minister to the Lord; he ministers to the congregation. When the service is over, if we do have a time of waiting on God in prayer, this usually consists of petitioning prayer again.

Thus, we don't go to church necessarily to minister to the Lord, but to pray and seek God on our own behalf.

The Christians we just read about in Acts 13, however, came together and "... ministered to the Lord, and fasted." More than one person was involved in this account, because it says, "*As THEY ministered to the Lord, and fasted....*" This is the true prayer of worship.

God's Desire for Man's Praise

God made man so He would have someone to have fellowship with. He made man for His own pleasure. It is

true that God is concerned about us and wants to meet our every need, but even more than that, He wants our love, worship, and fellowship.

We are born of God. He is our Father. No earthly parent ever enjoyed the fellowship of his children more than God enjoys the fellowship of His sons and daughters.

In one revival meeting we held I decided to do something different. After about six weeks of meetings, I announced to the congregation one night, "Let's have some different kinds of services. For three nights out of these remaining two weeks, I want us to come together to minister to the Lord."

I explained, "I may read from the Word a little and make a few comments, but I am not going to do any preaching. We are not going to petition God to do anything. We are coming as a group to wait on the Lord — to minister to Him and to worship Him. If you don't want to pray this **way, do not come on these particular** nights."

I added, "I don't want us to come and wait on Him for just ten minutes.

I want us to come with the thought in mind that we will wait at least an hour in prayer, and perhaps longer. We will minister to the Lord, praise Him, tell Him how much we love Him, and thank Him for His goodness and mercy."

One might have expected the crowds to have fallen off on those nights, but they didn't. Just as many people came to praise and worship the Lord as came on the other nights. I found that the people wanted to wait on God. And in that kind of atmosphere, God ministered to us in unusual ways. I am convinced that we miss out on many blessings because we don't take time to get into the right attitude of worship and to minister to the Lord.

The Power of Praise

Let me call your attention to the fact that this is the kind of atmosphere God can move in. We read in Acts 13:2, "*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, THE HOLY GHOST SAID....*" With hearts full of love and praise, yielded to the Lord, the Holy Spirit can manifest Himself and make known God's will and leading for His children's lives.

A minister told me of an experience he once had which illustrates this power of praise. Early in his ministry, while he was still a young evangelist, he was staying at a pastor's home during one of his revival meetings.

During the night a call came for the pastor to go pray for a baby who was having convulsions. The pastor had been called out of town to preach a funeral, but the pastor's wife asked this young evangelist to go with her and a few other faithful Christians to pray for the child.

Relating the experience to me, he said, "We rebuked the devil, prayed at the top of our voices, and went through all the motions we sometimes feel are necessary to get God to hear our prayers. After about forty minutes of such rigorous praying, the child was no better, but continued having convulsions.

"I had done about all I knew to do — I'd done everything I'd ever seen anybody else do — but nothing happened. Then the group gradually became quiet and the pastor's wife began to say softly, 'Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,' and praises began rolling from her lips. She continued in this spirit of praise for about ten minutes. Finally, one by one, all of us picked it up until we were all praising God. In the midst of that atmosphere, the child's

convulsions ceased and he fell asleep.

"We stood around rejoicing, but while we were talking, the child awakened and went back into convulsions. We became alarmed and started to pray and rebuke the devil. We anointed the child with oil and laid hands on him. We went through all the usual maneuvers again, but nothing seemed to help.

"Then when we settled down again, the pastor's wife began to praise the Lord, ministering to the Lord, and telling Him how much she loved Him. We all joined in, and soon the child's convulsions stopped and he went to sleep, permanently healed. That night I witnessed the power of praise."

This was an instance when the prayer of worship worked when nothing else would. As these believers, like those in the Early Church, "ministered to the Lord," the Holy Spirit moved and manifested the mighty power of God.

Memory Text:

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." (Luke 24:52,53).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..." (James 1:22).

Lesson 13

The Prayer of Worship (Part 2)

Bible Texts: Acts 16:22-25; 2 Chronicles 20:15,17-19,21,22; Luke 24:50-53

Central Truth: Praise was a characteristic of the Early Church.

In the sixteenth chapter of Acts we have the story of Paul and Silas in Philippi. We read of their arrest, how they were beaten with many stripes, and how they were cast into prison.

ACTS 16:22-25

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded them to beat them.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

A Song at Midnight

I want to call special attention to verse 25: "... *Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God...* "What did they have to be so happy about that they felt like singing? Surely nothing was going right for them.

They had been preaching the Good News of the Gospel and what did they get for it? They were brought before the rulers, charged and beaten, and then cast into prison with their feet placed in stocks.

Their backs were sore and bleeding. Every part of their bodies ached. But did they sit there moaning and complaining, crying, "Why did this have to happen to me?" No. The Bible says they "*sang praises unto God.* "

If they had been like some of us today, the Scripture might have read, "And at midnight Paul and Silas griped and complained, whined and whimpered, wondering why God had allowed this to come upon them." Their conversation might have followed this line:

"Paul, you still there?"

"Sure, I'm still here. Where else could I be?"

"I tell you, my poor back is really hurting me. I just don't understand why God ever sent this on us. He knows that I've tried to serve Him and have done my best."

That kind of attitude would have just gotten them further into trouble instead of out of it!

We can learn something here from Paul and Silas. After all, they were in trouble. They were in pain. They were in jail. All in all, it was a bleak situation. One could hardly blame them for being discouraged. However, as someone has said, Paul and Silas got in jail, but they didn't let the jail get in them.

This is the reason many people are defeated. Trouble comes to everyone, but our attitude toward it is what

makes the difference between victory and defeat. How we look at the situation makes the difference in whether we get out at all.

In the example of Paul and Silas we can find help for our midnight hour — our time of testing — when the storms of life threaten to sweep us overboard.

Paul and Silas weren't in Philippi on a vacation. They were there to do the Lord's work. They weren't out of the will of God.

The first thing that some people think when adversity strikes is that they surely must be out of the Lord's will or such a thing wouldn't have happened. But Paul and Silas were *right in the middle* of God's will.

If we were meant to measure if we are in God's will by whether or not everything runs smoothly, with no hard places and no sacrifices, then Paul never got in the will of God in his entire ministry — he missed it from beginning to end!

Let us notice something else in verse 25: "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: AND THE PRISONERS HEARD THEM.*" They weren't quiet about it. They were praising God out loud right there in jail.

Not only did the prisoners hear them, but God heard them! "*And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed*" (v. 26).

Deliverance came while they were praising God.

A Song in Battle

Let us look at an Old Testament counterpart to this story. During the reign of King Jehoshaphat, the Ammonites and Moabites came against the Israelites. Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord in prayer and He answered him.

2 CHRONICLES 20:15,17-19,21,22 15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's...

17 Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you.

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord.

19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high_

21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever.

22 And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

Jehoshaphat knew his army was no match for those of the countries banded against him, but he knew his God

was more than a match for them. He called a prayer meeting and the people fasted and prayed. The Spirit of God moved upon a young man in the congregation and he stood and prophesied. The Lord told them not to fear, for the battle was the Lord's.

The next morning when they went out against the enemy's powerful armies, they did not go against them with swords and spears but with songs of praise (v. 21). They marched and chanted, *"Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever."* In their hour of trial, instead of cowering in fear, the children of Israel sang praises to God just as Paul and Silas did in jail.

And what was the outcome of this battle? Look at verse 22: *"And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."* When they began to sing praises to God, He did something. They witnessed a manifestation of God's power.

Praise, a Characteristic of the Early Church

A spirit of praise and rejoicing was a characteristic of the Early Church.

LUKE 24:50-53

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

After the disciples watched Jesus return to heaven, they went back to Jerusalem with hearts filled with praise and thanksgiving to God.

Then we read about them in Acts 2:46,47: *"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. "*

Notice the expression, *"They, continuing DAILY with one accord... eat their meat with gladness ... praising God..."* With these early Christians, this wasn't a spasmodic occurrence — something that happened once in a great while. The Bible uses the words "continually" and "daily."

Too many Christians today get "prayed through" about every six months and have a time of praising and blessing God. If we were writing about their experience, we would have to use the words "occasionally" or perhaps even "semi-annually." But the Bible records that the early Christians *"were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. "*

If we want to see the same manifestation of *power* the Early Church had, we are going to have to see the same manifestations of *praise* they had.

Memory Text:

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen" (Luke 24:52,53).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 14

United Prayer

Bible Text: Acts 4:23-31 **Central Truth:** There is power in united prayer.

In the third chapter of Acts we read that as Peter and John entered the Temple through the Gate Beautiful, they saw a man begging alms.

Peter told the man to look at them. Expecting to receive a coin, he looked, and Peter told him, "*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give*

I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk " (Acts 3:6). Peter took the man by the hand, lifted him up, and the man started walking. He entered the Temple praising God.

This raised a stir among the people, and Peter and John were taken before the priests and elders. They were cast into prison, and the next day were taken before the rulers. Unable to deny that a true miracle had taken place, the priests were forced to let them go. However, they commanded them not to preach or teach in the Name of Jesus anymore. Then we read:

ACTS 4:23-30

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gen tiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threaten-ings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

From Prison to Prayer Group

Notice the first thing Peter and John did when they were released from the prison: "*And being let go, they went to their own company...*" A good place to be when in trouble is with your "own company" — people of like faith! It

is good to be around people who know how to pray.

I often have thought that if this group had been like some Christians today, the first thing they would have done would have been to organize a committee to go talk to those leaders and make a deal whereby everyone could get along. After all, these leaders were religious men, too. They believed in God and prayer. The only difference was that they didn't accept Jesus as being the Messiah, the Son of God.

However, the Bible does not say they appointed a committee for compromise. It says, "... *they lifted up their voice to God with one accord.*" They knew the value of united prayer.

I was raised in a Southern Baptist church, and in my youth I never heard people praying aloud in united prayer. In our church someone usually led in prayer. We never lifted our voices as a group in prayer.

