

P R A Y I N G
W I T H
F I R E

PART 2 OF 2

STUDIES 1 - 13

T E A C H E R M A N U A L

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

Praying With Fire

Part 2 of 2

Studies 1 - 13

Teacher Manual

TABLE OF CONTENTS		
Study	Title	Pages
1	United Prayer	1
2	The Prayer of Commitment	5
3	What Jesus Said About Prayer - Part 1 of 4	10
4	What Jesus Said About Prayer - Part 2 of 4	16
5	What Jesus Said About Prayer - Part 3 of 4	21
6	What Jesus Said About Prayer - Part 4 of 4	26
7	What Paul Said About Prayer - Part 1 of 2	32
8	What Paul Said About Prayer - Part 2 of 2	35
9	What Others Said About Prayer - Part 1 of 2	39
10	What Others Said About Prayer - Part 2 of 2	45
11	The Will Of God In Prayer - Part 1 of 3	50
12	The Will Of God In Prayer - Part 2 of 3	56
13	The Will Of God In Prayer - Part 3 of 3	61

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

UNITED PRAYER

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: Acts 4:23-31

In **Acts 3**, we read that, as Peter and John entered the temple through the gate called Beautiful, they saw a man begging alms. Peter told the man to look on them.

Expecting to receive a coin, he looked at them. Then Peter said -

Acts 3:6 - *.....Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*

Peter took the man by the hand, lifted him up and the man started walking! He went into the temple praising God.

This raised a stir among the people and Peter and John were brought before the priests and elders. They were cast into prison and the next day were brought before the rulers.

Unable to deny that a true miracle had taken place, the priests were forced to let them go. However, they commanded them not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus anymore.

Then we read **Acts 4:23-31**.

FROM PRISON TO THEIR PRAYER GROUP.

Notice the first thing Peter and John did when they were released from the prison.

Acts 4:23 - *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.*

A good place to be when in trouble, is with your own company, people of like precious faith. It is good to be around people who know how to pray.

I have often thought that if this group had been like some Christians today, the first thing they would have done would have been to organize a committee to go and talk to these leaders and make some kind of deal whereby everyone could get along together.

After all, these leaders were religious men, too. They believed in God and prayer. They believed in going to church.

The only difference was that they did not accept Jesus as being the Messiah, the Son of God.

However, the Bible does not say that Peter and John appointed a committee for compromise. It says -

Acts 4:24 - *.....they lifted up their voice to God with one accord,.....*

They knew the value of united prayer.

RESULTS OF UNITED PRAYER.

What was the result of the united prayer of the believers in **Acts 4**?

Acts 4:31 - *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.*

1. Had their united prayer been answered?

They had prayed -

Acts 4:29 - *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,*

They had not asked the Lord to remove the persecution or to strike down their enemies. They had not asked the Lord to make their way easy.

Instead, they prayed that, in the midst of persecution, they might preach the Word with boldness.

2. And the Lord answered their prayer.

Acts 4:31 - *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together;.....*

Do you know any group of people who are praying and shaking anything nowadays?

If Christians today would get together and pray “with one accord” they would shake the world for Jesus. There is power in united prayer.

Notice, too, that their prayer was for something specific. They were definite in their praying. They were not just praying some generalized prayer, but were praying about the need that faced them right then.

c. *And they all prayed at once.*

As they lifted their voices to God in fervent prayer, the place was shaken.

In our last lesson, we studied about a very similar incident. Paul and Silas had been thrown into jail in Philippi for preaching the gospel. Instead of complaining to the Lord for what had happened to them, they lifted their voices to the Lord in songs of praise.

Acts 16:25 - *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

They, too, were praying aloud for the prisoners heard them. They were not off in some corner mumbling quietly forlorn pleas to God. The prisoners heard them as they sang praises unto God.

Some people say they want to pray quietly because the Lord knows they have a song in their hearts. But if it is there, it is going to come out.

Matthew 12:34 - *.....for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

4. DID GOD ANSWER THE UNITED PRAYER OF PAUL AND SILAS?

Acts 16:26 - *And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*

Again the place was shaken as a result of united prayer!

When Paul and Silas joined forces in prayer and praise to God, the very foundations of the prison were shaken. The stocks came off their feet. They were free.

The jailer, awakened by the earthquake, saw the prison doors open and assumed the prisoners had fled. He knew he would be held responsible for their escape and became so frightened that he was going to kill himself.

Just then, Paul cried out with a loud voice -

Acts 16:28 - *.....Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*

The jailer knew he had witnessed the supernatural that night. He knew Paul and Silas were no ordinary men.

Acts 16:29-31 - *Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,*

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

As a result of the united prayer of Paul and Silas that night, the jailer, together with his entire family, accepted Christ as Saviour and were all baptized.

There is supernatural power in united prayer.

Memory text.

Acts 1:14 - *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,.....*

THE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

STUDY 2

Scripture Portions: Matthew 6:25-27; Philippians 4:6

Matthew 6:25-27 - *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

26 *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

27 *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*

Philippians 4:6 - *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Do you sometimes pray about a problem with seemingly no results? Unanswered prayers are usually due to our not praying in line with the Word of God.

There are often times when we need to pray the prayer of commitment. Peter talked about this kind of prayer when he wrote -

1 Peter 5:7 - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

I believe the Amplified translation is most illuminating and enlightening on this particular verse -

“Casting the whole of your care--all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all--on Him; for He cares for you affectionately, and cares about you watchfully.”

How wonderful it is that we can cast our cares upon the Lord in prayer.

5. PRAY ACCORDING TO THE LAWS GOVERNING PRAYER.

If people would just pray this prayer of commitment, it would eliminate some of the things they are praying about.

Some people's prayers are not answered because they are not doing what God said to do about cares, anxieties, worries and concerns. It is not going to do any good to pray about your cares unless you do what God tells you to do about them.

Some Christians seem satisfied just to think that God knows and understands all about their problems - but they still cling to their cares. Therefore, they do not get deliverance.

It is not enough to know that He understands and is concerned. We must go on and do what He says to do if we want deliverance from our problems.

Cast all of your cares, all of your anxieties, all of your worries upon Him for He cares for you.

This is the prayer of commitment, the prayer of casting or rolling our cares and burdens upon Him.

A scripture in the **Psalms** may help us to see a little more clearly what Peter is talking about here.

Psalm 37:5 - *Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

The Amplified version says, “.....roll and repose [each care] of your road on Him.....”

Commit, cast, roll your burden on to the Lord. He is not going to take it away from you. You must do the action.

Some people make the request, “Pray that the Lord will lighten this load.” He is not going to do that. He does not want to just lighten your load. He wants to carry it all.

But, there is a vital part that we must take in this. It is the prayer of commitment.

God does not want His children to worry, to be full of anxiety or burdened down with the cares of life. But there is something which *you* must do.

In an imperative sentence, such as those in **1 Peter 5:7** and **Psalm 37:5**, the subject of the sentence is understood to be *you!*

The Lord says, “*You* cast all your care upon Him.....” “*You* commit your way unto the Lord.”

We must do our part. We must obey the Lord before He will come to our aid. We must turn loose our problem before He will take over. This is a once-and-for-all proposition. It is not something that you do every day.

When we really cast our cares upon Him, when we really commit our way unto the Lord, we do not have them anymore. We are rid of them. They are no longer in our hands, but in His.

There is so much that the Lord would do for us, if we would but let Him.

We may have been honest and sincere in our praying about some matters, but we saw no answers to our prayers because we did not come according to His rules, according to His laws that govern the operation of prayer.

We did not do what He told us to do, then we wondered why He did not work certain things out for us.

Sometimes we have brought our burden to the altar of prayer. We have prayed and prayed and prayed about it. Then, when we got up to leave, we picked up our burden from the altar and took it home with us.

Too, there are those who do not really want to get rid of their problems. Oh, they claim, sometimes rather loudly, that they do, but they do not really mean it, for, if they did, they would not have anything to get people's sympathy. They would not have anything to complain about. They would almost have to close down conversation.

6. THE FUTILITY OF WORRY.

Matthew 6:25-27 - *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

26 *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

27 *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*

Jesus was simply saying in this passage of scripture, "Which of you, by worrying and being over-anxious, is going to change anything?"

We all know that worry is like a rocking chair. It keeps you busy, but does not get you anywhere.

Luke's gospel records the same portion as above, saying -

Luke 12:22 - *.....Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.*

Another translation of this verse reads "*Be not anxious about tomorrow.*"

Of course, we have to plan and prepare for tomorrow. We have to make certain provisions for the future. But what the Lord is teaching us here is that He does not want us to be filled with anxiety and worry about tomorrow.

We should say with Ira Stamphill, the well known gospel song writer, "*I don't know about tomorrow, but I know Who holds my hand.*" This is all that is important.

