Prayer Part 2: Preparing To Pray Like The Psalmists

Prepared By Nathan L Morrison For Sunday August 25th, 2019

Text: I Thessalonians 5:17

# 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. The psalms are often turned to in moments of joy and sorrow, in moments of peace and turmoil.
3. The psalms held an important place for early Christians and the New Testament!
   1. The book of Psalms is the most quoted O.T. book in the N.T.: at least 79 times and alluded to 333 times, meaning about 5% of the NT is tied directly back to the Psalms! (<https://www.theopedia.com/new-testament-use-of-the-old-testament>)
   2. The most quoted OT passage in the NT is Psalms 110, quoted directly or indirectly about 27 times (<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-110/>), with 110:1 quoted or alluded to at least 18 times!
4. We can learn a lot about prayer through a study of the Psalms; how they viewed God & themselves in relationship to God, and how they prepared to pray!
   1. How they viewed God (the One who hears their prayers): God is (Ps. 14:1-2); God is Creator (Ps. 8); God is the source of life and light (Ps. 36); God is Judge (Ps. 96); God is King (Ps. 95:3; 5:2); God is our Protector (Ps. 18); God is Shepherd (Ps. 23); God is near (Ps. 34:18); God is Love (Ps. 100:5)
   2. How they viewed themselves before God: Sheep in need of a Shepherd (Ps. 100:3); Sinners in need of mercy (Ps. 51)
5. Nothing connects us to God like prayer, and no one connected to God in prayer like the psalmists!
   1. This is not to say there are certain activities or rituals that must be done before prayer, but that the very lives the psalmists lived prepared them to pray when it was time.
6. Let us prepare to pray like the psalmists!

The Psalmists Prepared to Pray by…

* + 1. Studying God’s Word

1. Psalm 1
   1. The Book of Psalms opens by dispelling the common illusion that the sinful life is the good life.
   2. Daily the world is being brainwashed into thinking that true and lasting satisfaction is found by indulging the lusts of the flesh.
   3. Television, radio, movies, and the internet all suggest that permissiveness is the road to fulfillment – that the life of purity is dismissed as “puritanical, restrictive.” But the psalmist sets the record straight.
   4. Knowing God’s word is the deterrent to sin and straying onto the path of destruction!
   5. To be truly blessed, steer clear of the lifestyle of the wicked! (Must know God’s word to do that!) – the Psalmist meditated on the law of the Lord day and night!
2. Psalm 19:7-11 *(Psalm 119)*
   1. These two psalms alone show much study of God’s word guides their prayers! (119:105)
   2. In the word of God is much value and a great reward for keeping His commandments!
   3. God’s word serves as a warning (19:11)
3. As disciples of Jesus we must study His word in preparation for prayer so that we might live the godly lives we are called to (Jn. 8:31-32; II Tim. 2:15).

By the Scriptures the believer is taught to resist the devil (Js. 4:7), flee from temptation (II Tim. 2:22), hate sin and avoid the very appearance of evil (Eph. 5:11; I Thess. 5:22; II Tim. 2:19)!

1. To be able to pray like the psalmists we need to prepare by studying God’s word!
   * 1. Living God’s Word
        + 1. Psalm 26:1-3

David describes his life separated to God from the world.

He does that by stating he walked according to God’s truth (must know it to practice it).

David conducted himself with moral integrity – He had consistently walked in dependence on the Lord.

In language borrowed from metallurgy, he submits himself to God to be tested for genuineness and sincerity, to be proved in the smelting furnace for the presence of dross.

Both as to his heart (affections) and his mind (motives), he was confident of acquittal because he had always kept the Lord's lovingkindness before him and had walked in paths of faithfulness to God's Word.

* + - * 1. Psalm 66:16-20

The psalmist here knew wickedness in his heart would hinder his prayer!

From a life that walks with God (living His truths) God heard his prayer.

* + - * 1. Psalm 130

It appears here that the psalmist believes only the perfectly sinless can pray…is that so? (130:3)

No, the psalmists recognize we sin but here it is stated that God forgives!

By living by His word and hoping on His promises we can be forgiven and redeemed, and He will hear our prayers!

* + - * 1. As disciples of Jesus we must “walk in a worthy manner” of the gospel to which we are called! (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; I Thess. 2:12) – “Practice what you preach!”

I Pet. 1:6-9: Peter uses the same metallurgy language as David did (Ps. 26) and describes the trials of life as testing our faith and will prove our sincerity, faithfulness and love for Jesus, and ultimately the saving of our souls! (Vindication before God as David once asked for)

* + - * 1. To be able to pray like the psalmists we need to prepare by living God’s word!
    1. Having Broken & Contrite Hearts
       - 1. Psalm 51:17

David’s sin (adultery with Bathsheba) had been found out (II Sam. 11)!