When I started attending some Full Gospel services, their praying all at once disturbed me. I would go down to the altar to pray with them, but I prayed quietly. It bothered me because they prayed aloud. Their services stimulated my faith, but when I prayed at the altar, I would get at the far end, away from them, so I wouldn't be close to their noise.

One time I ventured to say something about it. I told them that God wasn't hard of hearing. They responded, "He isn't nervous, either."

I decided to search my Bible for the scriptural answer to this question. I wanted to see how the Early Church had prayed. (We claim to be preaching the same New Birth they preached, so we might as well be following them in prayer.)

As I read through the Book of Acts, I underlined in red pencil every verse where it said the people prayed in a group. I couldn't find one place where they called on one person to lead in prayer! Nor did they have any kind of "sentence prayers." The Bible said they lifted their voices. They all prayed at once, and they all prayed out loud.

After reading this, the next time I went to a Full Gospel service I got right in the middle of where they were praying. My mind had been renewed with the Word, and I got a blessing I never had received when praying alone quietly. I saw for the first time the blessing of united prayer.

Results of United Prayer

What was the result of the united prayer of the believers in this fourth chapter of Acts? Was their united prayer answered?

Let's look at verse 31:

ACTS 4:31

31 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 spake the word of God with boldness.

In verse 29 we read that they had prayed, "*And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.*"

They had not asked the Lord to remove the persecution or to strike down their enemies. They had not asked the Lord to make their way easy. Instead they had prayed that in the midst of persecution they might preach the Word

with boldness. And the Lord had answered their prayer.

Verse 31 says that "... *the place was shaken where they were assembled together...*" Do you know of any group of people who are praying and shaking anything today? If Christians today would get together and pray "with one accord," they would shake the world for Jesus. There is power in united prayer!

Notice, too, that their prayer was for something *specific*. They were definite in their praying. They were not praying some generalized prayer; they were praying about the need that faced them. And they all prayed at once. As they lifted their voices to God in fervent prayer, "*the place was shaken.*"

In our last lesson we studied about a similar incident. Paul and Silas had been thrown in jail in Philippi for preaching the Gospel.

Instead of complaining to the Lord about what had happened to them, they lifted their voices to the Lord in songs of praise. "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them*" (Acts 16:25). They, too, were praying aloud, for "*the prisoners heard them.*" They weren't off in some corner mumbling quiet, forlorn pleas to God. The prisoners heard them as they sang praises unto God.

Some people say they want to pray quietly because the Lord knows they have a song in their heart. But if it is there, it is going to come out, "...*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*" (Matt. 12:34).

Did God answer the united prayer of Paul and Silas? Acts 16:26 says, "*And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's bands were loosed.*" Again the place was shaken as a result of united prayer!

When Paul and Silas joined forces in prayer and praise to God, the very foundations of the prison were shaken! The stocks came off their feet, and they were free.

The jailer, awakened by the earthquake, saw the prison doors standing open and assumed the prisoners had fled. He knew he would be held responsible for their escape, and he became so frightened that he was going to kill himself. Just then Paul cried out, "... *Do thyself no harm: for we are all here*" (v. 28).

The jailer knew he had witnessed the supernatural that night. He knew Paul and Silas were no ordinary men, and he "... *came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*" (vv. 29-31). As a result of Paul and Silas' united prayer that night, the jailer and his entire family accepted Christ as Savior and all were baptized.

There is supernatural power in united prayer!

Memory Text:

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ..." (Acts 1:14).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...*" (James 1:22).

Lesson 15

The Prayer of Commitment

Bible Texts: Matthew 6:25-27; Philippians 4:6

Central Truth: When the winds of adversity blow, we can do exactly as the Word of God says. We do not have to fret or worry; we can cast our burdens on the Lord.

Do you sometimes pray about a problem with seemingly no results? Unanswered prayers usually are due to our not praying in line with the Word of God.

Often there are times when we need to pray *the prayer of commitment*. Peter talked about this kind of prayer when he said, "*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). I believe *The Amplified Bible* translation of this verse is most illuminating and enlightening. It says, "Casting the whole of your care — all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all — on Him; for He cares for you affectionately, and cares about you watchfully."

How wonderful that we can cast our cares upon the Lord in prayer!

Pray According to Laws Governing Prayer

If people would just pray this prayer of commitment, it would eliminate some of the things they are praying about!

Some people's prayers are not answered because they are not doing what God said to do about cares, anxieties, worries, and concerns.

Other Christians seem satisfied to think that God knows and understands all about their problems — but they still cling to these cares. Therefore, they don't get their prayers answered. It is not enough to know that God understands and is concerned. We must *do* what He said to do if we want to be delivered from our problems.

Cast all your cares, all your anxieties, all your worries upon Him, for He cares for you. This is the prayer of commitment — the prayer of casting or rolling our cares and burdens upon Him.

A Scripture in the Psalms may help us see more clearly what Peter is talking about here: "*Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass*" (Ps. 37:5). A reference in the *King James Version* says, "Roll thy way upon the Lord."

Commit, cast, roll your burden on the Lord. *He* is not going to take it away from you. Some request, "Pray that the Lord will lighten this load." He's not going to do that. He doesn't want to just *lighten* your load; He wants to *carry* it all. But there is a vital part that we must play in this. It is *the prayer of commitment*.

God does not want His children to worry, to be full of anxiety, or to be burdened down with the cares of life. But there is something you must do.

In imperative sentences, such as those in First Peter 5:7 and Psalm 37:5, the subject of the sentence is

understood to be "you." The Lord said, "You cast all your care upon him." "You commit your way unto the Lord."

We must do our part — we must obey the Lord before He can come to our aid. We must turn loose of our problem before He can take over.

This is a once-and-for-all proposition; it isn't something you do every day. When we really cast our cares upon Him, we don't have them anymore. We are rid of them. They are no longer in our hands, but in His.

There is so much that the Lord would have done for us, but we wouldn't let Him. We may have been honest and sincere in our praying, but we saw no answers to our prayers because we did not come according to His rules, His laws, that govern the operation of prayer. We did not do what He told us to do, and we wondered why He didn't work certain things out for us.

Sometimes we have brought our burden to the altar of prayer. We have prayed and prayed and prayed about it. Then when we got up to leave, we picked up our burden off the altar and took it home with us!

Then there are those who do not really want to get rid of their problems. Oh, they claim — sometimes rather loudly — that they do. But they don't — not really — because if they did, they wouldn't have anything to get people's sympathy with. They wouldn't have anything to complain about. They would almost have to close down conversation!

The Futility of Worry

MATTHEW 6:25-27

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Jesus was simply saying in this passage, "Which of you by worrying and being over-anxious is going to change anything?" We all know that worry is like a rocking chair: It keeps you busy, but it doesn't get you anywhere.

Luke's Gospel records the same teaching and says, "*And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life ...*" (Luke 12:22). Another translation of this verse reads, "Be not anxious about tomorrow."

Of course, we have to plan and prepare for tomorrow. We have to make certain provisions for the future. But what the Lord was teaching us here is that He doesn't want us to be filled with anxiety and worry about tomorrow. We can say with the Gospel songwriter, "I don't know about tomorrow, but I know Who holds my hand." That's all that is important.

Worry Nullifies Prayer

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God.

The Amplified translation of this verse will help us. It says, "Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything." Again, "you" is the understood subject of the sentence. When the Lord said, "Be careful (anxious) for nothing," He was saying, "[You] be careful for nothing...." In other words, "Don't *you* fret or have any anxiety about anything."

As long as you fret and have anxiety concerning the thing you are praying about, you are nullifying the effects of your praying. You haven't cast it on the Lord; you still have it. If you have it, He doesn't have it. If He has it, you don't have it.

As long as you are still worrying about your problem, lying awake at night, tossing from one side of the bed to the other, trying to figure it out, He doesn't have it. As long as your stomach churns every time you think about it, as long as you can't eat for worrying about it, He doesn't have it. You do. And really, all of your praying about it will not work, because you have not done as He has commanded.

He has promised to bring it to pass, but only after you have committed your "way unto the Lord."

When we cast our cares on the Lord, we no longer have them. To illustrate, if I took the last five dollars out of my billfold and gave it to you, I wouldn't have it any longer; you would. Then if someone came along and asked to borrow a dollar, promising to pay it back the next day, I would have to say, "I don't have a dollar."

I pastored for about twelve years. Occasionally during that time, problems arose, and I would be tempted to worry about them. When I would find myself becoming anxious about something, I would start talking to myself. "Now, Kenneth," I would say, "you know better than this. You are beginning to fret. Don't do it. It's not right."

Many times during the night I would awaken and the devil would bring to my mind a picture of certain conditions which existed in the church. I would be tempted to worry, but instead of worrying, I'd start laughing right out loud and say, "I don't have that problem. Praise the Lord, I'm carefree. I don't have it, devil. You can show me a picture of it if you want, but

I don't have it. The Lord has it."

It's amazing what God can do with your problems when *He* has them! But as long as you hold onto them — as long as you try to figure them out for Him and try to help Him work them out — He doesn't have any of them. You have them all.

When the winds of adversity blow, we can do exactly as the Word of God says. We do not have to fret or worry; we can cast our burdens on the Lord.

If you haven't done it yet, there is no better time than now to turn loose of your problems and sleep peacefully tonight. If the devil tries to bring a picture of them before you, put them out of your mind immediately and say, "No, I don't have that, devil. I don't have a care, I have turned them over to the Lord and He has them."

He'll work on it while you are sleeping. He never slumbers or sleeps (Ps. 121:4). You need sleep, but He doesn't. "... *he giveth his beloved sleep*" (Ps. 127:2). You are His beloved because you are accepted in the Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6).

Therefore, you can sleep peacefully. If we really believe the Bible and practice God's Word, we never should

worry. If we really believe what Jesus said — *"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it"* (John 14:14) — we wouldn't worry even if our house burned down while we were away. We wouldn't worry or fret about it. We would say, "Praise God, we'll get a better one." This is the attitude God wants us to have. Purpose in your heart today to practice God's Word; to practice faith.

Memory Text:

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 16

What Jesus Said About Prayer (Part I)

Bible Text: Matthew 6:5-13

Central Truth: The Lord's Prayer is a pattern in which we see certain principles of prayer.