3. WORRY NULLIFIES PRAYER.

Philippians 4:6 - *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

The Amplified version says “*Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything,.....*”

Again, *you* is the understood subject of the sentence. When the Lord said, “be careful (anxious) for nothing,” He was saying, “*You* be careful for nothing.” In other words, “Don’t you fret or have any anxiety about anything.”

As long as you are going to fret and have anxiety concerning the thing you are praying about, you are nullifying the effects of your praying. You have not cast it upon the Lord. You still have it.

If you have it, He does not have it. If He has it, YOU DO NOT HAVE IT.

It is amazing what God will do with your problems when He has them. But, as long as you hold on to them, as long as you try to figure it out for Him and try to help Him work it out, then He does not have any of it. You have it all.

When the winds of adversity blow, we can do exactly as the Word of God says. We do not have to fret or worry when we cast our burdens on the Lord. If you have not done it yet, there is no better time than now to turn loose your problems and sleep peacefully tonight.

If the devil tries to bring a picture of it before you, put it out of your mind immediately and say, “No. I do not have that, devil. I do not have a care. I have turned it over to the Lord and He has it.”

The Lord will work on it while you are sleeping.

Psalm 121:4 - *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

You need sleep, but He does not.

He gives His beloved sleep.

Psalm 127:2 - *..... he giveth his beloved sleep.*

You are His beloved because you are accepted in the Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:6 - *.....he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Therefore, you can sleep peacefully.

If we really believe and practice God's Word, then we should never worry. If we really believe what Jesus said in -

John 14:14 - *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

we would not worry even if, when we went home, we found our house had burned down while we were gone. We would not worry or fret about it. We would say, "Praise God, we will get a better one."

This is the place God wants us to be. Purpose in your heart today to practice God's Word to practice faith.

Memory text.

1 Peter 5:7 - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 1 of 4

STUDY 3

Scripture Portion: Matthew 6:5-13

While Jesus was here on earth, He taught much about prayer.

Perhaps the best known of His teaching on prayer is the oft repeated “Lord’s Prayer.” In this brief prayer, we find a pattern for prayer which Jesus gave to His disciples.

Just preceding this prayer, as recorded in Matthew’s gospel, are a few verses which are also very enlightening on this subject, and are really a prelude to this prayer.

Read **Matthew 6:5-13**.

7. PRIVATE PRAYER.

One of the first things Jesus said here was -

Matthew 6:5 - *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are:.....*

Surely none of us wants to be hypocritical, especially in our praying.

Then He described the hypocrite -

Matthew 6:5 - *.....for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.....*

This does not mean that all of our praying should be in private.

As we looked at the early church in prayer in Study 14, we saw them praying together as a group throughout the book of **Acts**.

What Jesus was referring to here was the danger of praying only to be seen of men.

There are those who pray in public just to appear really spiritual, to make people think they are real prayer warriors.

Those who pray only for the applause of men, have their reward - and that is all it is - the fleeting applause of men.

Jesus told His disciples to -

Matthew 6:6 - *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

He was stressing the importance of a private prayer life.

Public prayer is necessary and vital in the life of the church.

Praying together as a family is vital and necessary to the spiritual life of the individual. This is when we grow in spiritual stature.

This should not be just in those crisis times when we are driven to our knees. We should be spiritually prepared for such times through a daily prayer time which we set aside for fellowship with God.

8. REPETITIOUS PRAYER.

Jesus went on to say -

Matthew 6:7 - *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

We have two admonitions from the Lord.

Do not be like the heathen in our praying.

Jesus said that the heathens think they will be heard by their gods because of their repetitious praying, because of their much speaking.

Sad to say, some of this heathen thinking has sifted into Christian thinking. Many have the idea that God will hear them because of their much speaking, their lengthy and repeated calling on God.

They repeat the same prayer. They say the same phrases and words over and over again, thinking they will be heard because of repetition. But this is exactly what Jesus condemned when He said do not use vain repetitions, as the heathens do.

Then He said -

Matthew 6:8 - *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

He knows what you need before you ask. Yet, He wants you to ask, as we see in -

Matthew 7:7 - *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

God does not hear you simply because you repeat the same prayer over and over.

Some seem to have the idea that, if they could just pray long enough and loudly enough, eventually they could talk God into hearing them.

God is not going to hear you because you pray loudly or because you pray quietly.

As we have seen in previous lessons, it is the prayer of faith that God hears. He hears you because you believe Him when you pray and come according to His Word.

9. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER.

In the next few verses in Matthew, commonly called the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught His disciples some basic elements of prayer. It is more accurately the disciples' prayer, or the model for prayer that he gave to them while He walked with them on the earth.

Matthew 6:9-13 - *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Certainly, dispensationally speaking, this is not the church praying, for they did not ask anything in the Name of Jesus. When the church prays, they pray in the Name of Jesus.

However, we may learn many truths from these verses concerning prayer.

Jesus was not telling the disciples to pray this prayer word for word. He was giving them some principles in connection with prayer that will work for the church today.

1. The principle of praise.

The prayer begins with the words -

Matthew 6:9 - *.....Our Father which art in heaven,.....*

The unsaved can pray this prayer with their lips just as anyone can recite a poem, a prayer, or sing a song.

But to really pray this prayer from the heart, to really have fellowship with God, one must actually be a child of God. Otherwise, he cannot truly say, "Our Father....."

We hear much teaching these days about the “fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” Some would try to make us believe that we are all children of God, that He is the Father of all of us.

It is true that He is the Creator of all and we are all fellow creatures, but God is not the Father of all of us. He is the Father of only those who have been born again, those who are in His family.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He once said to a group of Pharisees, who were very religious people -

John 8:44 - *Ye are of your father the devil,.....*

The Pharisees were good people as far as works were concerned. Yet Jesus said to them that they were of their father the devil.

In order to be able to address God as Father, we must be born again. He is more than our God. He is our Father.

Jesus is saying here that the right approach to God is to come to Him because He is our Father and to come in praise and worship.

Matthew 6:9 - *.....Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

Come first with praise and worship into His presence because He is our Father.

b. The principle of putting God first.

The next verse says -

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

The principle involved here is that of putting the kingdom of God first. Later on in this same chapter Jesus repeated this principle.

Matthew 6:33 - *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

If we put God first, we need have no worry about material needs for “all these things shall be added unto you.”

We do not have to go through life with the soles of our shoes worn thin, with unpaid bills past due, driving an old Model T Ford.

If God is first in our lives, all these things shall be added.

Have you ever thought how all-inclusive this prayer is?

He prayed -

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

Do you suppose there are any sick folks in heaven?

No.

Nor is it God's will that there should be any sick folk on earth.

He wants our lives here on earth to be lived in the centre of His will, as it is in heaven. He wants us to enjoy abundant living.

John 10:10 - *.....I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

3. The principle of daily prayer.

In the next verse of this prayer, Jesus taught us the importance of daily prayer, of asking Him for our every need.

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

Even though He knows our every need, He still wants us to ask Him.

d. The principle of forgiveness.

Jesus taught much during His stay here on earth about forgiveness. He included it here as one of the essential elements of prayer.

Matthew 6:12 - *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

He also said -

Matthew 6:14-15 - *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:*

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Prayer will not work in an unforgiving heart. We simply cannot hold a grudge against anyone and maintain a real prayer life that gets results.

There are many instances where mental confusion and emotional frustrations can be attributed to harboring bitterness against others.

Doctors have learned that people who hold resentment in their hearts are more susceptible to certain types of diseases.

When they could get such patients to rid themselves of their resentment, although they had not responded at all to medical treatment, in most cases their trouble cleared up.

More and more, medical science is discovering how closely related our inner feelings are to our physical health.

I have sometimes heard Christians (who, mind you, were not walking in the closest fellowship with the Lord) tell me how badly they had been treated by a certain person. They would say, "Oh, yes, I have forgiven him all right. But I will never forget what he did to me."

They really had not forgiven that person at all. Resentment still lurked in the hidden corners of their heart.

5. The principle of deliverance from temptation.

Matthew 6:13 - *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:.....*

The word temptation means test or trial.

Many tests and trials could be met in advance by a child of God enjoying the fellowship with the Father that a proper prayer life brings.

Then, we come to the conclusion.

Matthew 6:13 - *.....For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

The prayer that began with praise also ends with praise.

Memory text.

Matthew 6:33 - *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 2 of 4

STUDY 4

Scripture Portions: Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13

The model prayer which Jesus gave to His disciples, commonly referred to as the Lord's prayer, **Matthew 6:9-13**, begins with the words -

Matthew 6:9 -*Our Father which art in heaven,*

In **Matthew 7**, when Jesus was again teaching on prayer, He used another illustration of how the earthly relationship between father and son is like the believer's relationship with the heavenly Father.

