

## **The Practice and Meaning of Prayer**

### ***1. Introduction***

It would be normal, in a study such as this to define prayer before going ahead to speak about it. However, rather than do that, the most practical thing would be to observe prayer in its finest operation – that being the prayer life of Jesus, the Messiah. Having observed this, in action, and having drawn from it, the principles of prayer, we are then free to scan the Scriptures for other material on prayer, and deduce those elements which will be useful to us as persons who wish to pray.

### ***2. Jesus and Prayer***

#### **(i) Jesus at Prayer**

The first prayer we have of Jesus was at his baptism. We are told (Luke 3:21) ‘... and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven was opened ...’. It is significant that he prays at what is, virtually, his coronation as Messiah, the King–Son of Psalm Two. Yet there is an implied reference to his understanding of the Temple as the place of prayer, right from childhood. In Luke 2:49 he says to his mother, ‘Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?’ At the commencement of his ministry he purges the Temple (John 2:16), calling it ‘my Father's house’. In Mark 11:17 he says ‘Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?’ (Isaiah 56:7). This second purging at the end of his ministry shows his regard for the Temple as a place of prayer, and he seems to have used it as such. We assume, then, that his practice of prayer preceded that event of his baptism.

Doubtless in the temptation in the wilderness, when he was fasting, he was also praying, since these two, necessarily, go together. In Luke 4:42, at the outset of his practical ministry, we find him departing to a lonely place, and we doubt not but that he was retiring for prayer. Thus in Luke 5:17, where we are told ‘the power of the Lord was with him to heal’, we can believe that this power came from his prayer–life, a principle underlined in Mark 9:29 when his disciples could not exorcise a demon and he told them that habitual prayer was needed for such. He himself is never recorded as praying just prior to exorcisms, and even only occasionally before miracles. In this case, it is generally not for power, but as thanksgiving, as in the case of feeding the 5,000 (John 6:11), and for teaching (cf. Mark 7:34), as he sighed before healing a deaf man.

We gather that he never doubted being heard by the Father, for he says,

'Thou hearest me always' (John 11:40–42). This accords with the principle stated by another healed man, 'We know God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, God listens to him. (John 9:31).

Jesus withdrew to pray, prior to choosing his disciples, for in Luke 6:12 we are told that he went into the hills to pray, and spent all night in prayer, and this is important, especially when we remember that his choice was necessarily to include his betrayer, Judas Iscariot. On one occasion when he was praying alone, he was moved to ask his disciples as to whom men thought him to be. (See Luke 9:18). This event was quite important, and very close, also, to the actual turning point of his ministry, namely the transfiguration. Luke tells us, of this occasion that 'he went up into the mountain to pray' (Luke 9:28). The effect of that prayer was very beautiful, and, also powerful. He was transfigured. When we realise that the transfiguration was with a view to the cross, then we can gather the importance of that time of prayer.

Another intimate and beautiful occasion (recorded in Luke 10:21) was his rejoicing in the Holy Spirit as he prayed. This was because his disciples had followed his commands, and had achieved good ministry. It is all the more remarkable, seeing he had just upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida for rejecting his words. He was in a state of great rejoicing, out of which he was able to thank God that the very rejection was part of His – the Father's – will. It is good to note that such prayer was in the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 11:1ff., a rich incident is described. As he prays in the presence of his disciples they ask him to teach them to pray. John the Baptist, it seems, had also been a man of prayer, and had taught his disciples. We gather from these remarks that prayer is something both taught and learned. Jesus then gave them what we now call 'The Lord's Prayer'. It is clear that Jesus had a characteristic form of prayer, for when he prayed, after his resurrection, with the disciples who had been walking the road to Emmaus, they recognised him in the act of thanksgiving. Such an act must have been seen by them, many times, those recorded being the feeding of the 5,000 and the blessing at the Last Supper.

