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# PRAYER PUTS POWER IN YOUR LIFE

Sermon Series



By Brooky Stockton, PHD

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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# PRAYER PUTS POWER IN YOUR LIFE

A series of sermons given by Dr. Stockton

Written so the saints can have victory (Nike) over the world through their faith.

## Professional Sketch



Pastor Stockton is happily married and the father of five children. He graduated from Emmaus Bible School in 1968 and New Mexico State University (B.A.) in 1971. He received his Masters of Sacred Literature (M.S.L.) and Ph.D. in Theology from Trinity Seminary in Newburg, Indiana. Pastor Stockton has 35 years ministerial experience in evangelism, church planting, counseling, Bible teaching, and pastoral ministry. He has taught Greek, Hebrew, OT Literature, NT Literature, Eschatology, and Biblical Theology to post graduate students. He is a former Principal of Mesilla Valley Christian School, President of Evangelical Ministerial Fellowship, Vice President of New Mexicans Against Pornography, Founder of Integrity Ministries and Nike Research. He is published in Interest Magazine, Zion's Fire, NM Perspectives, and Trinity Perspectives. Dr. Stockton has taken three trips to the Holy Land, and has been involved in two archaeological excavations, one at Bethsaida and the other at Khirbet el-Maqatir (Ai). He has been a member of MBA and ETS, and is presently serving as pastor of Forest Meadow Baptist Church and Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Trinity Southwest in Albuquerque, New Mexico, TSWU.

PO Box 884  
Tijeras, New Mexico [87059]

Version 2.0

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## PREFACE

Success in life is answered prayer.

If a person receives what he asks for, he is a successful person indeed. Throughout my Christian life, I have been impressed with God’s amazing answers to prayer, but I have also been bewildered at the times of silence.

There was a time when my little boy asked me for a bicycle for his birthday. Because I had just moved into a new city to take a new job, we had no cash. The purchase of a bike was out of the question. I prayed to the Lord. Oh, how I prayed. I shared the request with no one, absolutely, no one! On the day of my son’s birthday, a Christian brother showed up at my door saying, “God laid it on my heart to come over today. Would your boy like to have a bicycle?” I was stunned!! I will never forget my son’s joy, and mine, when we brought home a brand new bike.

But, silence! Oh, the thundering, terrifying sounds of silence! What does it all mean? Is God testing us or is there something in our life that is hindering our prayers? Because I want to be successful in prayer, I spent time plowing through the Scriptures in search of answers on how to pray better. I have not arrived . . . but I press on towards the mark of the high calling of God.

*There is a secret prayer, but there are no secrets about prayer.* All you need to know about prayer is found in the Holy Scriptures. What is available to all is available to you and I. Thus, this work is the result of what God has been teaching me on prayer.

My prayer is that as a result of this study, prayer will put Power in Your Life!

Brooky Stockton, pastor

# 1 THE POWER OF PRAYER

*"Everything is possible for him who believes"- Jesus*

Have you ever heard the lyric, "I could have danced all night"?

**Mark 9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.**

What a night! Peter, James, and John were privileged to witness the appearance of Moses and Elijah and the spectacular transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 9:1-2). It was truly a mountain top experience. There is no high like being with the Most High.

**Mark 9:9 And as they were coming down the mountain . . .**

**Mark 9:18-19 "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able."**

Afterward, Jesus led his three theology students off the mountain and into the dust, grit, and heat of the valley. Nothing could be more sharply contrasted with life on the mountain top than life in the Valley. On the mountain they saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His splendor. In the valley they saw the degradation of man in all his depravity.

A professor once told me, "You don't plant corn on a mountain top. You plant corn in the valley."

There is a lesson for us here. God did not intend for us to live out our faith in neat, orderly monasteries, but to live out our lives among the messy, miserable problems of the masses. He did not intend for us to possess a polished unused saber, but to go to war with a nicked and gouged sword. Our faith needs to be able to survive amidst the chaotic, perplexing problems of people.

If you will apply one lesson from this story about perplexing PROBLEMS IN THE VALLEY, it will put power in your life.



So, what is Valley Life like?

## **1.1 ARGUMENTS IN THE VALLEY**

**Mark 9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.**

When Jesus and his three students arrived, they found the scribes arguing with the other nine disciples. The embittered, arrogant, religious lawyers were compelled to argue and debate with Jesus' disciples. They were trying to "set them straight" about the Bible. And, it will be no different for you and me. There always seems to be an abundance of arrogant, lawyer-types that are compelled to force their worldview on others (Mark 9:14). Atheists, homosexuals, gender-bender politicians come to mind.

A surgeon, an architect and a lawyer were having a heated barroom discussion concerning which of their professions is actually the **oldest** profession. The surgeon said: "Surgery is the oldest profession. God took a rib from Adam to create Eve and you can't go back further than that." The architect spoke: "Hold on! God was the first architect when he created the world out of chaos in 7 days, and you can't go back any further than THAT!" The lawyer puffed his cigar and declared: "Gentlemen, Gentlemen, . . .who do you think created the CHAOS?"

Jesus confronted these lawyers and asked, "What are you discussing with them?" But, before he could get a reply from the, a man in the crowd shouted out the answer.

## **1.2 DEMONS IN THE VALLEY**

**Mark 9:17-18 "Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out. And I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it."**

The distressed father poured out the pain in his life. Apparently, demon possession caused his son to be mute. The demons would seize and slam him to the ground like an invisible, WWF wrestler. On the ground the boy would stiffen, shake uncontrollably, and foam at the mouth while grinding his teeth in a horrid contorted state.

While this appears similar to epilepsy, the text says the boy's condition was due to an evil spirit.

It is important to recognize that demons are real and that Satan is real. Their aim is to mislead, confuse, enslave, maim, and destroy happiness among mankind. In a world that is inebriated with the scientific, it would be a mistake to deny the influence of evil spirits and attribute everything to natural phenomenon. Satan is a liar and a murderer who seeks to mislead and mess up the lives of men and women:

*John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

Even while Jesus was carrying on a conversation with the man, the evil spirit gripped the boy and threw him into convulsions. What a pitiful sight: head shaking, eyes rolled back into his eye sockets; and, spit, saliva, and blood drooling out of the boy's mouth; and, teeth grinding, the body contorted, limbs stiff as frozen beef, and wallowing in the dust and dirt!

Have you ever seen an evil spirit? One day in a Baptist church in Alabama, Satan appeared on stage hissing and spitting out invectives against the congregation. The pastor disappeared behind the stage, and everybody raced to the exits except one man. As the foul odors of his presence filled the auditorium, Satan asked the solitary man if he was afraid of him. He replied, "Nope!" "Why not?" Satan inquired. The man leaning back in his chair with his arms crossed replied, "For 25 years, I've been married to your sister."

We may never see Satan, but the Bible informs us that the genesis of inexplicable evil is often due to the Prince of the Power of the Air.

### **1.3 POWERLESSNESS IN THE VALLEY**

**Mark 9:17-18 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.**

What a stunning statement, "I told your disciples to cast him out, and they could not." Though Jesus trained the nine, this problem appeared to be too big, too nasty, too human, and too messy for the disciples. No one could solve the perplexing human problem! Not the father, not the scribes, and not his star pupils.

How haunting are the words, "they could not." Perhaps this was the greatest problem in the valley—powerlessness among God's people. Fear is always powerless.

I don't know about you, but when I see these physical, fleshly, visible, tangible, sweaty, nasty, messy people-problems, and waves of doubt seems to swamp my little ship of faith. As long as I'm safely docked in my little study library, my faith is bold and brassy. But when I have to launch this vessel into sea of conflict, the winds of fear and unbelief blow my soul off course.

#### **1.4 UNBELIEF IN THE VALLEY**

**Mark 9:19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.**

Jesus targeted the heart of the problem, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?"

Unbelief--that wretched arrow that pierces my little bubbles of faith. Doubt, the mother of all sins, seems ready to birth all the fruits of the Poisonous Tree into my soul.

What is it about us that we can believe in Jesus, believe in His resurrection, believe that He will come again, but the minute we face an ugly, salivating problem, sharp needles of unbelief pops our balloons of optimism? Maybe this is why faith is so esteemed in heaven. We are creatures that find it easier to walk by sight and not by faith.

#### **1.5 JESUS IN THE VALLEY**

**Mark 9:19 He answereth . . . bring him unto me.**

There is hope in the valley because Jesus was there.

Jesus said, "Bring him to me!"

Things got worse before they got better. As soon as the spirit saw Jesus, the spirit seized the boy with his raw, brute power and delivered his enforcement. Slamming him to the ground the boy began to wet his pants, salivate, and shake like a human earthquake.

Jesus inquired about the boy's state. We discover the possessed was afflicted with his condition from the time he was a youth. If there were any bubbles of hope left in the disciples, the father's answer must have popped them all: "of a child." This visible, nasty problem was deep-rooted and long standing.

## 1.6 HOPE IN THE VALLEY

**Mark 9:23-24 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.**

Reaching deep down into his pocket for a penny's worth of faith, the father invested all that he had in Jesus: "If you can do anything, take pity on us."

The "if clause" is a first class conditional in Greek and is assumed true. The needy father was fighting spiritual poverty, but he came up with a penny of hope and invested it with Jesus.

Our Lord repeated his words, "If you can." and then, He injected the dejected with steroids of certainty: "*All things are possible to him who believes.*"

Apparently, Jesus was giving the man a blank check where it is impossible to overdraw its account in God's bank.

A traveler crossed a frozen stream  
In trembling one day;  
Later a teamster drove across,  
And whistled all the way.  
Great faith and little faith alike  
Were granted safe convoy;  
One had the pangs of needless fear,  
The other all the joy. (Source unknown)

Ya gotta love this dad! Jesus' words produced a bull market run in the father's faith. He let out a wet war whoop, "I believe!" This could be interpreted as "I trust you!" Here was a man that had little, but he was fully invested with Jesus. Honest and transparent, he then confessed his struggle against the bone-crushing weight doubt sitting like an elephant on his chest: "But, help Thou my unbelief."

With faith invested, Jesus declared a holy jihad against the demon from hell. Dropping a power bomb on Jake the Snake, Jesus’ power lifted the spirit and threw him out of the ring to land on the rock hard earth. With the authority of an executioner, Jesus commanded the spirit to “never enter him again.” The scene was a sweaty, terrifying affair. After the boy was thrown into convulsions, he lay pale-still in the dust. Some in the crowd thought, “He is dead.”

Spurgeon preached on this text: “Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth” (Judges 6:6). Where lays the secret strength of faith? It lies in the food it feeds on.

## 1.7 PRAYER IN THE VALLEY

**Mark 9:28-29** And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer.

Mystified, the young theology students approached Jesus wanting to know why they could not deliver the boy from the toilet-faced spirit.

Jesus’ answer was stunning: “This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer!”

Interestingly, Jesus did not say, “You do not have enough faith.” Some versions have the phrase, “but by prayer and fasting.” The word, *fasting*, is not in the original text. It was not fasting the disciples lacked, but prayer! Apparently, the whole garbled scene: the dispute, the astonished crowd, and episode of epileptic seizures was due to the disciples’ failure to seriously pray and to use the hammer lock of faith to bolt the demon into submission. ***Powerlessness was the result of prayerlessness.***

There is a major question to answer here. Is not our powerlessness to defeat Satan and to break ourselves loose from his strangling holds due to a lack of prayer? ***Powerlessness was the result of prayerlessness.***

Truth be known, prayer meetings are the poorest attended meetings of the church. We are bored with prayer. We are tired of prayer. We really do not believe in prayer. We would rather work than pray; party than pray; watch TV than pray. Prayer is hard. Prayer is not for wimps. It is a warrior’s business.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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Do we really think that effective preaching is inherent in the preacher? Do we really think that initiating a new program will solve our service needs? Do we really think that throwing money at a problem will unravel the tangled knots in our lives? Do we think that going through the motions of visitation will save souls?

John Wesley said, *"God will do nothing apart from prayer in the realm of history . . . God does nothing but in answer to prayer."*

*We can do much after we have prayed, but we can do nothing before we have prayed.*

"Prayers," said E.M. Bounds, "are deathless. They are our capital stock in heaven."

Prayer brings life. Strong saints are strong knockers. In prayer we acknowledge our creature hood and our dependence on God. Little prayer is the enemy of much prayer because it touches the conscience without touching the throne.

A pastoral friend of mine received news that a young Christian girl in his flock had given up the faith. He and another Christian went over to her apartment in an attempt to encourage her. But, she was hell-bound to go her own way and was determined to party till the cows came home.

Instinctively, this brother fell to his knees in the doorway of her apartment when a carload of boys arrived to take her out. She literally had to step over his body to get through the door, down the sidewalk, and into the back seat of the car. This pastor continued to pray. Interestingly, as the lusty men and women drove to their party, the driver turned on the radio which was tuned to a Christian radio station playing the song, "There is Power in the Blood."

For an unknown reason, the backsliding woman was pierced to the core and ordered the driver to take her back to her apartment. They argued with her, but she prevailed. They drove her home. When she arrived, this Christian and her roommates were still praying.

I don't know if prayer will always produce such dramatic results, but I can say, without prayer we will see less results!

It is always more fun to party all night than to pray all night. If you are going to confront the perplexing problems in the valley, more prayer is the means of putting power into your life.

It might be good to end with some power principles found on church signs:

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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*Running low on faith? Stop in for a fill-up."*

*"Fight truth decay-study the Bible daily."*

*"People are like tea bags-you have to put them in hot water before you know how strong they are."*

Faith in faith has little power, but faith in Jesus uproots problems and levels mountains.

***If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth-*** Jesus

Let us pray!

"Lord, we believe . . . but help thou our unbelief."

## 2 TEACH US TO PRAY, I

### Part I

And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

Two men were talking together about religion. The first challenged the second, "If you are so religious, let me hear you say the Lord's prayer. I'll bet you ten bucks you can't say it." The second replied, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." The first pulled out his wallet and took out a ten dollar bill, muttering, "I didn't think you could do it."

In our study on prayer, we come to what is called "The Lord's Prayer."

In truth, it is the "Disciple's Prayer" given in answer to their prayer, "Lord, teach us to pray."

The disciples sensed in Jesus' praying a depth, a mystery, and richness in His relationship to the Father. And, the disciples yearned for that relationship. If you have sensed there is more to prayer than you have yet experienced, this lesson is for you.



For centuries the mysteries of the pyramids and their ancient messages were locked in time. In 1799, Napoleon's troops discovered a stone in lower Egypt near the town of Rosetta with inscriptions on it that became the key that unlocked the mysteries of Egyptian hieroglyphics. It is called the Rosetta Stone, and it eventually made its way into the British Museum in London where it resides today. It is a slab of black basalt dating from 196 BC inscribed by the ancient Egyptians with a royal decree praising their King Ptolemy V.

The inscription is written on the stone three times, once in hieroglyphic, once in demotic, and once in Greek. Thomas Young, a British physicist, and Jean Francois Champollion, a French Egyptologist, collaborated to decipher the hieroglyphic and demotic texts by comparing them with the known Greek text. From this meager starting point a generation of Egyptologists



eventually managed to read most everything that remains of the Egyptians' ancient writings. The Lord's prayer is the Rosetta Stone that unlocks the great mysteries of prayer.

*You can open the mystery of prayer by using the keys Jesus gave His disciples.*



## **2.1      KEY ONE: PASSION**

What is needed among Christians is not ability, but teachability; not power, but a passion for prayer.

Most of us are fair weather Christians and we only pray when the storms of life threaten our boat ride on the sea of life. We know little about how to pray and err when we assume that just because a person attends church, he knows something about prayer. The prayer meeting is generally the poorest attended meeting in the church.

We need an explosion of people crying, "Lord, teach us to pray." Passion for prayer is the instrument that triggers the avalanche of answered prayer. C.S. Lewis said he waked each morning with the hopes and dreams of each day rushing his soul like wild animals. His first duty was to push them all back and to pray.

Even clergy know little about prayer.

Most seminary education is theological rather than spiritual. Seminaries seek to impart correct conceptions about God. Preachers learn the outlines of the books of the Bible, the great theological issues of the ages, and how to preach. But, few have never taken a course under a master of prayer.

Unfortunately, there are few schools on the art of prayer.

Furthermore, the life of a clergyman is not one that is conducive to prayer. He is expected to visit the flock and give wham bam, killer messages each Sunday. If truth be known, even the preacher is expected to be a man of the world— a teaching, visiting, preaching, counseling, financial, organizational TV / radio-wizard.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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While the preacher is expected to have the humor of Bob Hope, the brains of Albert Einstein, and the good looks of a James Bond, he is seldom expected to be a man of prayer.

E.M. Bounds confirms this observation, "The pulpit of this day is weak in praying. The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer. Prayer in the pulpit is too often only official—a performance for the routine of service."

Edward Payson said, "Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to minister. Pray, then, my dear brother, pray, pray, pray." (Preacher and Prayer, E.M. Bounds, 1907, p. 32).

There is a need among the clergy and congregation alike to enter into the disciplines of prayer.

But, to exhort men to pray is not enough unless they are offered serious instruction about how to pray. And, to learn how to pray, men must possess a passion for prayer.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman wrote to a friend about an experience he had with Praying Hyde's influence on him. Unsuccessful in a series of meetings, Chapman learned that Praying Hyde was in town and asked him to pray for him. Hyde came to his room and dropped on his knees. Five minutes of silence went by before Hyde uttered, "Oh, God."

Another five minutes went by and Chapman heard the most genuine, sincere petition he had ever heard.

That night the meeting hall was packed and over fifty souls came forward to receive Christ as their Savior. This is passion, intensity, enthusiasm, fear, respect, holiness, and faith all rolled into one.



## **2.2 KEY TWO: PREVENIENCE**

It was Jesus who prayed first. There can be no doubt that part of His prayer was dedicated to the welfare of His disciples. The disciples' petition to teach them to pray was simply a positive response to His initiative in prayer.

When we seek God, we hope that God will respond to our seeking.

However, it is not man who takes the initiative in the act of praying, **but God Who takes the initiative in the action of prayer that makes a Blue Ribbon Prayer.** It was God Who commanded, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (Jeremiah 33:3). It was God Who pleaded, "Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18). "He summons the heavens and the earth," declared the psalmist (50:4). Every act of praying is simply a response to God's prior action. Theologians call this, "the doctrine of prevenience." The heart of the gospel is not that the sinner loves God, but that God loves the sinner and seeks him. We love Him because He first loved us.

*The mighty action of prayer is built on the foundation of God's relentless search for lost men.*

*Prayer is not man's search for God, but a man's submission to the staggering pursuit of God's love for him.*

*We must be humble or stumble.* The smallest desire to pray does not come from us, but from God stirring our hearts to seek Him.

This knowledge alone will keep us from being devoured by the lion of spiritual pride.

Pride hinders prayer and is about as welcome in heaven as an Arab in a synagogue. When we realize that prayer is not our mighty initiative to pursue God, but simply a response to His mighty love, we are in a position to be heard: "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2).

The doctrine of prevenience helps us know that even in our praying, God is the First Cause.



## **2.3      KEY THREE: PRESENTMENT**

### **To Whom do we present our prayers?**

Backsliding Israel prayed to idols. The Pharisee in the temple prayed "to himself" (Luke 18:11).

The Samaritans worship "that which they do not know," declared Jesus (John 4:22).

Greeks prayed to Zeus or Apollo or Aphrodite.

Moslems pray to the false deity, “Allah.”

New Agers pray to an impersonal “Force.”

Indians pray to the “Great Spirit.”

Hindus pray to everything--rats and cows and trees because they are pantheists who believe that all of nature is part of god.

Mormons pray to a god with a physical body and believe that *as god once was, we are, and as god is, we shall become.*

Catholics pray to Mary.

**But, the Lord’s instructions about prayer help us to have presentable prayers.**

The first word in the Lord’s prayer is the word, “Father” (Pa,ter), not “our.” The word “our” (h`mw/n: humon) is the second word used in Matthew 6:9.

The title, “Father,” is in the emphatic position signifying the importance of the term. The world addresses the Inexplicable as “God.” The Jews addressed God as “the Creator,” or “Lord God Almighty,” or “Adonai” or “YHWH.” But, it is Jesus who introduces God to us as the Father.

During the sunrise of Jesus’ consciousness, we hear the twelve-year old reply to his parents, “I must be in my Father’s house” (Luke 2:49) At high noon He said, “I and my father are one” (John 10:31). And, during sunset in Jesus’ life He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Jesus uses this title approximately a hundred times in John’s gospel. He was unwearied with communion whether arising early or staying up late to pray.

**First, the title Father carries with it the idea of source and sustenance and strength of life.**

He is our Father by virtue of His creation. To call God “Creator” is to assert a basic distinction between the Creator and the creature. This great Christian conviction advances the truth that God’s existence is utterly independent of every other being, and that man’s existence is utterly dependent on the Supreme Being. God has no need of us, but we have a great need for Him. God does not change or grow, but man is always becoming. God is finished. Man is unfinished. God has no needs. Man has nothing but needs. God created all things; Man can create nothing. God is

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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independent of His creation. Man is dependent on Him and His creation. God is eternal. Man is temporal. God is in heaven. Man is on earth.

*It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves (Psalm 100:3).*

Not only does man owe his existence to God, but his continued existence to God. The Greeks taught that man was immortal; that his spirit would ascend unmolested to take his place among the gods. The Bible teaches, however, that God alone has immortality, and for this reason alone, man needs God (1 Timothy 6:16). If there is any hope of life after death, it can only be found in relation to the One who alone has immortality. Only the eternal Creator can maintain temporal man. To wake up every day is a gift of life from the Creator.

*True prayer, then, is when creatures truly, firmly, consistently depend upon their Creator. And, it is here men begin in prayer: a debtor, a dependent, a creature in need of relationship with God.*

And, it is this difference that gives us hope! Jesus put His disciples in contact with their Heavenly Father, their Creator.

**Second, God is not only our Father by virtue of creation, but by virtue of redemption.**

Man’s actual status is one of self-centeredness, “I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself” (Genesis 4:10). Four times Adam used the word, “I.” Man is fallen. He is imprisoned within himself. He is trapped in the black hole of wretched subjectivism. On a California campus, there was a poster advertising an Eastern religion with a caption that read,

*“You can go in and in and in, And then you go in and in and in, And after that you go in and in and in and in . . .”*

Man’s problem is not IGNORANCE nor is his need EDUCATION. Man is lost. He has wholly refused to live under the terms set by His Creator—in thankful dependence and God-centeredness.

It is a good thing that men do not have to pay taxes on what they think they are worth. Man is a slave to his own estimation of greatness.

In the machinery of his own mind, he remains the “big wheel.”

Like a ball of twine, man is all wrapped up in himself. Man has become self-willed, self-centered, self-organized, self-dependent. Men are into self-image, self-advancement, self-hypnosis, self-therapy, self-healing, self-publishing, self-employment, self-proclamation, self-helps. Man is so into self there is even a magazine called, "Self." "Selfies" are the new cell-phone rage.

Man has rejected God's plan for his life and presumed to substitute blind self-rule based upon his own, partial, distorted knowledge of his own frail goodness and selfish will. He even seeks to believe that he is god. So deeply has man fallen into self-centeredness that even after the disastrous centuries of bloodshed and misery, man still thinks that he can produce peace and tranquility by human legislation, human diplomacy, and human government.

Oh, miserable man! What can deliver him from his inner prison?

The answer lies in the gospel of Jesus Christ. "I declare unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached . . . Christ died for your sins . . . and rose again" (1 Corinthians 15:1-12).

"For God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

The gospel saves men and delivers them from self-centeredness, and self-deceit. It takes their eyes off their belly button and focuses them on the historical events of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as their hope for eternal life, immortality, and eternal happiness.

The gospel saves men from sin and releases them from the magnetic powers of self-centeredness. The cross kills self and delivers them to serve Another.

When a man confesses his sinnerhood and receives Christ as His Savior, he becomes a child of God (John 1:12-13; Ephesians 5:1). He knows God, not only as his Creator, but His loving, redemptive Father. Through the cross the believing man is delivered from self-centeredness by taking his eyes off his temporal self and his measly, puny, wretched, self-centered problems to look at the Christ of history for his eternal hope and earthly purpose.

In the Lord's Prayer, the first word Jesus taught His disciples was, "Father." Not, me, my, or I.

When a Christian prays, he takes his eyes off himself and off of his problems and looks to Another so wholly and totally different from himself.

He takes his eyes off the temporal, and places them on the eternal; off the mortal, to the immortal; off of sin, and onto pure holiness.

In prayer, the Christian is delivered from self-centeredness by relinquishing his own stubborn sovereignty to rely upon the strength of the Only Sovereign. He is no longer the Sun in his own solar system, but is content to be a special planet whose life rotates around the Son.

His new Gestalt is wonderfully organized around the will of the Father.

When a Christian prays, he engages this relationship as a dependent child coming in joyful dependence and thankful obedience to his heavenly Father, the one Who gives and sustains his life. He knows that prayer is a privilege of the family. Because of being a member of God's house, the believer has a right to boldly approach God and present his petitions to His Heavenly Father.

A man cannot really pray, "Our Father" without longing in his heart for a relationship with his brothers and sisters in Christ. Terms like "our" or "us" or "to us" (plural in the Greek) remind us that we do not own the Father alone, but share the blessed kinship together with all who know Christ. **We cannot possibly relate to God without relating to the family of God.**

*A man who does not desire to pray or to have a relationship with the family of God cannot rightfully think of himself as a child of God.*

In closing, we must not grow weary in prayer.

Mrs. Hanover, the wife of a wealthy businessman had been praying for her unsaved husband when the telephone rang. Stunned, she dropped the phone shaking with unbelief. The news she received was so terrifying, that at that moment she stopped praying. Years went by before a young man named Roger entered Hanover Enterprises to see Mr. Hanover. The receptionist said it was impossible to see him, but that he could see his wife.

Now president of the company, Mrs. Hanover asked, "You knew my husband?" "Yes, sort of . . ." the young man stuttered. "You see, I was just released from the army, and I was hitchhiking back home when a man in a brand new Cadillac pulled over. When I saw his beautiful suit and the new car, I lost all hope of getting a ride. But, he let me in and offered me a lift to the next town." Stumbling for words, Roger continued. "Ma'm, I'm a little embarrassed to say this, but

I'm a Christian and while we were driving I shared with your husband about the joy Christ brought into my life and asked him if he would like to receive Christ as his Savior. He pulled the car over. I thought I was going to be ejected from the car. But, he bowed his head in prayer.

Afterward, he said, 'This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me.'" Mrs. Hanover interrupted, "What day was this?" Roger responded, "I'll never forget it. It was May 7th, the day I was released from the Army."

At that moment Mrs. Hanover burst into tears. "Where is your husband," Roger queried. "He is dead. That was the day I received the telephone call that he had just been killed in car accident. He never made it home." Sobbing uncontrollably, Mrs. Hanover added, "That is the day I stopped living for God because I thought He had not kept His word" (J.K. Johnson, (1992). *Why Christians Sin*. pp 39-41).

In summary, the Lord's Prayer is the Rosetta Stone that provides the first of three keys to powerful, effective prayer.

If you have a passion for prayer, understand provenience. Your presentment of prayer is to your Heavenly Father.

There you are inserting the keys that will unlock the mysteries and power of prayer.

Let us pray: "Father . . ."



## 3 TEACH US TO PRAY, II

In our study on prayer, we are studying “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is the Rosetta Stone that unlocks the mysteries of prayer. In it we find the keys to a deeper, more fulfilling prayer life.

We now come to the imperatives:



### 3.1 KEY FOUR: PRIORITIES

**Matthew 6:9 “Hallowed be thy name.”**

We have all seen children’s stories about Aladdin’s lamp where the genie pops out and grants three wishes. If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?

When I had young children and we were on vacation, I would hand the children ten dollars each and tell them that they could spend the money on anything they wished. Each would buy something different: an ice cream cone, a toy soldier, a rubber ball, jewelry, or some other treasure. Each purchase revealed values. Each had a different set of priorities.

In this prayer, Jesus is introducing us to the priorities of the Father.

**The first priority in prayer is the honor of God’s name.**

A name in the Bible is often more than a title. It reveals the attributes and character of the individual, and this is especially true with the name or titles of God (Exodus 34:5-7; Psalm 9:10). God has many titles, such as “Elohim,” or “Adonai,” or “Jehovah-Shalom,” but He only has one name. That Name is YHWH (*hy<Bh.a.,Yahovah*) which means, “I Am Who I Am” (Exodus 3:14).

The archaic term, “Hallowed” comes from the Greek word “holy” or “sanctify” (a` giasqh,tw). It is an aorist imperative instructing us that His name and His honor should immediately become our first concern. Too often we are like toddlers demanding immediate gratification of our own lusts.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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All that is wrong with the world emerges from the neglect of God. When a Christian prays, "Hallowed be thy name," he is praying that all that he thinks and says and does might stem from a heart organized around an ambition to exalt and glorify God:

*1 Corinthians 10:31 "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all."*

*Leviticus 19:12 "You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD."*

It almost goes without saying that curse words or minced words should never be found upon our lips and that tattoos and idolatrous symbols should never be found upon our bodies (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Haddon Robinson has an old recipe for Rabbit Stew. On the recipe card the first instruction is, "First, catch the rabbit." If you want to live accurately, first pray that you might catch an infectious passion to esteem Christ in all that you do and say.



### **3.2 KEY FIVE: PROGRAM**

**Matthew 6:10 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

First, the word, "kingdom" (h` basilei,a) does not refer to a place or an event. It has to do with authority and sovereignty. It refers to "the rule of God" in the life of a person. "Let come" is an aorist imperative imploring Heaven that God's rule might be recognized among God's people NOW; that Christians might surrender to the rule and reign of God in their lives TODAY! It is a prayer that God's authority might be recognized by all men; by all Christians; by all politicians; by all kings; by all nations.

The prayer exposes the root problem of every man. The Scripture says, "All we like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). This prayer strikes at the heart of personal autonomy; personal pride; and the spirit of independence of men. "Thy kingdom come" strikes a blow to the proud libertarian. It forces a man to his knees.