Matthew 7:7-11 - *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 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?

10. KNOWING GOD AS FATHER.

We can see here one reason the Jews could not understand Jesus.

If He had come along as did some of the prophets of old, proclaiming judgment against them and presenting to them a distant, unapproachable God, they might have better understood Him.

That was the picture of God to which they were accustomed. When God came down and talked to Moses on the mountain, there was fire, thunder and lightening. If anyone touched that mountain, he died instantly.

When the presence of God moved into the Holy of Holies, no one dared intrude there for fear of instant death.

The Jews knew about a God Who was high and holy, Who dealt an awful judgment. And they feared Him.

Jesus, however, came with a message of love. He introduced God as a Father and suggested that they could approach God as a Father. The Jews just could not comprehend that kind of a God.

We see the same thing today. To many people, Christianity is just a religion about a far away God. They do not really know Him. They have never come to Him.

They have never come to Him through Jesus Christ in order to know Him personally as their Father. So they try to approach Him in the wrong manner.

But, thank God, He is our Father and we can come to Him because we are His children.

11. ASK, SEEK, KNOCK.....BELIEVE.

Most Christians are aware that this verse is in the Bible, whether or not they use it.

Matthew 7:7 - *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

Too often, though, we fail to receive what we are asking for. We fail to find what we are seeking. The door on which we are knocking is not opened.

Why? We must be doing something wrong if we do not receive, for the next verse promises -

Matthew 7:8 - *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

What is the reason for our failure?

I once read a book by a missionary who spent fifty-two years in the Holy Land. This was around the turn of the century when customs there were very much like they had been for centuries before.

In this book the missionary commented on this passage of scripture. He said, "I thought, as most Christians do, that when Jesus spoke these words, He meant if you asked and did not receive an immediate answer to keep on asking.

"However, after living in the Holy Land for so many years and becoming familiar with the thinking of the eastern mind, I learned that this was not what Jesus meant at all.

"In those days, if someone came to the outer gate and knocked, seeking admittance, the more wealthy would send their servant to call out and ask the name of the visitor. If it was someone who was known, they could enter immediately.

“If it was someone unknown, the servant would go to the master of the house and ask if he should let the visitor in.

“The thought here is that, when you knock, if you are known, you gain immediate entrance. To him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

If, when we ask and do not receive, if, when we seek and do not find, if, when we knock, it is not opened to us, we should first ask ourselves if we are known by the Master of the house.

If not, we should become acquainted, personally and intimately, with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We should make Him Lord of our life.

Having done this, the next step is faith to -

Hebrews 11:6 -*believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

For, as Jesus explained in -

Matthew 7:11 - *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?*

our heavenly Father is eager to give good gifts unto His children.

What earthly father wants his children to go through life poor and down trodden, sick and suffering? On the contrary, most of us labor and sacrifice so that our children can have advantages that we ourselves never had.

So, if you, being carnal, being human, want good things for your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?

Those three words “*how much more*” send a thrill through my spirit.

If we want happiness for our children, *how much more* does God want the same for us.

If we want good health for our children, *how much more* does God want good health for us.

If we want material blessings for our children, *how much more* does God want the same for us.

Luke’s account of this story gives us a few more details. Read **Luke 11:5-13**.

3. THE PRAYER OF IMPORTUNITY.

In this account which deals with the prayer of importunity, many people have had the mistaken idea that Jesus was teaching us to keep on asking in order to get results.

In this parable, we see a man who had a guest arrive during the night. As the host did not have any bread to set before his guest, he went to his neighbor's house and asked for a loaf of bread. The neighbor responded, "I am already in bed. Don't bother me." But, when the man kept pleading with him, he finally granted his request.

Jesus was illustrating here that, although the neighbor would not get out of bed to give the man bread just because he was a friend, yet, because of his importunity, he gave it to him. Jesus was saying *how much more* our heavenly Father will hear us and grant our requests.

It is the importunity of faith, not the importunity of unbelief that gets results. We can keep on begging God, importuning all we want but we will never get an answer if our importuning prayer is in unbelief.

It is the importunity of faith that works.

Matthew 7:7 - *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

Andrew Murray had real insight into this subject of importunity in prayer. He said that it is not good taste to ask the Lord for the same thing over and over again. He said that if the thing which you have prayed about has not materialized, do not ask again the same way you did in the beginning.

That would be a confession that you did not believe God the first time.

Just remind Him of your request. Remind Him of His promise. Remind Him that you are expecting the answer. Let this importunity be an importunity of faith.

This will bring results.

Luke's account of this story is more detailed than Matthew's. Matthew recorded -

Matthew 7:11 - *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?*

Luke enlarges on this by saying -

Luke 11:13 - *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

Although Matthew did not specifically name the Holy Spirit in his verse, we know that the Holy Spirit is a “good thing.”

I am sure that the Holy Spirit had a purpose for inspiring Luke and Matthew to record this as they did.

The Holy Spirit, as He inspired Matthew, wanted to stress the good things of life. He wanted us to know that God loves us just as we love our children and want our children to have good things.

The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to emphasize the spiritual things that God has for us.

By asking, seeking and knocking in faith, we can enjoy all the abundant blessings that God has for His children.

Memory text.

Matthew 7:7 - *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 3 of 4

STUDY 5

Scripture Portions: Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-24; John 15:7-8

In **Matthew 21**, we come to another passage where, as Jesus taught on prayer, He was talking about faith and prayer.

You cannot very well talk about faith without talking about prayer, nor can you talk about prayer without talking about faith.

They go hand in hand.

PRAY, BELIEVE, RECEIVE.

Matthew 21:18-22 - *Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.*

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Let us also look at this same account as recorded in Mark's gospel.

This is the only reference about prayer in the book of Mark, but he devoted a great deal of attention to this one account.

Matthew told the story in five verses whereas Mark gives us nearly twice as many on the same event.

Mark 11:12-14 - *And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:*

13 *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

14 *And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.*

Mark 11:20-24 - *And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.*

21 *And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.*

22 *And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.*

23 *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

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

In studying the Bible, it is good to compare the different gospel writers' accounts of the same incidents in the life of Jesus for, in this way, we can get different viewpoints. One writer might bring out some details that the others omitted.

In Matthew's account of the above story, Jesus said -

Matthew 21:22 - *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

Mark puts it a little differently -

Mark 11:24 - *.....What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

Both writers gave the basic formula for faith. Pray, believe, receive.

Someone has asked, "But what if you did not receive?"

"Then you did not ask believing, did you? The scripture says that if you pray and believe, you shall receive."

"Yes, but maybe it is not the will of God," they reply. "The scripture did not say anything about that here."

We are too quick to use this as an excuse for our unbelief. Jesus said -

Matthew 21:22 - *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

2. THE WORD OF FAITH.

In John's account of what Jesus said about prayer, not one single time does he use the words "faith" or "believe."

Let us look at one example.

John 15:7-8 - *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Why was it unnecessary to use the words "faith" or "believe" in this passage of scripture on prayer?

This is because there is no problem with faith if His Words abide in you.

There is only a lack of faith when the Word does not abide in you. If the Word does not abide in you, something else does.

If the Word abides in you, then faith abides in you.

Romans 10:17 - *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

A person may be giving mental consent to belief in the Word of God.

He could stand up, shake his fist and declare with fervor that he believes in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, that he believes it from cover to cover, from Genesis to Revelation, yet never really have the Word abiding in him at all.

Notice that Jesus did not just say, "If ye abide in Me....." If He had stopped there, we would automatically have it made as born-again Christians for, with the new birth, we do abide in Christ.

But, the scripture goes on to say, ".....and My words abide in you....."

The Word is called the "word of faith."

Romans 10:8 - *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;*

If this Word abides in you, it will cause faith to spring up in your heart.

12. THE LIGHT OF THE WORD.

This is the reason the psalmist of old said -

Psalm 119:130 - *The entrance of thy words giveth light;.....*

When we know the Word, we are not praying in the dark. We have light.

Again the psalmist said -

Psalm 119:105 - *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

We are not walking in the dark. Our pathway is lighted when we have the Word. If we have a lighted pathway, we can walk in that light. If there is no action, we are not walking.

1 John 1:7 - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,.....*

This does not say a thing about standing in the light. It says “walk.”

His Word is a light unto the path that we walk. To walk means action. As we walk in the light that God’s Word sheds upon our pathway, we will get results in prayer!

The psalmist also prayed -

Psalm 119:25 - *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

Jesus said -

John 15:7 - *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,.....*

He cannot quicken us according to His Word, although He wants to, unless His Words abide in us, unless we walk in the light of the Word.

