

LESSON 3

THE PRAYER LIFE



Scripture Texts: Matthew 6:5-8; John 16:23; James 4:2-3; 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:8

Nothing is more important in personal Christian living than prayer. It is the lifeline between Heaven and earth, between the Father and His child. Prayer is communion between God and man. No one can live for God without prayer, prayer for ourselves and for others. We are to direct our prayers to God and put faith in Him to answer. We are to pray desiring God's glory, not selfish satisfaction. Our prayers must be for things in the will of God. Then God will answer.

MEMORY VERSE: *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*
— 1 Timothy 2:8

Pray in Secret

Matthew 6:5-6. **Hypocrites . . . pray . . . that they may be seen of men.** At this time Jesus was teaching how to pray. He pointed to a wrong example and warned to not be like them. It is wrong to wish to attract attention to ourselves under the pretense of prayer. It is wrong to make the aim of prayer to be man's approval and honor. Jesus said such people **have their reward.** They wish to be seen of men. They have that. No further reward will be given—no answer from God, no spiritual blessing.

Jesus told the right way. **Enter into thy closet**—your secret or personal place to meet with and talk to God. **Shut thy door**—not that one with hinges but that one which shuts out all other earthly distractions and allows one to be alone with God. **Pray to thy Father which is in secret.** No pride, no show, no desire for men to see. Such prayer is directed to God's attention, and it wins it. God **seeth in secret**—He hears. He is pleased. He answers. He **shall reward thee openly**—others see the answer.

Words to an old song that we sing often come to mind and bless us:

"Alone with God, the world forbidden,
Alone with God, Oh, blest retreat,
Alone with God and in Him hidden,
To hold with Him communion sweet."

It is not wrong to pray in public where others hear. Elijah did (1 Kings 18:36-39), Jesus did (John 11:41-42), the saints did (Acts 4:23-31; 7:60; 12:12; 20:36), and God heard them.

Matthew 6:7-8. **Use not vain repetitions.** Much repetition is heathenish. Heathens have forms of worship they vainly repeat over and over. Some write forms of prayer and lay them before God. Others read and recite formal prayers written by some other person. **They think . . . they shall be heard for their much speaking.** Their trust is in the quantity of prayer and not in the quality—in the outward form.

Be not . . . like unto them. Prayer is the burden of one's heart. How can one pray the prayer of another? Jesus said we cannot. Our trust must be in God. He knows what we need before we ask. He wants us to ask and to put faith in Him to do it. Compare the prayers of Elijah and Baal's prophets in 1 Kings 18.

Ask in Jesus' Name

John 16:23. **Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.** We are to pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ. To pray in Jesus' name is not to just use the words. We must be in His name, connected with Him. This means we are authorized by Him to ask. If we are not, the words are forgery—such as attempting to buy something with a forged check.

Until now, the disciples had come directly to Jesus concerning their problems, needs, questions, and desires. Jesus here told them He would soon go back to the Father, and they would no more come to Him personally. Until now, He prayed the Father for them. But now, they must present their own petitions to the Heavenly Father, and present them in the name of the Son Jesus.

The Way Must Be Clear

James 4:2-3. **Ye lust . . . kill . . . desire . . . fight and war, yet ye have not.** Here is the tragic story of unfilled desires, unanswered prayers, lives still empty, and longings unsatisfied. Why? Because they **ask not**—do not pray. Striving in one's own strength never succeeds. Yet some pray **and receive not**. Why? **Ye ask amiss**—they just say words; they do not pray in the right way. They ask with a selfish motive and not for the good of others or for the glory of God. You ask to **consume it upon your lusts**—worldly satisfaction, a new car, a new home, and other earthly treasures—and fail to see greater needs to pray for. Children of God receive answers to prayer because their affections are set on things above, and they desire the will of God most of all. Their interest is in the Kingdom of God.

James 5:16. **Confess your faults.** Get personal grievances and hurt feelings out of the way. When you are at fault, own it. We cannot have faith for an answer when there is guilt in our lives. It is the **prayer of a righteous man that availeth much.**

Yield to God's Will

First John 5:14-15. **If we ask any thing according to his will.** The will of a child of God is yielded to the will of God. A lack in yielding causes a lack in confidence in receiving an answer. When we will what He wills and can say as Jesus did, "Not my will, but thine, be done," He hears, and **we have the petitions**. Jesus taught that we should sometimes seek agreement in prayer. It works to increase our faith if others agree with us in our petitions.

First Timothy 2:8. **I will therefore that men pray every where.** All people should pray. Saints must pray often. First Thessalonians 5:17 says to "pray without ceasing." Let nothing enter your life that will hinder your prayers and cause them to be stopped. Form the habit of daily, frequent prayer. Pray about everything. Ask God to direct each day for you. **Holy hands**—sin out of the life. **Without wrath**—with love in the heart. Without **doubting**—pray believing. Prayer changes things. The heaviest burden can be lifted by prayer. It is the condition of the heart that brings answers to prayer.

JUST A THOUGHT

Life's heaviest burden is to have nothing to carry.