

# ***Teaching Sound Doctrine***

## **The Worship of the Lord's Church as God Would Have It Part 3**

### **PRAYER**

Prayer is one of the great privileges of the Christian. Only those who are Christians have the right to call upon the God of heaven as their Father. Every teaching in the Bible (Old and New Testament) is applied to the child of God, and no passage applies the privilege or blessing of prayer to anyone other than a child of God.

The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous (Pro. 15:29).

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

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (Jam. 5:16).

For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (1 Pet. 3:12).

The man who is righteous is the man who does or obeys God's commands or the gospel of Christ (1 John 3:7; Psa. 119:172; Rom. 1:16-17). While there are many other passages and evidence dealing with this, these are sufficient to show that God will only hear the prayer of one who is a faithful Christian.

Christians have the **need** of prayer. The fact that Christ prayed evidences the fact that Christians should be characterized by prayer. As one looks at Jesus' life, we observe Him in prayer before any major event of His life. If He, being God in the flesh (Mat. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16), realized the need of prayer within His life, how

much more should we recognize that need. Thus, we are encouraged to pray. “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph. 6:18). “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:17-18). Certainly, Christians should be known for being a praying people.

Let us notice some of the conditions or **requirements** for acceptable prayer. The first is that the person is a faithful child of God. The prayer must be offered in faith (Mat. 21:22; Jam. 1:6-7). We must believe what God says about prayer and believe that He will give us what we request. Prayers must be offered with sincerity of heart (1 Cor. 14:15; Mat. 6:5). Closely associated with this is fervency (Jam. 5:15-18; Col. 4:12 where *laboring fervently* is literally agonizing showing all of your being embraced in the prayer). We are to be persistent in our prayer life (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8).

We must pray with a forgiving spirit (Mat. 6:12, 14-15; 18:23-35; Mark 11:25-26). However, we do not have the right to forgive someone who is not repentant. Forgiveness is always based upon repentance (Luke 17:3-4; Col. 3:12-13; Christ forgives on the basis of repentance, and we follow the pattern He set).

Prayers must be with the understanding according to 1 Corinthians 14:15. The context of this statement shows that this is giving understanding to others as Paul is speaking of public prayers. The one leading in public prayers should do so in such a way as other worshippers can hear and understand. They will then be able to say *Amen* (meaning: “let it be so,” or “so be it”) at the giving of the prayer. While we should be as charitable as possible regarding public prayers, there are some phrases which brethren have picked up over the years that are not scriptural. We should be careful as to what we say. This means that we should be thoughtful about our prayer life. We are not to say meaningless phrases and words (Mat. 6:7-8) but give deep thought to what we say.

Men must have the right motive when they pray. James writes, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts” (Jam. 4:3). James reveals that the reason they were not receiving from God when they ask is because they were asking with the wrong motive. Literally *lusts* is “pleasures” as in the ASV. They were asking amiss. This brings up the question: “For what can we pray?” While not giving a complete answer notice some things:

daily sustenance or necessities of life (Mat. 6:11), physical infirmities or sicknesses (2 Cor. 12:7-9; Jam. 5:14), for wisdom (Jam. 1:5), for our enemies (Mat. 5:44), for rulers (1 Tim. 2:1-2), for peace so we can more effectively spread the gospel (1 Tim. 2:2-4; not peace for peace sake), for preachers (Luke 10:2; Eph. 6:18-20), for help to overcome temptation (Mat. 6:13; 1 Cor. 10:13), for the forgiveness of our sins (1 John 1:9; Mat. 6:12). We have the right to pray for anything we want.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them* (Mark 11:24).

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14-15).

Since we can ask for *any thing* what would be asking amiss? The wrong motive is asking for something for our own pleasures. We can pray for anything and everything if the motive or purpose behind it is to better do the will of God.

Prayers are to be directed to the Father through (or in the name of) Christ. In the model prayer, Jesus instructed us to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven” (Mat. 6:9). He told His apostles:

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you (John 16:23-24, 26).

Jesus specifically states that prayer is not to be directed to Him but to the Father in His name. What Jesus told His apostles is repeated for all saints: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20). Songs encouraging us to have “Just A Little Talk With Jesus” or to “Tell It To Jesus Alone” (or other like songs) should not be sung. Likewise, we are not to pray to an apostle, Mary, a departed loved one, or anyone other than the Father. Prayers must be in the name of Christ. This is not a statement (as many suppose) but an action, something we do. It is praying by the authority of Christ, which means that we pray according as He has authorized (consider Col. 3:17; Acts 4:7).

Prayer must be according to God’s will. Jesus, speaking to the apostles, says, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it

shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). John applies this to every child of God, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14). For prayer to be effective we must bring our will into harmony with the Father’s will (Mat. 6:10). To pray according to God’s will means we must **know** God’s will, and then do everything possible to accomplish His will. God will act providentially in bringing about our request, but God often uses humans to accomplish His will. Paul prayed for the salvation of the Jews (Rom. 10:1-3), but he did all he could to save them.