

6. Prayer

Philippians 4:6-7

Prayer is our communication with God. Christians have a real, living relationship with Him. Unlike Muslims, Buddhists, or even many Christians, who just think that prayer is merely “reciting” written prayers. No. We have a living relationship with the Creator God. We can speak to Him as children to a Father. And get answers. We’re told to:

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing. [17] 不住的祷告。

We are always in full two-way communication with Him.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism gives a good definition of prayer:

Q. 98. What is prayer?

A. *Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.*

And Christ Himself taught the disciples how to pray. Not like the heathen, with vain repetitions, but in real, heartfelt communication:

Matthew 6:7-13

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 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.

[7] 你们祷告，不可像外邦人，用许多重复话，他们以为话多了必蒙垂听。[8] 你们不可效法他们；因为你们没有祈求以先，你们所需用的，你们的父早已知道了。[9] 所以，你们祷告要这样说：我们在天上的父：愿人都尊你的名为圣。[10] 愿你的国降临；愿你的旨意行在地上，如同行在天上。[11] 我们日用的饮食，今日赐给我们。[12] 免我们的债，如同我们免了人的债。[13] 不叫我们遇见试探；救我们脱离凶恶。因为国度、权柄、荣耀，全是你的，直到永远。阿们。

And in Philippians, we’ve got a wonderful description of the Christian’s prayer life:

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

[6] 应当一无所虑，只要凡事藉着祷告、祈求，和感谢，将你们所要的告诉神。

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

[7] 神所赐、出人意外的平安必在基督耶稣里保守你们的心怀意念。

“Be careful for nothing,” or “Be anxious for nothing.” Prayer is to keep us from getting anxious. If, after prayer, we’re more worried about our situation than before, we’ve got it all wrong. Prayer should be a relief from the cares of this world, knowing the the Lord of glory is in control of all things, and looks after His people. We’re called to be:

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

你们要将一切的忧虑卸给神，因为他顾念你们。

Real prayer is calling on the Lord in a two-way living relationship. It was said of Moses:

Exodus 33:11

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

耶和华与摩西面对面说话，好像人与朋友说话一般。

Now, that’s real prayer. Speaking to Him. Communicating with Him. Crying to Him. Not merely reciting words, or vain repetitions. The Lord is there to call upon at any time. We are not to be afraid of doing so:

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.

[16] 所以，我们只管坦然无惧的来到施恩的宝座前，为要得怜恤，蒙恩惠，作随时帮助。

We are to pour out our heart to Him:

Psalms 62:8

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.

你们众民当时倚靠他，在他面前倾心吐意。神是我们的避难所

We are to make our requests known to Him. He knows them all anyway, but He wants us to articulate them. And we are always to pray “with thanksgiving.” One of the worst things we read about the wicked is that they were never thankful for God’s mercies:

Romans 1:21

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

因为他们虽然知道神，却不当作神荣耀他，也不感谢他。他们的思念变为虚妄，无知的心就昏暗了。

Now, if we're true believers, that can never happen to us. But as true believers we should be all the more thankful in our hearts for the Lord's mercies. He has given us life, health, strength, food and clothing. Every breath comes from Him. Every heartbeat comes from Him. And above all else, we have been given the most precious gifts of all: repentance and faith in Christ. We should never cease to be thankful to Him:

Psalm 136:1

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

你们要称谢耶和华，因他本为善。他的慈爱永远长存。

1 Thessalonians 5:18

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

凡事谢恩。因为这是神在基督耶稣里向你们所定的旨意。

And if we pray to God in this prescribed manner, not in empty recited prayers, but in a real heartfelt relationship, our anxieties will be quenched. We will receive the peace of God in our hearts and minds. Our spiritual problem is in our hearts and minds. That's where the battle takes place. It's there that we get anxious about things. And it's also where the Lord works in us. True religion is spiritual:

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

因我们并不是与属血气的争战，乃是与那些执政的，掌权的，管辖这幽暗世界的，以及天空属灵气的恶魔争战。（两争战原文都作摔跤）

This is not talking about peace with God. If we're truly the Lord's people, we already received that when we first came to Him in repentance and faith:

Romans 5:1

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1] 我们既因信称义，就藉着我们的主耶稣基督得与神相和。

This is talking about the peace of God. This is a state of heart and mind that we can have. But we need to ask for it. It is something to attain in our hearts:

Romans 15:13

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

但愿使人有盼望的神，因信将诸般的喜乐平安，充满你们的心，使你们借着圣灵的能力，大有盼望。

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

坚心倚赖你的，你必保守他十分平安，因为他倚靠你。

And we can't understand it. The peace of God is incomprehensible. It's impossible to explain what it is, especially to someone who's never experienced it.

1 Peter 1:8

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

你们虽然没有见过他，却是爱他。如今虽不得看见，却因信他就有说不出来，满有荣光的大喜乐。

Notice, it doesn't say wait for the answers to your prayers, then you'll receive the peace of God. It just says "let your requests be made known to God" and then you'll receive it. So we receive the peace of God as soon as we make our requests to Him. But how can this be? If I ask you a question because I'm worried about something, I won't have any peace in my mind until you've at least given me some sort of answer. If you just sit there and say nothing, my anxiety, if anything, is probably going to be increased. But with God, we get the peace in our hearts and minds before He's answered. Isn't that strange?

And another question that ought to cross our minds: What's the point of prayer, when God knows what we want before we ask anyway? The answer is quite simple. Prayer, real prayer, is for our benefit, not God's. He knows what we want before we tell Him. God knows everything. In fact He knows far more about what we need than we do. Our prayers only scratch the surface of what we really need. The Holy Spirit prays for us:

Romans 8:26,27

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

况且我们的软弱有圣灵帮助，我们本不晓得当怎样祷告，只是圣灵亲自用说不出的叹息，替我们祷告。鉴察人心的，晓得圣灵的意思因为圣灵照着神的旨意替圣徒祈求。

And Christ is also praying for us:

Hebrews 7:25

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

凡靠着祂进到神面前的人，祂都能拯救到底。因为祂是长远活着，替他们祈求。

What a comfort it is to the Christian to know that both Christ and the Holy Spirit are praying for him. We need them. Our prayers are so shallow, even at the best of times. We feel so inadequate in prayer.

And then finally we see that all our prayers should be “*through Christ Jesus.*” These aren’t just words to say at the end of every prayer. As though God will hear us better if we always say the magic words, “In Jesus name, Amen” at the end of every prayer. That’s superstition. But Christ is the one we must acknowledge in everything. We can have no access to God the Father unless it is through the Son:

Ephesians 2:18

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

因为我们两下借着他被一个圣灵所感得以进到父面前。

We may not be able to understand prayer. We may not know how God is going to answer our prayers. But we know that prayer works. We have promises and examples throughout the Bible that this is true:

James 5:16

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

义人祈祷所发的力量，是大有功效的。

Let’s make sure we are fervent in our prayers, and that we have a true, real relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can answer our prayers and lead us in the right way. And this, according to this passage, is the perfect answer to all our worries.