

Prayer – What It Is, Its Privilege and Power Luke 11:1

Introduction:

1. Regardless of who we are, regardless of how intelligent we may think we are, regardless of how much physical strength, material wealth, social status, or political power we may possess, the fact is this: sooner or later, and time and again, we all feel our own vulnerability.
 - a. Regardless of who we are, those things of the flesh upon which we depend so much begin to topple. Physical strength deteriorates. Brain power diminishes. Loved ones die. Sometimes our closest friends let us down.
2. Yes, we are repeatedly forced to feel our own impotence, and at the same time to feel our dependence upon a Being far more powerful than we are, and a need to cry out to that Being for help – the kind of help which mere humans simply cannot provide. In other words, the times come when we are instinctively inclined to cry out to God in prayer,.
3. On the other hand, viewed in a different light, we are inclined to feel at least a little sympathy for the atheist, for he also experiences all the frustrations, vulnerabilities, uncertainties, and weaknesses we experience, but according to his mind set he has no one more intelligent, nor more powerful than himself upon whom to rely and to whom he can cry out for help.
 - a. He denies the very existence of God; hence, he does not know from whence he came, why he is here, nor where he is going!
 - b. However, insofar as this audience is concerned, your very presence implies that you do not fall in the category of the atheist. You believe in God, or else you would be somewhere else. But even though you do believe in God, you still experience and feel the effects of the frustrations, vulnerabilities, uncertainties, and weaknesses to which we have already made reference. In other words, you have repeatedly sensed the need of prayer in your own life.
4. And in this you are not alone. The Lord's disciples evidently felt the same need. Luke 11:1.
5. Prayer is one of the greatest privileges of Christians – for those who have assurance that God is, and that He hears and answers their prayers. I John 5:14,15; I Peter 3:12; James 5:16.
6. Prayer gives renewed hope, lifts one up in times of distress, heartache, and trouble; it comforts the heart, and gives assurance to the humble and lowly,.

Discussion:

I. But What is Prayer?

A. Negatively, Prayer is Not:

1. Simply desire.
 - a. A lot of people have all kinds of wants and desires. But we must ask for what we need (Jas. 4:2; John 14:13; I John 3:22)..
 - b. Some are too proud to ask.
 - c. With some their relationship with God is such that they will not ask.
2. To be a Vain Repetition of Words, Matt. 6:7-8.
 - a. **Note:** Not all repetition is vain repetition, Matt. 26:39,42,44; Luke 18:3-5.
 - b. Ironically, the words of Matt. 6:9-13 are often uttered in a way as to constitute “*vain repetitions.*” Any repetition of words which does not reflect the heart's desire would be vain repetition.
3. Designed for Show, Matt. 6:5-6.
4. Designed to be a Substitute for Obedience.
 - a. Matt. 23:14. These made a show of being devout, but they stole from widows!
 - b. Other examples of hypocrisy:
 - (1) One who thanks God for His revealed word, but neglects to study and teach it,.
 - (2) One who thanks God for opportunities to worship, but is irregular in attendance,.

B. Positively, Prayer is: (Based upon Luke 11:5-8).

1. Coming to God whenever there is a need. Cf. “*At midnight.*”
 - a. Judges set certain times. Princes and Kings have fixed hours when they may be approached. Cf. Esther 4:11. But God can be approached at all times! Psalm 119:62.
2. Approaching God in Confidence. “*Friend, lend me three loaves.*”
 - a. Doubtlessly, this man had on other occasions found his friend to be helpful.
 - b. God condescends to be the Friend of His people. Jas. 2:23; Jas. 4:8; John 15:15; Heb. 4:14-16.
3. Is coming to God as an adequate Provide. “*I have nothing..*”
 - a. God's resources are infinite. Psalm 24:1; Psalm 50:10-15.
4. Approaching God with Persistence. “*Yet because of his persistence..*”

- a. Persistence in prayer is a main point in this parable. Cf. I Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12; Luke 18:1; 21:36.
- b. In this request, there was an unwillingness to help at that particular moment, v. 8. But not so with God! Jas. 1:5.

II. But Is Prayer Really Important?

- A. The Scriptures Emphasize its importance, Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6-7.
- B. The Bible Emphasizes its power, Jas. 5:16; Isa. 40:28-31.
 1. Prayer is a blessing we have as Children of God which can never be taken away by an outside force. Rom. 8:35-39.
- C. It is a Key to Spirituality and Closeness to God.
 1. The example of King David, Ps. 61:1-4; 62:7-8; 63:7-8.
 - a. If we would pray like the Psalmist our spiritual lives would be better.

III. What are the Benefits of Prayer?

- A. We draw closer to God, Jas. 4:8; Heb. 10:19-22.
- B. It gives us renewed hope, Ps. 146:5-9.
 1. When all help is gone, when we feel life's problems closing in on us, when we cannot go another step, we can call upon God and renew our strength!
- C. It gives strength and comfort, Jas. 5:16.
- D. It identifies us with the Faithful.
 1. Cf. Jesus, the Psalmists, the apostles, etc. cf. Acts 6:4.
- E. We find forgiveness.
 1. Providing we are in the proper relationship with God. John 9:31; Heb. 10:19-22; Acts 8:22
 2. Jas. 5:15; Ps. 51:1-2; Isa. 55:6-7; I John 1:9.
- F. God will bless us, Heb. 4:16; Jas. 5:16-18.

Note: These benefits accrue if:

1. We keep His commandments, I John 3:22.
2. Ask according to His will, I John 5:14.

Conclusion:

1. Prayer is essential to spiritual development, both individually and congregationally.
2. But if you are not a child of God, your prayers will not avail! Prov. 28:9.
 - a. How can you say "*our Father which art in heaven*" if God is not your Father? Cf. John 8:44.
3. Or, if you have corrupted your relationship with God, you cannot remain in your condition and expect prayer to make the difference. I John 1:9; Prov. 28:13.

--Bobby Witherington, Dec. 18, 2016