While Jesus was here on earth, He taught much about prayer. Perhaps the best known of His teachings on prayer is the often-repeated "Lord's Prayer." In this brief prayer, we find a pattern for prayer which Jesus gave to His disciples. Just preceding this prayer, as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, are a few verses which also are very enlightening on this subject. They actually are a prelude to the prayer.

MATTHEW 6:5-13

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt 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.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Private Prayer

One of the first things Jesus said here was, *"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are..."* Surely none of us wants to be hypocritical, especially in our praying. Then He described the hypocrite: *"... they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."*

This does not mean, however, that all of our praying should be private. As we looked at the Early Church in prayer in Lesson 14, we saw them praying together as a group throughout the Book of Acts.

What Jesus was referring to here was the danger of praying only to be seen of men. There are those who pray in public to appear really spiritual; to make people think they are real prayer warriors. Those who pray only for the applause of men have their reward, and that is all it is — the fleeting applause of men.

Jesus told His disciples to *"enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."* He was stressing the importance of a private prayer life.

Public prayer is necessary and vital in the life of the Church. Praying together as a family is necessary and vital to the spiritual strength of the home. But private prayer is essential to the spiritual life of the individual. It is when we grow in spiritual stature. It should not be just at those crisis times when we are driven to our knees. We should be spiritually prepared for such times through a daily prayer time which we set aside for fellowship with God.

Repetitious Prayer

Jesus went on to say, *"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"* (v. 7).

Thus, we have two admonitions from the Lord: (1) don't be like the hypocrites in our praying, and (2) don't be like the heathen in our praying.

Jesus said the heathen think they will be heard by their gods because of their repetitious praying. Sad to say, some of this heathen thinking has sifted down into Christian thinking! Many have the idea that God will hear them because of their much speaking—their lengthy and repeated calling on God. They repeat the same prayer—they say the same phrases and words—over and over again, thinking they will be heard because of that. But this is exactly what Jesus condemned when He said, *"... use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do..."*

Then He said, *"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."* He knows before you ask, yet He wants you to ask, as we shall see in the next chapter of Matthew, where He said, *"Ask, and it shall be given you ..."* (Matt. 7:7).

God does not hear you simply because you repeat the same prayer over and over. Some seem to have the idea that if they could just pray long and loudly enough, eventually they could talk God into hearing them. But God is not going to hear you because you prayed loudly or quietly. As we have seen in previous lessons, *it is the prayer of faith that God hears*. He hears you because you believe Him when you pray, and you come according to His Word.

Basic Principles of Prayer

In the next few verses in Matthew, Jesus taught His disciples some basic elements of prayer. Commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, it is more accurately the Disciples' Prayer, or the model for prayer that He gave to them while He walked with them on the earth.

Dispensationally speaking, this is not the Church praying, for the disciples did not ask anything in the Name of Jesus. When the Church prays, she prays in the Name of Jesus. (However, we can learn many truths concerning prayer here.)

Jesus was not telling the disciples to pray this prayer word for word. He was giving them some principles in connection with prayer that will work for the Church today.

The Principle of Praise

The prayer begins with the words, *"Our Father which art in heaven...."* The unsaved can pray this prayer just as

they can recite a poem or sing a song. But to really pray this prayer from the heart — to really have fellowship with God — one must actually be a child of God. Otherwise, he cannot truly say, "Our Father..."

We hear much teaching these days about "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." Some would try to make us believe we all are children of God; that He is the Father of all of us. While it's true that He's the Creator of all, and we all are fellow creatures, He *isn't* the Father of all of us. He is only the Father of those who have been *born again*; those in His family.

During Jesus' earthly ministry He once said to a group of Pharisees, who were very religious people, "*Ye are of your father the devil*" (John 8:44). The Pharisees were good people as far as works were concerned. Yet Jesus said, "*Ye are of your father the devil*"!

Jesus is saying here that the right approach to God is to come to Him because He is our Father, and to come in praise and in worship: "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name ...*" (v. 9). Come into His presence first with praise and worship because He is our Father.

The Principle of Putting God First

The next verse in this pattern prayer says, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (v. 10). The principle involved here is putting the kingdom of God first.

Later on in this same chapter, Jesus repeated this principle: "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (v. 33). If we put God first, we need have no worry about material needs, for "*all these things shall be added unto you.*"

We do not have to go through life with the soles of our shoes worn thin, with unpaid bills past due, and driving an old Model T Ford. If God is first in our lives, "all these things shall be added."

Have you ever thought how all-inclusive this prayer is? Jesus prayed, "*Thy kingdom come. THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.*" Do you suppose there are any sick people in heaven? No. Nor is it God's will that there should be any sick people on earth.

God wants to shower our lives with blessings. He wants our lives here on earth to be lived in the center of His will, as it is in heaven. He wants us to enjoy abundant living. Jesus said, "...

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The Principle of Daily Prayer

In the next verse of this prayer, Jesus taught us the importance of daily prayer, of asking God for our **every need**: "*Give us this day our DAILY bread*" (Matt. 6:11). Even though God knows our every need, He still wants us to ask Him!

The Principle of Forgiveness

Jesus taught much about forgiveness during His stay here on earth, and He included forgiveness as one of the essential elements of prayer: "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (v. 12). In verses 14 and 15 He also **said**, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not*

men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Prayer will not work in an unforgiving heart. We simply cannot hold a grudge against anyone and maintain a prayer life that gets results!

There are many instances where mental confusion and emotional frustration can be attributed to harboring bitterness against others. Doctors have learned that people who hold resentment in their hearts are more susceptible to certain types of diseases. When they can get such patients to rid themselves of their resentment, although they have not responded at all to medical treatment, in most cases their trouble clears up. More and more, medical science is discovering how closely our inner feelings are related to our physical health.

I have heard Christians who were not walking in close fellowship with the Lord tell me how badly they had been treated by a certain person. They would say, "Oh, yes, I have *forgiven* him all right, but I never will *forget* what he did to me!" They really hadn't forgiven that person at all! Resentment still lurked in the hidden corners of their heart.

The Principle of Deliverance from Temptation

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.. ."(v. 13). The word temptation means "test" or "trial." Many tests and trials could be overcome in advance by the child of God who is enjoying the fellowship with the Father that a proper prayer life brings.

Then we come to the conclusion: "... *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen*" (v. 13). The prayer that began with praise also ends with praise.

Memory Text:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 17

What Jesus Said About Prayer (Part 2)

Bible Texts: Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13

Central Truth: God loves us and wants us to have good things, just as we love our children and want them to have good things.

The model prayer Jesus gave to His disciples, commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), begins with the words, "*Our Father which art in heaven....*"

In the next chapter of Matthew, when Jesus was again teaching on prayer, He used another illustration of how the earthly relationship between father and son is like the believer's relationship with the heavenly Father.

MATTHEW 7:7-11

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

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye 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?

Knowing God As Father

Here we can see one reason the Jews could not understand Jesus. If Jesus had come along as the prophets of old, proclaiming judgment against them and presenting a distant, unapproachable God to them, they might have understood Him better. That was the picture of God they were accustomed to.

When God came down and talked to Moses on the mountain, there was fire, thunder, and lightning. Anyone who touched that mountain died instantly. When the presence of God moved into the Holy of Holies, no one dared intrude there for fear of instant death. The Jews knew about a God who was high and holy — a God who dealt an awful judgment — and they feared Him.

Jesus, however, came with a message of love. He introduced God as a Father. He suggested they could approach God as a Father. But the Jews just couldn't comprehend that kind of a God.

We see the same thing today. To many, Christianity is just a religion about a faraway God. They really don't know Him. They never have come to Him through Jesus Christ in order to know Him personally as their Father; so they try to approach Him in the wrong manner.

But thank God, He *is* our Father and we can come to Him because we are His children!

Ask, Seek, Knock ... Believe

Whether or not they use it, most Christians are aware that this verse is in the Bible: *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"* (Matt. 7:7).

Too often, though, we fail to receive what we are asking for; we fail to find what we are seeking; and the door on which we are knocking is not opened. Why? We must be doing something wrong when we don't receive, because the next verse promises, *"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"* (v. 8). What is the reason for our failure?

I once read a book by a missionary who had spent 32 years in the Holy Land. This was around the turn of the century, when customs there were very much like they had been for centuries.

In his book, the missionary commented on this passage of Scripture in Matthew 7. He said, "I thought, as most Christians do, that when Jesus said, *'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,'* He meant if you asked and didn't receive an immediate answer to keep on asking. However, after living in the Holy Land for many years and becoming familiar with the thinking of the Eastern mind, I learned that this was not what Jesus meant at all.

"In those days, if someone came to the outer gate and knocked, seeking entrance, the more wealthy would send their servant to call out and ask the name of the visitor. If it was someone who was known, they could enter immediately. If it was someone unknown, the servant would go to the master of the house and ask if he should let the visitor in. The thought here is that *when you knock, if you are known, you gain immediate entrance. 'To him that knocketh it shall be opened.'*"

If when we ask we do not receive, if when we seek we do not find, if when we knock it is not opened to us, we should ask ourselves if we are known by the Master of the house. If not, we should become acquainted personally and intimately with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We should make Him Lord of our life.

Having done this, the next step is faith, to *"... believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Heb. 11:6). For, as Jesus explained in Matthew 7:11, our heavenly Father is eager to give good gifts unto His children: *"If ye 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?"* (v. 11).

What earthly father wants his children to go through life poor and downtrodden, sick and suffering? On the contrary, most of us labor and sacrifice so our children can have advantages we never had. So if you, being carnal — being human — want good things for your children, *"... HOW MUCH MORE shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"*

Those three words, "how much more," send a thrill through my spirit. If we want happiness for our children, how much more does God want the same for us. If we want good health for our children, how much more does God want good health for us. If we want material blessings for our children, how much more does God want the same for us.

Luke's account of this story gives us a few more details.

LUKE 11:5-13

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto

him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I can not rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

The Prayer of Importunity

In this account, which deals with the prayer of importunity, many people have had the mistaken idea that Jesus was teaching us to keep on asking in order to get results.