And, isn't this at the heart of every social problem we have in America today? How different things would be if mayors, council members, administrators, governors, representatives,

senators, judges, lawyers, and presidents would learn, know, perceive, recognize, and confess Christ as king and surrender to His law order.

The phrase, "Thy will be done on earth" strongly suggest that His will is not being done on earth. Society's problems are not due to economics, but to rebellion against God. Man is a sinner and his sins distort desires and create messes in the lives of others. The great need among men is the need to recognize the sovereignty of God and to surrender to His will. A heart enthroned with Christ does no harm to his fellow man.

**Second**, the definite article identifying the term, kingdom, suggests that God has a kingdom program. The kingdom of God is the manifestation of the rule of God in the person and ministry of Christ to defeat man's enemies and to bring men under the blessings of His messianic reign.

The kingdom was present when Jesus was on earth, but in another sense, the fullness of God's kingdom is not yet manifest among men. His kingdom is in heaven, not upon earth. His kingdom is spiritual, not earthly (John 18:36). His kingdom is here now in the sense that the many of the citizens of His kingdom are still on earth (Colossians 1:13, 14), but it is not here now in the sense that the kingdom program is not fully operational on this earth. "Thy kingdom come" means the final and total destruction of the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), the purging of evil from society (Matthew 13:36-43), and joyful fellowship at the messianic feast (Luke 13:28-29). Whether the kingdom will be established on this earth or a renewed earth is still hotly debated (2 Peter 3:10ff; Revelation 21).

**At this point it is important to challenge two theologies.**

First, there is postmillennialism, which believes the kingdom can and should be expanded through Christians at work in human government.

Secondly, there is dispensationalism that believes society is going to hell in a hand basket and that there is nothing Christians can do about it, or should do about it. The first is ultra positive and places a great onus on Christians to expand the kingdom. The second is ultra negative and refuses to except any responsibility for challenging corruption in government. One view leads to involvement, the other to isolationism.

The kingdom Christians pray for is not a millennial kingdom or some alleged future reign of Christ on earth, but the absolute, unconditional surrender of men to Christ's authority NOW!

Two words challenge our theology here--the term "earth" and "let come."

The term, "let come" signifies that in some way the prayer of Christians hastens the coming kingdom. The word "earth" implies that God is claiming authority over the entire world . . . all men . . . and all of man's institutions. Christ claimed jurisdiction over all men on the eve of His crucifixion (John 17:2); therefore, all men have a duty to acknowledge His authority over them.

The kingdom Christians pray for is not a millennial kingdom or some alleged future reign of Christ on earth, but the absolute, unconditional surrender of men to Christ's authority NOW!

We know that Christians cannot organize and bring in the kingdom. The legislature cannot take a vote and bring the kingdom to the earth. The gospel is not about improving society or government, but it does have a right to confront society and articulate Divine demands upon government people.

The kingdom gospel will not save society, but it will save men who live in society.

The kingdom will not come because Christians infiltrate the political structures of society and take over government, but in some way its purposes are advanced through prayer when we pray for government.

His kingdom will not come by human effort, but by Divine intervention. According to Daniel 2, Christ's kingdom will not come gradually but in a sudden, dynamic, irresistible way to destroy man's kingdoms and to establish the reign of God over this earth. Christians can bear witness of the kingdom, submit to kingdom law, and challenge men to enter the kingdom, (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23), but they cannot make it grow (Mark 4:27). But, through gospel proclamation, the rule of God is extended over the hearts of men. And, when men acknowledge His authority and God's law order, society improves.

Until that day, we pray, "Thy kingdom come." Until that day, we pray that His rule might be realized in our lives, in our families, in our church, and in our nation. And, that rule is realized when we yield to His sovereignty now. However, there is a tension between our will and His will. For that reason, prayer is an all out effort to identify rebel thoughts and acts that have not yet surrendered to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Closely associated with God’s rule is the prayer, “thy will be done.” The great challenge for each of us is to pursue His will, not our own.

When Ivan was in a Russian prison camp, a fellow prisoner watched him praying silently. In a critical remark, the prisoner stated, “Prayers won’t help you get out of here any faster.” Ivan responded, “I do not pray to get out of here, but to do the will of God” (Daily Bread, December 29, 1993).



### **3.3      KEY SIX: PROVISION**

**Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.**

To the overweight American, this prayer seems almost irrelevant. Until we are forced by negative circumstances to depend on God for daily sustenance, this prayer may lack meaning.

The term bread is symbolic for all of man’s physical needs. It would include all that is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of life: water, food, clothes, bedding, shelter, rent, love, and general happiness. This prayer is not only a plea, but an affirmation. We are physical beings and our Heavenly Father desires that we look to Him for our physical needs.

The term “us” implies that our prayers should extend beyond ourselves and include intercessory prayer for the needs of others.

The verb “give” is an aorist imperative instructing us that we have a right to come before our Father and respectfully ask him to meet our physical needs. God, not government, is the source of our provision. We are to petition Heaven for our needs, not fill out forms for government handouts. God is most glorified and we are most satisfied when we bow in humble dependence on Him Who sustains all things.

A critic once said to a preacher, “You just live from hand to mouth.” “Yes,” replied the minister, “But, it is His hand, and my mouth.”

God wants us to look to Him, not the government! With today’s nanny state, looking to the government to provide us education, food stamps, jobs, and security is a wicked temptation that

produces sick, weak Christians. In the minds of most Americans government is a god that provides jobs, healthcare, roads, schools, education, doctors, passports, driver's licenses, etc.

Government competes with God for the devotion of the people, and we must be fiercely refuse to petition government or "prey" to some administrative judge for relief.

This text does not mean we are to pray and not work. Man is called to provide for his own family and those who do not do so are worse than infidels (1 Timothy 5:8). Man bears the onus of plowing, planting, and harvesting. But, no farmer can make the corn grow. God is sovereign over the blessings of harvest. Therefore, we look to him.

The minister also looks to God to provide for his needs, but the people of God are also called to support their pastor(s) as part of their duty to Christ. Many a minister has lived in destitution because the flock has muzzled the ox with treads out the corn (1 Corinthians 9:9)—canon case law related to the Eighth Commandment, "Thou shall not steal." Depriving a minister of his due is a form of stealing. Possibly, individual deprivation may be individual families have deprived ministers of their financial support. This prayer is about "our," not "me," "my," and "I."

The word "daily" has given Greek scholars a run for their money in that the word cannot be found frequently in Greek literature. Robertson concludes it means "upon" or "on" or "the next day's" bread—a prayer of the household servant responsible for keeping the storage bin full.

The text appears to imply that we are to rely on God one day at a time. We need today's provisions today and tomorrow's provisions tomorrow. It is indeed a gift of grace to be content with God's provision today and trust God for tomorrow. It is one thing to have a hundred thousand dollars in the bank and say God is good, and it is quite another to have an empty bank account and say that God is good. Until you look into an empty flour barrel and pray, "Thank you Lord for what you are going to provide today," you have not yet tested this prayer, "Give us today our daily bread." It is one thing to be fat and full and say, "God provides," and it is quite another to have an empty wallet and believe, "God will provide." There is nothing like having nothing to test your faith.

Can God provide day by day?

When my wife and I were married and just embarking on a career in the ministry, we decided not to rely on our own wisdom but to trust God completely for our daily provision. We decided to

test the promises of God. Honestly, I never dreamed anything could be so difficult and exhausting. I hope you don't mind if I share a few stories. The names are changed to protect people's privacy.

Influenced by the life and story of George Mueller, I decided not take a salary for teaching Bible at a Christian school. Though I don't think this was a wise decision today, it was instructive. It was the middle of the month and my family of five was running low on groceries, real low! It was Sunday, and all I had for the rest of the month was ten dollars. I mean all the money I had in the whole world was in my wallet. And, I had not given anything to the Lord. In a moment of time, I became a hilarious giver and put the ten dollars in the collection plate. And then it dawned on me what I had done. On Tuesday morning, my wife informed me before breakfast that we were completely out of food and milk and that she was going to feed our children their last meal- cereal and watered down powdered milk. My wife and I did not eat. I prayed. Oh, I prayed. I came home from work at noon to check the mailbox. In the mail was a check for 25 dollars, the sweetest 25 dollars I have ever seen in my entire life. What was interesting was how we received it. My mom had cleaned out some closets and threw out a bunch of old papers. Dad decided to go through the trash and see if she might have over looked something. Digging through the garbage, Dad found an envelope with a twenty-five dollar U.S. Treasury Bond inside that was given to me as a boy. Dad smiled and mailed me the check. That 25 dollars fed my family for two weeks!

A pastor friend of mine was a man who lived by faith. He was an unsalaried servant of Christ and knew too often the trauma of being penniless. The day before his daughter's birthday, he asked his six-year-old daughter what she wanted for her birthday. She answered, "Daddy, I want a cherry pie." My friend was so poor he made Tiny Tim's pet mouse look like an English Baron.

Jim and his wife didn't have a dime in their purse or an apple in their cupboard. That evening, a Bible study group showed up at Jim's home for a Bible study and everyone brought a sack of groceries as a love offering. What amazed me was not that God provided so wonderfully, but that there was a pie mix and a can of cherries in one of those sacks. Over the years, I watched God graciously supply his needs. On many occasions I watched him sell his car to provide for daily necessities. In my opinion, it was a hard life, but he never complained.

I wish I could say that trusting God for daily bread was easy. Insecurity, fear, doubt, and jealousy are unwanted companions. The most difficult aspect of trusting God for daily necessities is living

in a society that abounds in wealth and where human wisdom (and maybe Divine wisdom) rests in laying aside a substantial portion of one's income to invest in retirement programs.

Let me illustrate the emotional difficulty: One time a wealthy brother came into my office and asked for prayer. He was worried sick! He shared with me how his bank account had dropped under ten thousand dollars, and that he was facing the possibility of having to liquidate a portion of his (large) retirement fund. What he did not know and I could not share was that I had no retirement fund and that I just gotten off my knees praying for my own concerns because my bank account had just dropped under a hundred dollars. I prayed for the man. Today, he is a wealthy man, and I am still praying, "Lord, give me this day, my daily bread." It is the word "daily" that tests my faith and pummels my own soul. Maybe this is the reason why most ministers start off in small churches and migrate to larger churches. Seldom, do we see ministers of a large church accept an assignment to a smaller church.

During my own pilgrimage I've learned several things about trusting God for daily bread.

**First**, the Father may ordain times of testing for His servants. If the Lord Jesus was led into the wilderness to experience forty days of hunger, we should not be surprised that God will lead some of us into periods where we have to trust God day-by-day.

On another occasion I was so destitute I felt like a penny asking for change. I was preaching through a series at a young church, and the church had not yet taken an offering for my services. I stayed up late that night preparing the sermon. Because I didn't have any money, I couldn't afford to buy gasoline for my car and I wasn't able to take my family to the church. To make matters worse, we had no food in the house. I walked to church and prayed that God would provide for my wife and three young children. After the Sunday morning meeting, a brother came up to me and slipped two dollars into my hand and said, "Thank you for your series of messages." On my three-mile walk home, I stopped off at the grocery store and bought some groceries. When I arrived home, my wife cried for joy.

That Sunday night, I was leading another Bible study about two miles from my home. Again, I walked. After the study, another brother came up to me and placed two dollars in my hand. Why not ten or twenty or a hundred? Why only two dollars? I did not know. But, it was God's provision for my family for another day's meals. The next day as I was in prayer about our daily needs when a neighbor brought over a big, huge bowl of stew. It lasted for three meals. God never took the pressure off, but He continued to supply our needs one day at a time with a five-



dollar check here and a two-dollar gift there. To be honest, this kind of life style wearied my soul. I prayed. I cried. I pleaded. I wept. And, I limped all the way through this period. But, God provided. To this day, I look back at that time in my life with absolute awe at the grace and power of God to sustain us day by day.

**Second**, we must be careful about judging those who are going through difficulties. Our church was having trouble meeting its budget demands. Bob was a financial wizard and wanted to take me out to lunch to talk about the church and its financial struggles. In the course of the conversation, he began to criticize John, one of our staff members, and accused him of being financially inept, a poor financial manager, and a guy who always seemed to struggle financially. I listened graciously. Later that month our church received a handsome check that helped cover our short falls and helped get the church back on its feet financially. I was greatly relieved and very thankful. When I looked at the check, it was from John. He had emptied his I.R.A. to keep the church afloat. Today, John is still poor and still serving the Lord. Bob made his millions and is now retired.

**Third**, going through the winepress of want is a fermenting experience. Jay was a talented, beloved brother. But, for some reason, he could not land a good job. He was in and out of work for years. It was a crushing, wrangling experience for him—and us. I hurt for the man and would pray for him often. During those years we used to attend a weekly prayer meeting together. Jay was always there. Week after week he would pull out his list and begin to cry and weep and plead with God in prayer for those on his register. His sincere, genuine prayers pierced my own heart. Who were those on his tear-soaked list? They were the names of those saints who were out of work. Jay never forgot the “us” in, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

In summary, the Lord’s Prayer is the Rosetta Stone that provides the second of three powerful keys to effective prayer. If you will pray with the right priorities and surrender yourself to God, and trust Him to provide for you, you will be able to unlock the mysteries and power of prayer in your daily life.

## 4 TEACH US TO PRAY, III

In our study on prayer, we are studying “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is the Rosetta Stone that unlocks the mysteries of prayer. In it we find the keys to a deeper, more fulfilling prayer life.

Today, we will investigate two more keys.



### 4.1 KEY SEVEN: PURGING

**Matthew 6:11 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

The term “debts,” is a synonym for the word, “sin.” The word “forgive” (aphiemi) means, “to send away,” “to let go,” or “to divorce. The verb “also have forgiven” is a disputed tense. In some manuscripts it is a present tense, and in others it is an aorist. Possibly, the Aramaic form was a perfect. The weight of the evidence suggest, however, the aorist tense would be less mechanical; and, therefore, the proper tense (Metzger). The aorist assumes completed action; i.e., our request for forgiveness is predicated on the presumption that we have already forgiven those who SINNED AGAINST US.

#### 4.1.1 DEBT

In broaching the subject of forgiveness, Jesus identifies a major human need among mankind. Not only do we have physical needs, we have spiritual needs. Among these is the need for forgiveness. We owe our existence to God and are required to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. He is worthy of our worship and our honor. But, because we have neglected Him, dishonored His laws, we are deeply in debt.

#### 4.1.2 FORGIVENESS

**First**, let us keep in mind that sins are not cleansed by prayer, but by blood. Only by faith in the doing and dying of Jesus can a person obtain eternal forgiveness. If prayer alone could obtain forgiveness, there would have been no reason for the Father to send His Son to the cross.

Forgiveness rests on the foundation of redemption (Hebrews 9:7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25; 10:19).

**Second**, let us keep in mind the Lord is addressing his disciples, not the world. The world cannot obtain forgiveness by prayer. The sinner who wants to obtain eternal forgiveness must repent, trust Christ, and throw himself on the mercies of the cross (Acts 20:21). Praying for forgiveness is something only Christians can do. When a Christian sins, his eternal standing and eternal inheritance is not in jeopardy. Rather, his fellowship with the Father is in jeopardy. Sin does not disrupt one's standing in the family, it disrupts communion in the family (Isaiah 59:2). This is what Jesus taught His disciples at the Lord's Supper, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet." The term, "bath" symbolizes salvation, and the term, "wash" symbolizes sanctification. We can pray till we are blue in the face for our physical needs to be met, but if we will not judge sin, our prayer will go unanswered. For this reason, prayer involves a fundamental commitment to purge sin in our lives in order that nothing may hinder our fellowship with God and man. This kind of prayer involves a healthy introspection. Prayer is a quest to explore the words, deeds, thoughts, and motivations that are contrary to God's Word (James 1:23). "Search me, O God, and see if there be in wicked way within me" (Psalm 139:23).

**Third**, let us keep in mind that confession is the means of purging sin from our lives (1 John 1:9). Confession follows inspection and it implies at least three actions: (a) Confession demands honesty about our sins and acknowledgement of them to God. God exhorts us to identify sin in our lives and to call an Ace an Ace, a Spade a Spade, and a sin a sin; that is, to be specific. It is one thing to pray, "God forgive me for my sins," and quite another to pray, "God forgive me for covetousness." (b) Confession may involve repentance and restitution. When our sins affect others, we need to acknowledge to the ones we injured that their pain is due to our sin. The hardest words to say are, "I was wrong." Furthermore, we may need to do what we can to repair the damage done. For example, Joe was a Christian and he borrowed Mike's truck and because he was careless, put a nasty dent in the tail end. Joe confessed his carelessness to Mike. Mike was upset not only because his beautiful truck was damaged, but because he had \$500 deductible on his insurance. Joe, however, promised to pay the deductible and over the course of a few months was able to pay off that debt. Now this is the proper way to deal with sin; (c) once sin is confessed, faith must be activated to lay hold of the joy of forgiveness. Sin need not be confessed again, and again, and again. Once will do.

**Fourth**, let us keep in mind that in praying for our own release from sin’s debt, we need to release others from their debt to us. The subordinate conjunction “as” (w`j) is comparing God’s measure of forgiveness to the measure we forgive others. In other words, God’s forgiveness is predicated on the presumption that we have granted forgiveness to those who seek it from us.



## 4.2 **KEY EIGHT: PROTECTION**

**“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”**

The word “temptation” is the Greek word *peirasmos*. It can be translated, “test” or “trials” or “temptation.” Jesus informs us that God is involved in the initiation of difficulties that enter our lives. If the Spirit led Jesus in the wilderness to be tested, apparently we can be led into certain types of testing. Since God does not tempt us with evil (James 1:12ff), we should assume the “temptation” here has to do with various sorts of trials—even trials that may provoke evil. The passage, however, does not say, “Tempt us not.” God does not tempt men with evil.

**There is a warning here:** The subjunctive verb “lead” has a negative in front of it. The imperative begs God not to do something. There are trials that can break us, and reveal the worst about us. Evil is all around us, even within us. We need to pray that God will never allow the kind of trial that will expose our deepest sins. Severe testing can shame even the best among us. I have no doubt there is a test that could cause me to deny Christ. When I hear of certain car accidents, severe illnesses, and the financial disasters, I wonder how in the world do people hold up. I pray, however, the kind of trial that might reveal the worst about me may never come into my life or the life of my church. At best we are delicate, fragile beings. It doesn’t take much to break a man or a community of God’s people. This prayer, therefore, is for humble men—men who know they are weak—men who fear being overcome by evil.

There is encouragement here: God is involved in our testing. He is sovereign, and nothing can touch our lives without His permission. He appoints our trials. This world is not out of control. Our lives are not the product of evolutionary development or the net result of unpredictable forces. Think of it! The difficulties that you are going through now are appointed for your good and His glory. Joseph could boldly say to his brothers, “Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God” (Genesis 45:8). Trials may frustrate us, but they may also perfect us. Trials can become a spiritual opportunity to test the promises of God. A weakness toward alcohol addiction

can result in a testimony to the power of God. A financial strait can result in a testimony to provision of God. A devastating illness can result in a testimony to God’s grace.

The phrase, “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen,” is a beautiful doxology, but it is not in the earliest manuscripts. Old Latin simply had, “Thine is the power for ever and ever.” The late manuscripts include the Trinitarian ascription, and some insert, “of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Because the Lord’s Prayer is such a powerful key to unlocking the mysteries of prayer, the church inserted the Lord’s Prayer in its liturgies. Because there was a need to standardize the Lord’s Prayer so it could be read in unison, smooth readings were developed. Eventually, the Trinitarian ascription found its way into some late manuscripts. Due to the science of textual criticism, we know this was not part of the original prayer. However, there is biblical basis for using the doxology. Possibly, the phrase came from 1 Chronicles 29:11.



### 4.3

### KEY NINE: PARDON

**Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."**

Interestingly, out of all the keys given by Jesus in this prayer, He only chose to give a postscript on the subject of forgiveness. Jesus knew that his disciples would have difficulty with this application.

#### 4.3.1 SEPARATION

**First, we need to understand that religious people, including Christians, have an amazing ability to separate their relationship with their fellow man from their relationship with God.**

We even have a doctrine called, “Separation of Church and State.” Post carpetbagger South practiced a policy “separate by equal.” Some Americans refer to abortion as “therapy.” It seems to be quite possible to live for God on Sunday and to live for the Devil on Monday through Saturday; to praise God in church and to curse men at work.

Jesus, however, never allowed his disciples to make a complete bifurcation between their relationship to God and man. He instructed his disciples to leave their gift at the altar and to get things right with their brother (Matthew 5:23ff). He taught them “to bless” and not “to curse” (Luke 6:28). James rebuked his congregation for the hypocrisy of cursing men made in the image of God (James 3:9). Here, Jesus instructed His followers to forgive others before they sought forgiveness from God.

#### **4.3.2 EXPECTATION**

**Second, forgiving others of their few, tiny sins against us ought to be easy since God has forgiven us of our many, enormous sins against Him.**

A person who has a giant problem in regards to forgiving others has a pigmy size view of his own sins and God’s forgiveness toward him. And, this is the problem that Jesus is addressing here. How can a person expect God to forgive him, if he does not forgive others?

Furthermore, we need to reconsider the petition, “Lead us not into temptation . . .” Since God leads us into testing, we need to reflect on the fact the rasping difficulties brought into our life by others are ordained of God. Perhaps, the deep pain we feel is designed for us to reflect on the pain that we have caused God by our own neglect and rebellion against Him.

#### **4.3.3 DEFINITION**

**Third, we need to define forgiveness.**

The word “forgive” as indicated earlier means, “to send away.” When we forgive others we must “send away” the deed *and the pain it caused*. This is the difficult part. For some, it is easy to forgive the deed but hard to forgive the lingering hurt. Unforgiving people tend to use hurt to control those who offended them. Anger and criticism are two well-refined tools victims use to control their offenders. But, this is not what Christ calls us to do. The sins of others against us must be “sent away,” “divorced,” and “released.” We must free the offender from our anger and set them free to live life under God.

Furthermore, **it is important** to distinguish between petty, emotional hurts swirling around in the hearts and heads of those who have been instructed by psychological teachers and real “offenses” as addressed in Scripture. The former not only presumes rights God has not granted, but

enthrones feelings as the ultimate arbitrator of right and wrong. The latter involves legitimate rights bestowed by God.

The Biblical word for “offense” is “skandalizo” (Matthew 17:26; 18:6, 8, 9) which involves personal injury or fraud or scandals that are in violation of common law. The term literally means, “to bait with a hook.”

Terms like “hurt,” “pain,” are closely associated with psychotherapy where supposed victims are encouraged to explore the “abused inner child” for blame points. The touchy-feely world of supposed psychological abuse does not rise to the same level of concern as a scandal. In other words, beware of being manipulated by the *culture of victimization* at work in the church.

#### **4.3.4 CONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS**

**Fourth, we need to forgive people who seek forgiveness.**

In Luke 17:3, Jesus predicated the bestowal of forgiveness upon the offender’s willingness to come and confess his wrongdoing. Based on this Scripture, I understand that forgiveness is not something that is automatic, but something that must be granted **only** after sin has been fully confessed. **If** grounded on the fact of repentance, forgiveness **must** be extended.

While automatic forgiveness is not a Scriptural doctrine, neither is clinging to bitterness (Hebrews 12:15). In my own mind, I’ve concluded that we need to work through offenses and come to a place before God that we are ready to forgive when and if the offender meets the criteria of repentance.

Sometimes, we need to let justice take its course. For example, I was working with a man and a woman hoping to achieve reconciliation. She was working through forgiveness and he was working through integrity. One day, the man really hurt his wife. I confronted him about it. Instead of repenting, he went home cut up all her clothes with scissors, flattened her car tires, and broke her car windows. They redneck had a severe problem. The issue was no longer forgiveness, but justice. The courts had to become involved and the man had to be punished for his crime. Reconciliation was impossible because he would not repent. Divorce was the only option.

### **4.3.5 STEPS TOWARD RESTORATION**

Furthermore, if we have sinned and injured someone by what we have done or said, it is important that we follow God's steps to restoration.

**Step One:** When we injure someone by our sin, it is our responsibility to go to that person and listen to the hurt and the pain we caused. This is very difficult. We are prone to engage in shallow repentance, shallow confessions, and shallow forgiveness. **Listening** to the pain we cause is one way we can truly repent and become an agent of healing to the injured party (Matthew 5:23-25; 7:1-3).

**Step Two:** Having listened, we should respond something like this, "Thank you for sharing your pain with me. I promise to carefully weigh what you say." And, then, weigh carefully what they say!

**Step Three:** Search your heart and ask forgiveness for the things that God has convicted you about while you were "carefully weighing" what they said. Admit your fault by saying, "I was wrong when . . ." Never say, "I'm sorry!" It communicates nothing. "I'm sorry" sounds like a four year old who is sorry he got caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

**Step Four:** Ask if there is anything else you can do to relieve the stress your sin has caused in their life. Injured may need some time to sort things through. Give them what they need.

**In Summary**, an effective prayer life involves purging ourselves of sin, seeking His protection, and pardoning others.

Steve and Sarah are a wonderful couple who are very likeable, but they had a blended family with all the typical problems. The crisis among their children separated them. They were headed for a divorce when they called me on the phone. They were as opposite as night and day. She was the sensitive rose-peddle, feeler type, and he was the determined bulldozer type. They were hours away from committing to a divorce, when I intervened. God was gracious. We listed the issues separating them, and then talked about them. Talking was not easy because each wanted to interrupt the other. We established some rules: He talks, she listens; She talks, he listens. For three days, they talked, listened; listened, then talked. The sunrise of hope dawned on the second day. Confessions were made, forgiveness bestowed. By the third day, they worked out a plan to



*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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resolve the issues separating them. Confession and forgiveness work, when people have integrity.

In Conclusion, the Lord’s Prayer is the Rosetta Stone that provides the keys to effective prayer. If you will enter the prayer closet with these keys, you will begin to unlock the hidden powers of prayer in your life.

## 5 A REBEL’S PRAYER

### *“Thy Kingdom Come”*

Our precious Lord taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom Come.” It is part of the Lord’s Prayer a.k.a. the “Disciples’ Prayer.” Positively, it is a plea that all men and all man’s institutions would surrender to be ruled by God’s law; negatively, it is a coup de’etat against godless authorities and de facto officials.

This is the rebel’s prayer—a revolutionary’s cry against the immorality of this age and the promotion of wickedness by men in rebellion against the Creator. This prayer is God’s permission to resist evil, to take the high road, and swim against the stream; it allows men to shout “No King, but King Jesus.” It is permission to adopt the motto “one nation under one God and one absolute law.”

It is a prayer against the belief that man is god; that government is god; that mans’ law or their constitutions are absolute.

It is a prayer against the status quo where ambitious men seek to advance the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It is a prayer against abortion, oppression, homosexuality, pornography, and greed.

It is a prayer against secularism, atheism, humanism, socialism, Marxism and every other ism wherein secularists seek to build a city where man is the measure of all things.

It is a prayer against rulers in rebellion against “the LORD and His Anointed”—against governments who seek to enslave and control men through coercion, intimidation, and fear.

It is a prayer against governments hostile to the maxim that the Bible is the Source of all Law; and, it is a prayer against governments that break their own laws.

It is a prayer against unjust laws and legislators “who do mischief through law” by creating a system of man-made statutes and codes that enslave their citizenry [Psalm 94:20]; who seek to

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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create a new world order through law; who promote alien laws that undermine the Ten Commandments and the virtues they advance: faithfulness, justice, and mercy.

It is a prayer against those who defraud others; against rulers that steal from the people through color of law; against unlawful taxation that transfers power from the family to the State.

If you are angry at godless politicians, this prayer is for you: “Lord, Thy kingdom Come.”

## 6 ASSURANCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER

### ***THE PRAYER NOTICES OF JESUS***

*Matthew 7:7-11 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. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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?*

We think we know how to pray . . . we even go through the motions from time to time. But, we really haven't touched the power of prayer. Prayer is what we do between brushing our teeth and combing our hair. We need to learn to pray better. And we can do so by paying attention to Jesus' prayer NOTICES. They are his assurances that the Father answers prayers.

**NOTICE HOW POSITIVE AND OPTIMISTIC JESUS IS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF ANSWERED PRAYER:** "it shall be given you . . . you shall find . . . shall be opened unto you . . ." He expresses no doubt, distrust, or skepticism. Having come from the right hand of God the Father, Jesus assures us that Heaven answers all kinds of prayers from all kinds of people in all kinds of circumstances every single day. Even though later Jesus declares men are evil, Jesus announces to us that answered prayer is a certainty. The normal Christian life is one of regular, daily answered prayer. We should expect to receive answers to our prayers.

Jesus Himself lived, in daily uninterrupted communion with the Father, so that He could say to His Father and our Father, "I knew that thou hearest me always" (John 11:42).

He plainly said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

It is reasonable to infer that God intended *asking* to be followed by *having* and that the Christian in the will of God can live day by day in the fullness of joy of having his prayers answered.

This is a promise better than the winning lottery ticket. Oh, to be this positive!! Oh, to possess the confidence that God gladly hears cracked and flawed sinners, and is pleased to answer our prayers! Is this our view of God?

**NOTICE THE MILITARY ORDERS REGARDING PRAYER.**

The verbs “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” are present, active imperatives; that is, they are commands—the language of prayer. Prayer is not an option or a suggestion or a childish activity. Praying is manly. Christian soldiers are ordered by the Commander to pray . . . and it takes brute force and military discipline to pray correctly.

We pray, not because we are bold, but because He has given us bold commands . . . and bold promises. Prayer is an order, a command. When we pray, we do so because He invites us to pray; commands us to pray; and, wills us to pray.

**NOTICE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYERS:** ask, seek, and knock.

There are simple and pure prayers; seeking and searching prayers; knocking and pounding at the door type prayers. Prayers are for the needy, the wanting, and the desperate. Prayers are progressive. There are stages to prayer—simple request type prayers; complex and complicated prayers; and intense prayers that demand time and commitment and urgency. How are we responding to our triple calling?