I heard F. F. Bosworth preach when he was seventy-five years old and still active for the Lord. He said, “I always start every morning by saying ‘Lord, quicken Thou me according to Thy Word.’” Then he went on to say what it meant to him to be quickened according to God’s Word.

He told how he was still in good health at age seventy-five. For all these years he had trusted God and had never had any kind of medication.

Bosworth lived to be eight-two years old and was busy in the Lord’s work up until the end.

When the time came for him to die, he knew it was near. He knew in his spirit that the Lord was coming for him.

A close friend of his flew to his bedside in Florida. When he arrived, Brother Bosworth was sitting up in bed. As he lifted his hand and praised God, he said, "Brother, this is the day I have waited for all of my life. I am going home."

He had prayed daily, "Lord, quicken Thou me according to Thy Word" and the Lord had quickened him every day until He took him home.

Bosworth died without sickness or disease. He just went home to be with the Lord.

God's Word is true whether or not we put it into practice. There are going to be some who will enjoy its fullest benefits.

Praise God, I am planning to be one of them!

Memory text.

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.*

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 4 of 4

STUDY 6

Scripture Portions: John 14:10-14; Chapter 16: 7-11 and 23-24

Let us look into the gospel of John again to see what Jesus had to say about prayer. As strange as it may seem, John does not record anything that the other gospel writers do in regard to prayer.

What he does say, the others did not include in their accounts. He said -

John 21:25 - *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

But he said -

John 20:31 - *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

Not all the gospel writers recorded the same things. Luke recorded part of what Matthew said. Mark recorded only one instance of Jesus' teaching on prayer, as we saw in the last lesson. Read **Mark 11:12-24**.

None of the other writers mentioned -

Matthew 18:19 - *.....if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

Actually, we have to put all the accounts together in order to get a clear picture of Jesus' teachings on prayer.

John covers the subject of prayer from an entirely different standpoint. Let us look at two passages of scripture which seem similar but really are quite different.

John 14:10-14 - *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

We have used this scripture in regard to prayer, but Jesus is not talking about prayer here at all, though many people think that He is.

Now let us compare two verses in -

John 16:23-24 - *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.*

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

In this passage of scripture, Jesus was talking about something entirely different from what He was talking about in **John 14**.

He said in -

John 16:23 -*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

But He said in -

John 14:13 - *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

He was talking about two different things.

TO DEMAND AS OUR RIGHT.

Let us examine these scriptures in the Greek New Testament. The Greek word here translated “ask” means “demand.”

It could be read “*Whatsoever ye shall demand in My name, that will I do.*”

We are not demanding it of God. When we pray, we ask of God, in Jesus’ Name. But we are demanding this of the devil.

Actually, the Greek is more explicit than the English translation. The Greek reads “*Whatsoever ye shall demand as your right.....*” It is not asking as a favor.

Whatever we ask or demand as our right, Jesus said, “I will do it.”

We have the right to demand Satan to take his hands off our finances if we are having difficulty making ends meet.

Whatever our need may be, it is our privilege, our right, in Christ to ask, to demand, that the need be met.

We see an example of this in the book of **Acts**. Peter and John saw a crippled man begging alms at the gate called Beautiful. Peter stopped and said -

Acts 3:4 -*Look on us.*

The man looked at them, expecting to receive a coin. Peter went on to say -

Acts 3:6 -*Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.*

Peter demanded in Jesus' Name that the cripple get up and walk. He did not pray that God would do it. He knew Jesus had said that whatever we demanded, or asked, in His Name, He would do it.

Just before Jesus said -

John 14:13 - *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

He said -

John 14:12 - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also;*

Peter was doing the works that Jesus did when he healed the cripple.

Even though we pray for the sick today, and this is certainly scriptural -

James 5:14-16 - *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:
15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.
16 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.*

if we just prayed for the sick and got results, we would not be doing the works that Jesus did. Jesus never prayed for the sick. He laid hands on the sick. He would command the devil to leave or He would just say -

Matthew 8:13 -*Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*
So, when Jesus said -

John 14:13 - *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

He was not talking about praying to God the Father. He was talking about doing the works He did.

2. GREATER WORKS - WHAT ARE THEY?

Not only did Jesus say that we would do the same works that He did, He also said -

John 14:12 - *.....greater works than these shall he do;.....*

Then He went on to tell us why we would do greater works -

John 14:12 - *.....because I go unto my Father.*

The greater works that the church can and is doing today are due to the fact that Jesus has gone unto the Father.

John 16:7-11 - *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

1. First -

We show men and women how to become born again.

“But were not people saved, or born again, under Jesus’ ministry” someone might ask?”

They were saved in the same sense that the people in the Old Testament were saved, but they were not born again.

The work of the Holy Ghost is necessary in the new birth. While Jesus was on earth, the Holy Ghost had not yet been given. This is why Jesus said -

John 16:7 - *.....It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

But did not Jesus forgive people’s sins while He was here on earth” someone else might say?”

Yes, but there is a difference between forgiving sins and being born again.

After a person is born again, if he sins he can get forgiveness, but he is not born again a second time. If that had been the case, we might have been born again thousands of times.

The new birth is a greater work than a healing or a miracle.

b. Second -

Not only were people not born again while Jesus was on earth, but also we never read in the four gospels of people being added to the church -

Acts 2:47 -*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

However, we do see this repeatedly in the book of **Acts**.

This is because there was not any church in Jesus' day in the sense that we think of the New Testament church. The only Body of Christ that was on earth then was His own physical body.

There were those who believed on Him and who had the promise of that which was to come, but this could only be consummated when the Holy Ghost came to baptize them all into one Body.

The Body had to be formed.

Today we are the spiritual Body of Christ. The only Body of Christ in the world today is the church.

Not only was no one born again under the ministry of Jesus, nor were there any added to the church, but also no one was filled with the Holy Ghost under His ministry.

These are the greater works that we do because He went unto the Father.

3. PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME.

Comparing now what Jesus said in **John 16**, regarding prayer, He said -

John 16:23 - *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.....*

When He said “in that day” He was referring to the very day in which we now live, the day of the new covenant, the day of the New Testament.

One translation for this verse reads “*In that day ye shall not pray to me.*” He told us not to pray to Him, but to pray to the Father in Jesus’ Name. (See Lesson 5.)

John 16:23 -*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

Then He went on to say -

John 16:24 - *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

He was telling them that now, while He was on the earth with them, they were not to pray to the Father in His Name. But “in that day” when He would no longer be on the earth, they would then ask the Father, in the Name of Jesus and -

John 16:24 -*ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

Our heavenly Father longs to meet our every need, if only we would ask Him, in order that our joy may be full!

Memory text.

John 14:14 - *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

WHAT PAUL SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 1 of 2

STUDY 7

Scripture Portion: I Thessalonians 5:16-18

In his writings to the early church, Paul had much to say to these new Christians about prayer. As we have already studied many of his teachings on prayer in several of our previous lessons in this series, we will not repeat them here.

We will, though, look at some additional things he had to say on prayer in these next two lessons.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - *Rejoice evermore.*

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Verse 17 in the King James Version is a little misleading as some people have gotten the idea that Paul was telling us here to pray all the time.

Other translations of this verse read, “*Never give up in prayer,*” or “*Be unceasing in prayer.*”

In other words, do not give up your prayer life.

It does not mean that we are to pray with every breath. That is not possible.

The exhortation to never give up in prayer is sandwiched in between the exhortations to *rejoice* and *give thanks*.

This is a good sandwich, isn't it? Paul said -

1 Thessalonians 5:16 - *Rejoice evermore.*

We are to be full of rejoicing. Then he said -

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

“But I just cannot thank God in everything” some might exclaim. Paul said that you could. He said this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

We all want to be in the will of God. And we can be, when we have things in their proper perspective.

When we know and act upon the Word of God in this manner, we can truly thank Him in everything.

I have done this in my own life when things looked very bleak.

When I first started out on the evangelistic field, there were many times that I would close one revival meeting with no other meetings in sight. I had a wife and two children to support. Actually, at the time, my niece was also living with us so there were five of us to feed and clothe.

When I would close a revival and put the last offering into my pocket, it would not be enough to pay the rent when I got home. I did not have enough money to buy the food that should be on the table. And - I did not have any prospects for another meeting.

On one such occasion, I started driving home after the closing service. I drove at night as the tires were bald and I thought I would have a better chance of making it at night when the weather was cooler. During the daytime, the roads were hot and there was a greater risk of a blowout.

And, I did not even have a spare tire.

All the way home, the devil perched on my shoulder and whispered into my ear, "What are you going to do now?"

I did not have an air conditioner so the windows were rolled down. I could hear the tires singing. It seemed as if the tires picked up the refrain and taunted me - "What are you going to do now?"

"What are you going to do now?" It kept getting louder and louder.

Thank God, when you have the Word, you can walk in the light of the Word.

