

# Prayer: Man's Communication To God

By Everett Hardin

When one of the disciples asked Jesus, "*Lord teach us to pray,*" Luke 11:1, he uttered the deepest and most universal desire of the human heart; the desire to communicate with God the Almighty. Man has devised several technical devices to communicate to one another, but man has only one way to communicate with God — prayer.

Prayer is not only a duty, but it is a privilege as well. Prayer is the way that man can express his thanksgiving and his gratitude to God. He can ask for protection and guidance *from God. Prayer is part of a Christian's life. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,"* Phil. 4:6.

Prayer is perhaps one of the most neglected duties of the Christian. It is so easy to preoccupy our time with physical aspects of life and forget to pray unto God. Usually when people pray it is because they are in need or they are in despair, but prayer ought to be uttered to God on a regular basis to express our thanksgiving unto Him.

## Efficacy of Prayer

The Bible affirms the efficacy of prayer offered by God's faithful children. For example, Jesus declared, "*Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you,*" Matt. 7:7. James affirms, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,*" Jas. 5:16.

Every sincere prayer offered to God by His faithful children receives an answer from Him. This does not mean that He answers all prayer immediately or exactly in the way the petitioners expect, but He does answer every prayer offered in according with His will. For example, Paul prayed to God three times to have the thorn of the flesh removed, 2 Cor. 12:7-10. God did not remove this thorn. Looking at the matter from a human standpoint, we might believe Paul's prayer was unanswered because the specific request he made was denied. Looking at it more deeply, we see that this prayer was answered in that Paul received what his heart desired: the grace of God to withstand the infirmity of the flesh. Thus was Paul's prayer answered, when instead of the removal of the thorn in his flesh, he received sufficiency of divine grace so that he could say, "*Most gladly therefore will I glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,*" 2 Cor. 12:9. God's "no" is as much as an answer as His "yes." He will not give His children anything that will harm them, but only that which is good for them. "*They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,*" Ps. 34:10.

## The Power of God

How can we have any doubt at all concerning the ability of God when we realize that the universe is the product of His hand? Constantly He maintains it by His power. Every living thing grows by the power of His might. Nothing is too difficult for His omnipotence. Jeremiah prayed to God, "*Ah Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: Thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God. The Lord of hosts is His name. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings,*" Jer. 32:17-19.

## **Acceptable Prayer**

Saying our prayers is not necessarily praying. Prayers can become a mere form of words, cold and lifeless. Those who conform themselves to a set form of words when they pray are in danger of losing the spirit of prayer. Prayer does not consist of solemn looks, religious tones, and humble attitudes of the body, nor beautiful expressions. One can draw near unto God with his mouth and honor Him with his lips, while his heart is far from Him, Matt. 15:8. Jesus said, "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him,*" John 4:23. What kind of worshippers does God desire? Those who worship in spirit and in truth, who express their inner self, their feelings, affections and desires through those items of worship. The following conditions are most important by all who would pray acceptably.

## **Godly Living.**

Jesus stressed the need for godly living for acceptable prayer in John 15:7, "*If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you.*" Some Christians live indolent, impure lives and expect their prayers to make all things right between them and their Creator. If their unfaithfulness is not corrected, needless to say, their prayers are in vain. The necessity of a faithful Christian life is impressed on our minds by I John 3:21-22, "*Beloved, if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*" Peter affirmed that, "*The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are opened unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil,*" I Peter 3:12.

## **Prayer Must Be Offered in Faith**

After James exhorts those who lack wisdom to request it of God. He designates the absolute requirement of faith, to make a request answerable by God: "*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord,*" Jas. 1:6-7. Christ lays down the same principle when He says, "*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive,*" Matt. 21:22.

## **In Accordance With God's Will**

"*And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, he heareth us,*" I John 5:14. The object of prayer is not to bend God's will to ours, but to raise ours to God; it is not to change but to accomplish the divine purpose. As we pray unto God there should be a sincere desire that His will be done in all things and that our lives always conform to His will. Jesus Christ even subjected His own prayers to this standard. In Gethsemane He prayed, "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,*" Matt. 26:39.

## **In The Name of Jesus**

In His last discourse with the disciples Jesus emphasized praying in His name, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, if ye ask anything in My name I will do it,*" John 14:13-14. When we approach God in prayer in the name of Christ, we do so with the realization that Christ is our sole access to the Father. To pray

in the name of Christ is to recognize and live by His supreme authority. We must recognize that He died for us, paying the price of our redemption and supplying divine power for fruitful, successful living.

### **Unselfishness**

James said, "*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts,*" Jas. 4:1-2. We must ask for the right things, in the right way, and for the right motives. We must realize that where selfishness is involved petitions to God are fruitless. God will not grant a request for the purpose of satisfying selfish desire.

Are your prayers acceptable to God? If man would only see the need to communicate with God, the world in which we live would be a better place to live, and heaven would become more of a reality instead of a fantasy.

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