**NOTICE HOW BLUNTLY AND SIMPLY JESUS STATES THE NEGATIVE TRUTH ABOUT MEN.**

He says, “If you being evil . . .” (ponhroi. o;ntej); that is, Jesus taught that men are radically and diabolically depraved—a first class conditional in Greek; i.e., “if and it is true that . . . “. We often classify men as “good” or “great” or “wonderful”, which is an idealistic view of people.

Our Lord has a different theology regarding men. People are evil! Rulers are common sinners! If Jesus were to proclaim the depravity of elected officials today in America, He would receive the hatchet by the media for not being politically correct, and for not being more positive about our leaders. If He were to insinuate our current president as being evil, he would be charged with a felony—a hate crime (HR 347 2012). He would be labeled a racist, sexist bigot. Jesus does not deny that men are made in the image of God or loved by the Father, but he is real about human

nature. Evil is at work in and through men. Our personal and social problems are not due to the environment or economics, but sin in the heart of men. But, even though we are sinners, our Father graciously answers prayer to those who make requests to Him! Are we realistic about men? Perspective is critical.

### **NOTICE HOW CHRIST USES A “REDUCTION ABSURDUM ARGUMENT” TO PROVE THAT GOD ANSWERS PRAYER.**

The reasoning behind a “reduction absurdum argument” is a pricking of the mind *by drawing a ridiculous conclusion from a legitimate premise*. In His lecture, Jesus seeks to inspire confidence in God’s willingness to answer prayer by focusing on the human father-son relationship *by drawing an absurd conclusion from a legitimate request*.

Even bad fathers do not give their children rocks and scorpions when they ask for fish and bread. For a father to respond so callously is radical and absurd. Likewise, it is insane to think that the Heavenly Father will not grant the legitimate requests of His people.

Is God stingy and poor? God does not throw us bones when we ask for meat. “The blessings of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it” (Proverbs 10:22). He does not cast us a spinning lure with a hook in it. If there is “a hitch” with an opportunity, it is not from God. If there is “good news” and “bad news” scenario, it is not from God. God is a Father who only gives good gifts to His people. Evil things are from Satan, not the Father.

### **NOTICE HOW CHRIST USES A “FORTIORI ARGUMENT” TO PROVE THAT THE FATHER ANSWERS PRAYER GENEROUSLY.**

The reasoning behind a fortiori argument is *if something less likely is true, then something more likely is true as well*. The language of the fortiori argument is “how much more”-- *a lesser to greater type reasoning designed to establish certainty*.

If evil men know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more does our all benevolent, all wise, all caring, all knowing, all present, all powerful Heavenly Father know how to give what is good to His children.

“Much more” is an adverb defining the type of giving God does. He is superlative at gift giving. The word “gifts” is plural. He gives more abundantly than loving, human fathers.

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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Before us is a contrast between the explicit goodness of evil men and the implicit goodness of a holy God. Man is depraved . . . and though evil is at work among fathers, they can give good gifts! And, if evil men can give good gifts, *how much more* will a good God give excellent gifts to his children?

*Christ does not say that God answers prayers because we are good, or because our prayers are good, but because God is good.*

*Prayers are answered because God is good, always good, and only good; therefore, His gifts are always good.*

Do we share this positive view of Father?

**NOTICE THE PHRASE, “your Father which is in heaven.”**

At the time Jesus said this, He dropped a bombshell on Jewish theology. The Jews believed in a holy, transcendent God; but, a happy, condescending Father was a unique and refreshing view to them.

Possibly, men saw God as holy and aloof. Some may have seen Him as miserly and stingy. But, Jesus announces God as a caring, benevolent, involved Father. The Father is not a creative engineer that abandons His children to grind out an existence alone under the raw laws of nature (deism). The Transcendent condescends to meet the needs of his attentive children. Heaven’s ears are tuned to earth’s cries!

**NOTICE THAT JESUS DID NOT SAY ALL PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED.**

There are many gods and many prayers in the name of those gods.

There is only one God that answers prayer. . . and that is the God of the Bible—the one, true, infinite personal triune Spirit—the God of Creation, the God of Israel, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His name is YHWH, the “Great I Am.”

God is not a force or “the first cause,” nor is He all that exists (pantheism). He is not “the man upstairs” nor “the Force” nor a kind, all benevolent Santa Claus that overlooks the wickedness of men. Jesus offers no assurance that prayers offered to man-made gods have the same wonderful result as that of a Christian praying to his Heavenly Father. He offers no assurance that the

prayer of rebels receives a hearing. But, he does offer God's children the assurance that their Heavenly Father delights in being a good to His children.

### **NOTICE THAT GOD'S VIEW OF GOOD IS DIFFERENT FROM MAN'S VIEW OF GOOD.**

Jesus taught that God gives "good things." God is good all the time and only gives good gifts to His sons. But, only God can define what is good. An anomaly arises because we define "good" in terms of the material and the sensual, but God defines "good" in terms of the spiritual. In Luke 11:3 in a similar sermon, Jesus adds, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Men tend to define "good" in terms of "stuff." But, Jesus sees the greatest good as the gift of the Holy Spirit. "He blesses us with every spiritual blessing" says the Apostle (Eph. 1:3). Even our suffering produces good (Romans 8:28). Our daily concerns are about paying bills, buying cars, and accumulating more cash. It's the economy, stupid!" said the Clinton administration. Christians are intensely concerned about the economy, money, the stock market, jobs, inflation and gas prices, but who is concerned about a shortage of the Holy Spirit? What is the real crisis in America? "It's the lack Holy Spirit filled Christians!" Surely, we should be coveting more of the fruits of the Spirit like "Love, joy, peace . . ." (Galatians 5:22-23) and be less concerned about "stuff."

All believers have the Holy Spirit, but not all are filled with the Spirit or yielded to His work of transforming us into the image of Christ. Some of us are sugar cubes; some of us are ice cubes; but, God wants to make us cubes of salt—the type of Christians that confront evil and heal men. For this task, we need a greater portion of the Holy Spirit.

Our goals are too earthly; our vision too merky; our ambitions too small; our expectations too shallow; our wants too carnal; our wishes too material. We need an expanded view of God; an enlarged expectation; a brighter light; a sharper vision; a greater discernment; a change in priorities; a more positive view of possibilities; and, a more intense commitment to prayer.

Just like when we turn on the kitchen faucet, we expect water to come flowing out, we should expect a life of answered prayer.

We are served NOTICE by Jesus. Be assured, God answers prayer!!



## 7 PRAYER RESULTS!

*Acts 4:24-5:16 “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. . . 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 . . .”*

During the writing of this paper (August, 2003), the Episcopal Church ordained a homosexual bishop to their ranks. They justified their actions saying they “prayed about it” and that “the Spirit” (?) was leading them into new era of church development. I have no doubt they “prayed about it,” but I know the Holy Spirit did not lead them to sanction such wickedness in their ranks. The great question before us is this: “How do we recognize answered prayer, and in particular, how do we recognize the filling of the Holy Ghost?”

**You can reap dynamic fruit by planting the seeds of prayer in heavenly soil.**

### 7.1 DYNAMIC SHAKING

Before us is a prayer meeting—one of the most powerful, dynamic prayer meetings in the history of the church. We do not know for sure where the disciples were assembled. Maybe it was at the temple or maybe they met in a home. Out of this prayer meeting, we see the dynamic results of the Spirit moving among God’s people.

The text says, “the place was shaken.” Whether this was a literal, physical shaking or a vigorous spiritual shaking within the hearts of God’s people is difficult to say. Since the subject of the verb is “place,” I assume Dr. Luke referred to a literal earthquake. “The place,” not the saints, were shaking. We know this result, along with the other results in this chapter, was germane to this prayer meeting.

The word “prayer” is a genitive indicating that the source of this earthquake was not due to geologic forces, but due to the forces of prayer.

## 7.2 DYNAMIC FILLING

The text says, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”

While all believers are baptized by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) and sealed with Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) when they believe, not all believers are presently filled with the Spirit. The word “filled” is synonymous with “total surrender” or “complete yieldedness” or “complete control” by the Spirit. Dr. Luke is telling us that the Spirit was in charge of the saints.

What happens when the Spirit is in control of God’s people? We should note what did not happen here. Pentecost was not repeated. They did not speak in tongues. They did not shake and begin to roll in the aisles. They did not lose control of themselves. The fruit of the Spirit is “self control” (Galatians 5:22).

## 7.3 DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP TO THE BIBLE

The text says they spoke the Word of God. They did not talk about their experiences. They did not discuss the weather, the results of last year’s Olympics, or the latest ugly trend in politics. They did not retreat to some mountain in Tibet to meditate. They did not look inward and begin to inspect their childhood traumas. They did not quote Plato or Aristotle. Nor did they lose control of themselves and start uttering jibber-jabber. They spoke the Word of God.

To be filled with the Spirit means to be filled with the Word of God. In Ephesians, Paul said, “Be filled with the Spirit speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” In the parallel passage in Colossians, the text reads, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:16-18).

We are living in a day an age where people lack confidence in God’s living Word. When Christians hurt, many turn to “self-help” books. Others consult with psychologists, the high priest of secular society. When Christians want to improve their lives, some look to government programs to help them overcome their financial crisis. Others turn inward to seek personal, subjective experiences. When the Episcopalians ordained their first homosexual bishop, many of the leaders justified the new move by saying, “the Spirit is leading us . . .” Lacking was any significant discussion regarding the Word of God. When an individual denies the sufficiency of God’s Word or a church abdicates the authority of God’s Word, they are like a ship without a

rudder on the sea of human opinion. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

#### **7.4 DYNAMIC BOLDNESS**

The word “boldness” (parrhsi,aj) means “to be frank,” “full of confidence,” or “fearless.” Fear is one of the giants that causes God’s people to cower and take flight during a fight for the faith. These messianic Jews had every reason to be afraid. The same group that crucified Jesus had the apostles arrested. All of them faced the fear of rejection and the possibility of crucifixion. But, they overcame that fear by the power of prayer and the dynamic filling of the Holy Spirit.

#### **7.5 DYNAMIC FELLOWSHIP**

Dr. Luke says, “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (Luke 4:32). Prayer resulted in dynamic unity and fellowship. When churches are fragmented and divided, and people are isolated and alone, you can bet your boots that people are not filled with the Spirit. Healthy people associate. Unhealthy people stand aloof. If one wants to follow God, he must follow God with God’s people. People were united in fellowship because they were first united in prayer.

#### **7.6 DYNAMIC POWER**

Out of this prayer meeting, came dynamic power: “And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33).

The disciples did not talk about their esoteric experiences, but the gospel of Jesus Christ. They did not talk about religion, but the resurrection. They did not give a lecture on theology, but bore witness about history—namely, the literal, physical resurrection of Christ. Man’s hope is not in religion, but in the facts of history. Man’s fundamental problem is not economics, but death. Is there any hope that there is life after death? The disciples did not speculate or postulate, they gave an affidavit about what they had seen and heard. Jesus rose from the dead. That is the hope! That is the message! And, they articulated that message with extraordinary power supplied by the Holy Spirit.

## **7.7      DYNAMIC GRACE**

Another result of prayer and the work of the Spirit is listed, “. . . and abundant grace was upon them all (Acts 4:33). Not justice, not criticism, not legalism, not judgment, but grace was released. When saints are going through times of complication or persecution or misfortune, grace oils the squeaking wheels. Prayer returns us to fundamental principles: God is good and gracious. When grace is released in a troubled body, people tolerate diversity and human weakness. Petty differences are ignored. When grace is not present, the spirit of criticism invades the congregation. When we sow prayer in heavenly soil, grace crops up on the earth.

However, don’t confuse grace with permissiveness. Permissiveness is the abuse of grace. Grace is not without law or without standards. It tolerates human weakness, but not rebellion against God’s law-order.

## **7.8      DYNAMIC SHARING**

Out of this prayer meeting came individual commitments to share physical wealth with those less fortunate. Possibly, many Jews lost their jobs because enemies of the faith dismissed them. Unlike communism and American socialism, which forcibly redistributes wealth through the graduated tax system, this community of believers voluntarily and individually shared their wealth. Prayer plows hard ground and tills the soil so the fruit of giving can yield its crop.

## **7.9      DYNAMIC JUDGMENT**

Another result of this prayer meeting and of being filled with the Holy Spirit was intolerance of active sin. The Spirit-filled church could preach the good news to unbelieving people and tolerate diversity and difficulty in their own ranks, but they could not tolerate damnable lies. The Holy Spirit judged the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

When God judged sin, “great fear” came over the church—not a fear that prevented them from sharing their faith, but a fear that prevented them from sinning against the Father. We walk on a narrow bridge. On one hand, we must accept God’s grace, but on the other hand we must honor God’s holiness. Just as we are called to tolerate human weakness, we are also called to be intolerant of sin. The Psalmist reminds us that “Lovingkindness and truth go before Thee” (Psalm 84:14). If we error on the side of justice, we can become judgmental and critical toward the brethren. If we error on the side of grace, we can become mushy and “namby-pamby” toward

sin. If we do not judge sin, the church and her message are degraded; and, if we do not show grace, God’s people become hurt and isolated. The key is prayer. Prayer cleanses, but it also puts us in touch with grace and forgiveness.

## **7.10 DYNAMIC WORKS**

Dynamic works are another crop harvested from sowing prayer, “And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people” (Acts 5:12).

Miracles are rare in history. They are not non-existent, but they are rare. As a result of this prayer meeting, the apostles were endowed with extraordinary problem-solving ability. It is difficult to say what counts as a miracle. But, somehow prayer puts us in contact with the supernatural so extraordinary things happen. Diseases disappear, money shows up, and opportunities emerge when Christians pray. Prayer brings out the good in people so that people’s needs are met. Some of these deliverances may be attributed to human instruments and others may be attributed to divine developments. Sow prayers in heaven and watch the crop of dynamic works grow on earth.

## **7.11 DYNAMIC EVANGELISM**

Prayer resulted in evangelism: “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number” (Acts 5:14). These were times when professing faith in Christ could result in persecution, a loss of a job, imprisonment, or even death itself. These were not days when it was comfortable to be a Christian, yet people were coming to Christ. How do we account for such fruit? Sowing prayer is the answer.

One time in my life, I felt like my Christian witness had stagnated. I spent a considerable amount of time in prayer about the lack of fruit in my life. A tremendous burden to win souls invaded my heart. I dedicated two weeks to read, and pray, and study the great works on soul winning. Over the next three-months, within the context of my normal ministry, over fifty people professed faith in Christ through personal evangelism; that is, one-on-one. Some are my best friends today. I remember that everything came together for me: opportunity, courage, Bible memory, motivation, power, articulation, and boldness. It was amazing. The only way I can account for the harvest is to attribute it to a mighty moving of the Spirit that sprouted because of prayer seeds.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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Moreover, there is just no such thing as a Spirit-filled Christian who is not on someone's hate list. The Spirit-filled believer does not conform to the world or submit to godless government policies: abortion and same-sex-marriage comes to mind.

The same Spirit which enables us to submit to God's law-order pushes us to resist unbiblical laws, statutes, and policies. Spirit-filled Christians testify to the righteousness of God and in so doing are likely to offend politicians living in rebellion against God's law-order. Believers should expect the media and government officials to brand them racists, sexists, hateful bigots.

Moreover, Spirit-filled Christians cannot expect the goats not to betray you. Take a stand for God, and carnal, worldly-minded statist crawl out of the darkness to persecute, condemn, castigate, isolate, slander, blame, and accuse those speaking truth.

In summary, prayer puts power in your life. When the Spirit is at work, prayer results in dynamic fruit, some of which are listed in this lesson. If you want to have dynamic fruit in ministry, you must sow the seed of prayer in heavenly soil.

## 8 ALWAYS TO PRAY

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

An acute observer of human behavior, Jesus observed a fatal flaw in the prayers of God’s people. Men quit too easily. We are a community of fainters, quitters, and resigners.

Pulling his disciples aside, Jesus gave them a powerful lesson on prayer saying, “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

A little boy was heard praying one night,

*“Dear God, Daddy is still not making enough money for this family. Mother still worries about how we are going to pay the bills. My brother Bob is still not on the first string football team. My sister Beth still does not have a boy friend. Grandma still has trouble with shingles, and I’m tired of praying for this family.”*

Perhaps you have fallen into a state of resignation and discouragement regarding prayer. If so, this lesson is for you.

**You should not give up praying for the following reasons:**

**First, Christians ought always to pray because prayer is the primary means of overcoming evil.**

The word for “faint” in verse one is the Greek word *evgkakei/n* (*ev kakein*). It is made up of two words “en” which means “to turn inward,” and “kakeo” which means evil. It can be translated, “Men ought always to pray, and not to turn in to evil.” When we stop praying, we give in to evil.

All religious political systems like democracy assist people in living with evil or in trying to escape it. The adoption of same-sex marriage, protecting baby butchers, and laws demanding toleration of transgenders comes to mind.

The Greek stoics criticized Christians because they were unwilling to accept the world as it is. Buddhism is not a religion as much as it is instruction on how to negotiate with suffering in the

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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world. Hinduism seeks to escape suffering by exerting mind over matter; that is, Hinduism does not seek to confront evil but to escape it by rechanneling mental energies.

In secularism, life is an end in itself. It refuses to include God in life's equation. Consequently, the norm is life as it is. Even among the Christian community, prayer is viewed as wasted energy. When the press asked Paul Tillich, the death-of-God theologian, if he prayed, Tillich responded, "No! I do not pray; I meditate."

For this reason, Jesus taught his disciples that **prayer is essentially a revolt against evil.**

**Prayer is rebellious** because it refuses to tolerate rebellion against God's law-order as the norm for society.

**Prayer is the weapon** that angry men use to confront the forces of evil around them. And, this is what makes Christianity so different than the philosophies and religions in the world. **Christians are in revolt against evil among men.** They do not seek to make peace with evil, escape from it, run from it, tolerate it, put up with it, hide from it, or attribute it to multiculturalism, freedom, diversity, and "Black Lives Matter." The price of freedom is not toleration of wickedness. Christians confront evil through private prayer . . . and, may be called upon to confront it publically.

The lesson for Christians is twofold: (a) Nothing destroys prayer like resignation, and (b) evil spreads in an environment of prayerlessness.

**Second, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because Christians have a license to pray.**

The Geek word "ought" (dei/n) is a word that places a duty or injunction on men. It is a polite command that calls the will of man to enjoin the process of prayer. By using the adverb "always" (pantote), Jesus authorizes us to pray any time in any place.

This view of prayer was totally different than that rabbinical Judaism which taught that Jews should only pray three times in one day lest they be a pest praying.



Prayer is not our idea. We did not make it up. We did not create it. It simply does not originate with man. The license to pray any time, any place, for any reason is a gift of God. Because Christ urges us to pray and to keep on praying, we have a right to do so.

To reinforce the need to always pray and not to give up, Jesus told his disciples a parable about an unjust judge who was plagued by a relentless widow.

Apparently, this woman bulldog kept showing up in court and would not stop barking in court until the unjust judge honored her pleading. From this parable, we learn more reasons why a person should always pray and not give up.

**Third, we ought always to pray and not to faint because God is just.**

Jesus told the parable of the Unjust Judge because He wanted to contrast this miserable Judge with His merciful Heavenly Father. The judge was evil, selfish, and unjust, but God is good, generous, and just.

Jesus' argument is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If this widow, through her persistence, motivated this hard, stubborn, recalcitrant judge to action, surely, we can prevail in the courtroom of a good and just Judge and expect Him to act on our behalf.

**Notice that Jesus' sees prayer as a legal pleading**, a motion before the Supreme Court of Almighty God.

Notice Jesus' view of God. Jesus saw God as an all-powerful, all-good, all-generous Judge. The idea that God is stingy, reluctant, and too busy for us cannot be found in this passage.

**Four, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because Christians have a special standing in the Court.**

He calls believers "His elect." The widow was the weakest, poorest member of the Jewish society and yet she prevailed before the unjust judge. Surely, we who are God's children, the apple of His eye, can receive regular answers to our prayers before the Court. We are not merely Citizens of a God's kingdom, but His beloved children. He may not listen to others, but surely, He will listen to us.

**Five, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because they have a special promise.**

**Jesus commanded us to hear what the unjust judge said.** Then, Jesus asked an important question, "And shall not God avenge His own elect . . .?" A positive answer is expected. If the unjust judge can be prevailed upon, surely, our Judge will grant justice to His own.

Jesus continued, "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Notice Jesus said, "I tell you . . ." Jesus was not supposing, but speaking from His own authority. He did not quote the rabbis, He spoke from His own authority.

The word "speedily" can be translated "quickly" or "suddenly." I think the word "suddenly" is more appropriate in this section of Scripture. Jesus assures his disciples, by His own word, that God's ears are always open to pleadings from His children and that He will answer them suddenly.

**Six, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because the Court is always open.**

All courts in America operate between 8:00 and 5:00 PM, and they recess for lunch. But, God's court is never closed. Court is never in recess. Court is never over booked. Court never takes a holiday. For this reason Jesus anticipated that God's children would plead, "day and night." There is always hope that our prayers will be answered because we have 24-hour access to the Judge.

**Seven, Christians ought always to pray and not to faint because tough, persistent prayer cannot be resisted.**

Notice what the unjust judge said to himself, "I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me" (18:5). The word "weary" (u`pwpiá,zh) is another interesting Greek word. **It means "to strike one in the eye."**

Literally, it means "to give another a black eye" or "to give one an evil stare." Imagine with me for a moment that old lady coming into court day after day with her doubled fists and giving the judge her evil stare. Her piercing steel look with her bent eyebrows struck fear into his wicked pea-pickin' heart.

*When is the last time you gave God a black eye in prayer? When is the last time you gave God the evil stare?*

Notice the imperfect verb in verse three, “she was coming unto him.” The imperfect implies continuous action in the past, that is, this widow kept coming and coming and coming and coming into this court. The Texas Rangers have a saying, “You can’t stop a righteous man that keeps coming, and coming, and coming atcha.”

When is the last time you exhausted Heaven with your constant, continual, unceasing prayers?

Persistence is always the key to success in any endeavor in life whether it be music, writing, study, business, or prayer.

The Brazilians have a special word for perseverance. It is called “*garra*.” *Garra* means fingernails. A person with *garra* hangs in there with their fingernails.

Columbus had *garra*. Halfway through his voyage across an ocean none had ever sailed and going to a world no man had ever seen Columbus’s crew urged him to turn back. They even blackmailed him emotionally by threatening mutiny. Because Columbus hung in there by his fingernails, history was changed forever.

Remember Churchill? In the darkest hour of his war against Germany, Churchill came on the radio and said to his bomb-battered, war-weary people, “Never, never, never, never, never give up.” The British Bulldog spoke from the surf and foam of his soul and through his leadership, the English defeated Germany in WWII.

Have you heard of Beth Anne DeCiantes, the Olympic runner, who attempted to qualify for the 1922 Olympic trials marathon? In order to qualify as a female, she had to finish the 26 mile race in less than two hours and forty five minutes (2:45). At mile 23, her legs turned to lead. Struggling, she managed to reach the final straightaway at 2:43 and only two minutes left to qualify. Two hundred yards from the finish, she stumbled and fell. She was down 22 seconds. The crowd shouted, “Get up. Get up. Get up.” With less than a minute to go, she staggered toward the finish line. Five yards from the finish line with only 10 seconds to go she collapsed again. The crowd roared. Beth could not stand up. Beth Anne DeCiantes crossed the finish line with *garra* crawling on her hands and knees in two hours, 44 minutes, and 57seconds.

In conclusion, Jesus observed a weakness in human nature that hindered prayer. Unanswered prayer happens because religious men are quitters and fainters. In order to correct the problem, Jesus gave the disciples a list of reasons to persevere in prayer. Surely, Jesus reasoned, men ought always to pray and not to give into evil because our good God answers the prayers coming from His persistent children.

He concluded with a question, "When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" Notice how Jesus links faith and prayer together at the last moment.

The verb "comes" is an aorist participle talking about His first coming on earth, not His second.

The idea is this: The Son of man, having come, shall He find the faith on the earth? What is your answer? The definite article in front of "faith" infers that Jesus is talking about the faith of the widows; that is, faith like the widow who was persistent in her prayer.

What is your answer to Jesus' question? I hope it is a "Yes!" As long as you and I are on the earth, I hope Jesus will find us persisting in prayer because we believe His instructions about prayer.

## 9 PRAYER AS A LEGAL PLEADING

*Psalm 50:15 “And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”*



A child of God will never know God’s strength until he has met adversity. Trouble may be the black horse upon which blessing rides.

You can find Christ in an empty wallet but He is seldom found in a cash box. There is something about difficulty that causes us to dig deeper, pray better, and work harder.

Some time ago, I was unfairly sued along with another Christian in retaliation for doing my duty as a minister of Christ. Though I did nothing wrong, I was concerned. I found myself spending hours at the library reading frantically through law books to figure out how to defend myself. My whole life was turned upside down. I did not understand legalese (lawyer talk), comprehend procedure, or know diddily-squat about courts and judges.

With the help of my lawyer friend, I scratched out “an answer to the complaint,” “a motion to dismiss,” “a counter complaint,” and “a motion for summary judgment.” Over a few months my knowledge increased and my confidence grew. On the day of my hearing, I presented my defense and the judge dismissed all charges against me because the plaintiff’s accusations were frivolous. But, the judge sustained my counter complaint! What an ordeal! What an education!

One thing I learned is that prayer is much like a legal pleading, and if you will learn to plead your case properly before the High Court of Heaven, your prayers can be more effective.

*You can prevail in prayer in the day of trouble by properly pleading your case.*

### 9.1 PLEAD OBEDIENCE TO THE SUMMONS

In Psalm 50:1-4, “the Mighty One, God, the Lord speaks and summons the earth . . . that He may judge his people.” A summons is a citation ordering a defendant into court to face a charge.

Right or wrong, true or false, convenient or inconvenient, if the defendant does not show up for court, presumption of guilt prevails and the plaintiff will be awarded a judgment.

Here, it is the Judge, the Might One (El), God (Elohim), the Lord (YHWH) who issues the summons. It must be obeyed! A summons from God is not optional. We come before the Throne of Grace, we are not there because of human presumption, but by Divine command. Prayer is not man's invention, man's prerogative, or man's contrivance. Prayer is simply obedience to an Order of the Court, and we would do well to honor it. Failure to appear shows contempt of court. It also creates a presumption of guilt. Furthermore, failure to appear can result in a heavenly bench warrant. When you pray, acknowledge that you are before the Bench in response to His summons.

## **9.2 PLEAD THE PURPOSE**

The said purpose of the summons is stated: "that He may judge His people." A judge not only condemns, he justifies; he not only punishes offenders, he protects victims. In the Book of Judges, Israel's judges rose up to defend the nation against foreign powers that had enslaved them. A judge was a savior, not an accuser; a victor rather than a villain; a warrior king rather than a wailing prosecutor. The purpose of this summons is for protection. The judge intends to bless, not condemn.

Yes, the Judge has a complaint against His people, but his purpose is to remove the infraction in order to bless His people. Selah.

## **9.3 PLEAD THE PROPER PARTY**

**Psalm 50:4 "He summons the heaven above, and the earth, that he may judge His people; Gather to Me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."**

A hearing before a court cannot occur unless the proper parties are present. A proper party is one who has an inherent interest in the subject-matter of the litigation. In fact, ratification of commencement ought to be the first order of business in any court.

Here God calls upon His people to appear in His Court. He calls them "His consecrated ones" (godly ones) and those "who made a covenant with Him." Who are you? Are you one of His people? Have you made a covenant with Him? Are you a Party Injured? Then, you are the Proper

Party and you have a right to appear in Court and motion the Court to provide a remedy. God has set His love upon you, elected you before the foundation of the world, and washed you in the blood of the Lamb. Surely, of all persons, you have a right to move the Court to act in your favor.

If you are not “godly” and are not a partaker of the “new covenant,” then you are not the Proper Party and you have no right to approach the Bench! You are in the wrong jurisdiction. Stop praying and go to your god-government for a remedy.

## **9.4 PLEAD JURISDICTION**

**Psalm 50:7 “Hear, O my people, and I will speak . . . I am God, your God.”**

Jurisdiction is a term of comprehensive importance. It determines the powers of the courts to inquire into facts, apply laws, make decisions, and declare a judgment. It is the first issue to be decided in any case. Does the court have the authority to hear the case? An American living in the U.S.A. has no duty to the laws of Russia. A New York Court cannot try a Delaware resident. A federal court has no jurisdiction over a private Citizen. A State court only has jurisdiction over state officers, state corporations, and other jural persons.

Here, God is claiming in personam jurisdiction over His people because He is their God. Heaven’s Court has jurisdiction over “the earth” (50:1), “the east and west” (50:2), “Zion” (50:2), the “heavens” (50:4), “his people” (50:4), the “saints” (50:5), but the “wicked” have no right to petition the Honorable Court (50:16). If you are God’s child, the Court has in personam jurisdiction over you, and you have a right to plead your case before the Judge.

Furthermore, He has subject matter jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to His law and His people. And, He has territorial jurisdiction seeing that the “earth is the Lord’s and the people thereof” (Psalm 24:1).

## **9.5 PLEAD THE OPPORTUNITY**

**The Judge orders, “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” (Psalm 50:15).**

Trouble is an opportunity. God cannot deliver a man who is not in trouble, or heal a man who is not sick, enrich a man who is not poor, or forgive a man who is not sinful. Trouble gives you the

right to expedite your case; the right for special considerations; and, the right to waive honorable court rules. Do you remember the elections of 1990 when Bush defeated Gore in Florida by only a few hundred votes? Lawyers challenged the election process and motioned the Supreme Court to expedite their case because of the election crisis. The Court dispensed with special publication rules. Instead, the lawyers submitted their briefs on regular 8 ½ x 11 paper. Likewise, if you are in a day of trouble, surely, the Court will waive certain expectations. You haven't time to tweak your prayers and adjust your motions. Just get into the Courtroom and plead your cause. The day of trouble is a day of opportunity.

## **9.6 PLEAD THE TIME**

**Psalm 50:15 “Call upon me in the day of trouble.”**

Maybe you have a wayward son, or a health crisis, or financial need. Yesterday, you were not in trouble. Today you need deliverance. Tomorrow will be too late. If it is a midnight hour and there are only a few grains left in the hourglass, then plead the time—the day of trouble.