In this parable we see a man who had a guest arrive during the night. He didn't have any bread to set before him, so he went to his neighbor's house and asked for a loaf of bread. The neighbor responded, "I'm already in bed; don't bother me." But when the man kept pleading with him, he finally granted his request.

Jesus was illustrating here that although the neighbor would not get out of bed to give the man bread just because he was a friend, he gave it to him because of his importunity. Jesus was saying *how much more* our heavenly Father will hear us and grant our requests.

It is the importunity of faith, not the importunity of unbelief, that gets results. We can keep on begging God — importuning all we want — and we never will get an answer if our importuning prayer is in unbelief.

It is the importunity of faith that works: *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."*

Andrew Murray had real insight into this subject of importunity in prayer. He said it is not good taste to ask the Lord for the same thing over and over again. He said if the thing which you have prayed about hasn't materialized, don't ask again the same way you did in the beginning. That would be a confession that you didn't believe God the first time.

Just remind God of your request. Remind Him of what He promised. Remind Him you are expecting the answer, and let this importunity be an importunity of faith. It will bring results.

Luke's account of the story is more detailed than Matthew's, and in verse 13, Luke added something. Matthew

recorded, "*ye 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?*"

Luke enlarges on this by saying, "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give THE HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?*" (Although Matthew didn't specifically name the Holy Spirit in this verse, we know that the Holy Spirit is a "good thing.")

I am sure the Holy Spirit had a purpose for inspiring Luke and Matthew to record this as they did. The Holy Spirit, as He inspired Matthew, wanted to stress the good things of life. He wanted us to know that God loves us just as we love our children and want them to have good things. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to emphasize the spiritual things God has for us.

By asking, seeking, and knocking in faith, we can enjoy the abundant blessings God has for His children.

Memory Text:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 18

What Jesus Said About Prayer (Part 3)

Bible Texts: Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14,20-24; John 15:7,8 **Central Truth:** Where the Word of God abides, there faith abides.

In Matthew 21 we come to another passage where Jesus taught on prayer. He actually was talking about faith *and* prayer. You can't very well talk about faith without talking about prayer, nor can you talk about prayer without talking about faith. They go hand in hand.

Pray, Believe, Receive

MATTHEW 21:18-22

18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

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

Let's look at this same account in Mark's Gospel. This is the only reference to prayer in the Book of Mark, but the writer devoted a great deal of attention to it. Whereas Matthew told the story in five verses, Mark takes nearly twice as many verses to tell the same story.

MARK 11:12-14,20-24

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it...

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye

shall have them.

In studying the Bible, it is good to compare the different Gospel writers' accounts of the same incidents in Jesus' life. In this way we get different viewpoints. (One writer may give us details that the others left out.)

In Matthew's account of the above story, Jesus said, "*And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*" (v. 22). Mark put it a little differently: "... *What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*" (v. 24). Both writers gave the basic formula for faith: Pray, believe, receive.

Someone has asked, "But what if you didn't receive?"

Then you didn't ask believing, did you? The Scripture says if you pray and believe, you shall receive.

"Yes, but maybe it isn't the will of God," people will reply.

The Scripture didn't say anything about that. We are too quick to use this as an excuse for our unbelief. *Jesus said if you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive!*

"But what if someone asked for ten million oil wells?" someone might ask.

Well, if you have faith for ten million oil wells, you will get them. But I doubt seriously you could believe that. Don't ask me to agree with you in prayer for them, because I don't think I could. However, if you *can* believe that you will receive ten million oil wells, you will get them. Sometimes I have believed for things that seemed almost as impossible and have received them. Jesus said it, and I believe it:

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

The Word of Faith

In John's account of what Jesus said about prayer, not one time does he use the words "faith" or "believe." Let us look at one example:

JOHN 15:7,8

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

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Why was it unnecessary to use the words "faith" or "believe" in this passage of Scripture about prayer? It is because there is no problem with faith if His words abide in you. There is only a lack of faith when the Word *doesn't* abide in you, because if the Word doesn't abide, something else does. If the Word abides in you, faith abides in you: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17).

A person may be giving mental assent to belief in the Word of God. He could stand up, shake his fist, and declare with fervor that he believes in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, that he believes it from cover to cover — from Genesis to Revelation — yet never have the Word abiding in him.

Notice that Jesus didn't say, "//

YE abide in me _____" If He had stopped there, we would automatically have it made as born-again Christians, because with the New Birth we do abide in Christ. But the Scripture goes on to say, "... *and my words abide in you*...."

The Word is called "the word of faith": "*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach*" (Rom. 10:8). If this Word abides in you, it will cause faith to spring up in your heart.

The Light of the Word

That is the reason the Psalmist of old said, "*The entrance of thy words giveth light...*" (Ps. 119:130). When we know the Word, we are not praying in the dark. We have light.

Again the Psalmist said, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Ps. 119:105). We are not walking in the dark. Our pathway is lighted when we have the Word!

If we have a lighted pathway, we can walk in that light. "... *if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...*" (1 John 1:7). This doesn't say a thing about *standing* in the light. It says "walk." God's Word is a light unto the path that we walk.

The Psalmist also prayed: "... *quicken thou me according to thy word*" (Ps. 119:25). Jesus said, "*If my words abide in you....*" He cannot quicken us according to His Word — although He wants to — unless His words abide in us; unless we walk in the light of the Word.

I heard F. F. Bosworth preach when he was 75 years old and still active in the Lord's work. He said, "I always start every morning by saying, 'Lord, quicken thou me according to thy Word.' "

Then he went on to say what it meant to him to be quickened according to God's Word. He told me how he still was in good health at age 75. For all those years he had trusted God and never had any kind of medication.

Bosworth lived to be 81 years old and was busy in the Lord's work up until the end. In January 1958, he knew the time had come for him to die. He knew in his spirit that the Lord was coming for him.

A close friend of his flew to his bedside in Florida. When he arrived, Brother Bosworth was sitting up in bed. He lifted his hand and praised God, saying, "Brother, this is the day

I have waited for all of my life. I am going home."

He had prayed daily, "Lord, quicken thou me according to thy Word," and the Lord quickened him every day until He took him home. Bosworth died without sickness or disease. He just went home to be with the Lord.

God's Word is true whether or not we put it into practice.

Memory Text:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...*" (James 1:22).

Lesson 19

What Jesus Said About Prayer (Part 4)

Bible Texts: John 14:10-14; 16:23,24,7-11

Central Truth: Whatever our need may be, it is our privilege in Christ to demand that this need be met.

Let us look again into the Gospel of John to see what Jesus had to say about prayer.

As strange as it may seem, John did not record anything the other Gospel writers did in regard to prayer. The others did not include what he wrote in their accounts. John said if everything Jesus said and did was written, the world itself could not contain the books. He said he wrote that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Not all the Gospel writers recorded the same thing. Luke recorded part of what Matthew said. Mark recorded only one instance of Jesus' teaching on prayer, as we saw in our last lesson on Mark 11:12-24, the cursing of the fig tree. Matthew covered this in Matthew 21.

Matthew also talked about the prayer of agreement, which none of the other writers mentioned: "*... 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*" (Matt. 18:19). Actually, we have to put all the accounts together to get a clear picture of Jesus' teachings on prayer.

John covers the subject of prayer from an entirely different standpoint. Let us look at two passages of Scripture which seem similar, but really are quite different.

JOHN 14:10,14

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth 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.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Many think this Scripture refers to prayer, but Jesus is not talking about prayer here at all.

Now let us compare two verses in John 16.

JOHN 16:23,24

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus was talking about something entirely different from what He was talking about in chapter 14. In John 16 He said, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, HE will give it you.*" But in

John 14 He says, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do....*" He is talking about two different things.

To Demand As Our Right

Let us examine these Scriptures in the Greek New Testament. The Greek word here translated "ask" means "demand." Or, "*Whatsoever ye shall demand in my name, that will I do.*"

We are not demanding it of God. When we pray, we ask of God in Jesus' Name. But we are demanding this of the devil.

Actually, the Greek is more explicit than the English translation. The Greek reads, "*Whatsoever ye shall demand as your right...*" (not ask as a favor).

Whatever we ask or demand as our right, Jesus said, "I will do it." We have the right to demand that Satan take his hands off our finances if we are having difficulty making ends meet. Whatever our need may be, it is our privilege, our right, in Christ to ask, to demand, that this need be met.

We see an example of this in the Book of Acts. Peter and John saw a crippled man begging alms at the gate called Beautiful. Peter stopped and said, "Look on us." The man looked at them, expecting to receive a coin. Peter said, "*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk*" (Acts 3:6).

Peter demanded in Jesus' Name that the cripple get up and walk. He didn't pray that God would do it. He knew Jesus had said that whatever we demand, or ask, in His name, He would do.

Just before Jesus said, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask [demand] in my name, that will I do,*" He said, "*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also....*" Peter was doing the works Jesus did when he healed the cripple.

Even though we pray for the sick today — and this is certainly scriptural (James 5:14-16) — Jesus never prayed for the sick.

Jesus said, "*...the works that I do shall he do also....*" If we just prayed for the sick and got results, we wouldn't be doing the works Jesus did. *Jesus laid hands on the sick, but He never prayed for them.* He would command the devil to leave, or He would just say, "*Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee*" (Matt. 8:13).

So when Jesus said in John 14:13, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask [demand] in my name, that will I do,*" He was not talking about praying to God the Father; He was talking about doing the same works He did.

Greater Works

Not only did Jesus say that we would do the *same* works that He did; He also said, "*... and GREATER works than these shall he do...*" (John 14:12). Then He went on to tell us *why* we would do greater works: "*... because I go unto my Father.*" The greater works that the Church can do and is doing today are due to the fact that Jesus has gone to the Father.

JOHN 16:7-11

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient [profitable, for your best] for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

What are these greater works? We show men and women how to become born again. "But weren't people saved, or born again, under Jesus' ministry?" someone might ask. They were saved in the same sense that the people in the Old Testament were saved, but they were not "born again." The work of the Holy Spirit is necessary in the New Birth, and while Jesus was on earth the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. This is why Jesus said, "... *It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you*" (John 16:7).