Even though the psalmists prepared their hearts by serving God and understood sin could hinder their prayers, they still had a healthy understanding of their sinfulness.

One who is not arrogant or proud in their sin, but broken-hearted over it, David says God will not despise.

The preparation here when one has sinned is to be grieved over it when we ask God to forgive.

Psalm 51 as a whole reminds us that when we sin and fall short (Rom. 3:23) we are to confess our sins before God with a broken and contrite heart.

It is not a check list we strike off “Brokenness and Contrition” before praying but that without those feelings we won’t even pray! *(Why pray for forgiveness if not grieved and think we have done nothing wrong?)*

* + - * 1. As disciples of Jesus we need to recognize where and when we fail and seek God’s forgiveness!

I Jn. 1:6-10: We sin, and so when we do let us confess it to God to be forgiven!

* + - * 1. To be able to pray like the psalmists we need to prepare by praying from a broken heart over sin!
    1. Surrendering to God
  1. Psalm 31:5

1. Psalm 31 is a psalm of David but because of Psalm 31:5 it is associated with Jesus:
   1. “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.”
   2. Luke 23:46: Jesus cried this with a loud voice before He died.
2. Considering Jesus cried out this surrendering of one’s self to God, quoting this portion of the psalm as He was about to die on the cross, in accordance with God’s plan (I Cor. 15:3-4), what does this kind of commitment and surrender mean in a person’s life?
   1. Acts 7:59: Stephen called on Jesus and said this as he saw Him standing at the right-hand of God (7:56).
3. When we surrender our souls to God we mean everything that we are and will do!
   1. As disciples of Jesus we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30), and be ready to follow Him even if it means sacrificing our lives (Lk. 9:23-25).
      1. Jesus is our example in submitting His will to the Father’s – Mt. 26:39
      2. II Tim. 1:12: Paul stated that he continued to suffer for Jesus because he had faith in Him who he entrusted himself with! *God is worthy of our trust and surrendering to!*
      3. If we don’t surrender our hearts to God like this we won’t pray consistently! *Our desires will always come first!*
   2. To be able to pray like the psalmists we need to prepare by surrendering our hearts to God!
      1. Offering a Sacrifice
         * 1. Psalm 5:3; 54:6; 66:13-15
4. 5:1-3: A prayer to God in the morning. Giving to God of our attention and time first thing.
5. 54:6: Sacrifice and praise go together hand-in-hand.
6. 66:13-15: Sacrifice to God was natural response to having prayers answered.
   1. Sacrifice and prayer can be seen in the life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:
      1. Gen. 12:8; 13:1-4, 18; 26:25; 33:20: All three built altars to God and called on His name!
   2. Sacrifice and prayer under the Old Law went together!
7. I Chr. 21:26; Is. 56:7: David sacrificed and prayed and was answered by God; God said, through Isaiah, that the people would sacrifice and His house would be a house of prayer.
8. The Old Law was such that their offerings (physical and figuratively) were in keeping with the word of God and so He would hear their prayers and answer them!
   1. As disciples of Jesus we are to give our lives as spiritual sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2).
9. Jesus is our High Priest (Heb. 10:19-23) and as His priests (I Pet. 2:4-5, 9) we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God! The image is the same concept from the Old Law applied spiritually under the New Covenant!
10. Heb. 13:15-16: We can offer up spiritual sacrifices through praise, thanksgiving, and sharing with others what God has richly blessed us with
11. With all of that in mind, it is important to note that only those who belong to God and offer Him sacrifices (by the way we live) can truly pray and be heard!
    1. To be able to pray like the psalmists we need to prepare by offering our lives as sacrifice to God!

Conclusion

1. Preparing to pray is not going through certain rituals or check-lists before praying; for the disciple of Jesus it is about being in Christ, with His sacrifice as the means to enter into God’s presence.
2. To pray like the psalmists what must we do in order to prepare our hearts for prayer?
   1. Study God’s word, live it, be broken over sin, surrender to God, & offer up sacrifices pleasing to Him!
   2. We need to be in the word so we even know what to pray about and for who and what.
   3. We need to surrender to His word instead of using prayer as a means to ignore His will for our lives.
   4. Only in Christ can we be a people prepared to pray at all times! (I Thess. 5:17)
3. May we live our lives in such a way as to, like the psalmists, prepare our hearts for the habit of “praying without ceasing” *(I Thess. 5:17)* and draw nearer to God!
4. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent & be baptized, and live for God!
5. If a Christian, do you pray as you should? Draw near to God. Repent and be renewed!
6. Whatever your requests, let them be known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!