## **9.7 PLEAD THE CHARACTER OF THE JUDGE**

**Psalm 50:15 “Call upon me.”**

In our country the courts are considered incorruptible, and they are! But, the judges sitting on the bench are very flawed, fractured people.

But, not so with Heaven's Judge. He is too good to be corrupted. Too righteous to be partial; too holy to be tainted; too just to be unfair; too gracious to be critical of what may appear to be petty concerns--imperfect prayers, and an imperfect life. Come before His Majesty and say, “Lord, I appeal to You who are too great to change, too good to lie, too compassionate to overlook my plight . . . I pray you would . . .”

## **9.8 PLEAD THE COURT'S ORDER**

The Court has ordered you to “Call . . .” in the day of trouble.

By calling, you are not being a pest. You are not a nuisance. You are not an inconvenience. A judge's order must be obeyed! Prayer is the proper way of motioning the Court to act. David motioned the Court, “Hear my prayer,” a Qal command in Hebrew (Psalm 4:1). It is no mistake



that the language of prayer is in the imperative. The petitioner respectfully moves / commands the Court to honor his motion. And, His Court is never closed. Never too busy. Never over scheduled. Never bogged down with cases. He has commanded you to come. An order of the Court is not to be ignored. Would He have delivered the summons if He did not intend to honor it?

## **9.9 PLEAD THE PROMISE**

The text says, "Call . . . and I will deliver you." The word, "deliver" (#lx, *chalats*) is a Piel verb meaning that extra intensity is intended in the deliverance.

The word "deliver" means "to draw out." It is translated "tear out the stones" in Leviticus 14:40 supplying the imagery of removing difficult, heavy problems. It is translated "watered garden" in Isaiah 58:11 implying that God will refresh the weary, thirsty soul. It is translated "to present the breast" in Lamentations 4:3. The imagery here is of nursing mother pulling out her breast to give her crying baby milk to drink and comfort to feel.

The phrase "I will" certifies that the Judge will honor His promise. He who is holy and just can be nothing but faithful and true. The Judge is not poor. "Every creature in the forest" and "every bird in the mountains" and "the cattle on a thousand hills" are His (Psalm 50:1-12).

The Judge is not unwilling. He has commanded you to "Call." The Judge is not unable, "for nothing shall be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). If necessary, He will shake heaven and earth to come to your rescue. He will provide a path through your Red Sea.

The fact that the Judge will deliver is forever settled--Further more saith not!

But, what is not settled is the "when" of the deliverance.

For this, the supplicant must trust the Wisdom of the Court, for the "spirit of wisdom and understanding" are upon Him (Isaiah 11:2). God is seldom early, never late, and always on time.

## **9.10 PLEAD THE PROPER OBJECT**

**Psalm 50:15 "I will deliver You."**

Will He deliver everyone else, but not me? The "you" in this verse refers back to "his people," "my consecrated ones," "my people" and to "Israel" (Psalm 50:4, 5, 7). You who have put your faith in Christ, are you not a son of Abraham (Galatians 3:7)? Are you not a member of the "called out ones," the true Israel of God (Matthew 16:16; Romans 9:6)? Having received Christ are you not now His child (John 1:12-13)? Maybe, He will not answer the wicked, but surely He will answer You, a member of His family. Maybe, He will not answer the backsliding Christian, but surely He will answer You, one who is walking with integrity.

You may say, "But I am flawed. How can God answer me?" Even better! Plead your weakness. It was to an imperfect, flawed, fractured ritualistic people to whom the promise was given (50:8-14). Did not God say to the ailing apostle, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9)?

He does not answer the prayers of good, perfect people . . . because there are none. Only Jesus is all-good. He answers the prayers of repentant sinners; and, His responsible, obedient sons and daughters.

## **9.11 PLEAD THE PURPOSE OF THE COURT**

**"I will deliver you, but you shall glorify Me."**

**You can have the deliverance, but God must have the glory.** You can have your health, but God must have the honor. You have your wealth, but God must receive the worship. You can have your pardon, but God must have the praise. If you are a thief of God's glory, how can He honor His promise to deliver?

Does God delay?

He did with Mary's prayer for her sick brother (John 11). But, maybe a resurrected Lazarus could bring Him more glory than a recovered Lazarus? Did God wait 14 years to answer the prayer of aging Abraham? Maybe, a child from an old man and an old woman could bring Him more glory than the gift of a child to a young bride. Did Jacob's plea for protection and prosperity happen in the first year of his departure from Canaan? Maybe, an impoverished patriarch with no commodities, two wives, and eleven children could bring Him more glory than a wealthy single bachelor. After defeating Goliath, could not God have made David king of

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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Israel? Maybe, an innocent but vilified fugitive seasoned by years of hardship would make a better king than a naïve boyhood king.

*Out of the Darkness  
Out of the dark forbidding soil  
The pure white lilies grow.  
Out of the black and murky clouds,  
Descends the stainless snow.  
Out of the crawling earth-bound worm  
A butterfly is born.  
Out of the somber shrouded night,  
Behold! A golden morn!  
Out of the pain and stress of life,  
The peace of God pours down.  
Out of the nails -- the spear -- the cross,  
Redemption -- and a crown! (Source Unknown).*

It is not a mistake that a pleading is called, "a prayer" in court. Prayer is much like a legal pleading, and if you will learn to plead your case properly before the High Court of Heaven, your prayers can prevail. Furthermore, saith naught.

## 10 A PRAYER FOR INSIGHT

*Ephesians 1:15-23 “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. . . that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”*

Having concluded his eulogy, Paul bows in prayer for the believers in Asia Minor- who bore the true marks that characterize all Christians: faith in Christ and love for the brethren. Paul’s prayer is a model prayer. It is a good thing to pray the prayers of the Bible. They are insights into what we really need.

Warren Wiersbe tells the story of William Randolph Hearst, a famous art collector, who read the description of a famous painting and decided that he wanted to acquire the piece. He commissioned his staff to find out where the art work was located. After months of searching, his agent reported to Hearst that he found the famous masterpiece. It was located in a warehouse owned by Hearst.

Like William Hearst we may not be enjoying the blessings we already possess. If we do not understand our present riches in Christ, we may engage in a quest for something we already have.

One time I saw a book in a store. The title intrigued me. I purchased my prize and took it home only to discover as I was putting it into my library that I already had a copy on my shelf.

Because the Colossians were troubled by their spiritual poverty and did not understand their riches in Christ, they embarked on a spiritual journey into the ghettos of first century metaphysics. Many turned to the empty house of Greek philosophy for answers only to learn in their famine that, “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ” (Colossians 2:3).

Some turned to Jewish legalism and its strict dietary laws and observance of new moons and Sabbath days only to learn in their cuffs and chains that Christ was the fullness and splendor of the illusive shadows they chased (Colossians 2:17). Others turned to the pain-inflicted world of merkabah mysticism where participants fasted and abased themselves hoping to obtain a glimpse

into the world of spirits. They seem to be ignorant of the fact that Christ is the essence of all spiritual truth and the source of spiritual wealth (Colossians 2:19).

Unaware of their wealth in Christ, Christians sometimes chase mirages hoping to quench their spiritual thirst. Many are intrigued with pop psychology and its shallow wells of self esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization. Some let go of the spiritual altogether to pursue the material things of this world.

You don't have to go down rabbit trails in pursuit of spiritual wealth. *If you understand and pray this prayer, you can begin to enjoy your riches in Christ.*

## **10.1      INSIGHT INTO THE PLAN OF GOD**

**Ephesians 1:17-18 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,**

The key request in this prayer is “may give” (didomai), a subjunctive aorist. It is a request that God would immediately go to work and to grant the petition.

We do not need more spiritual blessings, more peace, or a higher life. We need the “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (1:17); that is, we need insight into what we already have.

The term “spirit” lacks the article. This is not the Holy Spirit, but an attitude or disposition that seeks wisdom and revelation. Revelation is the acquisition of knowledge. Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. The word “sophomore” (wise fool) contains the Greek word “wisdom” (sophia). We do not need more revelation, but we do need more insight into the Revelation of God in Christ. We are blessed with galaxies of riches in Christ but only acquire planets of the wealth in the universe of the gospel of Christ.

The eyes of our heart need to be enlightened so we may know the hope stored up for the saints.

To the Greek, the word *heart* (kardia) did not refer to the seat of emotions, but to the door of the mind. The term “eyes” does not refer to the eye of the body, but the eye of the soul. Paul is not praying that believers would feel good or increase their self-esteem but that they might value

their inheritance. He is not praying that believers would obtain ecstatic experiences from God, but that they would BE ENLIGHTENED about the blessings bestowed upon them when they first trusted Christ (1:3). The need is for light, not heat; for reformation, not revival.

Believers are often like impoverished street people huddling together around a candle on a cold winter night not knowing that right around the corner is God’s warm treasure house. Christians do not need more spiritual wealth, but they do need a bright light to see the riches contained within the gospel; in election (found in Ephesians 1:4), in predestination (1:5), in adoption as sons (1:5), in redemption (1:6), in forgiveness (1:6), in the revelation of the mystery of his will (1:9, 10), in His inheritance (1:11), in the gospel of salvation (1:13), in the good faith deposit of the Spirit (1:13, 14), in one’s identification with the history of Christ (2:1-7), and into the mystery that the church is the temple of God (Ephesians 2-3).

## **10.2 INSIGHT INTO THE POWER OF GOD**

**Ephesians 1:19 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,.**

<sup>GNT</sup> Ephesians 1:19 kai. ti, to. u`perba,llon me,geqoj th/j duna,mewj auvtou/ eivj h`ma/j tou.j pisteu,ontaj kata. th.n evne,rgeian tou/ kra,touj th/j ivscu,oj auvtou/Å

“Dynamite” and “dynamo” are derived from the Greek word for power (duna,mewj). Two Greek words define the quality of this power.

The word “great” (me,geqoj) means huge in size. Various English words are derived from the term “great” (mega): megaphone, megabyte, and megaton (the explosive force of a million tons of TNT).

The word “surpassing” comes from the Greek word *uperballo* which means “to throw beyond.” It was used by Olympian champions who threw beyond other javelin throwers. God’s megatons of power was exerted in raising Jesus from the grave. Even with all the doctors and scientists and megatons of TNT available, none can raise the dead. In raising Christ to God’s right hand in glory, God out-threw, out-ran, and out-performed man’s abilities, expectations, and dreams.

**Greek words are used to describe this power.**

The Greek word *energia* refers to the potential force of a thing. It is referring to all the capacities of divinity.

Another word in this series of descriptions is the word *ischus* (ivscu,oj) which is the source of all power in God. When this potential force is released from the source of God’s power, it produces *kratos* (kra,touj) or work—the displacement of oppositional objects or bodies.

Kratos is translated “*strength*” or “*might*” in Mary’s Magnificat where Mary attributed the miracle of her pregnancy to the kratos/strength of God. Somehow, Paul wants us to know and understand the potential energy (*energia*) of God’s megaton power (*dunamos*) coming from the source of His strength (*ischus*) that was released with great force (*kratos*) in history when He raised Christ from the dead.

This power is available for believers. It is near us, on us, in us, around us. Like the stars, his power is always there.

Paul did not pray for power to do God’s will, but that we might know we already possess the power extended to us in to do God’s will. If we know His will and His strength, we can experience His power.

### **10.3 INSIGHT INTO THE POSITION OF CHRIST**

**Ephesians 1:20-21 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:**

Paul prays that believers might know how great the risen Christ has become not only in His resurrection, but in His ascension and His session at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:19-22). The Lord Jesus Christ holds the greatest position in the universe. The phrase “right hand” refers to the ultimate position and authority and honor within a kingdom. He is the greater Joseph in charge of Pharaoh’s kingdom. The term “far above” intensifies the authority of Christ. He is above ALL and over ALL the following jurisdictions:

☐ **Principalities:** The Greek term *arche* refers to the first cause, the first in a series, or the principal ruler of a nation: king, prince, president, general, or prime minister.

- **Powers:** The Greek word *power* (evxousi,aj) refers to delegated authority within a kingdom, the extension and limitation of power: magistrates, bureaucrats, counsels, legislators, senators, police, and armies.
- **Mights:** This is our word *dunamis* which refers to the power of a government. Governments have no rights, only power. People have rights; government has power.
- **Dominions:** The word *dominion* (kurio,tthoj) is derived from the term “lords.” It refers to the boundaries of a lord’s rule; i.e., the domain of his rule; his jurisdiction; his land; his county. These dominions would include the nations on earth as well as the spiritual realm where Satan rules.
- **Every name that is named:** No matter what power, king, government, or authority arises in history, Christ will always have a superior name, a superior accomplishment, superior authority, superior power, superior prestige, and superior honor.

While kings and rulers on earth have great authority and power, they also have great limitations. Our Lord has greater authority, greater power, and has no limitations. His authority not only extends to this age, but to the age to come; not only to the church, but to the State.

## 10.4 INSIGHT INTO THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

**Ephesians 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:15-23).**

What does it mean that Christ is Head of the Church?

**It refers to our Lord’s position** as Master, Commander, Lord, Chief, Sovereign, and King of the church.

**It refers to our Lord’s dignity and authority as supreme Ruler of the New Israel.** Israel had king-rulers over them, and the church as a new Israel, has the Lord Jesus Christ as its King. He is head of redeemed humanity. As Head of the church, He is preeminent. As Head, He is worthy of honor and esteem and worship. Our goal is to glorify our Head. A failure to comprehend the greatness of Christ is like treating the Queen of England as a common maid. It is not only a major social faux pas, but evidence a person lacks prudential judgment. Before the Queen



arrives, deputants arrive to instruct guests on the proper protocol in addressing the Queen of England. And, if this much attention is necessary for a human queen, how much should we be students of the proper protocol in addressing the Lord Jesus Christ?

Christ is "not the man upstairs" but the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, the King of the Nations (Jeremiah 10:7), and Head of the Church.

**It refers to the priesthood of all believers.** The church does not have a priesthood, it is a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5-12). While it is wonderful to have others pray for us, each of us has access to the Head of the Church.

**It means that our Lord sustains a living organism.** The church is not an organization, but an organism; not a corpus of man but a corpus of Christ; not a dead fiction, but living body! As a living organism, the church is entitled to all rights as a spiritual being under His direction. Oh, how the Spirit must be grieved at church leaders who capitulated to the will of the state and consented to turn the living corpus of Christ into a dead, fictional, IRS 501 c 3 Corporation. The legal head of the incorporated charitable organization is not Christ, but the IRS.

**It refers to the dependent nature of the church.** The church owes its existence to the grace of Christ and is sustained by Him, and not the grace of the U.S. government. Christ's church is an organism dependent on the Savior, not the State. It is ordered by Him, not legislative statutes. The church is sustained by prayer to Almighty God, not pleadings to the almighty State.

**It refers to the exclusive authority of Christ and the independent nature of the church.** The church owes its existence to Christ, not to men; to Christ, not preachers; to Christ, not the Congress. It operates under church law not IRS law. It is sustained by Christ in heaven, not the government in Washington D.C. The church operates independent of the State and is accountable to Christ, not to pagan, humanistic, pompous rulers.

While pastors are part of the plan of God, a pastor is not the Head of the church. While the pastor may have certain responsibilities, we must remember the pastor is a fellow servant and pilgrim on this earth. While a church may be elder ruled, the elders are not the Head of the church. While the elders are essential to serving the church, we should remember they are simply trustees of a local church. While a president may be the head of a country, he is not the Head of the church.

The church is sovereign by virtue of her relationship to Christ.

It was for this reason the Pilgrims left England. In England the King was the self-proclaimed Head of the Church. In church history, the term "free church" meant the church operated independent of and free of any governmental controls. When churches enter into highly restrictive contracts with the government to obtain some government privilege, such organizations waive their natural, God-given, unalienable rights to carry out its mission without interference from the State.

When a church has to ask the government for permission to do this or that, the Headship of Christ is compromised. The Scripture warns: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness (the church) with unrighteousness (the government)?"

**It means that the church has authority to conduct its mission in this world.** If "all authority in heaven and earth" is given to Christ, and Christ has commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations, then Christian servants have authority to minister His word in ever part of the world. The church does not need a license from the State to start a church, a school, or a ministry. It does not function under codes and statutes of men, but under the law of Christ.

Practically speaking, Christians need to stop asking the state for permission to marry, teach, pass out literature, feed the poor, start a school, or open a store front to start a church. Forget the BAR attorneys. Remember Christ!

Do you remember Victor Hugo's story of *Les Miserables*? After escaping from the clutches of the police, Jean Valjean finds refuge in a convent. Though the French police knew he was inside, the authorities had no jurisdiction in God's house. It was because the church was under command of a higher power than that of Rome that led the Christians to engage the mission of evangelism and to "turn the world upside down."

What does all this mean? When we grasp the plan of God, the power of God, and the position of Christ, we can claim our riches in Christ and have power to serve Him better.

Pastor Ken Gaub tells the story of the time he was traveling on I-75 with his family from Pennsylvania back to his home in Yakima, Washington. Discouraged and feeling the need to stretch, he stopped to feed his family at a near-by Dairy Queen and to take a walk. While on this short walk, he heard a telephone ring in a nearby telephone booth. He picked it up, and the operator asked for Ken Gaub. He nearly fainted. A lady named Millie was struggling with

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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thoughts of suicide. She heard Ken speak and decided to call him because she thought he could help. Picking up a pencil she wrote down the first number that came to her mind. It was a telephone number of the telephone booth Ken was standing next to in a city he had never visited before. Sensing the encounter was from God, he prayed for wisdom and helped the woman through her crisis. Ken, no longer discouraged himself, wrote an article, "God Knows Where You Are."

The key to Christian service is tapping into our Highly Exalted Savior who reigns over All Things. When we operate under His Headship, life flows to us.

If you are like William Randolph Hearst seeking spiritual treasures, maybe it is because you do not understand the wealth you already have in Christ. This prayer is not about what you can get from God, but about insight into your riches in Christ. You believe in the gospel to partake of its wealth; you pray to understand and enjoy and spend your wealth in the gospel. You may think you need money, or experiences, or psychological help, but you really need insight into Christ Himself. Let us study the Word of God and pray, "Lord, open my eyes that I may see."

## **11 A PRAYER FOR POWER**

The Book of Ephesians is a “Gold Mine of Gospel Truth” because it takes the believer into the Bank of Heaven and reveals to him the riches of his inheritance in Christ. The Gospel of Salvation is a rags to riches experience. But, believers are often unaware of their wealth and sometimes do not feel wealthy. For this reason, Paul lifts up a prayer in the middle of his treatise because Christians need an expanded capacity to appreciate and enjoy their riches in Christ.

### **11.1 THE REASON FOR THE PRAYER**

**Ephesians 3:14 “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father.”**

To find the reason for this prayer, we must go back to verse six, “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

The Gentiles were called “pagans,” “heathen,” “barbarians,” and “dogs,” and “the uncircumcised” by the Jews—not exactly affectionate terms.

But through gospel proclamation, Gentiles are being called to salvation and made members of the family of God. All our service, all our giving, and all of our prayers have a reason, and that reason is that we have been blessed with the gift of salvation and we want others to discover this same gift.

### **11.2 THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER**

**Ephesians 3: 14“For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father.”**

In the East, bowing the knee was a term that expressed humility by an inferior in the presence of a superior. It is good for us to get on our knees when we pray. The business of the church is done on its knees. If we want to stand tall, we must learn to kneel. Without humility we cannot expect to gain access into the presence of the Omnipotent. Without apprehending the Father’s dignity, we will not express humility.

### **11.3 THE OBJECT OF PRAYER**

**Ephesians 3:15-15 “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.”**

Men call the Inexplicable, “God.”

The Jews knew Him as “Creator,” “the Almighty,” and “YHWH,” the “Lord” of Israel. In the N.T. Jesus reveals Him as “The Father,” the all-wise, all-caring Giver and Sustainer of life. He is a Father by right of creation and a Father by right of redemption—the new creation. When we pray, we do not pray to a “Force,” or “to a ceiling,” or “to a higher power,” we pray to infinite, personal, triune Spirit—our Heavenly Father.

The Father has a family, not made up of believing Jews only, but of believing Gentiles who have found salvation in Christ. Part of His family is in heaven, and a smaller part of that family is on earth. His family is affectionately called, “the church,” “the temple of God,” the “Bride of Christ,” and “the Israel of God.”

How does one become a member of His Family? One cannot inherit this privilege. One cannot determine to become a member of this family. Nor can the good will of others make one a child of God. One can only become a son by being birthed of God (John 1:12, 13).

### **11.4 FIVE PETITIONS OF PRAYER**

**Seeing five needs within the family of God, the apostle offers up five petitions:**

#### **11.4.1 THE NEED FOR STRENGTH**

**Ephesians 3:16 “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power (dunamis) through His Spirit in the inner man.”**

As Paul traveled among the churches, he must have been impressed with the power of salvation at work among men, but he also observed weakness among God’s people. God’s people are sometimes like a house of cards-- the slightest tremor and the best among us collapse. We are like an engine that needs a battery to start its pistons churning. Without power the light bulbs of

our faith will not give their light. Without wind in our sails, our ship of faith cannot travel from port to port.

The seat of this power is in the inner man. We live in a day and age where men and women place a great emphasis on body building and strength. They go to health clubs to swim laps, pump iron, and to ride stationery bicycles. It is possible to be a giant in the gym and a pygmy in the pew.

The need among us is for strength in the inner man. When the lions of lust, the demons of doubt, and the pesky foxes of fear seek to devour the heart and soul, we need inner strength.

And where do we get this power? It does not come from our effort, or our activity, or our initiative. It is a gift of grace through His Spirit at work in the inner man.

#### **11.4.2 THE NEED FOR DEVOTION**

**Ephesians 3:17 “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, being rooted and grounded in love,”**

The word *dwell* means, “to be at home.”

The terms “rooted” and “grounded” express permanency.

Paul is not praying that people will be more religious. He is praying that the light of the knowledge of the gospel might burn brightly in the heart. He is not praying Christ will make an occasional visit, but that Christ will find a permanent home in the hearts of believers. He is not praying that Christ may have an important place in the heart. He is praying that Christ may have the preeminent place. He is not praying for a quick transplant but that each believer might be like a deep-rooted wild fig tree. He is not praying that Christ as a Divine Person will live in each heart, because Christ as a Divine Person lives in heaven. He is praying that the knowledge of the living Christ may find permanent residence in every soul, and that every soul would send roots down into the soil of God’s love.

#### **11.4.3 THE NEED FOR A CAPACITY TO COMPREHEND**

**Ephesians 3:18 “that you may “be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth . . .of the love of God”**

We have here a “hina” (purpose) clause, which contains **a main verb** and **two infinities**.

The main verb in this prayer is the Greek word, “exischuo” (evxiscu,shte), which means “to be able to possess strength.” Paul realizes believers need an enlarged capacity to understand the breadth and length and height and depth . . .of the love of God. Getting a hold of the love of God is like trying to hold an elephant on your lap. The love of God is as broad as the outstretched arms of the Savior, as high as His thorn pierced brow, as deep as his nail pierced feet, and as deep as the river of pain that met Jesus at Calvary. Who can grasp it?

The first infinitive is the English word comprehend, which comes from the Greek word, Katalabe,sqai, which in turn is a combination of two Greek words, “kata” (down) and “lambano” (to receive or take). The kata is a preposition which adds extra intensity to the verb “to take.” It is translated “seize” in Mark 9:18 and “caught” in John 8:3. The imagery before us is that of a hunt or chase. Paul uses this word because he knows the saints need special strength to be able to catch and seize something so massive and wonderful and virtuous as the love of God.

#### **11.4.4 THE NEED FOR A CAPACITY TO KNOW**

**Ephesians 3:19 “and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” The second infinitive is the infinitive “to know” (gnw/nai.). Paul wants the believers “to be able” to know in an experiential way the “surpassing” knowledge of the love of God.**

By using the word, “surpassing,” Paul is asserting a couple of facts about the love of God.

First, the love of God surpasses everything else worth knowing. We live in an age where knowledge in some fields doubles every two years. We place a great emphasis on acquiring knowledge. We encourage our children to finish high school, to get a college degree, and to obtain field experience. It is possible to have a bucket of academic knowledge but possess only a teaspoon of understanding about God’s love. A man may understand the mysteries of the atom, molecular biology, and the mysteries of light, but if he does not know the love of God, he is poor beyond shame.

Second, God’s love is really unsearchable. It is higher than the highest mountain, broader than the deepest sea, wider than east and west. The peak of God’s love makes Mt. Everest (29, 028 feet) look like a sand dune. It would be easier to swim the 4000- mile long North African Nile than to explore one tributary stream flowing from the sea of God’s love. It is easier to memorize

Black’s Law Dictionary than it is to understand one splinter of God’s mercy expressed at the cross of Calvary. God’s galaxies of love come to us in the Son, but we only possess planets of understanding.

#### **11.4.5 THE NEED TO BE HAPPY**

**Ephesians 3:19 “that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”**

So much of life is spent pursuing happiness. Where can we find true happiness? In a bone-chilling adventure? In material things? In physical pleasures?

Paul knows the heart can only find true happiness when it is in fellowship with the Father. By “the fullness of God,” Paul is referring to the polar attributes of God—his holiness and love. Apparently, it is possible for us to find complete joy in the champagne of God’s revelation to man.

*“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.” - Blaise Pascal, Pensées VII(425)*

In this prayer, Paul is reaching beyond the galaxies to the very throne of God. It is an impossible stretch, yet Paul dares to ask that God’s finite people might be filled with the fullness of the Infinite. How can the ocean of God’s presence fit into our cup? To be filled with the fullness of God, we must be empty of the self-life with all its idols and lust so we can find our soul’s satisfaction totally in Christ.

Paul’s prayer is one of enlargement that we may discover the wine of joy, the pillow of comfort, and the sword of purpose from the presence of Christ in our lives.

### **11.5 THE DOXOLOGY OF PRAYER**

**Ephesians 3:20-21) “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. “**



After Paul reaches the climax of his prayer, he bursts into an accolade of praise presenting to us the possibility of the impossible.

*To Him*

*To Him Who is able*

*To Him Who is able to do*

*To Him Who is able to do that we ask*

*To Him Who is able to do all that we ask*

*To Him Who is able to do all that we ask or think*

*To Him Who is able to do beyond all that we ask or think*

*To Him Who is able to do beyond all that we ask or think*

*To Him Who is able to do abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*

*To Him Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*

*To all generations forever and ever. Amen!*

In 1540, Martin Luther had an assistant and friend named Friedrich Myconius. Friedrich became sick and was on his deathbed and wrote Luther a farewell letter. Luther immediately sent a reply,

*"I command you in the name of God to live because I still have need of you in the work of reforming the church...the Lord will never let me hear that you are dead but will permit you to survive me. For this I am praying because I seek only to glorify the name of God."*

Fredriech, who had already lost the ability to speak, recovered and lived an additional six more years to server Luther. He died **TWO MONTHS AFTER LUTHER HIMSELF HAD DIED.**

Man's chief end is to glorify God. And, God is most glorified when we enjoy Him.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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Paul prays that that we might give glory in the church to Jesus Christ. He does not receive glory at the U.N., in the Congress, at the Red Cross, or in our public schools. Only an expanded, enlarged church filled with the fullness of God has the ability to give Him glory.

## 12 A PRAYER FOR STABILITY

*Philippians 4:1-9 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.*

### 12.1 PEACE AND ITS LACK THEREOF

Paul affectionately calls the church “his beloved,” “his joy,” and “his crown.” But, the church at Philippi was not being a joy. The troops were infighting, discouraged, and scattered.

The word “therefore” directs us back to the bloody struggle between the “the enemies of Christ” and the “citizens of heaven” (3:18-20).

Earthly minds and heavenly minds will always be at war.

The one who follows Christ cannot be a friend with the world. The god of the world is their appetite and their glory is their shame, but the God of the Christians is Christ and their glory is His name. In this conflict, the Christian can never make peace.

As in all wars, there are casualties. The church is always under assault, always getting knocked off balance, and always seeking to repair itself. At times the church appears weak having only the strength of a pretzel.

Blow by blow, the world presses forward challenging the Christian community to retreat from its moral ground and retract its beliefs. For this reason, there is a need for stability.

The apostle commands the church, the “dearly beloved,” to “stand firm in the Lord.” The verb *stete* (you stand firm) is a present tense verb which implies that the church must stand and keep on standing firm against the aggression of the ungodly and not give ground.

***If we want spiritually stability, we must pray regularly, ponder correctly, and practice constantly.***

## **12.2 PEACE WITH MEN**

The menacing war between the enemies of Christ and the church demobilized the saints at Philippi and scuffles erupted in their own ranks. Two female privates, Euodia and Syntyche, whom some refer to as “Odious” and “Soontouchy,” started raining “death from the sky” on each other.

Commander Paul issued a direct order to these two women to drop their weapons and to embrace each other. The words “to agree” means “to be of the same mind;” i.e., they were to search out the mind of Christ on the issues separating them and come to an agreement about His marching orders (Philippians 2:5-10).

So serious was the contention between these two combatants that Paul recruited other soldiers, “Yokefellow,” to assist in this reconciliation. Facing an armored assault by the world is scary enough, but it pales in comparison to the “friendly fire” that sometimes breaks out in the church.

Paul redeployed his troops and channeled their energies towards pursuing internal unity. The church cannot be an instrument of peace to the public if they are not experiencing peace in private.

## **12.3 PRAY REGULARLY**

### **PEACE IN THE HEART**

Because these women were “geein” when they should have been a “hawin’,” Paul commanded His troops “to rejoice in the Lord always.” So important is his order that he repeats it twice. The imperative is a present tense verb implying that this regiment was to rejoice and keep on rejoicing. In other words, Commander Paul directed his soldiers to refocus; i.e., to get their eyes

off the things that separated them and to focus their affections on sweet Jesus and the gospel that originally united them.