"But didn't Jesus forgive people's sins while He was here on earth?" someone might say. Yes, but there is a difference between having one's sins forgiven and being born again.

After a person is born again, if he sins, he can get forgiveness, but he is not born again a second time. (If that were true, we might be born again thousands of times.) The New Birth is a greater work than a healing or a miracle.

So people were not born again while Jesus was on earth. Second, we never read in the four Gospels, "*And the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved.*" However, we do see this repeatedly in the Book of Acts. This is because there *wasn't* any Church in Jesus' day in the sense that we think of the New Testament Church.

The only Body of Christ that was on earth was His *physical* body. There were those who believed on Him and who had the promise of that which was to come, but their beliefs could only be consummated when the Holy Spirit came to baptize them all into one Body. The Body had to be formed.

Today we are the spiritual Body of Christ. The only Body of Christ in the world today is the Church.

Not only was no one born again or added to the Church under the ministry of Jesus, neither was anyone filled with the Holy Spirit under His ministry. These are "the greater works" that we do because He went to the Father.

Praying in Jesus' Name

Let us compare now what Jesus said in John 16 regarding prayer: "*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing...*" (v. 23). When He said "in that day," He was referring to the day in which we now live — the day of the New Covenant, the day of the New Testament.

One translation of this verse reads, "In that day ye shall not pray to me." He told us not to pray to Him, but to pray to the Father in Jesus' Name. (See Lesson 3.) "... *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* "

Then He went on to say, "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*" (v. 24).

He was telling His disciples that while He was on the earth with them, they did not pray to the Father in Jesus'

Name; however, "in that day," when He would no longer be on the earth, they would ask the Father in the Name of Jesus, *"and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. "*

Our heavenly Father longs to meet our every need — if only we would ask Him — so our joy may be full!

Memory Text:

"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 20

What Paul Said About Prayer (Part 1)

Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Central Truth: When we are fully trusting God, we can thank Him in every circumstance of life.

In his writings to the Early Church, Paul had much to say to these new Christians about prayer. We already have studied many of his teachings on prayer in previous lessons, so we will not repeat them here. In the next two lessons, we will merely look at some additional things he had to say about prayer.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

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

Verse 17 in the *King James Version* is a little misleading. Some people have gotten the idea that Paul was telling us here to pray all the time. Other translations of this verse read, "Never give up in prayer," or "Be unceasing in prayer." In other words, don't give up your prayer life. Maintain a prayer life. It doesn't mean that we are to pray with every breath. This is not possible.

The exhortation never to give up in prayer is sandwiched between the exhortations to "rejoice" and "give thanks." That is a good "sandwich," isn't it? Paul said, "Rejoice evermore." We are to be full of rejoicing.

Then he said, "*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*"

"But I just can't thank God in *everything!*" some might exclaim.

Paul said you could. He said this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning *you*. We all want to be in the will of God. And we can when we have things in their proper perspective.

When we know and act upon the Word of God, we can truly thank Him in everything. I have done this in my own life when things looked bleak.

When I first started out on the evangelistic field, often I would close one revival meeting with no other meetings in sight.

I had a wife and two children to support. At the time, my niece also was living with us, so there were five of us to feed and clothe.

When I would close a revival and put the last offering in my pocket, often it wouldn't be enough to pay the rent when I got home. I wouldn't have enough money to buy food. And I didn't have any prospects for other meetings.

On one such occasion I started driving home at night after the closing service. I drove then because my tires were bald, and I had a better chance of making it at night when it was cooler. (During the daytime, the roads were hot, and there was a greater risk of a blowout. And I didn't even have a spare tire.)

All the way home, the devil perched on my shoulder and whispered in my ear, "What are you going to do now?"

What are you going to do now?" I didn't have air-conditioning, so the windows were rolled down. I could hear the tires singing, and it seemed as if they picked up the phrase and taunted me: "What are you going to do now? What are you going to do now?" It kept getting louder and louder.

But thank God when you have the Word, you can walk in the light of the Word.

I said, "I'll tell you what I am going to do, Mr. Devil: I'm going to act just as if the Word of God is so. The Bible says, 'Rejoice evermore.' I rejoice for the \$42 offering I did get. The Bible says, 'In every thing give thanks ...' I thank God for the \$42. I may have needed \$102, but I thank God for the \$42. I am rejoicing. I am giving thanks.

"And I'll tell you something else, Mr. Devil. I thank God for this test, for this is a good time to prove that God and the Bible are true. This is an opportunity for me to believe God, and

I am thanking Him for it. Since you asked me what I'm going to do, I'll tell you exactly what I'm going to do: I'm going to go home, go to bed, and sleep like a baby."

I arrived home around two o'clock in the morning, and my wife asked, "How did everything go?" I knew she was wondering if I had received enough money to meet the bills.

"Everything is just fine," I told her. "We don't have a thing in the world to worry about. I'll tell you about it in the morning." Then I went to bed and slept soundly and peacefully.

Early the next morning, before I had awakened, the phone rang. When Oretha handed it to me, I found that the caller was a pastor I had heard of but hadn't actually met.

He asked, "When can you start a meeting with us?"

"As soon as you want me to," I answered.

"Then how about starting next Sunday?" he said.

"I'll be there," I said, praising God in my heart for answered prayer, for meeting my needs again as He had in the past because I had trusted in Him.

I had obeyed God's Word and had rejoiced in the face of despair. If I had griped all the way home, I am not sure it would have worked out that way. Memory Text:

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..." (James 1:22).*

Lesson 21

What Paul Said About Prayer (Part 2)

Bible Texts: 1 Timothy 2:1,2,8; 4:1-5

Central Truth: Prayer, accompanied by obedient surrender to God, touches heaven.

In Paul's writings to the young minister Timothy, he had a number of instructions regarding prayer. At this time Timothy was the pastor of a New Testament church.

Pray for Heads of Government

1 TIMOTHY 2:1,2

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

2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Too often we put ourselves first in our praying. In fact, sometimes that is as far as we ever get — just praying for ourselves and our own personal lives and needs.

But here Paul instructed Timothy, "... *FIRST OF ALL, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*" Then he became more specific and said, "*For kings, and for all that are in authority_*" (In that day, people were ruled

by kings. This would be comparable to presidents and other heads of government in our day.)

Why did Paul say we should pray for those in authority? "... *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*" Whatever happens in the nation we live in affects all of us. God is concerned about us, and whether or not our leaders are Christians, God will do some things for our sake.

We notice that intercession is mentioned here. When Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, God came down and talked with him before destroying those wicked cities. Abraham pleaded with God not to destroy the cities if as many as ten righteous people could be found, and God said, "*I will not destroy it for ten's sake*" (Gen. 18:32).

There are more than ten righteous people in the United States, so we need not be frightened, but we do need to intercede for our country and the heads of government. God will do some things just because we ask Him.

Pray With Hands Outstretched to Heaven

1 TIMOTHY 2:8

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

Everyone will agree with the first part of Paul's statement to Timothy — that men everywhere ought to pray. But notice Paul also gives some explicit instructions on prayer: "... *lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*"

We would all encourage people to pray without doubting. Jesus said, "... *whosoever shall say unto this*

mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and SHALL NOT DOUBT in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith" (Mark 11:23). (Certainly we also can see the necessity of praying without wrath.)

If we encourage people to follow two-thirds of Paul's instructions in this verse, then we also should obey his third admonition: "... *lifting up holy hands....*"

Those of us who come from denominational churches may find it difficult at first to lift our hands in prayer. I can remember when I first came around people who lifted their hands to pray. It was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life to lift my hands and pray.

Someone may ask, "Do you *have* to do it?" No, you don't *have* to do it, but if we are going to obey part of the verse, why not *all* of it? Why not pray New Testament style?

If Paul was writing to the Church under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, I am under obligation to obey. If *part* of it is inspired of God, then *all* of it is inspired, and we need to pay attention to it.

Sanctifying Prayer

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

4 And every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;

5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

In this passage, Paul is not referring to sinners or the heathen world. He is talking about believers who depart from the faith. Verse one says that "... *some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*"

Then in verse three he mentions some of these doctrines of devils: "*Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats ...*" Most of us have met individuals who have fallen prey to such erroneous teaching.

But Paul, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said concerning meats, "... *which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving to them which believe and know the truth. And every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*"

The devil will use any means he can to lead people away from God.

I once knew a minister who was on fire for God and had a remarkable ministry in reaching the lost. He could get more people saved accidentally than most people can on purpose.

But he got off on the subject of diet, and he started teaching people what to eat and what not to eat. He preached Old Testament dietary laws and spent all his time trying to regulate people's diets. If he got anyone saved, I don't know of it. The devil undermined his ministry of reaching the lost.

People have asked me, "Do you eat pork?" Certainly I eat pork. I sanctify it *"by the word of God and prayer,"* as Paul teaches. You could eat skunk if you wanted to, because *"... every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving"* (v. 4).

We can regulate our diet however we want as long as we receive it with thanksgiving and it is sanctified with prayer. Then nothing we eat need hurt us. Nothing I eat ever hurts me, because I sanctify it. So many people tell me they can't eat this or they can't eat that because it hurts them if they do. It need not, if you will sanctify it as Paul teaches us in this passage of Scripture.

We need to be careful of segments of the church world which have gone off into these areas, because Paul says that they have given *"heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, "*

Memory Text:

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *-But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ... "* (James 1:22).

Lesson 22

What Others Said About Prayer (Part 1)

Bible Texts: James 5:13-18; Jude 20,21

Central Truth: Our prayers are not answered on the basis of how good we have been, but on the basis of our right standing in Christ.

Now let's turn to some other writers and see what they have to say on the subject of prayer.

What James Said About Prayer

JAMES 5:13-16

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

James asks three questions: "Is any among you afflicted? Is any merry? Is any sick among you?" He is talking about three different things here. The words "afflicted" and "sick" do not mean the same thing in this verse of Scripture. James gave one instruction for the afflicted and another instruction for those who were sick.