There are other recorded events, in which he prays, especially in John's Gospel. The first is at the raising of Lazarus a most significant occasion. Shortly afterwards, when the Gentiles, through the disciples, seek to meet Jesus, he again prays, this time in great depth, for their confrontation raises great issues of his (now) impending death, and its universal significance. In fact, it is in this last week that he reveals the extent of his prayer life, especially in regard to intercession. In Luke 22:32 he tells Simon Peter that he has prayed for him that his faith fail not. On the same night, he tells the disciples that he has prayed to the Father that He send them the Holy Spirit. His high-priestly prayer is the richest recorded intercessory prayer in man's history. (See John 17). Then the prayer within Gethsemane as he cries out to his Father, is the deepest within the annals of prayer.

Nor is this the end. On the Cross He prays two great prayers; 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do,' and 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit'. Following the resurrection, as we have said, he blessed the bread before the two disciples. We are not told that he did similarly (John 21:13) at the seashore, but in Luke 24:50 it is certainly prayer when he lifts his hand and blesses them.

Nor is his prayer life completed at this point. Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, 9:24

and I John 2:1–2 make it clear that he has at this time a heavenly ministry of intercession.

From this we may conclude simply that Jesus was not only a man of prayer but the man of prayer. Hence we seek to learn from him, both from his practice, and what he taught by both word and precept, concerning prayer.

## **(ii) Jesus ' Teaching on Prayer**

### **(a) Teaching by Example**

As we have said, it was the way Jesus prayed which raised a yearning in his disciples to learn to pray. Looking at his practice of prayer, we can find nothing which was not in conformity with his own teaching regarding it. If we examine his times of prayer, then we can see that he prayed both in private and public. He prayed before the events of his healing and teaching, so that he was rarely required to pray at those times of action. Again, there were public occasions when he prayed, although primarily these were with his disciples. It is probably best to see his prayer as the source of communion with his Father, in order to fellowship with Him, no doubt, but primarily to know, and be enabled to do, His will.

With him, the powerful relationship of Son to the Father is what is the key to his prayer life, and the principle of communion. However, behind the Father–Son relationship runs the principle, ‘my Father has always worked, and so I, too, work’. In fact, prayer in its deepest meaning and action is that of the Son being obedient to the Father, and for us as the sons being obedient to the Father.

### **(b) Teaching by Precept**

1. **Prayer to the Father.** In the first three Gospels, Jesus advises prayer to God as Father, ‘When you pray, say, ‘Our Father ...’’. In Matthew 6:1–15 and 7:7–11 this principle is beautifully described. One prays, not ostentatiously, in public, but in the privacy of one's room, where one speaks to one's Father. In temporal need, one trusts the Father, asking Him for daily requirements, but at the same time living with men as the Father relates to them. Luke 11:9–13 reinforces this basis of prayer. Human fathers are generous to their children – how much more the Heavenly Father, seeing His quality so transcends that of human parents. This Father gives ‘good things’ and ‘the Holy Spirit’, nor is He tardy. If a neighbour, at midnight will give food to a borrowing neighbour, how much more the Father! This is the secret of prayer – God is Father! To reinforce this, Jesus in Luke 12:13–32 shows that the farmer who provides for himself, will suddenly find it is not his, whilst the disciples who have sought the Kingdom need not fear, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give it to them. We wonder when men will learn the generosity of God, and that we do not have to importune Him. This is further borne out in the story of the poor widow who sought vindication from an evil judge. She had to importune him, for he looked for bribes but could not stand nagging. Do we then have to nag God? Not a bit of it. He hears us, and is speedily giving us the answer. (Luke 18:1–8).
2. **The Nature of Prayer to the Father.** It is here we should deal briefly with the Lord's Prayer. It is one thing to pray to the Father: it is another to pray correctly. Hence, the petitions of the prayer inform as to the nature of true prayer. We pray corporately to God as Father

'our; Father'. This presupposes family, and the relationships which go with it. Secondly, we see God's Fatherhood as both holy and heavenly, hence we relate to Him as holy and earthly children. Thirdly, we pray for the Kingdom to come, that is for the will of the Father to be done as much in our situation as in the heavenly. A high prayer' Then we ask for our needs. Following this acknowledgement of our creaturely and childlike dependence upon the Creator Father, we seek to have full relationships in the realm of forgiveness. We are offending others, and they, us. Hence, we wish for His forgiveness, primarily, out of which springs human forgiveness. Following this (and related to it) we pray for deliverance from the Evil One, and power not to succumb to temptation (testing) by the Father's aid. The ascription of glory which concludes the prayer has been added later, but is most fitting, for petition should be rounded off with praise and thanksgiving.