I said -

I will tell you what I am going to do, Mr. Devil. I am going to act just as if the Word of God is so. I am going to act like the Bible is true. The Bible says to rejoice evermore. I rejoice for the forty-two dollar offering I did get.

The Bible says, "In everything give thanks....." I thank God for the forty-two offering. I may need one hundred and two dollars, but I give thanks to God for the forty-two offering. I am rejoicing. I am giving thanks.

And I will tell you something else, Mr. Devil. I thank God for this test, for this is a good time to prove that God is true and to prove that the Bible is true.

This is an opportunity for me to believe God, and I am thanking Him for it. Since you asked me what I am going to do, I will tell you exactly what I am going to do. I am going home. I will go to bed and sleep like a baby.

The result?

I arrived home around two in the morning. My wife asked, “How did everything go?”

I knew she was wondering if I had received enough money to meet the bills.

“Everything is just fine. We do not have a thing in the world to worry about. I will tell you about it in the morning.”

Then I went to bed and slept soundly, peacefully.

Early in the morning, before I had awakened, the phone rang. When I answered it, the voice on the other end of the line was that of a pastor of whom I had heard but had not actually met.

He asked, “When can you start a meeting with us?”

“As soon as you want me to,” I answered.

“Then how about starting next Sunday?” he asked.

“I will be there,” I said, praising God in my heart for answered prayer, for meeting my needs again as He had in the past because I had trusted in Him.

I had obeyed God’s Word and had rejoiced in the face of despair. If I had griped all the way home, I am not sure it would have worked out that way.

Memory text.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

WHAT PAUL SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 2 of 2

STUDY 8

Scripture Portions: I Timothy 2:1-2, 8; and Chapter 4:1-5

In Paul's writings to the young minister Timothy, he had a number of instructions regarding prayer. At this time Timothy was the pastor of a New Testament church.

1. PRAY FOR HEADS OF GOVERNMENT.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 - *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;*

2 *For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

Too often we put ourselves first in our praying. In fact, sometimes that is as far as we ever get - praying just for ourselves, our own personal lives and needs.

Here Paul instructed Timothy to -

1 Timothy 2:1 - *....first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;*

Then he became more specific and said -

1 Timothy 2:2 - *For kings, and for all that are in authority;.....*

In that time, the people were ruled by kings. This would be comparable to our prime minister or president, and to the heads of the government of our day.

Why did Paul say that we should pray for those in authority?

1 Timothy 2:2 - *.....that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

Whatever happens in the nation in which we live, is going to affect all of us.

God is concerned about us and, whether or not our leaders are Christians, God will do some things for our sake.

We notice that intercession is mentioned here. When Abraham made intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah, God came down and talked with him before destroying those wicked cities.

Read **Genesis 18**. Abraham pleaded with God not to destroy the cities if as many as ten righteous people could be found.

God said -

Genesis 18:32 - *.....I will not destroy it for ten's sake.*

There are more than ten righteous people in our country so we need not be frightened, but we do need to intercede for our country and for our heads of government.

God will do some things just because we ask Him.

2. PRAY WITH HANDS OUTSTRETCHED TO HEAVEN.

1 Timothy 2:8 - *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

2. Men everywhere ought to pray.

Everyone will agree with the first part of Paul's statement to Timothy - that men everywhere ought to pray.

But notice that Paul also gives some explicit instructions on prayer.

1 Timothy 2:8 - *.....lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

We would all encourage people to pray with doubting. Jesus said -

Mark 11:23 - *.....whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

And certainly we can also see the necessity of praying without wrath.

If we encourage people to follow two thirds of Paul's instructions in this verse, then we should also obey his third admonition.

3. Lifting up holy hands.

1 Timothy 2:8 -*lifting up holy hands*,.....

Those of us who came from a denominational church background, may have found it difficult at first to lift our hands in prayer. I can remember when I first came around folk who lifted up their hands to pray. It was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life to lift my hands and pray.

Someone may ask, “Do you have to do it?” No, you do not have to do it, but if we are going to obey part of the verse, why not all of it? Why not pray New Testament style?

If Paul was speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of God in writing to the church, then I am under obligation to obey. If part of it is inspired of God, then all of it is inspired and we need to pay attention to it.

3. SANCTIFYING PRAYER.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 - *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*
2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;
3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.
4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:
5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

In this passage of scripture, Paul is not referring to sinners or the heathen world. He is talking about believers who depart from the faith.

1 Timothy 4:1 -*some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

Then he mentions some of these doctrines of devils in -

1 Timothy 4:3 - *Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats*,.....

Most of us have met individuals who have fallen prey to such erroneous teaching. But Paul, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said concerning meats -

1 Timothy 4:3-5 -*which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.*
4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

The devil will use any means he can to lead people away from God.

I once knew a minister who was on fire for God and had a remarkable ministry in reaching the lost. He could get more people saved ‘accidentally’ than most people could on ‘purpose.’

But he got off on the subject of diet and started teaching people what to eat and not to eat. He preached Old Testament dietary laws and spent all of his time trying to regulate people’s diets.

If he got anyone saved, I do not know of it. The devil simply undermined his spiritual ministry of reaching the lost.

People have asked me, “But do you eat pork?”

Certainly, I eat pork. I sanctify it “by the Word of God and prayer” as Paul teaches.

You can eat skunk if you want to, for -

1 Timothy 4:4 -*it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*

We can regulate our diet however we want as long as we receive it with thanksgiving and it is sanctified with prayer.

Then nothing we eat need hurt us. Nothing I eat ever hurts me because I sanctify it.

I have heard so many people tell me that they cannot eat this or that because it hurts them if they do.

But it need not if you will sanctify it as Paul teaches us in this passage of scripture.

We need to be careful of those segments of the church world which have gone off into these areas, for Paul says that they have give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

Memory test.

1 Timothy 2:8 - *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 1 of 2

STUDY 9

Scripture Portions: James 5:13-18; Jude 20-21

Let us turn now to some other writers to see what they had to say on the subject of prayer.

WHAT JAMES SAID ABOUT PRAYER.

James 5:13-16 - *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 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.

James asks three questions - "Is any afflicted?" "Is any merry?" "Is any sick?"

He is talking about three different things here. The words "afflicted" and "sick" as used here, do not mean the same thing.

He gave one instruction for the afflicted and quite another for those who were sick.

The Greek word translated here "afflicted" does not refer to illness or physical affliction. It means a test or a trial.

James said, "If you are going through a test or trial, do your own praying."

Not many do that. Most people go running around to find someone else to do their praying for them.

But James did not say a word about getting anyone to pray for you in this situation. He said, "Let *him* pray."

This does not mean that it is not all right for us to pray one for another. The main thing God wants us to learn is to do our own praying. Then we can gain a great victory.

But if you have to depend upon someone else to pray you out of this trial, then the next time you are confronted with one of life's tests, you will not know the way out. You will have to find someone to pray you out again. If you cannot find someone, you may not make it.

Then James said -

James 5:13 - *Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

This needs little comment. It is easy to sing when we are merry, isn't it?

James then said -

James 5:14 - *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,.....*

P. C. Nelson, who was a Greek scholar, brings out the fact in his writings that the Greek word translated "sick" carries with it the thought that the person is so ill he cannot do anything for himself. If he has some minor ailment, he could go to the church where the pastor could pray for him.

But when he is so ill he cannot get out of bed, he is to call for the elders of the church to pray for him.

We must remember that, when James wrote his epistle, the church was in its infancy. Disciples would go into a place where there was no church, preach and win people to the Lord and establish a work.

These new churches did not have all the ministry gifts.

Not having a pastor, they would appoint the eldest in the congregation, or, in some places, those who had matured more spiritually, to be in charge and to watch over the flock.

As the church developed and grew, God gave -

Ephesians 4:11 -*some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

Thus, in the process of time, there would be those who were separated unto the ministry.

CAN A PERSON WITH SIN IN HIS LIFE BE HEALED?

James instructed those who were sick to call for the elders to pray for them and anoint them with oil,

James 5:15 - *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

James was not saying here that everyone was ill because of having committed sins. He was saying the reason *some* are sick is that they have sinned. If he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

There is forgiveness and healing for us.

Many have thought that, because they have failed God, they must continue to be sick, that they must pay for their sins. However, this scripture does not say, "If he have committed sins, he has to go on being sick to pay for it."

It says, "If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

Then James went on to say, because this is all tied together, -

James 5:16 - *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.....*

We dare not take this verse out of its setting and apply it wrongly. James was not suggesting here that we come to church to have a confession meeting.

He was saying that, when these elders come to pray for the sick man, if he has sinned, he should confess it then. He is not going to get healed with unconfessed sin in his life.