The Greek word translated here "afflicted" doesn't refer to illness or physical affliction. It means a test or trial. James said if you are going through a test or trial, do your own praying. Not many people do that. Most people run around looking for someone else to do their praying for them. But James didn't say a word about getting anyone to pray for you in this situation. He said, "*let him pray.*"

This doesn't mean it's not all right for us to pray for one another. The main thing God wants us to learn is to do our own praying, because we can then gain great victories. If you have to depend on someone else to pray you out of a trial, then the next time you are confronted with one of life's tests, you still won't know the way out. You still will have to find someone else to pray you out, and if you can't find someone, you might not make it.

James said, "*Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*" This passage of Scripture needs little comment. It's easy to sing when we are merry, isn't it?

James then said, "*Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him.*" P. C. Nelson, who was a Greek scholar, brought out in his writing that the Greek word translated "sick" implies that the person is so ill he can't do anything for himself. He is helpless.

If a person had a headache or some minor ailment, he could go to the church, where the pastor could pray for

him. But when he is so ill he can't get out of bed, he is to call for the elders of the church to pray for him.

(We must remember that when James wrote his epistle, the Church was in her infancy. The disciples would go to a place where there wasn't a church, preach, win people to the Lord, and establish a work. These new churches didn't have all the ministry gifts. Because some churches didn't have a pastor, they would appoint the eldest in the congregation, or in some places they would appoint those who had matured most spiritually to be in charge and watch over the flock. As the church developed and grew, God gave "... *some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*" (Eph. 4:11). So in the process of time, there were those who were separated unto the ministry.)

Can a Person With Sin in His Life Be Healed?

James instructed those who were sick to call for the elders to pray for them and anoint them with oil. *"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him"* (James 5:15). James wasn't saying that everyone is ill because of having committed sins; he was saying the reason *some* are sick is because they have sinned: *"If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."* There is forgiveness and healing for us.

Many people think because they have failed God they must continue to be sick because they must "pay" for their sins. However, this Scripture doesn't say, "If he have committed sins, he has to go on being sick to pay for them." It says, *"If he have committed sins, THEY SHALL BE FORGIVEN HIM."*

James went on to say, *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed"* (v. 16). This is all tied together. We can't take this verse out of its setting and apply it incorrectly. James wasn't suggesting that we come to church to have a confession meeting. He was saying that when the elders come to pray for the sick man, if he has sinned, he should confess his sin. He isn't going to get healed with unconfessed sin in his life!

What Is a 'Righteous'

Man?

James followed this admonition with the words, *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* Then in the next two verses he gave us an example of a righteous man.

JAMES 5:17,18

17 Elias [Elijah] 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.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

You might think, as I once did, *But Elijah was a prophet. He was a great man of God. I can't possibly do what he did.* However, James didn't say, "Elijah was a prophet, and he prayed." He said Elijah was a man *"subject to like passions as we are."* He had the same faults and failings we do, and he made the same mistakes — yet his prayers worked.

God doesn't hear a prophet more quickly than He hears any other believer. James didn't say it was the "effectual fervent prayer of a prophet" that got the job done. He said, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*_____"

"Well, if I were righteous I could do it," you might say. But you *are* righteous if you are saved, because you are the "*righteousness of God in him* [Christ]" (2 Cor. 5:21). God made you righteous; you can't make yourself righteous.

As a pastor for nearly 12 years, I often saw people in my congregation who didn't live half as consecrated lives as others did, yet they could pray twice as effectively as the others. They could pray the prayer of faith more quickly for themselves and their families. I was puzzled about this until the Lord finally showed me through

His Word that we don't get our prayers answered on the basis of how good or how bad we have been; it is on the basis of our right standing in Him.

We are made righteous in Christ Jesus. "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Righteousness means right standing with God. Jesus is our righteousness. Every one of us who is a born-again believer has the same right standing or righteousness Jesus has. We are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace by way of the blood of Jesus.

What Jude Said About Prayer

Jude also said something about prayer that is enlightening and helpful.

JUDE 20,21

20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, look ing for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude's teachings here agree with what Paul said to the Church at Corinth: "*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth ...*," and "*He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself ...*" (1 Cor. 14:14,4). (See Lessons 9 and 10.)

The word "edify" means to build up. Praying in an unknown tongue edifies or builds up the believer. You could say it is a means of "spiritual muscle building."

Jude didn't say praying in the Holy Spirit would build up your faith. He said, "... *building up yourselves on your most holy faith...*"

It's foolish to take a text out of its setting and try to prove something with it. We shouldn't try to make a verse say something that doesn't agree with the rest of the passage. We must interpret the verse in the light of the whole passage. We must study it in context, putting all the verses together. Then one verse will help and modify the other and they will fit together.

Romans 10:17 tells us how to build up our faith. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" We build up our faith through the study of God's Word. Then, through praying in tongues, we build up ourselves spiritually on the faith we already have.

We can build spiritual muscle tone into our everyday lives as we are edified through praying in the Spirit.

Memory Text:

"... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"(James 5:16).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only..." (James 1:22).*

Lesson 23

What Others Said About Prayer (Part 2)

Bible Texts: 1 Peter 3:1-6,12; 1 John 5:14-16; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 3 John 2

Central Truth: God's eyes and ears are ever open to the cries of the righteous.

In Peter's epistles to the Church, he, too, gave believers instructions in the matter of prayer.

Relationship to Spouse Can Hinder Prayers

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; THAT YOUR PRAYERS BE NOT HINDERED" (1 Peter 3:7). Peter is talking about marriages in which both husband and wife are believers, because he said, "... being heirs together of the grace of life ____"

Men, if some of your prayers are not being answered, perhaps you should examine your relationship with your wife. Do you show her tenderness and respect, *"giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel"*? If not, Peter says that your prayers are hindered.

He gives similar admonitions to wives. Let us look at them.

1 PETER 3:1-6

1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Here Peter suggests that there is a way of winning an unsaved husband without the Word: *"... if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."* The word "conversation" here means one's manner of life; her conduct.

God Hears Prayers of Righteous

Further on in this chapter, Peter has more to say about prayer.

1 PETER 3:12

12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Who are the righteous that this verse refers to? In Lesson 22 we saw that we, as born-again believers, are the righteous in Christ Jesus: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Righteousness is not based on how good or bad we are, but on our standing in Christ. Jesus is our righteousness.

Peter said that God's eyes are over us, and *"... his ears are open unto [our] prayers..."* I'm glad God has eyes and ears, aren't you? He sees us and He hears us. His ears are open to our prayers; but as we saw in verse seven, we can hinder our prayers. God doesn't hinder them — He doesn't refuse to hear — but we can hinder them. Let us take care that we don't hinder them; then we can know His ears are open unto our prayers.

Watch and Pray

Then in First Peter 4:7 we read, *"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."* Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter saw into the future to the day in which we live and admonished believers concerning the necessity of watchful prayer. In Mark's Gospel we read where Jesus, talking about the last days, said *"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is"* (Mark 13:33).

God's Will in Prayer

John, too, had important things to say about prayer.

1 JOHN 5:14-16

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, what soever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Although the word "pray" is mentioned only once in this passage of Scripture, John has used the words "ask" and "petition," referring to prayer. He said, *"... if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."* Remember this: If it is according to the Word, it is according to His will.

Some people take the attitude that they will pray for something and if it is God's will, He will give it to them. If it isn't His will, then He won't. However, this isn't what the Bible says.

John said, *"... if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."* His Word is His will. If we know what His Word says about a certain matter, then we know what His Will is about that matter. This agrees with Jesus' statement, *"... if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"* (John 15:7).

Verse 16 of the above passage has been the subject of much controversy, and most preachers just stay away

from it. However, it ties right in with the two preceding verses and continues talking about prayer:

1 JOHN 5:16

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

John is saying here that if we ask God to forgive someone, this is according to His Word and according to His will, and He will do it.

Some years ago, I was holding a meeting near my hometown in Texas when I received a call that my grandmother had fallen into a coma and was near death at her home. Each night after the evening service I drove back to her home and would sit up with her through the night. She never regained consciousness.

The third night as I sat there I prayed, "Dear Lord, I'm so sorry I didn't pray with Granny the other day when I visited her."

I knew Granny was a Christian and loved the Lord, but there are sins of omission as well as commission and I could see where she had missed it. (Others can see where I have missed it. We can see where others miss it sometimes better than we can see ourselves.)

So I prayed, "Lord, I wish I had prayed with her. Just let her revive so I can have a word of prayer with her. (She was elderly and I knew in my spirit she was going to go.) Let me make sure there isn't any unconfessed sin in her life."

As I prayed, Someone said, "Why don't you ask Me to forgive her?"

It was so real it startled me. I jumped out of the chair and the Bible on my lap scooted across the floor and under the bed.

"Who said that?" I asked. I thought someone had heard me praying and was teasing me. However, I found no one when I looked around the room and outside the door. I sat back down and began to study, but I couldn't concentrate, so I started to pray again.

"Lord, why don't You bring her out of it and let me have a word of prayer with her to see that she doesn't die with any unconfessed sin in her life?"

Again that Voice said, "Why don't you ask Me to forgive her?"

I jumped again and said, "Someone is playing tricks on me." But a check into the bedrooms of everyone else in the house revealed that they were sound asleep.

I went back to Granny's bedroom and tried to study, but I could not, so I began to pray again.

When I did, He said the third time, "Why don't you ask Me to forgive her?"

This time I had the presence of mind to remember that Eli had told the child Samuel to answer when God called. I realized it was the Lord, and I answered, "Me ask You?"

He said, "Yes, you ask Me. Don't you know that my Word says in First John 5:16, *'If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them... ' ? ' "*

I turned the pages of my Bible to that Scripture and read it. "That's right. That's exactly what it says! All right,

Lord, I ask You. Please forgive her. You can forgive her of these things that I can see of omission, and of anything else that she didn't see or I don't see, You forgive her."

He said, "All right, I have."

I thanked Him for it. To me that settled it. Can't you see that this was according to His will?