3. **Prayer with Earnestness.** Jesus stresses the elements of earnestness, fervour and urgency. This must not be mistaken for panic, however. One is praying to God. However, one has to be genuine, and not lethargic, slothful, and merely optimistic. The Syrophoenician woman who came to him was tested as to the genuine nature of her petition. Her own will was sharpened as it was contested, and her faith was highly stimulated. Hence the words of Jesus, 'O woman' Great is your faith' Be it done for you as you desire'. (Matt. 15:28). This was not the 'vain repetition' spoken against by Jesus (Matt. 6:7). It was purposeful, persistent asking. Such is the principle of 'Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'. (Luke 11:10).

What stimulates such earnestness? The answer is that God is Father. As His children we have needs. So we may, and must, ask. This is borne out by the story of the father of the demoniac son, who, when he went to the disciples, found they could not exorcise the demon. After Jesus had done this, they asked him the reason, and the answers given are interesting and valuable. In Matthew 17:19 the disciples ask him why they were powerless, and he says that it is because of their 'little faith'. However, the size of faith is of no matter. It is the exercise of it that counts. In Mark 9:29 he says, 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer'. Some texts have 'and fasting'. The principle is that habitual prayer (and fasting) keep faith in God at such a pitch that one can do anything within the will of God.

Endless petition ('vain repetition') is not the same as earnest prayer. The context of Jesus' warning against empty asking show that such who pray are often hypocrites, dullards, and double-minded men. Hence, their prayers are 'vain' or 'empty', and they will not be heard. Nor is there any need to 'nag' God. He hears the cries of those who genuinely call to Him. Jesus himself proved the truth of dependent prayer, as well as teaching it.

4. **Prayer with Agreement.** The passages of Matthew 18:18–20 and 16:19 show that prayer must sometimes be public, common and corporate. When they are met together with a common aim, especially in prayer, then the Lord of the church is there, Jesus. They need to agree, and when they do, their prayers will be answered. It is to be noted that 'Whatsoever you bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven', reads in fact, 'Whatsoever you bind on earth, shall have been bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven,' showing us that such prayer is in conformity with the will and action of God.

**5. Prayer–Teaching in John's Gospel.** Jesus makes it clear, not once, but time and again that God is His Father, he being the Son, and that their relationship is unique. As Son, he is totally dependent upon the Father for what he is and does. He does nothing according to his own will; he does only the will of the Father. His prayer is always in that context. Because he always does the Father's will, the Father always hears him (John 11:41–42). In fact, this is the very heart of prayer: simply to know and do the Father's will. He says, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work'. 'I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear I judge: and my judgement is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me'. 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me'. (John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38). Again, he shows that he is fulfilling this will within a certain programme of action and time, for he says, 'I must work the works of Him who sent me, while it is day. The time comes when no man can work'. Also, 'I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou gavest me to do'. (John 9:4, 17:1). For this reason, we repeat the word of the blind man who had been healed by Jesus: 'We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, God listens to him'. This accords with John 8:29, 'And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do that which is pleasing to him'.

It is in John's Gospel in particular, that the Son is shown to be concerned with the glory of the Father. This comes through in many ways, but primarily in and by doing the Father's will. Hence John 17:1–5, where Jesus says, 'Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee'. He means by this that he is praying the Father to reveal His glory through the end–events of the Cross and Resurrection. He then says, 'I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do'. Previously he had prayed to glorify the Father (John 12:27, 28). However, it is his desire that the Father be glorified in and by the Son, which opens up to us the deepest possible teaching on prayer. This is seen in the passage of John 14:11, 3, and especially in vs. 10–13.

