Prayer Part 1: Buckles & Straps

Prepared By Nathan L Morrison For Sunday August 11th, 2019

Text: Eph. 6:18-20; Phil. 4:6

# Intro

1. Prayer:
   1. Often misunderstood, misapplied, underestimated, overlooked, or infrequent.
   2. Saints need to know its necessity, its power (the power of the One Who Hears!), and its value in one’s life.
2. Many put on the Armor of God, but forget to pray, not realizing that prayer is the buckles & straps that hold the armor together.
   1. *Eph. 6:10-17:* The armor of God listed: Belt of Truth, Breastplate of Righteousness, Shoes of the Spread of the Gospel, Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation, & Sword of the Spirit.
   2. Eph. 6:18-20: *“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit.”*
   3. Not only does it hold the armor together, it also puts us in contact with our God, head of army.
   4. No soldier goes into combat without securing his armor properly, and staying in contact with his commanders.
   5. Same for Soldiers of Christ: we must study for instruction and pray often for communication, to strengthen our relationship with God.
3. It is important to understand prayer and pray to God frequently!
   * 1. Prayer Reflects a Relationship with God
4. Prayer is the way people of God address God – I Thess. 5:17 (Pray without ceasing – it is a habit)
   1. God has made it possible for His children to talk to Him (I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16)
   2. God asks His children to call upon Him (Lk. 18:1-8; I Tim. 2:1-3; I Thess. 5:17)
   3. The model prayer of Jesus (Mt. 6:9) shows that prayer was designed for God's children (“Our Father in Heaven...”) – Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6: Saints are children of God, fellow heirs of Jesus and can cry out, “Abba! Father!”
   4. Jesus cried out to God saying, “Abba! Father!” – Mark 14:36
5. Prayer is the privilege of the righteous (Js. 5:16)
   1. God hears the prayers of the righteous! (I Pet. 3:10-12)
6. We know God listens and answers our prayers.
   1. Jn. 14:13-15: Jesus told His disciples if they call on His name He would not only hear them but answer them – Sometimes His answer is “No” *(II Cor. 12:7-9)*
7. Who are we that God would hear our prayers and answer us?
   1. Ps. 8:4-8: David asked this very question and came to the conclusion that we are special over the rest of His creation *(Gen. 1:26-27: On the 6th day, God created man in His likeness)*
8. We are special in that we differ from all the rest of creation as we were made in the likeness of God and one day will share in the inheritance with Jesus as His brothers and sisters.
   1. I Pet. 1:3-5: We have the hope of salvation which is an inheritance in Heaven with God.
   2. Col. 1:12: We will share the inheritance with the saints.
   3. Eph. 1:3-12: God’s relationship to man was outlined from the beginning: to adopt us as sons and to inherit eternal life and live with Jesus our Lord *(Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6).*
9. As children of God we need to talk to our Father in Heaven!
   * 1. Conditions of a Prayerful Heart
        + 1. Contrition – Ps. 51:17

Contrite (Webster’s): to break or bruise; to rub or wear. Literally, worn or bruised. Hence, broken-hearted for sin; deeply affected with grief and sorrow for having offended God; humble; penitent; as a contrite sinner.

II Chr. 7:13-15 (Solomon’s dedication to the Temple); Is. 58:9: God will hear one’s prayers when they are humbled and penitent (turn from their wickedness).

* + - * 1. Whole-heartedness – Mark 12:30

Jer. 29:13: “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”

Heb. 11:6: We must have faith that He rewards those who seek Him!

* + - * 1. Faith – Mark 11:24

Heb. 11:6: One cannot please God without faith.

Prayer is not a substitute for works.

As a farmer does not pray for good crops as a substitute for his obligation to prepare the soil, plant the seed, etc., but for reinforcement of his efforts.

No Christian should pray for the sick, the needy or the lost as a substitute for his responsibilities to such teachings as *Gal. 6:10; Rom. 15:1;* and *Mk. 16:15-16.*

Js. 1:5-8: The one that prays to God without faith should expect nothing in return!

Js. 4:3: The one who prays out of wrong motives receives nothing!