The last part of that verse does make an exception, however. It says, "... *there is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*" How will we know if a person has committed this sin unto death? *We will only know this as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.*

This has happened to me only two times in my life when I have been praying for someone and the Lord showed me that there was no need to pray for them, because they had sinned the sin unto death.

What is this sin unto death? First, John is not talking about *physical* death here, but about *spiritual* death. This isn't a sin that an unbeliever can commit. It is a sin only a Christian can commit, for he used the term "brother."

Let us look into the Book of Hebrews to find out more about this.

HEBREWS 6:4-6

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

HEBREWS 10:26-29

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

The sin God is talking about here is not the sin of lying, cheating, or something like that. God offers forgiveness for such sins. There is no forgiveness, however, for those who have "*trodden under foot the Son of God....*"

The Hebrew Christians to whom this book was written were under great persecution and were tempted to go back to Judaism. When they accepted Christ, they were cut off from their families, ran into financial hardships, and faced numerous other trials. But God warned them in these Scriptures that to go back to Judaism was to deny Christ. It was to say that they would be counting "the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing," or, in other words, that Jesus' blood was just common blood like any other man's.

Let us remember that as long as a person stays in Christ, he is eternally secure. But we don't want to forget that there is a sin unto death.

John's Three-Dimensional Prayer

3 JOHN 2

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

The word translated "wish" in the King James Version is "pray" in the original Greek. Therefore, John said here, *"Beloved, I PRAY above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."* If he was motivated by the Spirit to pray that way, that would be the desire of the Spirit of God for every person. It is all right, then, to pray for financial prosperity, because John said, *"I pray above all things...."*

John's prayer here concerns three dimensions of our lives: physical, spiritual, and material. He said, *"... I pray ... that thou mayest prosper [material blessing] and be in health [physical blessing], even as thy soul prospereth [spiritual blessing]."* Thus, we see that God desires to bless every part of the believer's life.

Memory Text:

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 24

The Will of God in Prayer (Part 1)

Bible Texts: John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 16:31

Central Truth: If our prayer request is according to God's Word, it is according to His will.

In the next three lessons we will focus our attention on the will of God in prayer.

As we look at our memory text, First John 5:14, notice the words "confidence" and "heareth": "*And this is the CONFIDENCE that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he HEARETH us.*" Another translation of this verse says, "And this is the boldness we have toward him..."

Under what condition can we have confidence that God hears us when we pray? He hears us if we ask anything according to His will!

In the next verse we read, "*And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*" Notice that this Scripture says, "*And if... he hear us ... we have the petitions that we desired....*" It would seem from reading this that there must be something He *doesn't* hear.

If we don't have this confidence or boldness when we pray, it must mean that the Lord doesn't hear us. If we don't fulfill our part, it won't work.

How can we get confidence, boldness, and faith? The Word of God gives faith: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). "*The entrance of thy words giveth light ...*" (Ps. 119:130). "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Ps.

119:105). When we walk in the light of the Word, we are not walking in darkness.

Many times we pray in darkness because we don't know what God's will is. We don't come with confidence or boldness. We come trembling and fearful, hoping He will hear us, but that won't work.

We first need to go to God's Word and find out what it says about our particular problem. Then we can pray in faith, knowing His will in the matter. (Almost everything we need to pray about is covered in His Word.)

The Will of God Concerning Salvation

First of all, we know that saving the lost is God's will, because that is why Jesus came to earth and died.

JOHN 3:16

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

2 PETER 3:9

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

ACTS 16:31

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

I don't know of anyone who would pray for a lost loved one by saying, "Lord, *if it is your will*, save him." However, much of our praying for the lost is not effective. Why? Because we do not come with confidence and boldness.

Our text says if we come with confidence and boldness, asking according to His will, we know that God hears us and we have the petitions we desire. That should be clear enough. However, our praying is too often in the natural realm rather than in the spiritual realm. We pray, "God save our loved one," and then we wait to see if God has answered our prayer! If the person gets saved immediately, we believe God heard us. If he doesn't — if we see no change in his life — we think God didn't hear us. This is walking by sight, not by faith, and it brings only confusion.

You might say, "I have prayed and prayed for my unsaved loved ones, and it seems as if my praying doesn't work." Return to God's Word and you'll discover why your prayers aren't answered: "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will... "*

There's no question that it's God's will to save the lost, as we just saw from the Scriptures. The Word of God is the will of God. Therefore, if our request is in accordance with His will, we know we have the petitions we desire of Him.

I once knew a country preacher who, because of his limited education, never had an opportunity to pastor a large church. Most of his pastorates were small community churches. However, he was in constant demand to hold revivals because of his tremendous soul-winning. Wherever he went, a landslide of souls resulted. He could go to a church where no one had been saved in years, and great numbers would accept Christ as Savior.

When he was in his early sixties and still enjoying phenomenal success, I once asked him the secret of his success.

"It is a very simple thing," he told me. "I just apply the same faith to see folks saved as I do to see them healed or to believe God for anything else. It never enters my mind to doubt that people will come to be saved. If doubt did come, I would resist it in the Name of Jesus.

"I pray, but not more than others do. I do seek God, of course, but I attribute my success in soul-winning to one thing: *I have confidence the unsaved will come*. By the eye of faith I see the altar filling up with lost souls. And if the meeting doesn't go as well as it should, I don't necessarily increase my praying about it; I just exercise more faith."

This preacher was expressing the confidence, the boldness, our Scripture text is talking about, because he knew the will of God in the matter.

Some people, on the other hand, only look at the circumstances. They say, "No one came to the altar for salvation last night. They probably won't tonight, either." This kind of person is looking at the wrong thing. He may pray for souls, but he does not see them coming to Christ. He really doesn't have confidence that they will come. His faith is only in what he can see.

We Can Nullify Our Prayers

Often people undo their prayers! They may have prayed and even asked others to pray, but then they nullify

their prayers and the faith of those who are praying with them by speaking negatively. Talk *faith*, not *doubt*!

I once knew a minister who asked me and others to pray for his son. However, at the same time he was requesting prayer, he would tell his boy, "You'll never amount to anything. I don't know what in the world I'm going to do with you! I have done everything I can do. I have prayed and prayed, but it looks like my prayers don't do any good."

This man was confessing defeat and failure rather than victory and faith. He was building doubt and insecurity into his son. This is why so many people have lost their **children**.

As we pray **for our children**, we must not do anything in our home that would nullify the effects of our prayers. We must build confidence and trust in our children. We must instill a sense of security in them.

Before I was married, I usually stayed in the homes of pastors during revival meetings, and I often felt sorry for their children.

I particularly remember one pastor's 12-year-old son. His parents were impatient and short-tempered with him. They were always telling him he would never amount to anything. Sure enough, he didn't! He broke the hearts of his parents. He was married several times, and he never provided a living for his family.

These parents may have prayed and asked their church to pray. They may have shed many tears and even fasted. But their lives nullified the effects of their prayers.

From the spiritual standpoint as well as the natural standpoint, the things that happen to children in their early years are what mold their lives as adults. Let these years be spiritually rich and meaningful for your children. Let your life match your words. Work with God; don't work against Him.

I also have seen pastors' children neglected. The pastors' wives were so busy working in the church that their children were left alone to do as they pleased. That's why I told my wife when we were first married, "I'll run the church and you run the house."

In the first church we pastored after we were married, we were told it was their custom for the pastor to teach the adult Bible class of men and the pastor's wife to teach the women. I told them my wife didn't teach Sunday School.

They argued, "But it's our custom here. We have been doing this for more than 20 years!"

"Well, I just changed that custom," I replied. "We'll consolidate the two classes and make one big auditorium class, and I will teach it. My wife doesn't teach Sunday School."

When they asked me why, I told them, "I am going to preach and pastor the church. My wife is going to stay home and keep house and take care of me and our children, when we have them. I want her to run things there, and I'll run things here. There are many capable people in the church who can work, so let's put them to work."

When they wanted to make Oretha president of the women's missionary council, I put my foot down again. "She can attend the meetings," I told them, "but she won't serve in any capacity." This has paid off well for us.

Authority To Claim Your Family

Every believer has authority in his own household. We have more authority there than we have anywhere else. Acts 16:31 tells us, "... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, AND THY HOUSE." Too many

people, in praying for their family, have struggled and begged God to save them, but they have not backed up their prayers by claiming the promise. Thus, they have prayed in darkness instead of in the light of God's Word.

Our text says, "*... if we ask any thing according to his will [we know that salvation for our children is God's will], he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us ... we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*" (1 John 5:14,15).

If *we know* God heard us, we don't have to keep begging Him to save our children. This doesn't mean that the whole family will come to Christ overnight, but as we stand in faith, thanking God, they will be saved.

For us to continue asking and begging God is a confession that we don't believe we have our petition. If we really believed we had the petition we desired of the Lord, as the Scripture says, we would be thanking Him for it!

Sometimes, you see, we go through the right motions but without the right believing. We can go through the motions because someone told us to do so or because someone else did it, but for it to work, we must have faith for the answer down in our hearts.

The thought never entered my mind that our children would not be saved, because I had authority and power in that area. I prayed for them once and claimed their salvation on the basis of the Word. When the thought would come to me that they might not be saved, I would reject it immediately in the Name of Jesus. I had confidence — I had boldness — that our children would be saved because I had prayed according to God's will.

Knowing what the will of God is concerning lost souls, we never should pray, "Lord, if it be your will, save this person." *We know* it is His will!

Memory Text:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth 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 LESSON IN ACTION: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...*" (James 1:22).

Lesson 25

The Will of God in Prayer (Part 2)

Bible Texts: Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; 1 Peter 2:24

Central Truth: To be an effective prayer warrior, we must have God's Word abiding in us.

As we continue our study about God's will in prayer, let us look at these pertinent words of Jesus in John 15:7: *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* Under what conditions did Jesus tell us to ask what we will? He said, *"If ye abide in me...."* In other words, to be born again is the first requirement. If we are born again, we are abiding in Him.