One time I was involved in a nasty disagreement that erupted in a church in Colorado Springs. Tempers erupted, hairs bristled, and words were exchanged. Just as I was losing hope, one of the mediators in the dispute began to talk about the “sweetness of Jesus.” Everyone calmed down. We talked for three more hours. Every time things got tense, this spiritual brother started sharing short, sweet thoughts about the Savior. Amazingly, at the end of the heated discussion, everyone embraced.

I learned an important lesson that day: ***When things get tense, start talking about the sweetness of Jesus.***

The command “to rejoice” appeals to the will and targets the emotions. Paul redeployed their emotions to express joy. The “joy of the Lord” is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). All of God’s soldiers must be singers.

There is something about praise that drives poutiness away. What praise is to God, poutiness is to the devil. God loves it; the devil hates it. If we are not “praisers,” we will be “stinkers” like “Odious” and “Soontouchy.”

The order, “Let your gentleness be known to all men” is an aorist imperative commanding immediate employment of moderation; i.e., in times of stress, we should immediately employ “sweet reasonableness.” Our Lord was a man of steel and velvet, and Commander Paul charged his regiment to pad their attitudes with velvet in order to restore harmony among the troops.

Commander Paul ordered his army to “be anxious for nothing.” The word “anxious” refers to the mental activity of “worrying” and “fretting.” Paul did not want his troops preoccupied with problems.

The term “nothing” is the hammer that hits the thumb. The term eliminates the engagement of ALL anxious thoughts. While worrying may be a socially acceptable sin, it is banned among the troops. The command is a present tense implying that a soldier is NEVER allowed to complain or worry in the service of His King. Worry robs God of glory and man of courage. It motivates retreat. Rather than worry, Paul commands the soldiers to take their concerns to King Jesus in prayer.

Three kinds of communications are encouraged at the Command-and-Control Center.

**Prayer** (proseuche): This refers to the general act of prayer.

**Supplication** (deesis): This term refers to specific requests in prayer; i.e., respectful arguments in a legal pleading, the articulate reasoning in a formal petition.

**Thanksgiving** (eucharistia): This refers to an attitude of gratitude as opposed to a demanding spirit.

## **THE PEACE OF GOD**

There is a promise attached to prayer, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7). The term "surpasses" means "to rise above" and is can be translated "to govern" or "to rule over;" or "to have authority over;" i.e., the peace of God can rise above the worries of the mind and rule the heart. The term "guard" is a military term meaning, "to hold one prisoner," "to watch," or "stand guard." Peace is a settled agreement between two parties. The goal of war is peace. One cannot go to wage war for the gospel if there is no peace in the heart. Prayer is the means of obtaining this peace. Peace acts as a watchman that warns us of an approaching enemy. Without the peace of God standing watch over our hearts, rebel forces can break through our defenses and overrun our operations.

## **12.4 PONDER CORRECTLY**

### **PEACE OF MIND**

In our duty to stand firm, we must possess our hearts and minds. Since the emotions are responders to our thoughts, it is imperative that the peace of God stand guard over our thought process.

Commander Paul is concerned that the Christian soldier think correctly.

We live in a culture that is obsessed with good feelings. Feeling good has become the greatest good. By way of illustration, take the Star Wars trilogy where Luke Skywalker hears the voice, "Luke, let go. Follow your feelings." This is the dumbest advice we could ever give anyone. If

we followed our feelings, there would be lots of people going to the hospital each week with a broken nose. While the psychologists are fondling the touchy-feely realm of human emotions, Paul advances stability by challenging the thought life. ***Correct thinking is the key to standing firm.***

The word “think” or “dwell” comes from the Greek word *logizomai* (*logi,zesqe*). It means “to calculate,” “reckon,” “credit,” “consider,” “esteem,” or “to reflect upon.” Thinking, not feeling, is the key to spiritual stability. Feelings follow thoughts. Thinking is the engine that pulls the caboose, not the caboose that pulls the engine. To raise the standard of living, we must raise the standard of thinking, and this is what Paul is doing in this passage of Scripture.

*Straight living cannot come out of crooked thinking.*

**Think truth:** The word for “truth” is *alethes* (*avlhqh,j*). The female name “Alethia” comes from this Greek word. In every war, sides practice ruse and deception in order to confuse their opposition. This applies to the psychological battle as well as to operations and maneuvers. Truth is the Christian compass. It is the program that must run his internal computer. Truth can heal, and truth can hurt.

“Truth reforms as well as informs,” said the Puritan, William Jeneyh.

Like the Sun that can warm the body or blister the skin, truth can soothe and it can sting. We must seek truth, but truth also seeks us.

*Whether truth comes by the pound or by the ounce, it must have weight in our life.*

**Think honorable:** The word “honorable” refers to that quality in human beings, which “calls forth veneration and respect” says Friberg (Friberg lexicon). It is translated “dignity” in 1 Timothy 3:8.

**Think right:** The word “right” comes from the Greek word *di,kaioj* (*dikaios*). We get the word justification from this word. It refers to duties in a relationship. To do what is right is to do what is befitting and proper in a human relationship. If we want to do right, we must think right.

**Think pure:** The word “holiness” comes from this Greek word (*a`gna*). It signifies a dedication to cleanliness; i.e., a separation from sin and an attachment to holiness. It involves a search for anything that might contaminate the soul so that it might be cleansed. It involves a search for

virtue, in order that it may be embraced. Likewise, it lays hold of the ashes of the Red Heifer for cleanings from defilement (Numbers 19).

**Think lovely:** The word “lovely” comes from the Greek word *prospheiles* (prosilh,j). It is a combination of two words “pros” and “phileo.” It means “attractive” or “beautiful.” If something is winsome and engaging, we can think about it.

**Think good repute:** The Greek word *euphemos* word means “praiseworthy” or “good report” (eu;fhmoj), and it is the opposite of something that is condemned or under the ban. The chance of stability is increased when we think about things that are praiseworthy and commendable.

**Think excellence:** The Greek word *arete* (avreth,) refers to moral goodness or virtue. In 1 Peter 2:9 and 2 Peter 1:3 this word names the moral virtue that belongs to God. By excellence, we are not referring to perfection or something out of the reach of man, but the contemplation of the character of God.

**Think praise worthy:** We get the word praise from the Greek word *epainos* (e;painoj), that is, that which is valuable and applaudable. We must answer the question, “Is what I think about commendable?”

## 12.5 PRACTICE CONSTANTLY

Paul concludes his treatise on spiritual stability by issuing a final order: Whatever “you have learned and received and heard and seen in me” practice.

The Philippians heard the gospel message and saw a gospel model in Paul. The word “practice” is a present tense imperative implying durative action; i.e., do and keep on doing.

Like a good soldier, Christians constantly practice and drill.

A promise is attached to the command: “and the God of peace shall be with you.” The peace of God comes through prayer, but the God of peace comes through obedience. Here He is not promising His peace, but his presence. Prayer is not a substitute for performance.

The Navigator developed this aphorism:



*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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*Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap character; sow character, reap a destiny.*

In conclusion, if the God of peace is with us, we will multiply the possibility of possessing peace of heart, peace of mind, and peace with men. If we want to “stand firm” and be spiritually stable, we must pray regularly, ponder correctly, and practice constantly. If we do these things we will not only possess the peace of God, but the God of peace will possess us.

## 13 WHEN PRAYERS ARE UNANSWERED

*Matthew 15:28 "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish."*

Whenever I hear the words, great faith, my ears pick up. I want to be a person of great faith, don't you? But, what is great faith?

The problem with having "great faith" is that it is often tested and hammered out on the anvil of difficulty. "The Lord tests the righteous," says the psalmist (Psalm 11:5).

Have you heard about the young man who was an All-American football player in college? He went on to play professional football for a few years and then came back to his alma mater as an assistant coach. One of his main responsibilities in his new job would be to go out and scout and recruit players for his college team. Before he made his first recruiting trip, he went in to visit with the head coach, the same coach for whom he had played when he was there in college some years before.

The head coach was a crusty old veteran. He had held that position as head coach for many years, was widely known and highly respected all across the country. The new young coach said to him, "Coach, I'm about to head out on my first recruiting trip, but before I go I want to be sure that we are on the same page. Tell me, Coach, what kind of player do you want me to recruit?"

The old coach leaned back in his chair. He looked the young coach straight in the eyes and said: "Son, I've been at this job a long time and over the years I have noticed that there are several different kinds of players. For example," he said, "you will find some players who get knocked down and they stay down. That's not the kind we want!" And he said, "You will find some players who get knocked down and they will get right back up and get knocked down again and then they stay down. That's not the kind we want!" And then the old coach said, "But you will also find some other players who get knocked down and knocked down and knocked down, and every time they get knocked down, they get right back up!" At this point, the young coach got excited and he said, "Now, that's the kind of player we want, isn't it, Coach?" "No!" said the old head coach. "We want the one doing all that knockin' down!!"

Well, this is what God wants. He wants the kind of Christian that keeps knockin’ the Devil down.

**You can knock down your difficulties by activating the virtues of great faith.**

### **13.1 GREAT FAITH IS RECRUITED DURING GREAT DIFFICULTIES**

Blessing is often carried on the wings of adversity. That is, the greatness of a trial provides an opportunity to bring out the greatness of a faith. It took a Revolutionary War to make a George Washington. The great ride of Paul Revere made history only because the “regulars were a comin’.” It took the Civil War to expose the virtues of a man like Abraham Lincoln. John F. Kennedy is best known for his show down with the Russian nuclear crisis. Behind the collapse of the Berlin wall was the courage and strategy of a Ronald Reagan. Likewise, the great faith of the Canaanite woman was exposed because of the perplexing problem that engulfed her daughter.



We know little about this woman except that she was a resident of some village in the region of Tyre and Sidon. This area of ancient Phoenicia was still under the influence of the lifeless religion of Astarte, the pagan goddess. This Semitic goddess was worshipped by the Syrians, Palestinians, Phoenicians, Egyptians and other Semitic Tribes. King Solomon built a Temple to her as Astoreth, near Jerusalem. Astarte is the supposed incarnation of Ishtar and Inanna. Astarte was honored as a goddess of war and tenacity, but to the Semites, she was a goddess of love and fertility. The Greeks called her, “Aphrodite.” The Bible calls her, “the abomination” (2 Kings 23:13). Teenage girls often earned their dowry by serving as a temple prostitute. The daughter of the Canaanite woman was probably a devoted occult member and at some time came under the influence of the demon promoting the worship of Astarte. Disenchanted with her ancient religion, the mother of the demon-possessed girl heard about Jesus and determined to gain an audience before Him.

A pastor received this letter, “Dear Pastor, Are there any devils on earth? I think there may be one in my class. Her name is Carla.” (Salina, age 10).

While westerners may struggle with the concept of demons, we would do well to keep in mind, "the Devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

It was demonic difficulty that caused the Canaanite woman to leave the Temple of Astarte and knock at Jesus' door. A difficult trial is always unwelcome, but if it brings us face to face with Jesus, trouble can be our friend.

## **13.2 GREAT FAITH ENDURES UNANSWERED PRAYER**

**Matthew 15:22 The Canaanite woman began to cry out, praying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."**

What a wonderful prayer, "Have mercy on me!" The publican prayed this same prayer and went home justified (Luke 18:13), but when this woman prayed, Jesus did not answer her.

Have you ever knocked at Heaven's Gate, and no one answered? What do you do when heaven is pacemaker quiet? Silence, the deafening clanging chatter of silence, has tested the saints throughout the ages. Like a rat on a hot griddle scrambling to escape, silence brings us no relief from the heat of trials. Like a donkey crushed under the weight of heavy load, silence lifts no burden. Like the blistering sun steals the strength from one lost in the desert, silence saps our spiritual vitality. God's delays mangle our emotions, crush our hopes, and knock the wind out of our confidence.

I don't know about you, but I can stand anything except to be ignored. There is nothing more agonizing or more disconcerting than to pray and feel like I am talking to the ceiling. No wonder the psalmist cried, "To Thee, O LORD, I call; My rock, do not be deaf to me, Lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit." (Psalm 28:1).

But, somehow, some way, faith must endure the strain of unanswered prayer. Abraham endured 17 years of silence waiting for the birth of a son. Moses endured forty years of silence before God spoke to him at the burning bush. Mary's urgent prayer for her dying brother was met with four days of delay. And, he died during the Lord's silence. Why did Jesus wait so long? I don't know for sure, but maybe, a resurrected Lazarus could bring more glory to God than a healed brother. Maybe, a silent Jesus could teach us a lesson about the virtues of great faith.

### **13.3      GREAT FAITH ENDURES DISPASSIONATE BRETHREN**

**Matthew 15:23 "And His disciples came to Him and kept asking Him, saying, "Send her away, for she is shouting out after us."**

If the silence of Jesus was not enough of a test, this poor woman had to endure the acid rejection of Jesus' best pastoral candidates. They saw this woman as a nuisance. Her incessant cries annoyed them and interrupted their vacation in Tyre and Sidon. After all she had three strikes against her. She was a Woman! A Gentile! And, under the influence of demons promoting the goddess Astarte! Irritated, the twelve prayed to Jesus, "Send her away."

Interestingly, Jesus did not answer their prayers either.

Would you go to these men for counseling? Christians are sometimes like this. We view problems as an annoyance instead of an opportunity to serve; as a source of irritation instead of a chance to glorify God. Sadly, most of us are so bogged down in our personal concerns, we are unwilling to even be around the pungent, tart, putrid odors of locker-stagnated people problems.

If it hurts, send them away!

If it costs, send them away!

If it means a sacrifice, send them away!

If it takes more food, send them away!

If it means additional staff, send them away!

If it means double services, send them away!

If it means a new building program, send them away!

Meeting the needs of hurting people stretch us and break us. But, ministering is the reason for our existence. Let us remember, "There are no comfort zones on the cross!" May none never hear the words, "Send them away," uttered from our lips.

Further, if you have a need and have been unable to squeeze a drop of compassion out of busy Christians, don't get discouraged. Keep going to Jesus. He knows. He understands. He cares.

### **13.4 GREAT FAITH ENDURES HEAVEN'S REBUKE**

**Matthew 15:24** But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

First, this woman's faith had to endure the Lord's silence. Second, it had to endure dispassionate brethren. And now, when Jesus does answer, she receives a rebuke. He informs this woman that involvement with her rancid human problem is not within the mission of his ministry. It was the last thing she wanted to hear. However, the woman didn't get discouraged. She prayed on, "Lord, help me!"

At this point, it is important to note a fault with this woman's theology. In her first petition, she addressed Jesus as, "The Son of David." This was true, but it is strictly a Jewish term belonging only to the nation of Israel. As a Gentile, she had no right to approach our Lord on Jewish ground, that is, "on the sure mercies of David." In her second prayer, she addressed Jesus as, "Lord." "Lord" is Jesus' universal title on which she had a legal right to approach the Savior. Her refinement of faith was positive and progressive.

Sometimes Heaven is silent because our faith needs to be refined. Our prayers are frayed and flawed; our motivation selfish and skewed; and, our character weak and frail. Sometimes we claim the promises, but ignore the conditions: "If you abide in me (the condition), you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done for you (the promise)" (John 15:7).

Silence gives us time to be instructed and corrected.

If you are passing through a period of unexplained silence, maybe God is seeking to refine and perfect your faith, your motivation, or your character.

### **13.5 GREAT FAITH ENDURES CAUSTIC CORRECTION**

**Matthew 15:26-27** And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

Jesus corrected this woman a second time. He insisted that the Messianic blessings belonged only to Israel and not to the Gentiles.

Further, Jesus humbled the woman by calling her a "dog." The term dog was not a reference to the cute little pets that we have in our homes, but a reference to the mangy, mongrels that scavenged garbage pits searching for rancid meat. Personally, I don't like being accused and called names. Insult brings out the fierce fighter in me. Vilify me, and you had better find a foxhole, quick!

But, you gotta love this woman's humility and tenacity. Not only did she receive the Lord's rebuke, she honored Him by saying, "Yes, Lord." "No" and "Lord" don't belong in the same sentence, do they? Picking up on the dog analogy, the woman reasoned to a truth that she was simply the Lord's pet seeking croutons from underneath His table of dainty miracles.

Likewise, if you feel like you are on God's anvil being smashed by the hammer of adversity, maybe God is refining your faith to the glory of Christ.

### **13.6 GREAT FAITH RECEIVES GOD'S REWARD**

**Matthew 15:28 "Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish. And her daughter was healed at once.'"**

Not only did this woman receive the bread for which she begged, Jesus drew attention to her great faith and honored it for all to admire.

This Canaanite woman had great faith because she passed the tests given her by heaven. She didn't quit, collapse, or plunge into self-pity. She kept coming, kept praying, kept pleading, kept reasoning, and kept knocking until she received her answered prayer.

Ready for a baseball trivia question? Who is Clint Courtney? If you're unsure, don't bother requesting the answer from Cooperstown, N.Y. Clint never came close to making it into the Baseball Hall of Fame. In fact, it's very doubtful that his picture appeared on any bubble gum cards. This guy wasn't a legend in his own time -- not even in his own mind. He was only a memory maker for his family, and a few die-hard fans who were inspired by his tremendous fortitude. Clint played catcher for the Baltimore Orioles in the 1950s. During his career he earned the nickname of Scrap Iron, implying that he was hard, weathered, tough. Old Scrap broke no records -- only bones. He had little power or speed on the base paths. As for grace and style, he made the easiest play look rather difficult. But armed with mitt and mask, Scrap Iron never flinched from any challenge.

Batters often missed the ball and caught his shin. Their foul tips nipped his elbow. Runners fiercely plowed into him, spikes first, as he defended home plate. Though often doubled over in agony, and flattened in a heap of dust, Clint Courtney never quit. Invariably, he'd slowly get up, shake off the dust, punch the pocket of his mitt once, twice, and nod to his pitcher to throw another one. The game would go on and Courtney with it -- scarred, bruised, clutching his arm in pain, but determined to continue. He resembled a POW with tape, splints, braces, and other kinds of paraphernalia that wounded people wear. Some made fun of him -- calling him a masochist. Insane. Others remember him as a true champion (Jon Johnston, *Courage - You Can Stand Strong in the Face of Fear*, 1990, SP Publications, pp. 35-36).

Likewise, if Heaven is silent, your prayers are going unanswered, and you "resembled a POW with tape, splints, braces, and other kinds of paraphernalia that wounded people wear", draw upon the virtues of faith and keep knocking, and knocking, and knocking until you receive that for which you are seeking. Your faith is being tested.

### **13.7 OTHER GREAT REASONS WHY PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED**

When prayers are unanswered, we should be in "panic mode." If this is the case, consider carefully the following texts:

1 Peter 3:7, the Lord says, "... that your prayers be not hindered." Rebellion at home is one reason for unanswered prayers. Husbands that don't honor their wives and wives that don't submit to their husbands is a wall that prevents answers to prayers. Not taking a Biblical position at home is probably one of the central reasons why many prayers go unanswered.

*Likewise, wives be in subjection to your own husbands . . . 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 3:1-7).*

It is also true that every wrong against others (husbands, wives, children, parents, neighbors) which is not made right stands between the Christian and God to hinder his prayers.

*Matthew 5:23-24 "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hat ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."*

Unforgiveness is another reason some prayer go unanswered:



Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."

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*Matthew 6:14-15 "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"*

*See also Matthew 18:21-35" . . . So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses."*

Ephesians 4:26 commands us, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." A grudge, if left in one's heart overnight, may so take root as to embitter one's whole life and ruin a testimony.

Covetousness, too, is a most respectable sin and is found in the "best families," and one that hinders prayer. It is a sin that God hates. Covetousness for money or sex is literally idolatry (Colossians 3:5), and the covetous man is called an idolater (Ephesians 5:5). And God's Word says that "the love of money is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10), that is, literally, that the love of money can lead to every kind of sin in the world.

*Malachi 3:7-9 "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."*

God refuses to answer many prayers because congregations are stingy and negligent to pay their pastor a just wage for His services. Will a man rob God? Yes, they will; and, when they do, prayers are hindered.

*1 Corinthians 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*

Disobedience hinders prayer:

*1 Samuel 15:22-23 "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king"*

Indifference hinders prayer:

*Proverbs 28:9 "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."*

Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."

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Neglecting church and communion with evil companions hinder prayer:

*1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*

Neglect of the Word of God hinders prayer:

*Proverbs 28:9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*

*Psalms 1:1-3 "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."*

*Joshua 1:8 "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."*

*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."*

Particular sins hinder prayer:

*Psalms 66:18 "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

Are your prayers hindered? Thank God there is a remedy. I think an honest realization in the heart of one's failure of sin, followed by an act of forsaking known sin, and confession is a remedy for the backsliding heart.

*Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite."*

*Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

*John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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Is there anything between your soul and the Savior? If not, enter into the benefits of your salvation and begin the abundant life of prayer, asking and receiving from Him Who delights to give you the desires of your heart.

## 14 HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

### ***JESUS CLEANING THE HOUSE OF THE BANKSTERS***

*Mark 11:17 “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of thieves”*

*John 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables;*

*Revelation 18:21, 23 The great city of Babylon be thrown down . . . for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.*

The House of God should be marked by prayer and reconciliation of men to God . . . but stewards of God’s House having an amazing talent to transform God’s House into a retail store, a house of merchandise, an emporium, a business, a 501 c 3 organization, a dead fictional corporation, a coffee shop, a house of entertainment, a theater, a whoopla center, and about everything but prayer.

When the church was in Jerusalem it was a fellowship of men dedicated to prayer (Acts 2:42). When the gospel was preached in Greece, the church became a house of philosophers. When the gospel went to Rome, the church became an organization. When the gospel came to America, the church became a business.

The church a House of Prayer—what a concept!

God’s House can once again be a House of Prayer under Two Conditions.

#### **14.1 CONDITION ONE: GOD’S HOUSE MUST BE CLEANED UP**

If Christ were to return to American, what would He see? What would He think? What would He do? More than likely, He’d have some House Cleaning to do in order to restore the purpose: “My house shall be called a House of Prayer to all nations.”

When commercial interest gained control of God’s temple, our Sovereign Lord made a scourge of small cords and drove out the money-changers. America is totally controlled by the Jewish banking elite known as the International Monetary Cartel. And, this den of thieves a.k.a. “Occupied Wall Street” has driven America into incalculable debt and the people into poverty and joblessness. Furthermore, this same clan (the IMF, IRS, UN) controls government church organizations.

Isn’t it about time to make whips and drive out the Banksters again?

Truth be known, the big churches of America are commercial centers, 501 c 3 religious business organizations where the church treasurer is more than likely an uncompensated tax collector for the IRS.

In regards to the church in America, it’s about time to make some whips and to clean house once more.

## **FACTS ABOUT THE PASSAGE**

**First**, the pronoun “he” refers to our one and only Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of the Sabbath, Master and Commander, King of kings, the only Lawgiver. The term “money-changer” (kollubistes) means “bankers” or “Banksters” in the pejorative sense of the term. Because Roman coins had the image of Caesar on them, temple administrators required “offerings” and “purchases” be made with Hebrew shekels. Thus, currency was exchanged—for a price.

**Second**, the term “tables” (trapeza) was the bench or counter on which banking transactions were conducted. The term *trapeza* is properly translated “bank” in Luke 19:23; that is, the table was the bank. In overthrowing the bench, the Lord extinguished banking activity and banned Babylonian banking practices in the nation.

**Third**, the temple complex was both a **civil and religious center**. There was no separation of church and state in Israel. The temple was the seat of Moses, the center where the Sanhedrin met to manage national affairs; and, it was also the place of worship, the center of redemption and reconciliation of the people to God. That is, in driving the money changers out of the temple complex, he was driving the Banksters out of the nation—out of civil government as well as *church* government.

**Fourth**, the Lord Jesus Christ established an absolute principle: “Make not my Father’s House an house of merchandise.”

Mark records it this way, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of thieves” (Mark 11:17).

The purpose of the House of God is for prayer, for reconciliation, for fellowship, for communion, for relationship, for joy and worship, for spiritual growth and development. But, today it has become a place for fleecing the sheep and entertaining the masses.

The Greek word “merchandise” is *emporion* from which we get the word *emporium*. The term refers to “a center of trade” or “center of commerce” or “retail store that sells articles.” The verb “make” (*poieite*) is a present, active imperative meaning that good Christian men are to constantly, perpetually resist and fight Merchant Law. The negative demands negation of specific acts; that is, negative law limits government. It imposes a duty on man to deal with a particular evil. Emporiums are run by merchants under merchant law. Thus, we conclude that in driving out the Banksters, our Sovereign was abolishing commercial interests and Merchant Law in government as well as the church.

**Fifth**, the Banksters were Jews, not Gentiles. These Jews partook of the forbidden fruit of the poisonous tree, and were barred from the tree of life and the benefits of the Kingdom of God. Most of these Jewish Banksters learned their trade secrets from the University of Babylon, the rabbinical center of Judaism during the Intertestament Period. In driving the Jewish Banksters out of the temple complex, our Master was not being “anti-Semitic.” He dealt with the source of evil. The poisonous root was Talmudic Jews who broke the Tenth Commandment of their One and only Lawgiver (Isaiah 33:22).

**Sixth**, the Lord God condemned the Banksters because they intentionally, maliciously, recklessly violated the Tenth Commandment, “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s *property* . . .”

This commandment had the effect and force of law; that is, government is responsible to identify the lawbreakers and to punish them. So, what is meant by “covet?” Is God sanctioning “thought police” or the lawful motive of making money? The answer, of course, is “No!”

Covetous is more than desire. Sin arises when evil desire is coupled with **subversive plans** and **clever schemes** to unlawfully possess the property of another—such as the “income tax” and

“property tax” and “home loans” that shift wealth from the family to the State under color of law. Thus, the Son made a whip and banned the Banksters because their money-changing operation was not a legitimate (*something lawful*) business, but a financial contrivance deployed to fleece God’s flock.

**Seventh**, in Luke 19:46 our Lord referred to the Jewish Banksters as a “den of thieves.” He was not addressing petty theft, but constructive, institutional fraud on a grand scale by government Sanhedrin officials. This was a “den of thieves,” not a thief’s hideout. The Banksters banded together to protect their commercial schemes so they could fleece God’s flock while performing religious duties; that is, these Jewish Banksters used the power of the State and the color of law to hide thievery (trade secrets).

**Eighth**, though rudimentary, these Babylonian Jewish Banksters excelled in the art of loan-sharking and money-changing during our Lord’s sojourn on earth. Just as the simple serpent in the Garden of Eden grew into a hideous dragon in Revelation (12), Jewish usury grew into a huge, complex, hideous international Monster through the centuries which the apostle John called “Mystery Babylon” or the “Great Harlot.” Complete with “sorceries” (Revelation 18:23), the whole earth comes under the spell of this hideous Banking Magician. These “sorceries” (the UCC Code) include a depository of magic tricks: credit card scams, Federal Reserve Notes, foreclosures mills, electronic funds, interest on nothing, income, wages, junk bonds, toxic securities, derivatives, filter stocks, and other fictitious assets.

These Jewish, serpent Banksters active during our Lord’s lifetime morphed into the grotesque Ashkenazi Banking Monster we know today:

Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Bank or FED.  
Thomas J. Benison of JPMorgan Chase & Company;  
James J. Hill of Morgan Stanley;  
Athanasios Diplas of Deutsche Bank;  
Paul Hamill of [UBS](#);  
Paul Mitrokostas of [Barclays](#);  
Andy Hubbard of [Credit Suisse](#);  
Oliver Frankel of Goldman Sachs;  
Ali Balali of [Bank of America](#); and  
Biswarup Chatterjee of [Citigroup](#).”

Trilateral Commission

Council on Foreign Relations, Club Rome, and the modern Illuminati.

The IRS, the collection agency for the International Monetary fund.

With all three branches of government in bed with the banking prostitutes; and, with "religious societies" (a.k. a. "churches") committing fornication with the Banksters' bedroom master, the IRS, isn't it about time God's bondservants made a cat of nine tails to drive out the Thieves? Or, maybe we should implore Heaven to use a millstone and throw the covetous hookers into sea (Revelation 18:21).

Today, the church as a living body of believers is called God's House (1 Peter 2:5), and it too needs a good house cleaning.

*1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

Christians must be cleansed of moral defilements: "from profaning the (First-Day) Sabbath and to keep their hand from doing any evil" (Isaiah 56:2).

Like in Jesus' day, God's House needs to be scrubbed clean of commercial interests, 501 c 3 entrapments, IRS Mastery, commercial contracts, entertainment, fascination with prosperity, and other distractions. As long as the long arm of the IRS is in these "non-taxable, business organizations, restoring God's House to one of prayer is impossible: "No 'church' can serve two masters."

Jesus stated the purpose of God's House. It shall be a House of Prayer for all nations; that is, He reaffirmed Isaiah 56:7, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my House of Prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an House of Prayer for all people.

And, it will again, if . . .

**If God's people pray and create an environment to "gather the dispersed . . ." (Isaiah 56:8);**  
and,



**If God's pastors wake up, ear up, and repent of being "mute dogs" that can't even bark over evil perpetuated by the State: abortion, tax enslavement, same-sex marriages, gender-bender bathroom neutrality, and the censorship of Christianity by the liberal Zionist media et al.**

**If God's people repent going their own way indulging in their own pleasures (Isaiah 56:11).**

If God's people will mourn and weep over the want of righteous men, righteous husbands, righteous wives, and righteous politicians (Isaiah 57:1); and

**If God's people will repent of their idolatrous practices:** fornicating with the State, treating the state as some kind of god; adopting alien laws and philosophies and psychology; unbridled pursuit of wealth, indulgence in pornography, entertainment orientation, to mention a few (Isaiah 57:3-6).

## **14.2      CONDITION TWO: IF GOD'S PEOPLE HUMBLE THEMSELVES**

**God's House can once again be a House of Prayer if God's people get off their high horse and humble themselves.**

Be humble or stumble!

**Notice the character of God. He dwells among humble and broken people.**

*Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

The word "contrite" means "broken." It is translated "crushed" in Job 4:15, and it is associated with being "brokenhearted" in Psalm 24:19. In the context, it refers to one who is filled with regret over his own sins, his own failures, his own lack of character, and his own hypocrisy as one professing to know the LORD.