3. WHAT IS A RIGHTEOUS MAN?

James followed this admonition with the words -

James 5:16 - *.....The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Then, in the next two verses, he gave us an example of a righteous man.

James 5:17-18 - *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

You might think (and I once thought the same thing) "But Elijah was a prophet. He was a great man of God. I cannot possibly do what he did."

However, James did not say, “Elijah, who was a prophet, prayed.” He said Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.

He had the same faults, the same failings, he made the same mistakes we do. Yet his prayer worked.

God will not hear a prophet anymore quickly than He will hear any other believer.

James did not say that it was the “effectual fervent prayer of a prophet” that got the job done. He said, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man....”

“ Well, if I were righteous, I could do it,” you might say.

But you are righteous, if you are saved, because you are -

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *.....the righteousness of God in him.*

God made you righteous. You cannot make yourself righteous.

While I pastored for nearly twelve years, I often saw people in my congregation who did not live half as consecrated a life as others did, yet who could pray twice as effectively as the others.

They could pray the prayer of faith more quickly for themselves and for their families.

I puzzled about this many times until the Lord finally showed me, through His Word, that we do not get our prayers answered on the basis of how good we have been and certainly not on the basis of how bad we have been.

It is on the basis of our right standing in Him. We are made righteous in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Righteousness means right standing with God. Jesus is our righteousness. Every single one of us who are born again believers has the same right standing, the same righteousness that Jesus has.

We are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace by way of the blood of Jesus.

4. WHAT JUDE SAID ABOUT PRAYER.

Jude also said something about prayer that is enlightening and helpful.

Jude 20-21 - *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,*

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jude's teachings here agree with what Paul said to the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 14:4 - *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself;.....*

1 Corinthians 14:14 - *For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth,.....*

(See Lessons nine and ten.)

The word "edify" means to build up. Praying in an unknown tongue edifies and builds up the believer. It is a means of "spiritual muscle building" so to speak.

Jude did not say here that praying in the Holy Ghost would build your faith. He said, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith."

It is foolish to take a text out of its setting and try to prove something else with it. We should not try to make a verse say something that does not agree with the rest of the Bible by taking it out of its setting.

We must interpret it in the light of the whole scripture. We must study it in context, putting all the verses together. Then one will help and modify the other. They will fit together, interpreting one in the light of the other.

We are told how to build our faith in -

Romans 10:17 - *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

We build our faith through the study of God's Word. Then, through praying in tongues, we build up ourselves spiritually on the faith that we already have.

We can build spiritual muscle tone into our lives every day as we are edified through praying in the Spirit.

Memory text.

James 5:16 -*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT PRAYER

Part 2 of 2

STUDY 10

Scripture Portions: 1 Peter 3:1-6, 12; 1 John 5:14-16; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29; Third John 2

In Peter's epistle to the church, he, too, gave them instructions in the matter of prayer.

RELATIONSHIP TO SPOUSE CAN HINDER PRAYERS.

1 Peter 3:7 - *Likewise, 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.*

Here Peter is talking about marriages in which both husband and wife are believers, for he said "being heirs together of the grace of life."

Men, if some of your prayers are not being answered, perhaps you should examine your relationship with your wife. Do you show her tenderness and respect, "giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel?"

If not, Peter says that your prayers are hindered.

He gives similar admonitions to wives. Let us look at them.

Read **1 Peter 3:1-6**.

Here Peter suggests that there is a way of winning an unsaved husband without the Word.

1 Peter 3:1 - *.....if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;*

The word "conversation" here means one's manner of life, her conduct.

2. GOD HEARS THE PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Further, in this same chapter, Peter has more to say about prayer.

1 Peter 3:12 - *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.*

Who are the righteous to which this verse refers?

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians we see that we, as born again believers, -

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *.....might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Righteousness is not on the basis of how good or how bad we are, but of our standing in Christ Jesus Who is our righteousness.

Peter said that God's eyes are over us and His ears are open unto or prayers.

I am glad that God has eyes and ears, aren't you?

He sees us and He hears us. His ears are open to our prayers, but we can hinder our prayers as we saw in -

1 Peter 3:7 - *Likewise, 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.*

God does not hinder them. He does not refuse to hear them. But, we can hinder them.

Let us take care that we do not hinder them, then we can know that His ears are open unto our prayers.

5. WATCH AND PRAY.

1 Peter 4:7 - *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter saw into the future to the day in which we live and admonished believers concerning the necessity of watchful prayer.

In Mark's gospel we read where Jesus, talking about the last days, said -

Mark 13:33 - *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.*

4. GOD'S WILL IN PRAYER.

John, too, had some very important things to say about prayer.

1 John 5:14-16 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Although the word “pray” is mentioned only once in this passage of scripture, John has used the words “ask” and “petition” referring to prayer. He said, “.....if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.

Remember this - if it is according to the Word, it is according to His will.

Some people take the attitude that they will pray for something and, if it is God’s will, He will give it to them. If it is not His will, then He will not.

However, this is not what the Bible says. John said -

1 John 5:14 - *.....if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

His Word is His will. If we know what His Word says about a certain matter then we know what His will is about that matter. This agrees with Jesus’ statement -

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.*

1 John 5:16 - *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

This verse has been the subject of much controversy. Most preachers just stay away from it. However, it ties right in with the two preceding verses and continues talking about prayer.

John is saying here that, if we ask God to forgive someone, this is according to His Word and according to His will. And He will do it.

The last part of that verse does make an exception, however. It says “there is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.”

How will we know if they have committed this sin unto death? We will know this only as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.

This has happened to me only two times in my life when I have been praying for someone and the Lord showed me that there was no need to pray for them, that they had sinned the sin unto death.

What is this sin unto death?

First of all, John is not talking about physical death here, but about spiritual death. This is not a sin that an unbeliever can commit. It is a sin only a Christian can commit, for he used the term “brother.”

6. LET US LOOK INTO THE BOOK OF HEBREWS TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS.

Hebrews 6:4-6 - *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,*

Hebrews 10:26-29 - *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

The sin God is talking about here is not the sin of lying, cheating or something like that. God offers forgiveness for such sins.

There is no forgiveness, however, for those who have trodden under foot the Son of God.

The Hebrew Christians, to which this book was written, were under great persecution and were tempted to go back to Judaism.

When they accepted Christ, they were cut off from their families, ran into financial hardships and faced numerous other trials.

But God warned them in these scriptures that, to go back to Judaism, was to deny Christ.

It was to say that the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, is an unholy thing. In other words, that Jesus' blood was like that of any other man.

Let us remember that, as long as a person stays in Christ, he is eternally secure. But we do not want to forget that there is a sin unto death.

6. JOHN'S THREE-DIMENSIONAL PRAYER.

Third John 2 - *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

The word which is translated “wish” in the King James Version is “pray” in the original Greek. Therefore, John said here, “Beloved, I pray above all things

If he was motivated by the Spirit to pray that way, then that would be the desire of the Spirit of God for every person.

It is all right, then, to pray for financial prosperity for John said, “I pray above all things.....”

John's prayer here concerned three dimensions of our lives - physical, spiritual and material. He said, “.....I pray.....and that thou mayest prosper (material blessing) and be in health (physical blessing), even as they soul prospereth (spiritual blessing).”

God desires to bless every part of the believer's life.

Memory text.

1 Peter 3:12 - *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.*

THE WILL OF GOD IN PRAYER - Part 1 of 3

STUDY 11

Scripture Portions: John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 16:31

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

2 Peter 3:9 - *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Acts 16:31 - *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

In these next three lessons we will focus our attention on the will of God in prayer. We want to emphasize two words - “confidence” and “heareth” as we look at our text in -

1 John 5:14 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

Under what condition can we have confidence that God hears us when we pray?

He hears us if we ask anything according to His will. In the next verse we read -

1 John 5:15 - *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

As this scripture says, “and if....He hear us.....we have the petitions that we desired.....” it would seem that there must be something that He does not hear. If, when we pray, we do not have this confidence, this boldness, this faith, then He will not hear us.

What will give us this faith?

7. THE WORD OF GOD GIVES FAITH.

Romans 10:17 - *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Psalms 119:105 - *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Psalm 119:130 - *The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*

When we walk in the light of the Word, we are not walking in darkness.

Many times when we pray, we pray in darkness. We do not know what God's will is so we are just praying in the dark. We do not come with confidence or boldness.

We come trembling and fearful, yet hoping that He will hear us.

But that will not work.

We must go to the Word and find out what His Word says about our particular problem, then pray in faith, knowing His will in the matter.

Almost everything that we need to pray about is covered in His Word.

8. THE WILL OF GOD CONCERNING SALVATION.

We know first of all that saving the lost is His will for it was to this end that Jesus came and died.