He also said, *"... and my words abide in you...."* So we must have a thorough knowledge of God's Word to be an effective prayer warrior. We must have His Word abiding in us. In order to do this we must *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Tim. 2:15).

When we have God's Word abiding in us, we will know what His will is concerning any matter we need to pray about. As we saw in our last lesson, *God's Word is His will*. Therefore, we can bring our petitions with confidence and boldness to God's throne of grace.

If we have followed steps one and two of the above verse — if (1) we are abiding in Him, and (2) His Word is abiding in us — we can *"ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* What a powerful promise!

The believer walking in fellowship with the Word never will ask for anything outside of the will of God. If he knows the Word, he knows what is promised him; he knows the will of God. If he is not walking in fellowship with the Word, he is not going to have a successful prayer life and get answers to his prayers. His prayer life isn't going to be effective, because Jesus plainly stated, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you..."* We must come according to *His* conditions.

God's Will Concerning Healing

What does God's Word have to say about physical healing? Is it His will to heal the sick? Let us look at some Scriptures to determine His will in this matter.

ISAIAH 53:4,5

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

MATTHEW 8:16,17

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

1 PETER 2:24

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

We see from these verses that healing the sick is God's will because Christ bore our infirmities and carried our diseases. Just as He purchased our salvation through His death on the cross, so He has purchased our healing: "... *by whose stripes ye were healed.*" When we have His Word firmly settled in our hearts, we need not wonder if it is His will to heal us. We need not pray, "Lord, heal me *if* it be thy will."

Years ago while pastoring, I was called to pray for one of the members who was ill. Knowing the importance of her own confession of faith for healing, I asked, "Sister, will you be healed now as I anoint you with oil and lay hands on you in Jesus' Name?"

"Well, I will if it's God's will," she answered.

"How are you going to find out if it's His will?" I asked.

"I thought you would pray for me, and if it's His will, I'll be healed. If it isn't, I won't."

Under these circumstances I knew the woman was not going to receive healing. I knew her unbelief would stop the flow of God's healing power. I wanted to talk to her and show her some things from the Word of God before I prayed for her, but she said, "Go ahead and pray for me. I am in so much pain and misery."

I anointed her and prayed, knowing in my heart that she wouldn't receive anything because she wasn't believing in line with the Word. I stumbled through a prayer and had hardly said "amen" when she said to her husband, "Pete, go call the doctor."

The thing that really puzzled me was that she had just gotten through saying if it was God's will for her to be healed, He would heal her and if it wasn't, He wouldn't. She didn't get healed; therefore, by her own admission, it *wasn't* God's will for her to be healed. Yet here she was calling the doctor and paying him to get her out of the will of God!

According to her reasoning, it would seem she wouldn't even *want* to get well, because she would be getting out of God's will. It would be wrong to buy medicine and enlist the help of the doctor to get her out of the will of God.

Certainly this is a foolish line of reasoning, but this is the logic some people follow concerning prayer for their healing.

As we noted before, if we want to know God's will concerning a matter, study His Word. His Word is His will. His Word tells us it *is* His will to heal us. Let's not doubt His Word, but instead claim its promises for our healing.

Look to the Word for God's Will

Many people try to find the will of God by saying, "If it's His will He'll do it, and if it's not, He won't." We should determine God's will by looking into the Word.

If I am uncertain about something, I go to the Word first. I don't pray in uncertainty, because I would be wasting

my time. I could not pray in faith; I would be praying in unbelief and doubt, and it wouldn't work. When we know what God's Word says about a matter, we *know* what His will is.

Often people want to put all the responsibility for a matter on God, so they say, "It must not have been God's will, because I prayed, 'If it be thy will, do this,' and He didn't do it." These people want to relieve themselves of all responsibility and put it on God. But we can't get out of it that easily.

God gave us His Word and told us to "*Search the scriptures ... which testify of me*" (John 5:39). In them we learn His will.

Then there are those who know what God's Word says **about** a matter, yet they find it difficult to believe it will work in their case.

They are like a man who knows he will need some extra money, so he goes to his banker and arranges for a loan. He does not need the money right away; he just wants to have everything ready so he will have access to it when he needs it.

The man has his banker's word that everything is in order and he may pick up the money anytime he wants, but then he thinks *What if he doesn't give it to me? What if he didn't mean what he said?*

The man will have to *believe* what the banker said and then *act on it* to get his money.

Some people are like that with God. They know what He said in His Word about salvation for their loved ones, healing, or any other need they might have, but they find it difficult to believe He will do what He said He would do. But thank God, He keeps His Word!

Memory Text:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

THE LESSON IN ACTION: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ..."* (James 1:22).

Lesson 26

The Will of God in Prayer (Part 3)

Bible Texts: 1 Peter 5:7; 3 John 2; Philippians 4:19

Central Truth: We can find a promise in God's Word for every aspect of life. Then we can know how to pray, and we can have the assurance before we pray what His will is.

Studying God's Word is like searching for valuable gems. We can find a few jewels on top of the ground without much digging, but if we really want to get down where the valuable veins are, we have to dig for them.

To learn the deeper truths of God, we are told to *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"* (John 5:39).

Surface reading of our memory text in First John 5:14,15 has brought some to the wrong conclusion about what John was saying here. He said, *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."*

Some have thought John said, "If it is God's will, He will hear me, and if it isn't, He won't." However, that wasn't what he meant. John was saying if we have God's Word on a matter, we don't have to say, "If it be thy will," because we know His Word is His will.

For this reason I encourage people to find Scriptures with a promise concerning what they are praying about. Sometimes when people ask me to pray for them I say, "What Scripture are you standing on?" Many times they answer they have none in particular. "Well," I tell them, "that is what you'll get, then: nothing in particular."

If your request is in accordance with God's Word, that is His will. (It has to be His will for Him to promise it in His Word.) It is His will that we have everything He has provided for us in His Word.

I have found a promise in His Word for every aspect of life. That means I can know just how to pray, and I can have the assurance of what His will is before I pray.

Many times the reason prayer isn't working for people is because they are praying in darkness. They are trying to get God to help them apart from the Word. We are to walk in the light of the Word.

No one can build a successful prayer life if he doesn't know the Word. A successful prayer life is built and based on the written Word. When we pray according to the Word, it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We know which way to walk. Too much of the time, however, because we fail to see what God's Word has to say about a subject, we stumble about, not knowing just where we are going. Prayer then becomes a matter of desperation, begging God to do something. But when we know the Word ahead of time, we can come to God with confidence.

God's Will Concerning Worry

1 PETER 5:7

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

A woman with a look of desperation on her face once came to me requesting prayer. She began crying as she said, "Brother Hagin, the cares of life, the anxieties and worries, are just so great." She began to cry harder as she said, "I just can't carry all my burdens. I want you to pray that God will do one of two things: that He will either give me grace to carry them or else take about half of them away. I can carry half of them, but I just can't carry all of them."

"Well, I can't pray that prayer," I told her. "It would be unscriptural." A bewildered look came across her face. I went on to explain, "I cannot pray for you out of the will of God. If I am going to have any confidence that God will hear my prayer, I must pray in line with the Word of God."

"The Bible tells us, *'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.'*

"I know God's will for you because

I know what God's Word says. It isn't His will to give you grace to bear your load of care. Nor is it His will to take half of it away and let you carry the other half. How do I know this?

Because of what His Word says.

"First Peter 5:7 says, *'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.'* That verse doesn't say to cast half of your cares; it says *all*. That verse doesn't say God will give you grace to carry your worries; it says to cast *all* your care upon Him. Why? Because *'He careth for you.'*"

Then I said, "Sister, isn't it wonderful that we already have the answer for your prayer right here?"

Then I read her this same verse from *The Amplified Bible*, which is more explicit: "Casting the whole of your care — all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all — on Him; for He cares for you affectionately, and cares about you watchfully."

God's Will Concerning Financial Blessing

3 JOHN 2

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

In Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi, he was commending the Christians for their generosity in giving, as we see in the verses just preceding the above verse. They had taken up an offering of money and goods to send to other Christians. Because of this, Paul was saying to them, "Because you have given to them and helped them, God shall supply all your needs." He was talking about material and financial matters.

Another verse we think of in connection with financial blessing is found in Luke 6:38: *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."* We often hear this verse quoted when an offering is being taken. The emphasis usually is on "give" in the first part of the verse. But let's not overlook the results of that giving: *"... it shall be given unto you..."* Thus, we see financial blessings promised in this

verse.

Would you like to see increased financial blessings in *your* life? Increase your giving, because the Scripture says that your returns will be "... *pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.... For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*"

On the other hand, we can hinder our prayers* for financial prosperity by not cooperating with God; by not entering into the doors God opens for us.

I knew a young, able-bodied fellow who was without work for quite some time. He had a wife and five children. People in the church they attended helped by taking them groceries and clothes for the children. The church women also helped all they could by giving ironing and other work to his wife so she could earn a little money.

When I talked to the man he told me, "Well, the Lord said He would meet all of our needs. Some people tell me to get out and look for a job, but I am just waiting for the right one to come to me. The Lord will do it. And in the meantime, we are getting along all right." (But someone else was paying his house rent and feeding his family.)

We can't just sit and wait for something to come to us. The only thing that will come will be a pile of bills! A man can believe that God will help him and bless him financially, but he needs to move in the right direction and do whatever his hand finds to do.

If the first job he finds isn't exactly what he prefers, at least it will help him until something better comes along. In the meantime he can pray for guidance in getting a better job. God can open another job for him as he is faithful in whatever he finds to do in providing for his family.

As we continue to dig deeper into God's Word, we will see more and more things showing us His will in prayer.

For example, we know to pray for the lost in heathen lands, because His Word says, "*Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*" (Ps. 2:8).

We also know to pray that God would send ministers forth in the power of His Spirit: "*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest*" (Matt. 9:38).

As we study the Word of God, instead of saying "according to the *will* of God," we will say "according to the *Word* of God." Then we will have the right perspective.

Memory Text:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth 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 LESSON IN ACTION: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...*" (James 1:22).

¹ For a complete study of this subject, see Rev. Kenneth E. Hagin's book *The Art of Intercession*.