The word "humble" means "low" or "lowly." It refers to a disposition of modesty. It is the opposite of pride and a high sense of esteem. It is taking your place of one of God's creatures, and not trying to what you are not.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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The word "dwell" means "to settle, to tabernacle, abide." God is at home among humble people.

God's House is a holy place, and when God's people humble themselves, and are broken over the sins that have marred their lives, He will fill that house with His presence. He dwells with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit.

With sins purged and heart filled with Christ, prayer puts power in your life.

## 15 FASTING

“. . . and they shall fast” - Jesus

Traditionally, fasting was part of the doctrines of the church, but in recent times, in American times, you will be hard pressed to find fasting listed on any “What Our Church Believes” website tab.

Saint Basil the Great had this to say about fasting:

*“The fast sends up a prayer before heaven, being done as if with wings, before the mountain of Ascension. The fast is a complement of homes, the mother of health, the tutor of youth, an adornment of elders, the good companion of travelers, a reliable companion of those living together.”*

### 15.1 THE DETRIMENT OF INDULGENCE

The Fruit of the Poisonous Tree is the root of all evil among mankind. By it, sin spread to every infant and child, man and woman, rich or poor, wise and foolish, religious and non-religious. Sin was in the eating; and by eating sin multiplied its miseries.

**Adam** did not say "No!" to the serpent. His consent to partake of the poisonous fruit brought sin upon the human race. All the miseries of humanity stem from his want of self-control and his indulgence in eating the forbidden fruit.

**Cain** murdered his brother Abel after harvesting his crops (Genesis 4).

God sent the flood to destroy Adam’s race because of the fleshly-indulgence, want of chastity, and indulgences of that Generation (Genesis 6). He said to **Noah**, “My Spirit shall not abide in these men, for they are flesh” (Genesis 6:3). And, the deeds of the flesh are eating, drinking, drunkenness, and sensual depravity.

The core curriculum in Noah’s day is described by Jesus as a time when men were focused on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

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Matthew 24:38 For as in those days before the flood they were **eating and drinking**, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,

Eating and marriage are certainly a part of life, but you get the idea that **Noah’s generation** was totally consumed by sensual, earthly matters.

Jesus asked this important question, “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Matthew 6:25)

The **sins of Ham** occurred after the grape harvest and wine making (Genesis 9).

The wicked sins of **Sodom** flourished in a green house of pomp and pride, prosperity and abundance, feasting and luxury, selfishness and hedonism.

Ezekiel 16:49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, **excess of food, and prosperous ease**, but did not aid the poor and needy.

Because of his lack of self-control, **Esau** sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; and, God hated him for it.

**Isaac** developed an inordinate affection for his fleshly, sensual son Esau because “he ate of his game” (Genesis 25:28).

The sins associated with the wretched *egel masekah* (**golden calf**) were doubt (Exodus 32:1), idolatrous worship (32:6), feasting (32:5), eating and drinking (32:6), playing (decadence) (32:6), corruption (32:7), apostasy (32:8), “stiff necked” or hardened heart to the commands of the LORD God(32:9), singing (32:18), and dancing (32:19). Only drinking the ashes of deep repentance and the effectual intercession of Moses saved the nation.

In the time of apostasy when **Eli’s sons** served in the Tabernacle, the Spirit informs us they took meat from the caldrons before the prescribed time. God’s judgment came upon Eli and his indulgent sons. **Eli** died an overweight, permissive high priest who is described as “very heavy.” The command of his sons was “give it to us now.” This sin was “very great before the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:12-17; 4:11, 17-18).

**The rich man** in the Gospel said to his "soul," "Eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). The soul can never be fed with food.

We live in a super-permissive age. It is interesting that during a time when we have seen prayer and Bible reading removed from the public schools, and the demoralization of America by the porn plague, abortion on demand, radical feminism, gender bending, and same-sex-marriages, we have this perceptive statement:

"Nearly one-half of the American population will be obese by 2030 according to a 2012 study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. The researchers estimate that this will result in an additional \$66 billion dollars in health care expenditures, 7.8 million new cases of diabetes, 6.8 million new cases of stroke and heart disease, and 539,000 new cancer diagnoses. This epidemic of obesity and commonly associated diseases creates a gash in the fabric of our country that threatens the future of individuals, families, and our nation.

A 2006 Purdue study found that the fundamental Christians are by far the heaviest of all religious groups led by the Baptists with a 30% obesity rate compared with Jews at 1%, Buddhists and Hindus at 0.7%." (Fox News, January 4, 2013).

## **15.2     THE VALUE OF FASTING**

Good things happen during and after a period of fasting. Fasting takes us into the opposite direction of the eros of the world; and, converts natural energy into pious love for God. Fasting is not an effort to destroy the desires of the flesh, but it a voluntary discipline to help the body participate in sanctification (Romans 6:12-13).

It was during a time of great stress, dwindling supplies, and in the midst of a famine that **Jacob** found Joseph (Genesis 45:6, 11). It was hunger that drove him into the arms of his lost son.

After fasting forty days and nights, **Moses** received the second tablets, the law of the LORD God written in stone—the most penetrating words ever to reach human hearts. And, it was these words became the common core of pious attention and home school education in the nation (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 6:4-6).

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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After fasting forty days and nights, **Elijah** heard the voice of God, received direction, and started a school for prophets, and anointed his successor, the prophet Elisha.

Though the date of the **Book of Joel** is uncertain (835 BC; or Pre-exilic 7<sup>th</sup> century) was due to the obedience and fasting of Israel that averted certain judgment pronounced by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:13).

It was after three days of fasting and intense suffering that God delivered **Jonah**, his backslidden prophet, and corrected his course (Jonah 2).

It was on a day of fasting that **the People** received the Word of the Lord from Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:6.).

After a night of fasting and sleeplessness, **King Darius** discovered the power of the LORD God to save Daniel from certain death in the lion’s den. It was on this day, his administration was cleansed of corruption (Daniel 6:16).

It was on a day of fasting **the People** received the knowledge that the “Joy of the Lord is their strength” and a revival broke out among the settlers in Israel (Nehemiah 9:1ff).

When the Jews prayed and fasted, **Esther** and the Jews were delivered from the wicked plans of Haman (Esther 4:3).

After forty days of fasting, **the Lord Jesus** defeated the Devil, received the power of the Holy Spirit, and entered his ministry (Luke 4).

It was during a period of fasting that **Peter** received a vision from God that showed him God’s plans for the gospel to go to the Gentiles (Acts 10:3).

It was during a time of worship and fasting that the **first missionary movement** was launched into the Roman theater (Acts 13:1).

The **leadership** in the early church was spawned during periods of fasting and prayer (Acts 14:23).

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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But, fasting is not always necessary and profitable (Matthew 15:32; Acts 27:33). But, generally speaking a religious fast when accompanied by humility, godly sorrow, and the fear of God produce fruits of repentance and acts of faith.

Fasting does not constitute the deprivation of the good things of life, hostility to the body, or punitive afflictions of the flesh. Rather, fasting is part of the journey of the Christian life, where natural things are temporarily set aside to repair what sin has marred, and to lay claim to those matters close to the heart of God such as those concerns in the "Lord's Prayer."

However, fasting is not a means to obtain a right standing with God, because the Christian knows that he has a right standing with God because of the work of Christ on his behalf at Calvary.

If the great Lawgiver fasted, how much more should we who are duty bound to obey the law of liberty. May the Lord help us to obtain this grace that we might separate ourselves from good things on earth in order to possess superior things that belong to heaven.

### **15.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING**

Ezekiel 16:49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had **pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease**, but did not aid the poor and needy.

Job 1:4-5 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters **to eat and drink with them**. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would **rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings** according to the number of them all. For Job said, "**It may be that my children have sinned**, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus **Job did continually**.

A man afflicted with sickness of the body will stop work, see a doctor, and spend time resting at home; but it is amazing a man with a sick soul will go weeks, months, and even years without staying home to nurse his soul back to health; that is, men are careful to take care of their bodies, but quite careless to the nurture and care of their soul.

*Mark 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose / mar / destroy his own soul?*

The great Christian men of history have had a thirst and hunger for God; the great failures of history have had a great hunger for food, drink, and carnal delights.

Fasting is not punishing the body as much as it is rewarding and nurturing the soul.

Fasting is not going hungry; it is a time of feeding the Soul with meditations on God's Word.

Just as satisfying the stomach is the beginning of much evil, fasting is beginning of virtue.

Fasting is commanding the body to rest, while we exercise our soul to be vigorous to seek God.

Just as Eli the fat priest was morally careless and sloppy, No full, prosperous man is morally mindful and careful.

Fasting is the bride of virtue, the brother of holiness, the sister of mercy, and the friend of discernment.

Fasting is a time for resting our body while cleansing our soul.

As satisfying the stomach with food and drink is the beginning of evil, fasting is the beginning of goodness and holiness.

Fasting is a mild chastisement of the body in order to keep our soul chaste towards God.

Fasting is saying "no" to the counsel of our body in order to strengthen our soul to say "yes" to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fast is not hunger, but a little diversion from food. It is not forced abstention, but voluntary consent to be corrected and instructed by God.

As incontinence with food and drink is the cause of innumerable malevolence to the human race, fasting is the beginning of inexpressible benevolence to people around us.

The fast restrains the body and bridles desires that we might enlighten the the soul and give wings to new flights of obeying God.



As food and drink cast us into a stupor and make us vulnerable to all kinds of lusts and self-indulgences, fasting pricks the soul, brightens the eyes, and opens our ears to what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Fasting is a weapon to fight the Devil and the enemies of the soul.

Show me a soul unfamiliar with fasting, and I'll show you a soul that is lazy, careless, indulgent, and powerless.

A fasting man makes a better husband, father, and employee because he is more alert to the real needs of those around him.

A man strong towards cuisines is a man weak toward Christ.

A man held captive by foods, can find liberation through fasting; a man trapped in sins can find the keys to free him from captivity when the soul searches for God.

Men and woman have more fear of fasting than that have a fear of carnal indulgence and fleshly sins.

Fasting produces vigilance of mind; while feasting makes us spiritual lethargic and morally careless.

No one living in luxury is a disciple of virtue; no one serving God with prayer and fasting can help but be a doer of good deeds. By fasting Daniel overcame the sorcerous deception of his fellow administrators, and by fasting Jesus overcame the wiles of the Devil.

The first fast is difficult because the body has been use to getting its way; but, consenting to the discipline exercises the soul and strengthens it to take command over the body. What is needed to be a successful Christian is not more food, but more strength of soul.

True fasting is not denying the body, but denying the Devil and purging the heart of evil deeds, jealous thoughts, selfishness, anger, bitterness, and other sins that poison relationships.

Isaiah 66:3 As they have chosen their own ways, And their soul delights in their abominations,

Fasting not only bridles the body, but brides the tongue, lusts, and carnal desire.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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The true fast involves the suppression of fear, anger, slander, lies, and lusts.

The aim of the fast is to conquer passions, and to nourish a heart for God.

The enemy of the soul is sin, and fear of sin coupled with the fear of God is the friend of wisdom and discernment.

The goal of fasting is not pain or punishment of the body, but clarity of mind and new paths of obedience.

Fasting is not a means of gaining acceptance with God, but a means of understanding our acceptance with God because of what Christ has accomplished for us at Calvary.

Fasting is not meritorious because the only merits that God accepts are those accomplished by Christ on our behalf.

The true beneficiaries of fasting are those with whom our soul is bound; family, friends, and neighbors . . . "the poor and needy."

Be careful for what you hunger, for you shall surely find it.

## 16 ACTS 12: THE PRAYING CHURCH

When a rock rolls down a hill it will eventually come to rest. When an automobile runs out of gas, it will eventually stop along the side of the road. In physics, we call this the law of entropy, i.e., the available amount of energy in a closed system diminishes. All systems are moving toward a state of rest. As a church, we are always fighting rest, inertia, loss of energy. The tendency of every Christian movement is toward entropy. Ours is no different. At times we feel tired, sluggish, and sooo busy. What do we do when the second law of thermodynamics dominates our lives?

There was a church like this in the Bible—the Jerusalem church (Acts 12). They were at least 12,000 strong at one time in their history, but Saul’s persecution scattered this church to the four winds. Local sentiments cast a shadow of negativity over the Christians who remained in the area, and they became very unpopular in the media. Quite a change from the esteem they enjoyed earlier in their history (Acts 5:13). The waves of economic ruin and loss of jobs thrashed this boat load of Christians against the rocks leaving some families in deep water and financial shambles. Poverty set in like a New England fog to chill the bones and sap vital energy from souls struggling for existence. It was a terrible time for these people.

### 16.1 HEROD AGRIPPA

Herod Agrippa, the playboy wonder, was king at this time. He began a campaign of persecution to destroy the church in Jerusalem. Born in 10 B.C., Herod was the son of Aristobulus and the grandson of infamous Herod the Great. Aristobulus was killed by his father in 10 B.C. This caused Caesar Augustus to say he would rather be Herod’s pig than one of Herod’s sons. Agrippa’s grandmother was Mariame, a Hasmonean princess. Herod Agrippa was educated in Rome with his boyhood friends, Caligula and Gaius (later Roman Emperors). Agrippa lived a life of luxury—a sort of playboy life in decadent Rome. At one time, he was arrested by Tiberias for criticizing the Emperor. When Tiberias died in 37 A.D., Agrippa’s fortunes improved. Caligula or Gaius appointed Agrippa over northeast Palestine, the region of Galilee and Perea, and gave him the title “king” which is why he is known as King Herod Agrippa (41-44 BC).

## **16.2     THE DEATH OF JAMES**

Like his grandfather, Agrippa was half-Jew and half-Idumean. A slick politician, Agrippa was loyal to Rome, but he practiced a form of Judaism in order to pacify the Jews. Learning that the leading Jews were disgruntled with the sect of Christianity because of their extension into the Gentile community, Herod Agrippa had James, the brother of John, arrested, imprisoned, and put to death. It is here that our story begins: "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church." (Acts 12:1).

James was the first apostle among the twelve to be put to death. Notice the ease in which Agrippa is able to find James to arrest him and to behead the apostle. There appears to be no resistance, no struggle, no protest. The affair was a simple, quick, unjust execution of a good man by an evil king.

The church will always experience resistance to its message. One of Satan's strategies to cripple God's work is to target church leaders for destruction: "Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7).

## **16.3     THE ARREST OF PETER**

When Herod took a poll and learned that he gained points for executing James, he followed suit and arrested Peter, the leading pastor of the sect. The arrest took place during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an eight-day feast at the time of Passover. Apparently, Peter was kept in prison during this time. Agrippa planned to conduct a mock trial at the conclusion of the feast, trump up charges against Peter for breaking some statutory law, condemn him, and then put him to death. Herod knew this would please the leaders of the Jews and that his popularity would rise in the polls.

To assure results, Agrippa placed Peter in prison, possibly Fortress Antonio. Peter was guarded by four squads of soldiers, that is sixteen trained Roman commandos. Two were chained to Peter, one guarded Peter's cell door, and the other guarded the main prison gate. Rotating shifts, four soldiers would stand guard three hours at a time, twice a day.

Peter knew he was marked for martyrdom. The Lord predicted his death (John 21). Imagine Peter's thoughts while he was chained between these two soldiers contemplating his death. He must have thought, "This is it!" Things seemed so final.

## **16.4     THE CHURCH ASLEEP**

Notice that when James was arrested, the church did not protest. They did not march in the streets. They did not send a letter to remonstrate against the arrest. They did not pray! No prayer, no petitions, no pleadings went up to the throne of God on behalf of James. Perhaps, they were so wrapped up in personal problems they did not pray. Maybe they were spiritually asleep and lethargic, or possibly they did not discern the animus residing within the heart of Herod Agrippa. Whatever reason, they did not pray.

We learn a truth: People are often oblivious to the struggles of their leaders. Who would have ever guessed that Spurgeon suffered from depression because of the criticism of jealous contemporaries? Who among the saints knew the fears that shredded the soul of Adoniram Judson. Leaders usually do not hang out their dirty laundry in public. We need to understand that leaders are not immune to the struggles of humanity. Some are eaten up with the fear of rejection, some with the fear of criticism, and some with the fear of poverty. We need to pray much for our leaders.

## **16.5     THE PRAYING CHURCH**

Notice the difference between the arraignment of Peter from James: “So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying” (Acts 12:5).

## **16.6     THE POWERFUL RESULTS**

**Powerful Deliverance:** On the eve of Peter’s execution, an angel came to Peter’s aid. While the soldiers were in a deep sleep, the angel unlocked Peter’s chains, ordered him to get dressed, and the two of them busted out of prison. Scurrying through the streets, Peter arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of John, and reported the good news. Shortly, thereafter, Peter went underground.

**Powerful Joy:** When Peter arrived at Mary’s house and knocked at the door, Rhoda was “overjoyed.” Leaving Peter outside, she raced to tell the praying saints the good news. Prayer results in joy. Some of us can testify that we have come discouraged to many a prayer meeting, but who ever leaves in the same state?

**Powerful Judgment:** When Herod heard of Peter’s escape, he investigated the incident and ordered the guards to be executed.

Later, Herod attended a meeting in Caesarea to entertain a petition by Blastus from Tyre and Sidon. Apparently, the people of Tyre and Sidon offended Herod. Dependent upon the grain crop from Judea, the people of Tyre and Sidon needed to make amends and appealed to Herod at Caesarea through their agent Blastus. At the forum, Herod wore his silver robe, acted pompously, and flaunted his royal power in an arrogant, boisterous manner. When people attributed deity to Agrippa, he lapped up the praise like a starving dog. But, his arrogance ascended to heaven like odors from an open sewer, and an angel of judgment was dispatched to end his life. Herod died suddenly. Josephus tells us that he was seized in the stomach with a severe pain and died within days.

**Powerful Evangelism:** The Scripture tells us that “the Word of God continued to increase and spread” (12:24). This is God’s way of telling us that the Christians began to proclaim the gospel and that many more people placed their faith in Christ. The Greek verbs “increase” and “spread” are imperfect verbs indicating that this harvest was not a spurious, one-time event, but a continuous on-going revival in the region.

## **16.7      HOW TO PRAY POWERFULLY**

We must ask the question, “How can we pray and see the mighty power of God revealed?”

**Pray rebelliously:** Prayer is ultimately an insurrection against the status quo. Prayer happens because people refuse to accept the world as it is. Prayer is an organized rebellion against evil, meanness, injustice, immorality, sin, transgression, and wickedness of the age.

**Pray earnestly:** The word “earnest” (h=n evktenw/j) is an adverb describing the kind of prayer that was offered. The word “earnest” is translated “deeply” (NIV) in 1 Peter 1:22). The word is used to describe the Lord’s agony and blood sweat in Luke 22:44. In Jonah’s discourse to the wicked city of Nineveh, he advised them to put on sackcloth and pray “mightily to God.” The word “mighty” (LXX) is our word “earnest.”

**Pray continually:** The Greek verb for prayer is a present participle and it communicates that this church prayed continuously during Peter’s arraignment. Immediately, when the church heard that

Peter was imprisoned, they knew what to do. They fell on their knees and prayed for Peter. They did not stop praying until Peter was out of jail.

God is not calling us to pray 24 hours a day for the rest of our lives. But, I believe there will be seasons when we need to be on our knees for times of sustained prayer.

**Pray publicly:** By praying continuously, we do not mean that every individual prayed 24 hours a day for eight days, but that the church organized itself in a way that prayer was going up continuously because of the crisis. This was public prayer, group prayer, and church prayer. It was the power of collective prayer that resulted in Peter's release, and it was the lack of public prayer that resulted in the death of James.

Interestingly, no apostle was present at these prayer meetings. Individual church members initiated the prayer. Why is it that church members tend to wait till leaders in the church organize prayer meetings? I want to go on record to say that you never need my permission to start a prayer meeting.

**Pray specifically:** Note that this church prayed earnestly "for him" (Acts 12:5). They did not simply pray that God would bless the world, but they that Peter would be delivered from certain death. Their prayer was specific; that is, they argued with particularity Peter's plight before Him Who can reverse the inevitable. When praying, we need to narrow our focus. Avoid shotgun prayer. Send a silver bullet.

**Pray sacrificially:** Apparently, Peter was delivered in the middle of the night. People were losing sleep during this time of intercession. This kind of prayer is costly, but it purchased Peter's deliverance.

**Pray weakly:** When Rhoda sprinted to tell the rest of the saints that Peter was at the door, they thought she was out of her mind (12:15). All were shocked by Peter's arrival. We kind of laugh at this incident, but that is exactly how we would have responded. These are our kind of people. God allowed us to see the "humanness" of these people so we might know that powerful praying does not come from perfect people. You see, our prayers are a mixture of faith and unbelief, of hope and despair, of heaven and of earth. I wish it were otherwise. But it isn't. We pray weakly, that is, we pray to an Almighty God as frail saints struggling to believe God for the impossible. Instead of pretending to be pit warriors for God, I think it is best to argue our weakness. David confessed, "I am poor and needy, come quickly to me, O God" (Psalm 70:5). In other words,

don't let the consciousness of your humanity keep you from joining the saints at a prayer meeting.

In conclusion, we have examined an historical crisis that threatened the prosperity of the gospel. If Satan can destroy leaders, he can destroy a church. These saints were not perfect people, but they responded properly to a local crisis and reversed the course of history.

As a church, we will constantly be battling impotence, tiredness, weakness, and fruitlessness. Vision will grow dim. Programs will die. Laborers will quit. Energy will wind down. How do we overcome the law of entropy? The solution is to rebel and to be a praying church. Prayer is not part of our work; it is our work. We can do much for God after we have prayed, but we cannot do much for God until we have prayed.

Let us be a praying church! There is power in prayer.

## **16.8      A MOTION TO THE SUPERIOR COURT**

**Presiding Judge: the Lord Jesus Christ**

**Plaintiff: The Lawful Assembly in Judea**

**Criminal Case: ACTS 12**

**Defendant: Herod Agrippa**

## **16.9      NOTICE OF VOID JUDGMENT WITH SANCTIONS** **POSTMORTEM**

**COMES NOW** Dr. Loukas, executor with ministerial duties to our Sovereign, on behalf of the lawful assembly of Judea, living souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, mature in age and competent to plead, by the Authority and Power delegated to us solely by the Grace of God, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with His Commandments and Testimonies as revealed in Holy Writ, sole by and under the Leading Warrant in Law and by His Will do post this **NOTICE OF VOID JUDGMENT WITH SANCTIONS POSTMORTEM** at the gates for public edification:



**WHEREAS** King Herod Agrippa, hereafter “Herod”, partook of the forbidden fruit on the poisonous tree and refused to repent and believe the gospel; and,

**WHEREAS** Herod entered the dominions of the Lord Jesus Christ having no lineage to the tree of life, abiding in death, *persona non standi in judicio*, without authority for His presence, to disturb the peace in God’s kingdom regarding His beloved bondservants, James and Peter; and,

**WHEREAS** Herod having relied upon hearsay in an alien law order not recognized in the dominions of Christ; and having no standing in law, regarded idolatrous dogmas and expedient traditions of politicians originating with the vain imagination of men; and,

**WHEREAS** Herod *dolos malus*<sup>1</sup>, under the Serpent’s rule, having no *in rem jurisdiction* over the Lord’s property, and no *in persona* jurisdiction over Christ’s bondservants, and no *subject matter* jurisdiction over the ministerial duties of God’s servants; and,

**WHEREAS** Herod with *animus nocendi*<sup>2</sup> acted on mere allegations unsupported by facts setting forth a genuine issue for trial, under color of law, under laws unintelligible and unfamiliar to us, under laws alien to the Law and Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus for whom we minister; and, having failed affirmatively to show Probable Cause based on sworn testimony testifying of injury to person or property, did willfully, maliciously, and recklessly issue a miscreant warrant to arrest James and Peter, ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and,

**WHEREAS** Herod having declared war on God’s law order refused “his Assent to Law, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good,” proceeded without *corpus delecti*<sup>3</sup> without Lawful authority from our Only Sovereign upon whose shoulders all de jure governments are founded, without due process, without probable cause, without providing witnesses in favor of these ministers to come forward did falsify, slander, malign, charge, indict, judge, and condemn

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<sup>1</sup> Dolos malus: a craft of politicians employed for the purpose of deception.

<sup>2</sup> Animus nocendi: mind of harming

<sup>3</sup> Corpus delicti: body of crime; i.e., a judiciary can’t proceed without tangible evidence of a crime.

Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

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Christ’s bondservants to be executed; and, Herod with malice of forethought to *debellatio*<sup>4</sup> the saints, did execute James, an innocent with clean hands having no nexus to Rome, in violation of the Sixth Commandment. Further, He with *mala intendo* did unlawfully enjoin Peter, an innocent with clean hands; and,

**WHEREAS** we the lawful assembly in Judea did formally assemble by lawful right to petition our Sovereign Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, and did interpose with petitions for injunctive relief on behalf of Peter do post this NOTICE OF VOID JUDGMENT WITH SANCTIONS.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:** **WHEREAS** there is only One Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy, and since His superior court is never in recess, despite the defects of our persons and the defects of our petitions, the Judge heard our pleas; and (A) issued a Void Judgment with severe Sanctions against Herod for overreaching his de facto authority; and, for his violations of the Supreme Law of our Sovereign; and (B) ordered the immediate release of Peter; and (C) refused to intervene in the execution of bailiffs because they were unlawfully posing as police officers, and because they were compliant with unlawful orders and did not interpose to uphold the God-given rights of the innocents; and (D) ordered the immediate execution of Herod Agrippa circa March 5, in the 43<sup>rd</sup> year of our Lord at a public assembly in Caesarea because he ate of the poisonous tree and disturbed the peace in our Lord’s dominions.

De Facto authorities, **SO NOTICED AND WARNED.**

Loukas

NOTICE OF VOID JUDGMENT was accepted by the Court, Herod charged, condemned, and executed for crimes against humanity by an order of the Superior Court circa 44 CE. Furthermore, saith naught.

Luke: God’s bondservant, executor, historian, and court investigator

“The Judge withstanding *in the superior court*”- James 5:9

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<sup>4</sup> Debellatio: warring down or wearing down the opposition.

## **17 WHEN A FAMILY PRAYS**

By Brian Lynch

Do you believe in miracles? I do! God recently performed a miracle in my family.

I have witnessed the miracle of reconciliation between Mom and Dad who were separated for more than twenty years.

My parents were married on June 30, 1956. They have 3 sons: Frank, Kevin and me; and 5 daughters: Maureen, Kathleen, Kelley, Colleen, Erin. In 1964, when I was two, we moved from Philadelphia to the small southwestern town of Chandler, Arizona.

### **17.1 A FAMILY DIVIDED**

In the early eighties, Dad returned to Philadelphia to take care of his dying mother, whose last wish was for him to care for his older sister, Marianne. Dad remained there and performed that task faithfully for 20 years. Mom stayed in Arizona, and the kids continued with school, work and other activities.

### **17.2 AN ANSWERED PRAYER**

Through those years, my family fervently prayed for Mom and Dad to be reunited. On my Dad's 65th birthday, God began answering those prayers! For his special day, Mom wrote Dad a love letter urging him to grab a rocking chair and to live out the rest of his days with her in Arizona! In spite of Dad's polite refusal to accept her offer, Mom did not give up hope. And, their 45th anniversary was also approaching.

### **17.3 BAD NEWS**

In October, Dad's older sister Marianne traveled to Phoenix for a visit. At the end of her stay, on the way to the airport, she informed Mom that Dad had advanced prostate cancer. Incredibly, God's mercy had allowed Mom to reach out to Dad in love long before she found out that he was dying! He could not mistake her motive.

When I received the news that Dad had been diagnosed with cancer four years earlier, I called my pastor, Brooky Stockton. I told him that I was angry with Dad because he had known about the cancer for years and had not told any of us. Pastor Stockton instructed me, "You need to honor your dad and tell him how much you love him." I said, "Pastor, you don't understand, I'm so angry with him for not sharing this with me I could just spit." He repeated: "You need to honor your dad and tell him how much you love him." Didn't he know how mad I was? I realized that the command to 'Honor thy father and thy mother' is not conditioned on whether I feel they deserve it at the time.

I reluctantly obeyed and called my dad. We enjoyed the most wonderful visit of our lives. With God's love in my heart, I was be able to say, "I love you, Dad."

#### **17.4 GOD'S TIMING**

God's timing is interesting. Before I learned Dad had cancer, I was looking at a career change. After prayerful consideration, God directed me to keep my present work. Had I changed employment, I would have been consumed by the new job and would not have been able to take vacation time to spend with my Dad. Isn't God good?

My Mom called Dad that week and urged him to come to Arizona and to enjoy his family! In January (02), Dad made the trip to Phoenix. He and Mom spent almost every moment of that week together. I brought my wife and two sons (Gavin and Isaiah) to this family reunion. Dad had never seen his grandson, Isaiah, who was then two and a half years old. We felt so fortunate to have that week together with him and to treasure up those memories. Isaiah continues to pray every night that 'Papa Tom get all better!' Oh, how God treasures up those sweet prayers!

#### **17.5 DIFFICULT TIMES**

Dad did not commit to the "rocking chair retirement adventure," but had a wonderful time in Phoenix with his family. But, at that time, Dad began to experience severe back pain. Upon his return to Philadelphia, he discovered that the cancer had metastasized to his back. The Doctors advised Dad to receive a series of 10 targeted radiation treatments. This regiment created some complications which led to emergency surgery.

While Dad was hospitalized, a business opportunity materialized back east. I arranged the short flight to Philadelphia to coincide with the end of my trip. When I arrived, I learned that Dad was

transferred to the Artman Nursing Home to recover from the surgery. The despair in that place was suffocating. Dad was in terrible shape. He could barely speak or eat. I doubted that Dad would ever recover.

Mom booked a flight to Philadelphia to help take care of Dad. When Mom arrived, she looked terrific! But, Dad was slumped in bed and not very concerned with his own appearance. When my spiffy Mom made her entrance into the room, Dad's countenance changed. He sat up, slicked his hair back, and smiled! He said to Mom, "Come over here and let me smell you, doll face!" She spent her time there doing everything she could to cheer and encourage my father. That week, God brought a special blessing into our lives. A Christian orderly named Lawrence had a bright smile and a cute Jamaican accent. He prayed with Mom and my sister Maureen for Dad to be healed.