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

2 Peter 3:9 - *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Acts 16:31 - *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

I know of no one who would pray for a lost loved one and say, "Lord, if it is Your will, save him."

On the other hand, much of our praying for the lost is not effective, not because we question the will of God in it but because we do not come with confidence and boldness.

Our scripture says that, if we come with confidence and boldness, asking according to His will, then we know that He hears us and that we have the petitions we desire.

That should settle that case for victory and close it out. However, our praying in this realm is too often in the natural instead of in the spirit. It is entirely in the mental or physical realm.

We pray, "God save our loved one" and then we wait to see if God has answered our prayer.

If they get saved immediately, we believe He heard us. If they do not, or if we see no change in their lives, we think that He did not hear us.

This is walking by sight and not by faith, which only brings confusion.

One might say “I have prayed and prayed for my unsaved loved ones. It seems as if my praying does not work.” But, if you will come right back to God’s Word, it will enlighten you.

God’s Word will instruct you as to why your prayers are not answered.

1 John 5:14 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

There is no question but that it is His will to save the lost, as we have seen from the scriptures above.

The Word is His will, and, if it is according to His will, then we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

I once knew a country preacher who, because of his limited education, never had an opportunity to pastor a very large church. Most of his pastorates were small community churches. However, he was in constant demand to hold revival meetings because of his tremendous success in soul winning.

Wherever he would go, a landslide of souls would follow. He would often go to a church where no one had been saved for years, and would see great numbers accept Christ as their Saviour.

When he was in his early sixties and still having phenomenal success, I once asked him the secret of his success.

“It is a very simple thing,” he told me. “I must apply the same faith to see folks saved as you do to see folks healed or to believe God for anything.

“It never enters my mind to doubt that people will come to be saved. If the doubts did come, I would resist them in the Name of Jesus. I pray, but not more than others do.

“I do seek God, of course, but I attribute my success in soul winning to one thing - I just have confidence that they will come. By the eye faith I see the altar filling up with lost souls.

“If the meeting is not going as well as it should, I do not necessarily increase my praying about it. I just exercise more faith.”

This preacher was expressing the confidence, the boldness that our scripture is talking about, because he knew the will of God in the matter.

But some folks can only look to the circumstances. They say, “No one came to the altar for salvation last night. They probably will not come tonight either.”

These people are looking at the wrong thing. They may pray for lost souls, but they do not see them coming to Christ. They do not really have confidence that they will come. Their faith is only in what they can see.

9. WE CAN NULLIFY OUR PRAYERS.

Often people undo their prayers. They have prayed and solicited the help of others in praying but then they nullify their prayers and the faith of those who are praying with them by speaking negatively.

Talk faith, not doubt.

I once knew a minister who asked me, as well as others, to pray for his son. At the same time he was praying and requesting prayer, he would tell his boy,

“You will never amount to anything. I do not know what in the world I am going to do with you. I have done everything I can do. I have prayed and prayed, but it looks as though my prayers did not do any good.”

This man was confessing defeat and failure rather than victory and faith. He was building doubt and insecurity into his son. And this is where so many people have lost their children.

As we pray for our children, we must not do anything in the home that would nullify the effects of our prayers. We must build confidence and trust in our children. We must instil into them a sense of security.

As a young man traveling on the evangelistic field, before I was married, I usually stayed in the home of the pastor during my revival meetings. I often felt sorry for the children in the homes where I stayed.

In one home in particular, there was a twelve-year-old boy. His parents were impatient and short-tempered with him and were always telling him that he would never amount to anything.

Sure enough, he did not. Today he is forty years old and has broken the hearts of his parents. He has been married several times and has never provided a living for his family.

These parents may have prayed and asked the church to pray. They may have shed many tears and done much fasting, but their lives nullified the effects of their prayers.

From the spiritual standpoint as well as the natural standpoint, the things that happen to children in their early years are what mold their lives as adults.

Let these be spiritually rich and meaningful years in which our life witness will match our words. Let us not work against God. Let us work with Him.

In many of the pastors' homes where I have stayed, I have seen the children neglected. The pastors' wives were so busy working in the church that the children were left alone to do as they pleased.

For that reason, when I married, I told my wife, "I will run the church and you run the house." I would never allow my wife to teach Sunday school.

In the first church we pastored after we were married, we were told that it was their custom for the pastor to teach the adult Bible class of men and the pastor's wife to teach the women. I told them that my wife did not teach Sunday school.

They argued, "But it is our custom here. We have been doing this for more than twenty years."

Well, I just changed that custom. I said, "We will consolidate the two classes and make one big auditorium class and I will teach it. My wife does not teach Sunday school."

When they asked why, I told them, "I am going to preach and pastor the church, my wife is going to stay home and keep house, take care of me and the children. I want her to run things there and I will run things here. There are many capable people in the church who can work, so let us put them to work."

When they wanted to make my wife president of the women's missionary council, I again put my foot down. "She can attend the meetings," I told them, "but she will not serve in any capacity."

This has paid off well for us.

4. AUTHORITY TO CLAIM FAMILY FOR CHRIST.

Every believer has authority in his own household. We have more authority there than we do anywhere else.

Acts 16:31 - *.....Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

But, too many people, in praying for their household, have struggled and begged God to save them, and have not backed up their prayers by claiming the promise. They have prayed in darkness instead of the light of God's Word.

Our scripture text says -

1 John 5:14 - *.....if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

We know that salvation for our children is His will and He hears us -

1 John 5:15 - *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

Then, if we know that He heard us, we do not have to keep begging Him to save our children.

This does not mean that overnight, the whole family will come to Christ, but, as we stand in faith, thanking God, they will come.

For us to go on asking and begging God is a confession that we do not believe that we have the petition that we desired of the Lord. As the scripture says, we should be thanking Him for it.

Sometimes we go through the right motions but without the right believing.

We can go through all the motions just because someone told us to do it or because someone else did it. But, we must have faith down in our hearts for it to work.

The thought never entered my mind that my immediate family would not be saved. I have authority and power there. I prayed for them once and claimed their salvation on the basis of the Word.

When the thought would come to me that they might not be saved, I would immediately reject it in the Name of Jesus. For I had confidence, I had boldness that they would be saved because I had prayed according to His will.

Knowing what the will of God is concerning lost souls, we need never pray, "Lord, if it be Your will, save this one or that one." We know it is His will.

Memory text.

1 John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

THE WILL OF GOD IN PRAYER - Part 2 of 3

STUDY 12

Scripture Portions: Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16-17; 1 Peter 2:24

As we continue our study about God's will in prayer, let us look at these pertinent words of Jesus in -

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.*

Under what conditions did Jesus tell us to ask what we will?

He said, "if you abide in Me..." In other words, to be born again is the first requirement.

If we are born again, then we are abiding in Him.

Then He also said, "and my words abide in you...." So we must have a thorough knowledge of God's Word to be an effective prayer warrior.

1. WE MUST HAVE HIS WORD ABIDING IN US.

In order to do this, we must -

2 Timothy 2:15 - *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

When we have God's Word abiding in us, then we know what His will is concerning any matter about which we need to pray.

As we saw in our last lesson, God's Word is His will. Therefore, we can come with confidence and boldness to God's throne of grace with our petitions.

Hebrews 4:16 - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

If we have followed steps one and two of the above verse, if we are -

4. abiding in Him, and

b. His word abides in us -

then we can ask what we will and it shall be done unto us.

What a powerful promise!

The believer, walking in fellowship with the Word, will never ask for anything outside of the will of God. If he knows the Word, then he knows what is promised him. He knows the will of God.

If he is not walking in fellowship with the Word, He is not going to have a successful prayer life and get answers to his prayers anyhow. His prayer life is not going to be effective because Jesus plainly stated -

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.*

We must come according to His conditions.

2. GOD'S WILL CONCERNING HEALING.

What does God's Word have to say about physical healing? Is it His will to heal the sick?

Let us look at some scripture to determine His will in this matter.

Isaiah 53:4-5 - *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Matthew 8:16-17 - *When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:*

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

1 Peter 2:24 - *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

We see from the above verses that healing the sick is God's will because Christ bore our infirmities and carried our diseases. Just as He purchased our salvation through His death on the cross, so He has purchased our healing.

1 Peter 2:24 - *.....by whose stripes ye were healed.*

When we have His Word firmly settled in our hearts we need not wonder if it is His will to heal us. We need not pray, "Lord, heal me.....if it be Thy will."

Years ago while pastoring a church, I was called to pray for one of the members who was ill. I went to her bedside to pray for her.

Knowing the importance of her own confession of faith for healing, I asked her, “Sister, will you be healed now as I anoint you with oil and lay hands on you in Jesus’ Name?”

“Well, I will if it is God’s will,” she answered.

“How are you going to find out whether it is His will?” I asked.