* + - * 1. Righteousness – Js. 5:16

The prayer of the righteous can “accomplish much!” *But not if they don’t pray!*

Js. 4:1-3: One can ask God with the “wrong motives.”

I Jn. 5:14: We must ask for things according to His will, not from selfish motives.

* + - * 1. Obedience – I Jn. 3:22

Is. 59:1-2; I Pet. 3:12: Sin separates man from God and hinders prayer. He hears the faithful.

* + - * 1. Brevity (Short duration; few words) – Eccl. 5:2 (“Let your words be few”)

Mt. 6:7: Repetition and “many words” don’t mean it’s a good prayer.

We ought to pray to God frequently, but not ramble on and on!

* + - * 1. Candidly – Luke 12:30 (Mt. 6:6, 8, 32) – Talk to God openly of what’s on your heart *(Gal. 4:6)*

God already knows what is on your heart and what you need!

Psalm 88: Imagine if a person took to the podium to pray this prayer of Heman the Ezrahite in a public assembly! *(READ* *paraphrase of Psalm 88 – Plugged In: High Voltage Prayer by Edwin Crozier, Lesson 10, pg. 71) –* **How would you feel if someone led that prayer?**

* + - * 1. When you come before God in prayer, speak to Him from faith with your whole heart!
    1. Elements Of Prayer
       - 1. Adoration or Praise – Mt. 6:9

Prayer is a way of honoring God. (Acts 2:47; *Mt. 6:9)*

It exalts God as the object of our praise, the recipient of our love, and the source of all blessings – Js. 1:17

***Example:*** The prayer of the disciples after Peter and John had been released from prison. *(Acts 4:24-31: They recognized God as the Creator)*

* + - * 1. Petitions – Phil. 4:6 (Requests, Supplications)

Petitions include pleas for one's needs (I Jn. 5:14-15)

Petitions include supplications (earnest requests) – (NKJ: Eph. 6:18: “supplication”)

Luke 1:5-7: Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children; Elizabeth was barren.

***Example:*** Luke 1:11-13: Gabriel the angel (1:19) told Zechariah his “petition” (NKJ: “prayer”) was heard and they would have a son named John.

Petitions include confession of sins and pleas for forgiveness (I Jn. 1:9)

***Example:*** Simon *(Acts 8:14-24: Needed to ask for forgiveness)*

***Example:*** Ezra 9 contains a prayer of confession of sin *(Ezra 9:6-10:1)*

***Example:*** The prayer of David in Psalm 51 is an acknowledgement of his sin and a plea for forgiveness of it (esp. 51:1-4)

* + - * 1. Thanksgiving – Col. 4:2

Prayer should be characterized by thanksgiving for blessings received *(Phil. 4:6)*

***Example:*** Christians should be “abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6-7; 3:17)

* + - * 1. Alertness – Col. 4:2

Eph. 6:18: We are to come to God in prayer alert.

A danger in praying while distracted or tired is that we may not give Him all our attention.

***Example:*** The disciples were told to “watch and pray” as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane but He found them sleeping three times and rebuked them *(Mt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-41)*

* + - * 1. Intercession/Petitions – I Tim. 2:1 *(1st mention of prayer = Gen. 20:7: H6419 = to intercede)*

Intercession = *enteuxis (G1783):* It is “a supplication, a petition.” It is a technical term for approaching a king, and so for approaching God in intercession.

Intercessions are pleas for others *(I Tim. 2:1-2).* That means “seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others.” *(Neh. 1:6: Prayer for the sins of the people)*

***Example:*** Simon of Samaria asked Peter to pray for him *(Acts 8:24);* Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him *(Eph. 6:19-20);* we are to pray for the sick *(Js. 5:14).*

* + - * 1. We must come before the God of Heaven alert and in the attitude of thanksgiving and praise!
    1. Does Posture Matter?
  1. Some say certain body postures are necessary for a prayer to be acceptable to God