God seemed to be at work all week. I had the pleasure of getting to know my Uncle Henry and his family better. Uncle Henry poured out his love to Dad and the entire family. He listened carefully and was incredibly generous and loving. Uncle Henry shared with me in secret that my father was very concerned about how I might raise my family. I knew I needed to share with Dad the hope that I have in Christ. I prayed for an opportunity to discuss the gospel with him.

## **17.6      SHARING THE GOSPEL**

Before the week was up, God gave me some personal time with my Dad, and I had a chance to share the love of Christ with him. I did not have to tell Dad that I was a sinner. He knew that all too well. I spoke with him how sin separates us from God, and how God has provided salvation for us through the person and work of Christ. I wanted him to know that nothing we do can make us right with God. Everything has already been done for us through the cross. We must simply believe that and trust Him. For 45 minutes my Dad and I talked. As Dad and I talked about God's love, Mom sat nearby, and a dying Jewish man listened in the bed next to Dad. I assured my father, that if I died that day, I would be waiting for him at the gates of heaven. My Dad said with tears of joy, "You're a good man, son." Grateful for the precious time we'd spent together, I left to return home.

## **17.7 DAD'S DYING HOURS**

Shortly thereafter, Dad's health deteriorated. My father went 13 days without food and almost 3 days without water, Mom knew Dad was near death. My sister Maureen called the family and urged all of us to come and to say our goodbyes.

I had accumulated enough frequent flyer miles in my business travels to fly my 3 younger sisters across the country. Because I had just seen my father and expressed my love to him, I was not inclined to go. But, my wife encouraged me to make the trip.

When I arrived at the airport in Philadelphia, I called the nursing home. Dad was down to 8 breaths a minute. The family urged me not to wait for my brother Kevin and my sister Kathleen to arrive at the airport, but to come immediately. Concerned that my father might die at any moment, I rushed to the nursing home.

## **17.8 THE PRAYER FOR MY DYING DAD**

When I arrived, the family hovered around my dying Dad and tearfully waited for him to pass into eternity. Dad was pale, and struggled for breath. Mom looked at me and said, "We waited for you to pray, Son!" I searched my heart for the right words. I leaned over the bed and whispered, "Dad we're going to pray Gavin's favorite psalm, Psalm 23." As I prayed, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me," everyone in the room knew we were in that valley. But, a strange sensation came over me. Feeling God's presence, I prayed silently that God would take my Dad peacefully to his heavenly home.

## **17.9 GOD'S STUNNING ANSWER TO PRAYER**

The night wore on and we all were travel-weary and hungry. Uncle Henry arrived with some pizza for us. As we sat down to eat, Dad stirred, sat up, and said, "Hey, that smells pretty good. How about a slice!"

The wake we had begun was obviously a little premature! Dad ate some pizza and drank some water. Several days later Dad was feeling well enough to talk. He spoke to Kevin and me about some photos and other items he wanted to give us that were in his bedroom at home. I said, "Just tell me where they are and I'll go get them." But, Dad responded, "No, I want to go get them

with you." At that moment, Dad sat up, swung his legs over the side of the bed, and blurted out, "Let's go." My brother Kevin and I stared at each other with that same deer-in-the-headlights look. Not sure what the procedure was in such circumstances, I hurried down to the head nurse and asked, "My dad would like to go visit his home. Can he leave?" The nurse smiled and said, "Sure!"

I called my uncle and informed him that we were going to take Dad on a short trip back to his house. Uncle Henry laughed, "Your dad, God love him." Kevin and I lifted Dad into the wheelchair and headed down the ramp to the car. When we pulled up to his house, Dad said, "Don't bother with the wheelchair, I'll use the walker!" Kevin and I were both thinking the same thing, "Dad is going to collapse and die on the steps leading up to the front door." But, he didn't.

When Dad finished shuffling through several boxes of incredible memories together, he blurted out, "I'm hungry!" At 11:00 PM, the family headed over to Uncle Henry's for Philly cheese steaks. God had given our family the most amazing week of our life! At this point, the wake was postponed indefinitely.

On June 30, 2002, Mom and Dad celebrated their 46th wedding anniversary TOGETHER! This marked the first Mothers' day, Fathers' day, and anniversary Mom and Dad had spent TOGETHER in twenty years! Mom's dream now came true. On July 2, 2002, she and Dad flew from Philly to Phoenix. They now live TOGETHER in their own home!

Smiles, hugs, and laughter now abound in my family. I simply cannot praise God enough for answering our prayers.

MIRACLES can happen when a family prays!

Editor's Note: Brian's dad lived six more months after his miraculous recovery. He lived happily with his wife in Phoenix Arizona until he was taken home to be with the Lord.

## 18 PSALM 71: THE SENIOR CITIZEN’S PRAYER



There is no title to this psalm. It has come to be known as the “Midlife-Crisis Psalm” or “The Old Age Psalm,” but it really applies to young and old.

The psalm can be divided into three part: Confidence of Youth, Concerns of Old Age, Care from Youth to Old Age.

We live in a youth orientated culture where older people are often treated with contempt. In a dispose-all society, it is not uncommon for the seniors to feel that God has also tossed them away like a used paper towel. Thus, we have a prayer from a veteran saint who pens his worries in a hymn for all to enjoy.

### 18.1 THE CONFIDENCE OF YOUTH (71:1-8)

**Psalm 71:1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.**

This delightful chorus begins with a prayer to the LORD. It presupposes trust and commitment, the acceptance of covenant responsibilities.

This senior citizen made a decision early in life to trust God as His Savior and Lord.

Therefore, he prays, “Let me never be put to confusion.” The word “confusion” is the word “shame”—that wretched condition that swamped the original couple after their disobedience to the Creator (Genesis 2:25). Shame is that painful feeling we get when Godly authority becomes aware of our degrading behavior. Sin shames. Sin exposes our nakedness, our frailties, our innermost secret faults. Shame is the result of eating “yum yums” from the poisonous tree.

Thus, this is a prayer that the Psalmist might be protected from sin within and without.



There is a need for this prayer because we are living in an age where there is no shame. Nakedness, adultery, and the vilest of behaviors is approved and celebrated—even put on screen for all to see.

When the first couple tasted the apple, they knew they had sinned. We are living in a day . . . when it is time to pass the fruit again!

Before us, however, stands a man that fears sin’s harvest. Therefore, this saint seeks God’s covering and God’s protection from the humiliation sin causes.

**2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.**

Sin is bigger and stronger than us. We are no match for Satan. There is no natural remedy for hemlock at work in our soul from the poisonous tree.

Therefore, the psalmist implores the assistance of One greater than himself. The verbs “deliver, cause, incline, and save, and be strong” are a series of Hiphil imperfects and Piel imperatives appealing to the LORD to puissantly save and deliver him from the toxins at work in his own soul.

Who can trace down his own sins and defeat them? We need the power of Another.

This veteran says God has “given commandment” to save him. The verb is a Piel perfect emphasizing the intensity of the command; i.e., God ordered, shouted, and demanded his salvation.

This is no passive Savior. Salvation is spoken of as the “arm of the Lord:’ i.e., when God saves He rolls up his sleeves and goes to work; and, this is what he did in sending Jesus to save His people from their sins. In fact, the Savior is called “the arm of the Lord” in Isaiah 53.

**4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.**

The psalm is rich in metaphors for God: "rock of refuge...strong fortress...my rock...my fortress..." and then, without imagery, simply "my God." Rocks do not change. God is our immutable rock, and our eternal, unchanging fortress.

If our personal sin was not enough of a handicap in life, think of the ravenous wolves around us. The covetous, and liars, and thieves, and moral predators want a piece of us. From unscrupulous business men to sophisticated State workers, criminals want our house, our car, our possessions, our money, and OUR SOUL! Lawless and permissive officials rise to power. Grinch like predators, with hearts two-sizes too small, will steal everything we have without leaking a tear. These are powerful men, agents and officials of government, professional criminals who seem to have their hand in every pocket.

**5 For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth. 6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee. 7 I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. 8 Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.**

This prayer is personal. He reminds His Master that he has trusted Him from His youth . . . and that his trust continues.

The term "wonder" means "sign" or "miracle." It either means that onlookers were puzzled by His devotion to the LORD, or that His life and success was considered a miracle by others; that is, bystanders thought, in light of his humble talents, that he should have "bit the dust" and "gone up in smoke" a long time ago.

The psalmist, however, was still standing and he attributed his modest fortune to the greatness of God's sustaining power.

*1 Peter 4:4 "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:"*

This section ends with praise to God—a self-exhortation to put honey on his lips, and thankfulness on his tongue.

## **18.2     THE CONCERNS OF OLD AGE (71:9-16)**

**9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.**

The verb "cast" means "to throw off." It is a Hiphil imperfect, causative in action. The psalmist wasn't getting any younger. He felt vulnerable. He knew the pains of old age would be upon him. Dementia, frailty, deafness, and general loneliness seek the aged like highway robbers on the road of life.

He was concerned that in his weakness, God might throw him away like an old rag. This fear appears to be caused by his circumstances. Surrounded by a wolf-pack, their howls struck fear into his heart.

Perhaps, he thought barking enemies represented the voice of God, or that his bleak circumstances bore witness of God's abandonment. The cannons of his enemies thundered the same gloomy message, "God has forsaken him!"

Interesting, the imperative "persecute him" flowed so easily from the lips of his enemies, and it came at a time of his personal weakness. It is so easy to kick a man when he is down, and the ungodly seem so have a knack for doing so.

Prosperity teachers leave us with the impression that if God is on our side, the path we walk will be as smooth as butter. But, that is not so. Many of God's finest have lives filled with troubles. Careers collapse. Finances fizzle. Health fails. It is then the voice "God has forsaken him" screams like 9/11 sirens. All seems hopeless.

**12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13 Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.**

Two more concerns of Christian veterans comes into the light: (1) the fear that God might leave him in his adversities; and, (2) that the LORD might be dilatory in His assistance to him.

The word "forsake" is the same word used in Psalm 22 which was quoted by our Savior on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

After a brief prayer, he pleads his case against his adversaries and asks God to "confound" them; that is, to shame them and to expose their evil deeds. Like the first couple, he wants their fig leaves exposed and their nakedness revealed.

**14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. 16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.**

Like the first stanza, this section also ends in praise. You have to love this psalmist. He is swimming in troubles, but clearly has his head above water. Holding on to a life jacket, he postures himself to hope, to praise, to speak of God's salvation "all the day." His theme is inexhaustible, "I know not the numbers thereof." His confidence is not in his own goodness, but in the righteousness of Another.

The lesson is clear. During trials, let us be Christocentric, not self-centered; let us not search our own hearts, but the heart of Christ; not our own worth, but the worthiness of Christ. Let us not boast in our meager moral victories, but in the manifold victories of the Savior; not in our righteousness, but in the gift of righteousness given to all who believe (Rom. 5:17-18).

Men of God do not listen to inner voices or impressions, but the Word of God. Likewise, let us not search our past for some reason God should love us, but search the Scriptures to understand His love. We know that God loves us, not because of what we do, but because of who God is—a God of love.

We do not seek to be more worthy in order to be loved, but consent to be loved though we are unworthy.

Our joy is not in our own goodness, but the goodness of Christ.

For this reason, the psalmist said, "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine ONLY!"

### **18.3     THE CARE FROM YOUTH TO OLD AGE (71:17-24)**

**17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to everyone that is to come. 19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!**

Again the psalmist rehearses God's attentive care during his youth, and his commitment to proclaim the wondrous works of the LORD.

"O God" is used four times. He prays again that God would not abandon him when his hair turns gray. Lacking is any sense that God will censure him.

There is no self-flagellation here or penance or inordinate listing of sins. We come away with the impression that while the psalmist is not perfect, his sins have somehow been absolved by an act of God.

Rather, his prayer is for sustenance during his senior years—years wherein time robs men of the strength of their youth.

His prayer is not for himself alone, but for the younger generation. He sees himself as a billboard displaying the power of God to youth. Here is a man caught up with the symmetry of Almighty God and His great accomplishments.

**20 Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.**

This senior citizen is no Pollyanna. He has traveled a hundred miles of bad road, and admits his "great" and "sore troubles."

He does not blame himself or others for his difficulties. His trials are not random. God is in control, not Satan. "Troubles" were appointed by the LORD and he received them from His hand. He is both the Source of his difficulties and the Solution to them.

Someone has said in regard to old age, "The LORD saves the hardest part 'til last!" He does. Seniors play the 4th quarter of the game injured and sore.

**21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.**

But, this psalmist is no pessimist. He also expresses confidence that God "will quicken" (make alive) him again and bring him out of the valley of despair.

Possibly, there is the hope of resurrection in his faith statement. Moreover, he believes God will increase his greatness and comfort him in all his affliction. There is no negativity here! The future feels warm and bright!

**22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. 24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the daylong: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.**

Again, at the end of a stanza, this elder commits himself to praise--a fitting way to spend our final days on this earth.

Notice the themes that occupied the mind of this veteran saint: truth, God's holy character, redemption, and righteousness.

He is not looking inward, but outward; not at self, but at Christ.

This self-talk with the grand theme of the Holy One of Israel is a wonderful way to spend one's retirement. It is an inexhaustible theme.

Seniors cannot change the world, but they can change their tunes. Why not spend our final days on this earth beholding the glory and beauty of Another? Write hymns; sing praises; make music.

Let us be at rest. God will be with his aged saints . . . and, He will deal with the enemies of Christianity in His way, in His time! He is righteous and He will shame the wicked.

## 19 PSALM 102: A PRAYER FOR THE DISTRESSED

### 19.1 INTRODUCTION:

This is a psalm written by a distressed saint who draws a lesson from one of the great acts of God in history—the return of the Jews from Babylon (536 BC). The occasion is due to the unexpected command of Cyrus for the exiles to return to the Canaan and to rebuild their temple. Afflicted and alone in his personal trial, he submits his petition to the unchanging God of history. See Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah.

<sup>5</sup>**Psalm 102:1 <A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.> Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.**

Satan would have us believe that there is no God, no hearing, and no answering. If such be the case, it would be more desirable for the atheist to execute our death warrant than for us to ramble on about the case for the existence of God. To the soldiering saint, it would be better to die than to be denied access to His mercy seat.

The Hebrew word for “hear” is *shema*. It is a command, and it is the same word used in the “Shema” of Deuteronomy 6:4. I know you hear prayers, but hear my prayer pleas the psalmist. Though my prayer is flawed and I am broken, hear me!

The prayer of the psalmist is so flawed, it is more of a “cry” than a prayer. The first use of the term “cry” is when Israel cried over the bitterness of bondage in Egypt. When sorrow fills the

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<sup>5</sup> This psalm may have been written during the captivity following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, or it may have been written in a season after the Return.

heart and words fail, the urgency of our conditions begs that our groans reach the ears of Him who has the power and grace to arrest our conflict. If our cries do not enter the veil of Him who rules over true Israel, we are the most miserable of all men.

**2 Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.**

**The psalmist deals with a truth: that God is . . . but that God also conceals himself.** The secretive ways of God tests all men, and the psalmist fears His evasiveness who at times is more difficult to find than Big Foot: "Hide not . . ." "Do not ignore me. Do not pretend You do not know me. Do not be truant when I am in trouble. At least raise your eyebrow and acknowledge my presence. If my sins have so offended You, deal with them latter when I can better bear it. But, now, in my distress, overlook the weakness of my faith and see its sincerity.

Troubles are difficult enough, but a silent God in the midst of trials is a double tragedy. It is a great blessing for God to send a gift, but for the gift to arrive in time to avert disaster is a double benefit that bolsters confidence in God. Answers that come on the heels of prayer are the medallions of the saints. But, who can boast about a silent God in the midst of trouble? What faith can endure the bombardment of doubts due to God's abandonment of the man in the midst of his field of battle?

**The psalmist employs a set of effective metaphors to describe his condition.**

## **19.2 A DESCRIPTION OF HIS SUFFERING**

**3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.**

The metaphor is well chosen. Smoke is illusory, intangible, and immaterial. Fire is a fearsome destroyer. Smoke disappears into the midnight sky never to be seen again. It cannot be retrieved. It cannot be harnessed. It cannot be saved for usefulness at a later time. Not only were the psalmist's days disappearing like smoke, his bones burned away like coals in a hearth. Likewise, his feeble faith and piety passed before him like vapors amidst the burning ambers in this fire. His righteousness that stood like a proud cedar in the forest was stripped of its bark and all that remained was the black remains of a once noble tree.



What a plight: a child of God with an empty bank account; his energy spent; his youth past; his dreams a flame in pillars of smoke! But, this is the state of many a dear child of God.

**4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.**

The term "smitten" refers to an aggressive blow with the intent to slaughter. It is translated "kill" in Genesis 4:15. It refers to God's act of flooding the earth to destroy humanity in Genesis 8:21. It is the term used to describe Moses killing an Egyptian in Exodus 2:11. Here the psalmist sees himself as a tender plant that wants to live but is smitten by the intense heat under the desert Sun. His beauty and freshness is spent. Burnt, dehydrated, and under intense heat, the psalmist exposes himself as God's withering flower. God's blossom is so distressed he can't even eat. Sorrow stole his appetite. Regret ruined his routines. Weakened by the spiritual drought, God's faded flower shrinks into despair, dismay, and depression.

Gaunt and thin, he looks more like Eisenhower German POW death camp survivor than one of God's well fed sheep. Pale and gray, he resembles a living, emaciated corpse.

### **19.3 A COMPARISON TO THREE BIRDS**

**6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.**

The psalmist likens himself to **three miserable birds**. What is a water fowl doing inhabiting the parched, blazing wastelands staring at cactus and sand dunes? What is an owl doing moping alone in a desert clinging to solitude? Stunned and disorientated, all hope is abandoned. Isolated and depressed, he is face down in the sand. Fluttering for breath, he awaits his final fate.

I stare at the sand  
Where is His hand?  
My prayer not heard,  
Alone like a bird.  
Having once flown high,  
Is it time to die?

**7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.**

The psalmist sees himself as a tiny sparrow perched on a housetop as a sentinel keeping watch over a city he cannot defend, he cannot protect, and that will not heed his chirping. He is the lone patriot watching the nation. Where is the flock? Maybe this little bird has lost its mate or its little chicks. Maybe the other members of his clan are safely roosting in their nests.

This is not a cheerful sparrow, but a bird chirping in a minor key warning his nation of impending doom. He is only one bird. No other guards are seen on the rooftops. Where are the kindred spirits? What can a single, weak, depressed, exhausted sparrow do to save his sleeping city? He looks; he sees; he chirps out his warning, but no one hears; no one cares; no one wakes. The church slumbers on.

**8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.**

God's little bird watching his city was surrounded by predatory hawks, coyotes, and snakes. Clever politicians and government bureaucrats plotted his downfall. The psalmist found himself confronted by canons of criticism and the sword of slander "all the day." Whereas leaders should have an sworn oath to uphold God's law, these rulers were under oath to destroy God's sparrow. In the hunt, the demagogues acted with insane intensity to trap God's little bird and to take its life.

## **19.4 A DESCRIPTION OF HIS PERSONAL DISTRESS**

**9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,**

Ashes were the mourner's cosmetic choice in times of great grief. Lying in ashes symbolized humility and ruin. When people in the East wanted to express bereavement, they adorned themselves in sackcloth and wept face down in a pit of ashes. Drinking only water, he could taste the salty tears in his cup.

**10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.**

The nation was under judgment. Loyalties were divided. In the cloud of confusion, opportunists rose to power. Madmen ruled the nation. The rabble used that power to oppress this servant of

God. His enemies had provoked the Lord and were cause of the distress. When men idolize political power, Christians cannot be trusted not to betray one another. The sharp affects of justice now touched this patriot and he felt its bitter impact personally. The wrath of God poured out upon the nation splashed upon God's little bird. The grief and suffering of God's people pierced his own soul. Though he had done all within his power to avert the calamity that reached the nation, he found himself on his face mourning in ashes.

Possibly, his own political or financial distress was the judgment of God against the psalmist for his own personal sin. With his welfare deteriorating, he saw God as the Source of his calamity. It was God that lifted him up, and it was God that cast him down. God promotes; and, God demotes. He is the cause of the rise and fall of men. The psalmist was among the fallen.

**11 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.**

Grabbing two more metaphors, the psalmist compares his life to a shadow that appears in the morning and disappears in the evening under the cover of darkness. Like a tender, green blade of grass that appears in the spring, his vitality faded to a dry, pale yellow under the summer heat. Scourged by the blazing Sun, the positive passion of youth shriveled into depression. The psalmist is made to feel the brevity and temporariness of life. He wants to live. He wants a full life. But, poverty and death is at work robbing him of joy and happiness.

**19.5 A DESCRIPTION OF THE GOD HE SERVES**

**12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.**

Turning from his personal affliction, the author reflects on the true source of consolation. God's name is YHWH or "I am". I will perish, but You remain. I fade and change, but You are permanent. My life is a variable, but You are the one constant. My nation crumbles, but You are imperishable. My generation will perish, but you are indestructible. Because You reign as the eternal King, all is well.

Men will forget me, but there will be new generations who will remember You. Evidence of thy presence will cause future generations to seek your face. All things are vanishing, but you remain forever. You are the Creator and your creatures will always remember You.

**13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.**

What is our view of God? What kind of God is He? Is He a scrooge grasping tightly to his pennies or is He a benevolent Father eager to give? Do we see Him as a warden holding us in prison, or as a Governor that can grant us clemency and freedom? Do we see Him as some kind of unfaithful beau that abandons His sweetheart to lustily pursue another, or do we see Him as a devoted Lover that will “never, never, no never, never forsake us”? Our sticky trials often taint the truth of His character. Surely, there must be a key that unlocks the steel vault that hides the presence of God from us.

He does not know when, but the psalmist expresses confidence that God will act soon to comfort His people. He believes the silent, inactive God will arise from His concealment, speak, and revive His work in the psalmist’s day; that the sunshine of His presence would cause the shadows of judgment to retreat and the flowers to bloom. The disasters of yesterday are past. Today offers new hope. He may hide Himself for while, but He cannot restrain His desire to bless for long. The dark gray storm clouds and thunder claps must surely contain rain. He may withdraw His affections so His people will repent of their transgression, but he cannot restrain His love forever.

The time has come, yes, the time has come! After a dark night, there is the light of sunrise; after the cold winter, there is the warmth of spring time; and, after bitter discouragement, there is sweet encouragement. A God of love must love; a God of wealth must give; a God of grace must show mercy. The jailed must go free; the rejected must be accepted; and life must prevail over death. God is never continually at war with His people. Peace must be declared. Surely His frowns are temporary. Fasting must end and feasting must begin: For the time to favour her is come; yes, it is come!

**14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.**

Zion refers to Jerusalem and its Solomonic temple. Zion was not only the religious center of the nation but the hub of civil authority. Zion was Gods throne as well as God’s altar. Every devout heart yearned to be near the temple. The cold hard stones delighted the servants of God. So great is Zion even the dust had value to His people. Every aspect of God’s work is precious . . . and every task in service to Him a privilege!

Likewise, the servants of God take great delight in the church, the true temple of God. The youngest child in the smallest church has great importance to deacons in the family of God. Everything is significant, from preaching of the Word to the moping of floors. Nothing is without significance and no task below our dignity.

**15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.**

When God has mercy on his church, even the heathen take notice. When sincere hearts gather to light a candle to honor Christ, even the pagans come to see the light and enjoy the warmth. When Zion rejoices in the accomplishments of Christ, heathen are converted. Even kings are attracted to simple, happy faith of genuine believers. The restoration of Jerusalem following the captivity was a marvel to all the surrounding nations. Likewise, a revived church cannot escape the notice of civil rulers. There is nothing more riveting to pagans than to see humble Christian delighting in Christ and joyfully serving their Master's interest.

*O', God, revive me and start a fire in my own heart that sheds light on the glories of Christ.*

**16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.**

Young's translation has the tenses correct: "For Jehovah hath builded Zion, He hath been seen in His honor." A post-captivity psalm, God's house was rebuilt and His presence manifested among the people.

Kings take great pride in their palaces and public projects. Likewise, when God revives his work and rebuilds His church, He is honored among men. When pagans are converted and trained to serve Him, the Lord is glorified. A united church growing in holiness and love is like a setting of silver at a king's banquet. Who can resist genuine Christians bound together to honor Christ and serving the gospel in the energy supplied by the Holy Spirit? When Christians surrender themselves to the cross, little candles create a bonfire for all to enjoy.

Building up Zion is God's work and must be energized by His Spirit. While man can participate in it, and appreciate it, men can add nothing to it. Likewise, building the kingdom of God is God's work. It can only expand by a supernatural work of God. Man can preach the kingdom (sow the seed), but only God can cause the seed to grow (Mark 4:26). Both seed time and harvest are supernatural works of God.

## **19.6     A GREAT LESSON IN THE PSALM**

### **17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.**

Again, Young’s translation has the tenses correct (Qal perfect): “*He turned unto the prayer of the destitute, and He hath not despised their prayer.*” Historically, the poor were those left in the land to forage for food and those among the captives of Babylon that returned to rebuild the House of God. The pioneer exiles came back to a wasteland in order to rebuild the infrastructure of the nation.

What an encouragement that God hears the prayer of the destitute! The term “destitute” [Heb: ar-ar] refers to a small bush in the desert with tiny leaves—a condition brought about by a combination of acidic soil and drought conditions. In Jeremiah 17:6, the term “ar-ar” is translated “heath” which refers to a dwarf-shrub—a low growing woody plant in arid regions of the earth. Jeremiah specifically mentions salty, parched lands. Perhaps, the psalmist is referring to vegetation near the Dead Sea. The principle the psalmist seeks to convey is God hears the prayer of his dwarfed afflicted people.

What an encouragement! God answers prayer! Thousands of saints will testify to it! Israel’s King does not hear men because of their wealth or their status in society. God is not moved by riches or reputations. He is moved by faith. God is love and He loves because of Who He is and not because of who we are or what we have accomplished. Great kings are surrounded by powerful and wealthy men. The common man has no access to a prince. Unlike arrogant judges who cite petitioners with contempt for violating some esoteric rule, there is a King that is ready to bend his ear to those stripped of wealth and health. He hears beggars! As a King he has the wealth to pass out more than crumbs; as a gracious Being He can overlook the great faults of the petitioners. He will not despise the weakness of the prayers or the prayers of the weak.

### **18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.**

Having experienced such direct and intense answer to prayer, the psalmist shares his intent: Let this be written for future generations. Take a lesson from history. The rebuilding of the Second Temple was an act of God in answer to prayer. Take note, for there shall be future generations

who will be poor and destitute. Let them be hopeful! There is a God in heaven who hears the prayer of the poor.

**19 For He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to lose those that are appointed to death [YLT: “sons of death”]; 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;**

The lesson from history continues: the destitute in Babylon are called “sons of death” because it appeared they would die bondman in a foreign land. Exiled and without a temple, they poured out their hearts to the Lord. The God of Heaven heard their cries for spiritual and political freedom (prisoners of Babylon). When Cyrus came to power, God stirred the heart of Cyrus to grant freedom for political prisoners. He gave the order for volunteers among the exiles to return to Israel to rebuild God’s temple.

To the captives, the order seemed like a dream. Political prisoners in Babylon, Cyrus ended their bondage. Such political reversals are rare in history. Jolted, the nation came to life. In the graveyard where nations are buried, Israel’s casket was opened. Like Lazarus, a nation in grave clothes hobbled out of their tomb.

The psalmist teaches a profound truth: *When forsaken by men, there is a God in Heaven that hears the cries and groans of those in shackles and chains.*

**22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.**

How great was the sudden political reversal and the return of the captives from Babylon to rebuild the temple? The psalmist answers. When the final act of history closes, and saints are gathered around the eternal campfire telling stories, the return of the Jews to the land of Israel from the refugee camps in the State of Babylon will not be eclipsed. As a miracle of history, it parallels Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

## **19.7 A RETURN TO HIS PERSONAL STRUGGLE**

**23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.**

Having secured the grand fate of the temple and announced the miracle of the release of the Jews from Babylon, the psalmist now returns to his personal stress. The verb “weakened” is a Piel perfect indicating intense affliction that caused him to hobble as a lame man toward the finish line. He was so afflicted, the stress was killing him—even shortening his expected life span.

**24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years *are* throughout all generations.**

The psalmist did not fear death, but he loved life. With an elephant on his chest and struggling to find strength to breathe, he begged the Almighty for a full life. Because God lives, he wants to live. Knowing God is, he wants to personally experience all of Jehovah’s mercies and graces. Because God answered the prayers of the destitute under Babylonian oppression and because he feels like a desert plant stripped of its leaves, he begs God to be to him what He was to the exiles—a God of resurrection.

**25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands. 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27 But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.**

It is reasonable to expect God to answer his prayers because God has not changed. What he was to destitute Israel in Babylon, He can be to the destitute psalmist now!

**28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.**

The psalmist seemed confident that godly seed will continue in future generations, not because of virtue in them, but because there is an unchanging God who creates and sustains them in every age. What encouragement! We can expect the truth and mercy of God to prevail in all seasons of history. While it seems things are always getting worse and worse, there is this promise to claim: “the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.”



## 20 PSALM 3: A MORNING PRAYER

### *ENEMIES RISING*

Before us is a morning prayer.

If you feel like you are facing impossible odds and that your enemies are stronger than the angel of death, you are not alone. There was a day in David’s life, he didn’t have the strength of syrup. With enemies rising, he could have easily drifted into a sea of depression. How did he survive the flood of negative reports? Before us is a morning prayer that reveals the key to overcoming the spirit of despair that seeks to strangle hope among us.

What should we do when we are overwhelmed with adversity and our enemies are stronger than steel?