“I thought you would pray for me and, if it is His will, I will be healed. If it is not, then I will not be healed.”

Under these circumstances, I knew the woman was not going to receive healing. I knew her unbelief would stop the flow of God’s healing power. I wanted to talk to her and show her some things from the Word of God before I prayed for her, but she said, “Go ahead and pray for me. I am in so much pain and misery.”

I anointed her and prayed, knowing in my heart that she would not receive anything because she was not believing in line with the Word.

I stumbled through a prayer and had hardly said, “Amen” when she said to her husband, “Pete, go call the doctor.”

The thing that really puzzled me, though, was that she had just gotten through saying that, if it was God’s will for her to be healed, He would heal her and if it was not His will, then He would not heal her. Yet here she was calling for the doctor and paying him to get her out of the will of God.

It would seem, according to her reasoning, that she would not even want to get well then, for she would be getting out of God’s will. It would be wrong to buy medicine and enlist the help of the doctor to get her out of the will of God.

Certainly, this is a foolish line of reasoning, but this is the logic that some people follow concerning prayer for their healing.

As we have said before, if we want to know God’s will concerning a matter, look to His Word. His Word is His will.

His Word tells us that it is His will to heal us.

Let us not doubt His Word, but instead, believe its promise for our healing.

3. LOOK TO THE WORD FOR GOD’S WILL.

In a similar situation, this is the conclusion which people reach many times. They try to find the will of God by saying, “If it is His will, He will do it. If it is not His will, He will not do it.”

But we should determine His will in the matter by looking into the Word.

I find the answer in the Word for anything for which I might pray. If I am uncertain about something, I go to the Word first. I do not just pray uncertainly for I would be wasting my time. I would not be praying in faith. I would be praying in unbelief and doubt and this does not work.

When we know what God's Word says about a matter, then we know His will.

Many times people want to put all the responsibility for a matter onto God so they say, "It must not have been God's will, because I prayed, "If it be Thy will, do this....." and He did not do it. Therefore, it must not be His will."

These people want to relieve themselves of all responsibility and put it all onto God. But, we do not get out of our responsibility that easily. God has given us His Word and told us to -

John 5:39 - *Search the scriptures;.....which testify of me.*

In them we learn His will.

Then there are those who know what God's Word says about a matter, yet find it hard to believe that it will work in their case. They are like the man who knew he was going to be needing some extra money so he went to his banker to arrange a loan.

He did not need the money right away but just wanted to have everything ready so that he would have access to it when he did need it.

The man filled out all the forms and handed them to the banker. Seeing that everything was in order, the banker told him he could have the money, to come in anytime he wanted to and pick it up.

The man had his banker's word for it, but then he thought, "What if he does not give it to me? What if he did not mean what he said?"

The man would have to believe what the banker said and act upon it in order to get the money.

Notice how some people are just like that with God. They know what He said about healing, salvation for their loved ones, or any other need they might have, but they find it hard to believe that He will do what He said He would do.

Thank God, He keeps His Word!

Memory text.

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.*

THE WILL OF GOD IN PRAYER - Part 3 of 3

STUDY 13

Scripture Portions: 1 Peter 5:7; Third John 2; Philippians 4:19

1 Peter 5:7 - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

Third John 2 - *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

Philippians 4:19 - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Studying God's Word is like searching for valuable gems. We can find a few jewels on top of the ground without much digging. But, if we really want to get down where the valuable veins are, we have to dig for them.

If we just go along on the surface, we may pick up a small diamond occasionally, but if we will dig down a little deeper we will find larger gems and jewels.

To learn the deeper truths of God, we are told to -

John 5:39 - *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

Surface reading of our memory text has brought some to the wrong conclusion of what John was saying here.

1 John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Some have thought John said, "If it is His will, He will hear me and if it is not, He will not."

However, that was not what he meant at all. John was saying that if we have God's Word on a matter, we do not have to say, "If it be Thy will."

For this reason, I encourage folks to find scripture pertaining to their particular need when they pray. Find scriptures with a promise concerning what you are praying about.

Sometimes when people ask me to pray for them, I ask, “What scripture are you standing on?” Many times they answer that they have none in particular.

“Well,” I tell them, “that is what you will get then, nothing in particular.”

If it is according to His Word, then that is His will. It has to be His will for Him to promise it in His Word. It is His will that we have everything He has provided for us in His Word.

I have found, in my own experience, that I can find a promise in His Word for every aspect of life. Then we can know just how to pray. We can have the assurance before we pray as to what is His will.

Many times the reason prayer is not working for people is that they are praying in darkness. They are trying to get God to help them apart from the Word.

The psalmist said -

Psalm 119:105 - *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Psalm 119:130 - *The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*

We are to walk in the light of the Word. No one can build a successful prayer life if he does not know the Word. A successful prayer life is built and based upon only the written Word of God.

When we pray according to the Word, the Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We know then which way we are walking.

Too much of the time, because of a failure to see what God’s Word has to say about not knowing just where we are going, prayer then becomes a matter of desperation, of begging God to do something.

But when we know the Word ahead of time, we can come to God with confidence.

GOD’S WILL CONCERNING WORRY.

1 Peter 5:7 - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

A woman with a look of desperation on her face came to me once requesting prayer. She began crying as she said, “Brother, the cares of life, the anxieties and worries are just so great.”

She began to cry harder as she said, “I just cannot carry all my burdens. I want you to pray that God will do one of two things - that He will either give me grace to carry

them or else take about half of them away. I can carry half of them, but I just cannot carry them all.”

“Well, I just cannot pray that prayer,” I told her. “It would be unscriptural.”

A bewildered look crossed her face.

I went on to explain, “I cannot pray for you out of the will of God. If I am going to have any confidence that God will hear my prayer, I must pray in line with the Word of God.

The Bible tells us -

1 John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

“I know God’s will for you because I know what God’s Word says. It is not His will to give you grace to bear your load of care. Nor is it His will to take half of it away and let your carry the other half. How do I know this? Because of what His Word says.

1 Peter 5:7 - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

“That verse does not say that God will give grace to carry your worries. It says to cast *all* your care upon. Why? Because He cares about you.”

Then I said, “Sister, is not it wonderful that we already have the answer for your prayer right here?”

Then I read her this same verse from the Amplified New Testament, which is more explicit.

“Casting the whole of your care--all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all--on Him; for He cares for you affectionately, and cares about you watchfully.”

2. GOD’S WILL CONCERNING FINANCIAL BLESSING.

Third John 2 - *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

Philippians 4:19 - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, He was commending the Christians for their generosity in giving, as we see from the verses just preceding this one. They had made up an offering of money and goods to send to other Christians. Because of this, Paul was saying to them, "Because you have given to them and helped them, God shall supply all your need."

He was talking about material and financial matters.

Another verse which we think of in connection with financial blessing is found in -

Luke 6:38 - *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

We usually hear this verse quoted when an offering is being taken and the emphasis is usually on the first part of the verse - "give."

Let us not overlook the results of that giving - "and it shall be given unto you....."

We see financial blessings in this verse. Would you like to see increased financial blessings in your life? Then increase your giving, for the scripture says that your returns will be -

Luke 6:38 - *.....pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

We can hinder our prayers for financial prosperity by not cooperating with God. We can hinder our prayers by not entering into the doors that God opens for us.

I knew a young able-bodied fellow who was without work for quite sometime. He had a wife and five children. Folks in the church they attended helped them out by taking out groceries and clothes for the children.

The church women also helped all they could by giving ironing and other work to his wife so she could earn a little money.

When I talked to the man, he told me, "Well, the Lord said He would meet all of our needs. Some folk tell me to get out and look for a job, but I am waiting for the right one to come to me. The Lord will do it. In the meantime, we are getting along all right."

But, someone else was paying his house rent and feeding his family.

We cannot just sit down and wait for something to come to us. The only thing that will come will be a pile of bills.

A man can believe that God will help him and bless him financially, but then he needs to move in the right direction and do whatever his hand finds to do.

If the first job he finds is not exactly what he prefers to do, at least it will help him until something better comes along. In the meantime, he can pray for guidance and help toward getting a better job.

God can open another door for him and another job for him as he is faithful in whatever he finds to do in providing for his family.

4. GOD'S WILL CONCERNING PRAYING FOR THE LOST.

As we continue to dig deeper into God's Word, we will see more and more things showing us His will in prayer.

For example, we know to pray for the lost in heathen lands for His Word says -

Psalm 2:8 - *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

4. GOD'S WILL CONCERNING LABORERS.

We know to pray that God would send forth ministers in the power of His Spirit.

Matthew 9:38 - *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

As we study the Word of God, instead of saying "according to the will of God" we will say "according to the Word of God."

Then we will have it in the right focus.

Memory text.

1 John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.