

7-11 Prayer

I receive lot of questions on how to pray effectively. This is one indication to me that the Spirit is stirring up the hearts of people to pray. This is a wonderful thing as we need to awake as many people as we can to intercession. I have gone through different phases in my prayer life from expecting one prayer with faith to be all that is acceptable, to praying again and again until the thing comes to pass. Both are biblical, and I have found that as with many things it is not a situation of "either or" but of "both and". It is not faith to plead with God for something He has already promised and that we are to receive by faith. But on the other hand sometimes there are things that hinder our faith and thereby hinder our receiving the answer. The disciples cried out "Lord increase our faith."

Oswald Chambers wrote, "Prayer is not only asking, but an attitude of mind which produces the atmosphere in which asking is perfectly natural. 'Ask, and it shall be given you.'" (My Utmost for His Highest - July 16). Prayer, like all of Christian life is a question of balance. On the one hand don't use vain repetitions. Matthew 6:7,8 says, "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him." But the question can be asked, if the Lord has knowledge of what we need before we ask, why do we even need to ask? The subject of Salvation might serve as an example. He has knowledge that the unsaved need salvation. He has even provided for their need. But unless they ask, they can not receive. In this case it has to do with personal responsibility and freedom of will.

Freedom of will is one of the greatest privileges God gave to human race. In His sovereignty, He chooses not to over step the free-will which He has given us. "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11). This verse reminds me of something that occurred recently on the date, July 11th, also written as 7/11. I tell the story of how the Lord had been giving me the numbers 7-11 over and over in various ways. I prayed, "Lord what are you trying to communicate to me through these numbers 7 & 11?" After I prayed this prayer for wisdom, I went to the cupboard to get a coffee cup. I looked up on the top shelf, way in the back where cups remain neglected for a long time. I saw a travel mug from a "7-11" store which is a 24 hour convenience store here in America. We do not have a 7-11 store in my home town of Missoula, and I can't even say how the mug originally came into my possession. As I reached for the cup I saw the motto of the store on the side of the cup which read, "Oh Thank Heaven!" I realized the Lord was saying to me, "Oh thank heaven 24 hours a day." In other words, give thanks unto the Lord without ceasing. I immediately went to the scriptures to find the place where it reads, "Rejoice always, pray

without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

What a wonderful God we serve who speaks to us in such wonderful ways. In Luke 18, Jesus was teaching on prayer. "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." His point here was that we should pray and continue to pray even if the circumstances were not agreeable to having our prayer answered. He continued, "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" I often point out the different aspects or stages of prayer as I see them. The first part is in the category of "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pet 5:7). Then there is the phase of, "enter(ing) into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." I look at this as a process, first I cast all my cares (needs) upon Him (because He is the burden bearer, and He cares for me). Then I go into the gates (authority) with thanksgiving (thanks for hearing me and answering my prayers Lord), then into His courts (intimacy, worship) with praise (Lord you are so good, you have done such magnificent works, I love you with all my heart). We can't leave any of these parts out of the process.

There is another example I like to give from Jesus' example in Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." He was burdened about things and circumstances. So are we at times. Sometimes we are afraid to pray will full expression or emotion because we do not want to get into praying soulishly or against the will of the Lord. Let's face it, many times we "do not know how to pray for things as we ought" (Romans 8:26). We should pray with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and then end as Jesus did with the words "not my will but Your will be done." I call this a spiritual line-item-veto. It allows the Lord to receive prayers of faith, but also to disregard any prayer that may not be in His timing or will. This is much preferable to praying with the words or attitude of "if it be Thy will." There is no faith in a prayer like that. But if we pray without any fear that He will hear our prayers, and also ask that Only His will be accomplished through our prayers, we join together in accomplishing His will upon earth as it also is done in the heavenly realm.

TAKE TIME TO PRAY

I got up early in the morning

And rushed right into the day.

I had so much to accomplish

That I didn't have time to pray.
Problems just tumbled around me
And heavier came each task.
I whined, "Why doesn't God help me?"
He said, "You didn't ask."
I groaned and shouted and grumbled,
I tried every key in the lock.
I cried, "Why doesn't He open?"
He said, "Son, you didn't knock."
So, I got up early this morning
And paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish
I had to take time to pray.
-- Author Unknown

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