1. Several different positions are seen in Scripture:
   1. Laying on one's face/Bowing *(Num. 16:22; I Chr. 21:16-17; Ezra 10:1; Mt. 26:39)*
   2. Standing *(I Kings 8:22-23; Mk. 11:25; Luke 18:13)*
   3. Lifting up hands *(I Kings 8:22, 54; Ps. 28:2; Lam. 2:19; I Tim. 2:8)*
   4. Lifting up eyes *(Dan. 4:34; Jn. 17:1)*
   5. Eyes cast down *(Luke 18:13)*
   6. Kneeling *(I Kings 8:54; II Chr. 6:13; Luke 22:41; Acts 20:36; 21:5)*
2. Consider the poem, “The Prayer of Cyrus Brown” by Sam Walter Foss *(Read)*
   1. God, through the NT writers, is focused on us praying and speaking to Him and NOT in what position we do it in!

Conclusion

1. There are many types and forms of prayer! *(Jonah prayed from inside a fish! – Jonah 2:1)*
2. Prayer is an important part of our Christian life.
3. Many are guilty of not praying as they should, as often as they should, or for praying for the wrong things, or out of wrong motives. ***How often do you pray?***
   1. This is an area in which perhaps we all need improvement in!
   2. Do you pray just twice a day, before you eat and before you go to bed?
   3. Are you an Only-in-Need Christian where you call on the Lord to save you when you are in trouble or do you communicate with Him often?
4. When you pray, make sure to:
   1. Praise Him
   2. Thank Him
   3. Confess to Him
   4. Ask for forgiveness
   5. Make requests of Him
   6. Ask for help
5. When you “put on the whole armor of God” *(Eph. 6:11)* make sure to fasten it securely with the buckles and straps that hold it all together: Prayer!
6. May we have a habit of “praying without ceasing” *(I Thess. 5:17)* and draw nearer to God!
7. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent & be baptized, and live for God!
8. If a Christian, do you pray as you should? Draw near to God. Repent and be renewed!
9. Whatever your requests, let them be known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!

**Paraphrase of Psalm 88 from *Plugged In: High Voltage Prayer* by Edwin Crozier, Lesson 10, pg. 71**

A brother is about to lead a prayer. He walks haltingly to the lectern. His hair is disheveled, his clothes rumpled. His shoulders are slumped. His face is blotched and mottled white and red. His eyes are swollen and his cheeks are damp. He grasps the podium as if it is the only thing that is keeping him from collapsing on the spot. He bows his head and says:

“God, You are my Savior; so I’m praying to You now like I’ve been praying to You night and day. Please, listen to me. I’m really struggling. I can’t take it anymore. I feel like I might as well die because You aren’t taking any notice of me anymore. You have made my life like darkness. You must be angry with me because You’re lashing out at me like the repeated lashing of the ocean waves. My friends don’t like me anymore and that’s Your fault. I’ve cried so much over this I can hardly see. I’ve been praying to You for years, and You haven’t done anything. Am I going to die? Will You do anything for me then? Will I be any good to You then? Every morning I’ve been praying to You and get nothing. Why have You thrown me away? I’m absolutely powerless and helpless. I’ve been like this since I was young because of Your terrors. Your attacks have destroyed me. They are always against me. They are closing in on me. And You have taken away my friends.”

Without even saying ‘Amen,’ he stops and staggers back to a spot on the front row.

**“The Prayer of Cyrus Brown” by Sam Walter Foss**

“The proper way for a man to pray,”

Said deacon Lemuel Keyes,

“And the only proper attitude

Is down upon his knees.”

“No, I should say the way to pray,”

Said Preacher Doctor Wise,

“Is standing straight, with outstretched arms,

And rapt and turned up eyes.”

“Oh no, no, no,” said Elder Snow,

“Such posture is too proud;

A man should pray with eyes fast closed

And head contritely bowed.”

“It seems to me his hands should be

Austerely clasped in front,

With both thumbs pointing toward the ground,”

Said the Preacher Doctor Blunt.

“Las’ year I fell in Hodkins’ well,

Headfirst,” said Cyrus Brown,

“With both my heels a stickin’ up,

My head a-pintin’ down.”

“An’ I made a prayer right then and there—

Best prayer I ever said,

The prayinest prayer I ever prayed,

A-standin’ on my head.”