### 20.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

**Psalm 3:1-8 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son<sup>6</sup>**

This insightful psalm was composed during the civil war between David and his rebel son, Absalom. It was composed during the king’s hasty flight from Jerusalem down to the Jordan

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<sup>6</sup> *Ax<sup>a</sup>r>b'B* (Qal, infinitive construct, 3<sup>rd</sup>, m., s) “while or in fleeing”

*ynEÜP.mi* = “from the face of” Absalom his son.

*WBâr;-hm'* (Qal, perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> p., s.) “how increased are *yr'\_c'* my enemies”

*~yBi<sup>a</sup>r;* ÷ Adjective plural = “how much” *~ymiîq'* (Qal ptc.) “increased” *yl'([l'* “upon me”

Valley. His small entourage scrambled to flee the capital city and every face bore witness to the distress. On the way, David received all kinds of negative reports of Absalom’s coup d’état and military advancement on the palace. The situation was real and serious. This is a morning prayer; i.e., it instructs us on how to handle fears that announce our doom. The prayer was on the lips of David and was written for us so we might know how to pray at the beginning of a day filled with gray clouds.

## **20.2      MULTIPLICATION OF ADVERSARIES**

**1:1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.**

David was overwhelmed with the numerous, overwhelming odds against him. The sheer numbers of Absalom’s loyalists and size of his army knocked the wind out of him. David was in a state of shock at how quickly the nation he had fought so hard to save from surrounding nations deserted him.

David’s emotions were compounded. Not only did David have enemies, the chief enemy was a son whom he loved. Who can understand the twisted grief strangling David’s heart during the Absalom Revolt?

While David faced internal and external enemies, and while his enemies were political, national, and international, the believer also has many adversaries. There are times in life when he awakes to strange bedfellows: a Judas in the form of traitors, gossipers, political rivals, and narcissistic neighbors. Maybe the adversarial State has turned loose its minions of mistaken justice to capture him in their commercial net. On top of this, he fights the world, the flesh, and the Devil. At times, the battle seems overwhelming . . . even impossible.

**3:2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.7**

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<sup>7</sup> ~yBir; “how much” ~yrlám.a0 (Qal ptc., m., pl.) “are saying to my soul, no ht'['; Wvy>) salvation to him in Elohim.” David is surrounded by negativity.

As David was fleeing from Absalom, he received many negative reports from couriers about the size and success of the uprising. The reports were exaggerated and cast in the most gloomy terms. His hair turned gray. Even his closest advisors felt David’s cause was lost. Not only did David feel like God had forsaken him, his friends confirmed the cynical voices screaming from his doubting heart. No miracles should be expected! The nation was divided. This was the psychological warfare and its cannons blasted the fort in David’s soul.

Likewise, we need to realize that being victorious in the midst of so much opposition starts with winning the psychological battle. How often do we wake up and hear the thunder of doom rumbling in our own soul? Darkness pressed on all sides? Duties taste like chalk? When these storm clouds of hopelessness rain despair on our soul, we need to realize the psychological battle is part of the enemies’ strategy to defeat us. “God HAS NOT GIVE US THE SPIRIT OF FEAR!” (2 Timothy 1:7). We dare not look at circumstances or listen to the inner voices of melancholy, but look to God and listen ONLY to His Word.

### **20.3      THE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ADVOCATE**

**3:3-4 But thou, O LORD, art a shield<sup>8</sup> for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill<sup>9</sup>. Selah.**

The term “but thou” (*hT’ää;w>*) is emphatic in Hebrew. In the midst of the spurious rumors that prophesied David’s doom, he reminded himself with vigorous faith that God was his shield and glory—the One who infused strength into his soul. In David’s core, he believed God was his Protector and his Sustainer. So, he prayed . . . oh, how he must have prayed!

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<sup>8</sup> “And you, LORD, *are* a *!gEåm’* shield *ydl\_[]B* about or upon me, *ydl<sup>a</sup>AbK* my glory/abundance/wealth *~yrlimeW* (Hiphil ptc.) raising/exalting *yvi(aro* my head.” Note David’s positive view of God (a shield), the one who raises him up.

<sup>9</sup> “My voice to the LORD *ar’\_q.a*, (Qal, imperf., 1<sup>st</sup>, s.) I cry, *ynInE“[]Y:)w:* (Waw conseq., imperf., 3<sup>rd</sup>. s.) and he heard me *Avåd>q’ rh:ßme* from his holy mountain. Positive answer to prayer.

While fleeing, David muttered out a prayer. It wasn't long, but it was genuine. The answer did not come immediately. He learned later after the crisis that God had answered his plea. The answer came from His holy hill. Both David's throne and God's throne were in Jerusalem. And, while David had lost his throne, God had not lost His!! We must keep in mind in the midst of the upheavals in life, God never ceases to be sovereign. He can act to help us . . . if we are in touch with him . . . if we believe His Word and not the ugly voices within!

## 20.4 THE EXALTING ANTHEM

### **3:5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me<sup>10</sup>.**

Despite being battered emotionally from all the negative reports about revolution, and despite having to feel his way through the darkness during his day of flight, David was able to sleep—and to sleep well. The confidence that God was in control of his imperfect, flawed, faulty life, enabled him to commit his defense to God and to sleep through the first terrible night. David was not a perfect man with a perfect walk, but he served a gracious supporting God.

### **3:6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.<sup>11</sup>**

David now asserts the lesson he learned. He reflected on how his soul had been battered by the barrage of negative reports and how his soul was pierced by arrows of fear. Prayer answered,

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<sup>10</sup> “I *yTib.k;<sup>a</sup>v'* laid myself down and *hn"v"iyaiñw* (Qal, waw consec., imperf. 1<sup>st</sup>, s., paragogic or emphatic heh) I slept! *ytiAc+yqih* (Hiphil, perfect, 1<sup>st</sup>, s.) I awaken for the LORD *ynlke)m.s.yl* (Qal, imperf., 3<sup>rd</sup> s., 1<sup>st</sup> suffix) will sustain me.

<sup>11</sup> *ar'yaiâ-alf}* (Qal, imperfect, 1<sup>st</sup> s.) I will not be afraid when ten thousand/myriads people which/that *bybi<sup>a</sup>s'÷* around *Wtv'ä* (Qal, perfect, 3<sup>rd</sup>, pl.) set themselves/put themselves/ around or upon me. David's future emotional application—No fear, no matter what!

David resolves to never again let fear invade the fortress of his heart. David, with his talons of faith sunk deep into the character of the LORD, makes a choice, “I WILL NOT be afraid!”

The battle on inside is often worse than the battle on the outside. Like David, we need to revisit our faith and to make a choice. What are going to believe: our inner fears or the promises of God? Rather than give into fear and the inner voices that prophecy defeat, we need to examine the heart of God, pray, and commit what we can’t understand to the One Who controls all things? Having prayed, we get off our knees, and restfully go about our day’s duties.

**3:7-8 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.<sup>12</sup>**

With enemies rising, David entreated God to “Arise”—thus the reason for this psalm. Though David prayed and God answered his prayer, his conflict with Absalom did not end immediately. He continued to pray for deliverance knowing that ultimate deliverance came from the Lord.

David ends with a benediction asking the Lord to bless His people. David’s prayer for deliverance was not self-centered. He did not throw himself a pity party with himself as the only guest. He looked outward, not inward. He got off his knees and determined to be a blessing to others! His continuance as king was necessary for the benefit of the nation. History proved this to be true. Likewise, all prayer should have as its end a blessing for the people of God.

[A note: Depressed people are usually unbelieving, disobedient Christians trapped in a web of self-centeredness wherein the spider of melancholy sucks out every ounce of hope from the heart. These unbelieving folks will not believe God’s Word nor will they take a genuine interest in other people. They are stuck of self crying daily about all their troubles of life. They have a

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<sup>12</sup> *hm'ÛWq*« (Qal, imp. 3<sup>rd</sup>, s., paragogic heh) Rise up, LORD, save me, Elohim, *t'yKiähi-yK* (Hiphil, perf., 2<sup>nd</sup>, m., s.) you smite *yxil, \_ yb;äy>ao-1K'-ta* all my enemies upon the *yNEßvi* tooth/cheek, *~y[iäv'r>* the wicked *T'r>B:)vi* (Piel, perfect, 2<sup>nd</sup>, s.) you smash.

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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unique ability to discount the suffering of others . . . and are completely deficient in love and concern for other people. David refused to visit this island! He did what he could, even in his suffering, to be a blessing to his people. And, so will every man of God.]

In conclusion, when you see enemies rising, pray this prayer. It is a morning prayer designed to free us from the baggage of fear. Sink your talons into the promises. Believe God's goodness though you may not FEEL his goodness. Once prayed, leave the results with God. Get off your knees and go to work being a blessing to others. Call friends. Serve a neighbor. Help your spouse. Be a blessing to someone, everyday!

## 21 PSALM FOUR: AN EVENING PRAYER

### *SHALOM IN THE STORM*

This is an evening prayer.

**Psalm 4:1 <To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David.>**

A *neginoth* is a song intended to be played on a musical instrument. So glorious was Israel’s joy, they had to continually create new songs for the harp to express the melody playing in their heart. The psalm is about the Source of Shalom or finding peace in the midst of a storm.

**Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.**

This song was not created by a psalmist sailing on calm seas or lounging upon beds of ease. He knew the bitterness of a failed harvest and the sharp criticism of proud and wealthy men.

“Hear me” is an imperative, the mood of prayer. Of first concern is, “Hear me when I call!” Prayer is useless if God doesn’t hear, and God does not hear the rebel’s prayer (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:2). Only righteous men have a hearing in God’s Court. David knew he had a right to be there, but he also knew that he had no innate qualities that would attract God to himself. God was the Source of his preferential standing. All men are sinners. But, those who believe in Christ gain a righteous standing before the thrice holy God and are declared “holy and blameless” in his sight (Ephesians 1:3 ,4). Believe it, enjoy it, claim it!

The term “enlarged” is a term of deliverance. It means to expand or to relieve pressure. At the beginning of his day, David felt an elephant sitting on his chest. At the conclusion of his day, David reflected on his progress. He realized that God was at work relieving the pressure. But, more needed to be done”! He pleaded two more causes: have mercy upon me and hear my evening prayer.

**2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.**

Before speaking to men, David first spoke to God. David's stress had its source in the "sons of men." As a king, David had political adversaries. No doubt he felt the deep criticism of his administration from politicians, lawyers, and the aristocracy in the nation. Everyone was an expert on what the king should be doing. Surrounded by godless, self-centered, narcissistic people, David charged them with three violations of God's law:

First, they turned his glory into shame. Possibly, the political critic sought to destroy his reputation; diminish his holdings; and to deface his property. Second, these men loved vanity; that is, having no heart for God or virtue, they entertained murderous plots, plunder, and the pursuit of pleasure. Third, the sons of men sought after leasing. The term "leasing" (kazab) refers to envious schemes designed to deprive men of their property in violation of the Ten Commandment. David found himself around by a trinity of evil doers: skimmers, schemers, and scammers. Three commands were broken: slander is a form of murder; love of vanity is idolatry; and, "leasing" includes Machiavellian commercial tactics-- a violation of the Command "Thou shall not covet." "Selah" means to "stop and think about this." Schemers are on every street corner and are clearly exposed by David's question; that is, the weeds of greed and envy were rooted deeply in these hearts of the cunning.

**3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.**

In contrast to the insects among men who spin their webs of deceit in order to trap the innocent in their commercial schemes are those whom God has set apart for His special delight. While the Lord is displeased with the opportunists, He takes pleasure in His elect. Because of this, God's man expresses confidence that the Lord will hear his prayers.

**4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.**

David now offers his counsel to his people in song. The word "stand in awe" means "to tremble." Too many sin and tremble not. The whole trouble with humanity is a lack of the fear of



God among us. If men do not contemplate the power of the Almighty, they have no wisdom. For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

When men are not afraid to sin, troubles abound. No wonder David advises men to be silent and to engage in quiet contemplation about the Lord. Apparently, the scarcity of the fear of God was due to busyness and thoughtlessness.

In modern times, the high priests of society are psychologists whose main goal is to train people how to have peace while rebelling against God's law. David's advice is "sin not." Modern secular men do not believe there is any such thing as sin, so be free and be happy.

**5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.**

David continues his counsel to men and urges them to walk on the narrow, lonely, less traveled road of righteousness; that is, to take the high road of integrity, to trust God, and to obey His law-word. "There is a way that seems right unto man," and most men attend the university of "MY WAYISM." It is called "liberalism."

The basic premise of law today is relativism. There is no black and white. There is only gray. The only absolute is that there are no absolutes. Since there is no consensus on right and wrong and humanistic man cannot agree upon what is evil or define what is good, pluralism, and confusion mark the culture. Thus, the totalitarian State arises to keep the peace. Only God can define what is right. David encourages the nation to walk in the revelation of God's righteousness; that is, choose His law and reject man's multi-ethical universe (multiculturalism).

Trust in the Lord stands in juxtaposition to trust in self or flawed men or the pompous State.

If men would obey the proceeding verse, they would realize they are sinners in need of a Savior. When the Hebrews sinned, they brought a lamb to the altar—a righteous sacrifice. Likewise, God has provided a Lamb—a righteous sacrifice sufficient to cleanse the greatest sinner. Come to Calvary and behold the Lamb. Trust in Him and the treasures of salvation will be yours.

**6 *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.***

There are many voices that challenge the benefit of being a Christian. Surely, it is easier to walk by sight than by faith; to pursue the material than to seek the spiritual; to believe in man than to believe in God. Man's thoughts are attracted to earth rather than heaven; to the works of men rather than to the works of God. Men would rather work than believe; busy themselves with wealth accumulation than to build their faith. The worldly would rather eat bread that produces mammon than to eat bread that increases Bible knowledge. To man, money is the answer to all things and the good sought. But, to God's man the key to life is God's favor, "the light of Thy countenance upon us." (See Numbers 6:26). The smile of God among us is better than piles of cash upon us. Better to have His sunshine than to have gold that glitters.

**7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.**

There is nothing that brings more happiness to man than a full harvest or profitable business or a burgeoning bank account. Prosperity warms the heart of man like the morning Sun; but, poverty unleashes the terrors of the night. All of man's energies and pleasures are wrapped up in pursuit of the material.

But, the psalmist reveals a joy that is greater than a farmer's fulfillment during an abundant harvest. Many a saint has looked at an empty flour barrel and shouted "Praise God." Spurgeon said, "Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn." A sip of sweet Jesus is better than a jug overflowing with sweet wine. If I own the world, but have not Christ, I am bankrupt; If my field is fallow, but have the Savior, I am rich indeed.

The psalmist is not saying his godly ones do not need corn and wine. Rather, he is glorying in the root as well as the fruit. God, not man, is the source of blessings. God grace, not man's sweat, is the first principle of abundance.

**8 I will both lay me down in peace [shalom], and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.**

Men do not sleep well without their wealth. A drop in the stock market; an unexpected expense; and a declining bank account is the cause of many a man's sleepless night. But, the Christian who knows he can find shalom with only pennies in his pocket. The psalmist sees the Lord as his only sources of security. "You alone [badad], make me dwell in safety. " Thus, the psalmist finds

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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his source of shalom in the LORD his God. His peace in the midst of his personal storm is anchored to his covenant keeping LORD.

The pragmatic man finds solace in corn, wine, and wealth; but, the man of God finds rest in his relationship with the God who enables man to produce corn, wine, and wealth. Heaven, not earth, is the source of shalom-- peace by Jesus Christ [Acts 10:36].

*Acts 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ:  
(he is Lord of all:)*

## **22 A PRAYER FOR OUR GRANDAUGHTER**

*LONDON*



**Fearfully made, no one denies;  
Wonderfully made; feet, hands, and eyes.  
Made in secret under God's great care;  
Made in the womb; chin, nose, and hair.**

**My form and my frame written in Your Book;  
Where You can See, and You can look.  
Your thoughts about me are precious to You;  
More in number than I can accrue.**

**Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Lead me to Christ, let me never depart.  
Search me, O God, and know my thoughts;  
Cleanse my heart of sin's dark spots.**

**When I sit down, and I rise up;  
Guide my life, and fill my cup.  
Lead me in the everlasting way;  
Guide me and guard me, this I pray.**

**Grampa Brooks: April 10, 2015  
Founded on Psalm 139**

## 23 THE POWER OF PRAISE

### 23.1 SEVEN MAJOR BENEFITS OF PRAISE

#### **Praise is the entrance into worship.**

Praise is physical, audible, adoration.

You can praise without worship, but you can't worship without praise.

Praise is the way to approach God. The tribe of Judah, which means "praise," was the tribe at the entrance of the Tabernacle. To enter the tabernacle, one had to pass through **Judah**, or praise.

#### **Praise is a life-changing practice.**

God loves it. The Devil opposes it. And, men of the world don't understand it. At one time Satan used to lead the angels in praise to God and he hates it today more than anything. Worship is mentioned twenty-four (24) times in the Book of Revelation, and eight times (8) of the Devil.

Praise is one of God's remedies for defeating His enemies.

#### **Praise is the reason for our existence:**

*1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

We exist to praise God. We are an acquisitioned people--a peculiar people. Our purpose is to glorify and God. We must realize what we are before we can worship. We are holy and royal priests with a duty to extol the Lord. Unless we understand our identity we will never succeed as worshippers. We will be uncomfortable with praising Him. We were made to sing, to praise, and to exult in Christ as priests of Almighty God.

What is success? If a light bulb lights, it fulfills its purpose. If a glass holds water it is successful. If a watch keeps correct time it is successful. Praise is our purpose. When we praise, we fulfill

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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our reason for existence. Now, we are not made to make money. We are not made to be executives, or football players, or slaves to our jobs. We are made to enjoy Him, praise Him, and to exalt Him.

**Praise is a benefit: it is a return on God's investment** (Psalm 30:11,12; 106:47,48; 142:7).

*Psalm 30:11-12 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that my glory may sing praise (todah) to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

Praise is expected by God. We are set free to praise. Once we were bound to hardship, slavery, and sin, now we are set free and delivered to praise.

**Praise is God's home address;** that is, it is where He lives.

*Psalm 22:3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises (tehillah) of Israel.*

The praises of Israel was the Law of the Lord God in the Ark of Testimony, the central focus of the nation. It was here at the altar men of old offered praises to the Lord God.

I like to hang around the donut shop, but God hangs around the praises of this people. He is enthroned, not in heaven, but the human heart that praises Him.

Praise is to God what complaining is to the Devil. Start praising and something happens to you. When God is enthroned, it means that he rolls up his sleeves and goes to work. **Praise is the logical entrance into the worship experience.**

*Psalm 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving (todah), and into his courts with praise (tehillah): be thankful (yadah) unto him, and bless (barak) his name.*

**Praise glorifies and prepares the way for deliverance from which binds us.**

*Psalm 50:23 Whoso offereth praise (todah) glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.*

Through praise, Jehoshaphat was delivered from a hostile act of war (2 Chronicles 20).

Through praise, Jonah was delivered from the bottom of the whale (Jonah 2).

*Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."*

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Through praise, Paul and Silas were delivered while in prison (Acts 16).

**Praise is manly.** All of the Levitical singers in Israel were men. When men and women went to the temple feasts for worship, the choirs were composed of only male singers. Levites had the duty to write songs, compose songs, and sing to the nation.

Each priest had a beard and was required of God to have praise on his lips and a double edge sword in his right hand; that is, the men in the choir were also ordained to protect the temple (and the nation) with their swords. They were the Green Beret of their time, the elite guard on the temple mountain.

*Psalm 149:6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands*

Men are at their best when they have praise on their lips, and a 9mm Glock on their right hips; when they stand ready to defend family and friends; when they stand ready to fight those who disturb the dominions of Christ.

Enough of feminized Christianity! Fill the choirs with men--men with joy in their hearts and a weapon in their holster.

Grow in a spirit of praising God, and you will fulfill your purpose on earth.

## **23.2 SEVEN MAJOR HEBREW WORDS FOR PRAISE**

**Hallal** (Psalm 113:3; 119:164): Hallal means to praise YHWH. It is used over 200 times in the Bible; 99 times in the OT; 24 times with the name Jah employed.

*Psalm 84:4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising (hallal) you.*

**Yadah** (Nehemiah 8:6; Genesis 29:35): *yad* is hand. It means to "lift or throw up the hands to God". It is often translated "thanks or thanksgiving." It is used 99 times the O.T; 53 times as "give thanks" and 32 times as "thank". It is a symbol of surrender, of yieldedness, of joyful adoration. No exercise in worship is more controversial in worship today than the use of hands in worship, and yet, the Hebrew words urges us to employ our hands in worship.

*Psalm 134:2 enjoins us "to lift up our hand in the sanctuary and bless the Lord."*

*Psalm 63:4 "I will lift up my hands unto your name."*

\* God loves it, the flesh hates it, and the devil is devastated by it (Jack Taylor, 85).

**Barak** (Job 1:21; Psalm 96:2): When God is the object, it means to “declare God as the object of success.” It may be related to *berek* meaning “knee.” It infers “to speak well” of the Lord; to give Him credit. It is used over 200 times to denote blessing from and too God; 73 times it denotes praise to God. It is wonderful to receive blessing from the Lord, but it is perfect heart that gives back to Him and blesses Him.

*Judges 5:2 "That the leaders led in Israel, that the people volunteered, bless (barak) the Lord."*

**Tehillah** (Deuteronomy 10:21; 2 Chronicles. 20:22; Nehemiah 12:46): This word occurs over fifty times and it is derived from *hallel* meaning “to sing or laud.” It is perceived as involving music, especially singing (over 300 mandates in Scripture urge believers to sing).

*Psalm 22:3 "But Thou art holy, o Thou that inhabitest the praises (tehillah) of Israel."*

\*The Praises of Israel are the Law, the Ark of the Testimony, and the Shekinah Glory.

**Zamar**: This word is used exclusively in poetry. Its use outside the psalms are rare (only 4 times). It means “to pluck the strings of an instrument, to sing, to praise.”

*1 Chronicles 16:9 "Sing to him, sing praise (zamar) to him; tell of all his wonderful acts."*

Note: I Chronicles 16 uses four words for praise: *tehillah* (35), *barak* (36), and *hallal* (last verses).

**Todah** (Leviticus 7:11-13, 15; Psalm 100:4): this word means “to extend the hands in a sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, or thank offering.” It is an act of faith, and is a type of praise which doesn’t see the victory, solution, or answer. This is the word used in Leviticus with the fellowship offering.

*Psalm 50:23 "He who sacrifices thank-offerings (todah) honors me and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God."*

**Shabach** (Psalm 117:1; Daniel 2:23): This word means “to shout, to address in a loud tone, to commend.” It is an exclamatory form of praise.



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*Psalm 63:3 "Because your love is better than life, my lips shall glorify (shabach) you."*

A heart filled with praise is a beautiful thing, and it puts power in your life.

## 24 PSALM 138: A KING’S PRAISE

### *PRAISE IS A KING’S BUSINESS*



This is a kingly hymn composed by a manly king praising the merits of his eternal King to other kings.

It has been said the thankfulness is the queen of virtues. This being so, then praise is the excellence of kings.

### 24.1 A KING’S PRAISE IS WHOLHEARTED

**Psalm 138:1 <A Psalm of David.> I will praise (todah) thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise (zamar) unto thee.**

This great king shares a great song to great men about a great God and His great deliverance from a great battle. *We learn from David that praise is a king’s business, and that all who praise God are the true kings upon the earth.*

Though composed by a king, before us is a snapshot of a healthy kingdom saint.

What a healthy heart! Praise is to the soul is what health is to the body; and, praise is to God what complaining is to the Devil.

What a healthy will! Praise was a choice: “I will” praise thee—another indicator of a solid, wholesome, resolute, vigorous, confirmed, strong, unwavering soul. Man is altogether better when He expresses thankfulness for the blessings of God in his life.

What a healthy occupation! Notice the object of praise, “Thee” (LORD God). Men are more often than not occupied with self. Our psychologized society has taught men to turn inward. Self-discovery has become the great occupation of neo-pagans. But, here is a saint that is outside of

self enthralled with Another. He is Theocentric, not anthropocentric; Christ-centered, not self-centered.

Men are often enthralled with the beauty of a woman, beautiful weather, or a beautiful mountain scene. But, here is a vigorous heart that has been captured by the beauty of the LORD God. Delivered from wretched subjectivism, he takes us outside of ourselves to behold the wonders of the one, true God.

What a healthy commitment! This is no bifurcated, double-minded, divided, bi-polar, duplicitous, partite, half-hearted man. "I will praise Thee with my whole heart."

The phrase "before the gods" informs us that David was not afraid to sing the praises of God before kings, magistrates, judges, parliamentarians, and government agents who think of themselves as some kind of god.

**Psalm 138: 2 I will worship (shachah) toward thy holy temple, and praise (yada) thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.**

David is no idolater. He "bowed down" to the God Who made heaven and earth; the God who revealed himself to Israel and tabernacled among them. His first concern was the honor of God's name and the glorious fountain of virtue and truth flowing from all that His name represents. All that is wrong in society begins with the neglect of God and the debasement of His name in the minds of men. To remedy man's dwarfed and diluted views of God, the king interjects steroids of praise about the YHWH to beef up man's faith.

Moreover, David was more spirited about revelation than creation. The preposition "above" could just as easily be translated "over thy name." All truth about God is controlled by His Word. All that a man needs to know about God is found in the Bible; and, if a truth claim cannot be verified by the Scriptures "there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). To study Scripture, is to know God; to know God, study Scripture.

**Psalm 138:3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.**

*David takes us to the first sweet reason for his hymn of praise. God's rescues, deliverances, protections, provisions, disentanglements, and answers to prayer create a waterfall of praise within a healthy heart. A man who knows and feels God's emancipations will rise to be a king among men. It is fitting for a king to praise the Creator; that is, those who praise God become kingly.*

The most noble men among us think about Christ and extol His greatness. Praise is the excellence of kings.

## **24.2     A KING'S PRAISE IS KINGLY**

**Psalm 138: 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise (yadah) thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.**

The Bible is good for me because it is good for all men. It not only commands my attention, but it commands the obedience of princes. Scripture was made for kings, and true kings honor Him. Those who possess the praises of God are priest-kings on earth, and all true kings praise God (Revelation 1:5).

**Psalm 138: 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.**

*A second sweet reason to praise God is addressed: "Great is the glory of the LORD."*

David anticipated a time when the kings of the earth would unite and sing praises to the way of the Lord; that is, they would promote the righteousness and justice of the God (Genesis 18:19). Like clouds, the glory of the Lord is in full view of the nations. Jeremiah confirms the international intrigue by announcing Him as the "King of Nations" (Jeremiah 10:7).

Again, kings sing the praises of God, and all who praise Him are the true kings.

The knowledge of the God of Scripture is not only good for me, but it is good for all men and all civil rulers. Oh, how much better our world would be if politicians would take time to reflect on the greatness of God and their duty to His law-order. In the present order of things, spiritual paupers rule the nations. True kings are afoot, and a fool on horseback. One day, the true kings

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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of the earth (Christians) will be revealed and they shall reign with Him (Ecclesiastes 10:7; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6).

**Psalm 138: 6 Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.**

*David expounds a third sweet reason to praise God.* God’s greatness, majesty, and power reaches into the stars. Yet, the transcendent God condescends to listen to the likes of you and me. He stands tall among the gods, but he bends his knee to hear our prayers. But . . . the proud? He has had enough of their blabbering, whining, and boasting.

### **24.3     A KING’S PRAISE PAVES THE WAY FOR REVIVAL**

**Psalm 138: 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.**

Notice the subject and object of the verb “revive.” “(You) will revive ME! Revival is of God, not man. Revival does not happen because a church plans it. Revival is an act of God in response to thankful people (Psalm 50:23). Furthermore, you can’t revive a corpse. You can only revive the living. Revival is for Christians, not the pagans.

*Having given three sweet reasons to praise God,* the psalmist arises from his chapel of praise with a new assurance that though his life is complex and has its stormy battles, God will revive him in the midst of the dangers. A new confidence emerges that God will protect him from the plots of those who tongues are like daggers.

David not only expected general protection from those with an evil eye, but he anticipated more answers to prayer that would be characterized as personal, special, specific, particular, timely, powerful deliverances by the mighty hand of this condescending God. No wonder David expected kings to praise Him! And, all Christians do.

**Psalm 138: 8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me . . .**

A second assurance grows within this king’s heart like a mighty oak. The trials of life were not there to make him bitter, but to make him better; that through it all, God would be with him to protect, to purify, and to perfect the outcome of his duties both temporal and eternal.

**Psalm 138:8 . . . thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands**

David did not attribute his survival and military successes to his own talent, skills, or acumen. Before us is a humble man aided by a humble God. This king attributed his escapes on the battlefield and victories in combat to the mercy of God.

This king ends his praise with a prayer: “*forsake not the work of thy hands!*” Perhaps, being aware of his own moral frailty, weakness, and sinful tendencies, he cries out to God, “forsake me not.” Though having much to praise God for, the king closes his song in utter dependence on his God for future deliverances.

The most intelligent, knowledgeable, skilled men among us know God, think about God, and are inspired by His Spirit to speak about Him, write about Him, and exhort others to surrender to Him. If you are not praising the King of the Nations, you are not the King’s son; and if you are not a king’s son, then you are not in His kingdom. True kings surrender to God’s law-order, and worship the King of kings (Matthew 11:29; Romans 10:9; Revelation 17:14)

*1 O worship the King all-glorious above,  
O gratefully sing his power and his love:  
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.*

*2 O tell of his might and sing of his grace,  
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.  
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.*

*3 Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;  
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.*

*4 Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail.  
Your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,  
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!*

*Luke 18:1 “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”*

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*5 O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,  
whom angels delight to worship above!  
Your ransomed creation, with glory ablaze,  
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!*

*Psalter Hymnal, (Gray)*

A man is never stands taller than when he is on his knees. Be humble, or stumble. Be prayerful and cheerful. Praise is a manly and thoughtfully kingly. When done regularly and joyfully, it puts power in your life.

## 25 SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

### Scriptures

1 Chronicles 16:9.....	160	Acts 5:12.....	53	Genesis 2:25.....	128
1 Chronicles 29:11.....	37	Acts 5:13.....	115	Genesis 25:28.....	108
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