The essence of these verses is as follows:– 'I do nothing of myself. When I speak and actions happen, I do not initiate them, but the Father does them through me. In this way I glorify him. Now I am going, and will not be here, as now I am, to do those things which glorify Him. However you will be here, and you will be as much in me, as I am in Him. When you pray – as I used to pray – then the same things; nay even greater things, will happen. This will glorify the Father. I will be glorifying Him, yet it will be you'. The principle of this is clearly seen in Matt. 5:16 – 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven'. Of course, prayer is the means by which (a) We abide in the Son and the Father, and know their will, and (b) Ask for it to happen, so that it comes to pass. As we have said, in this fact lies the true essence of prayer – the sons, in the Son, doing the Father's will. Prayer is first knowing what God wants, and then asking for it to happen.

**NOTE ON OBEDIENCE:**

The obedience of Christ is a great principle brought out in the Epistle to the Hebrews, e.g. 2:10, 5:7, 10:7, etc. However, one verse, which almost certainly relates to the event of Gethsemane, (5:7) indicates the secret of his effective prayer, 'In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him

from death, and he was heard for his godly fear'. 'Godly fear' sums up just about everything – obedience, doing the will of God, having true reverence and worship – everything. There are other passages on Christ's obedience (e.g. Phil. 2:5–11), but when we later examine the cry 'Abba' used in Gethsemane, and then penetrate the action, in prayer, of Gethsemane, we will see that true obedience is 'from the heart', out of which (only) comes true prayer.

### ***3. The People of God At Prayer***

Let us say again that we learn more from the action of prayer, than simply by distilling principles or forming methodologies, not that these are necessarily to be despised. It is most natural, then to divide this study into two – (i) Prayer in the Old Testament, and (ii) Prayer in the Church.

#### **(i) Prayer in the Old Testament**

It would be impossible, within the scope of this paper, to include a history of prayer in the O.T. This is for various reasons, one being the profuse amount of available material, and the other that worship, sacrifice, and prayer are generally the one thing, so that to attempt a study of one involves the others. However, we can say generally that mankind is divided into two or three sections, in regard to prayer:

- (a) Those who know and serve God and so are free to pray to Him
- (b) Those who are not consciously opposed to God, nor seek to worship idols, but do not in fact know Him, and
- (c) Those who oppose God, who worship either themselves or idols (or both), and who do not, then, pray to God.

The first couple had special opportunity for communion with God, in Eden, walking with Him in the cool of the day. Cain, following his ineffective worship, and his murder of Abel, is afraid to go from the presence of God, even though he is uneasy in it. When Seth is born, and he has a son, then men (some of them) begin to call upon the name of the Lord. This, amongst other things, means prayer. Following the Flood, the offerings of Noah and his family can be seen as prayer. However, it is Abraham who can be called a man of prayer and worship. Before he offers Isaac he says 'I and the lad will go yonder and worship ('bow down'), and come again to you'. (Gen. 22:5). Yet, already Abraham is called a prophet, and it is indicated that he has power in prayer (Gen. 20:7). Moses, perhaps of all, knew the power of intercessory prayer, especially for his people, for he, of all, fellowshiped with God. One of his most beautiful prayers is seen in Exodus 34:8–9, after God has revealed some of His glory, 'And Moses made haste and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshiped, and he said, 'If now I have found favour in Thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray Thee, go in the midst of us, although it is a stiff-necked people: and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thy inheritance''.

We have outstanding prayers like those of Hannah to God, especially her prayer of gratitude. David, as we can gather from the psalms, was a man of prayer; indeed few may have prayed more deeply. His prayer over his son Solomon, and the common worship of the people is moving to read (I Chron. 29: 10–22). Two of the great prophetic giants of prayer are Jeremiah and Daniel, whose intercession for their people is both humble and poignant. See 'Lamentations' and Daniel chapter nine.

The places of prayer are also indicative of the life of prayer of many of the people of God, both as persons and as the worshiping community. Abel has his altar (we presume), as also Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham.. (Gen. 12:7), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), Jacob (28:18, cf. 35:7), whilst the Israelites were given the whole cultus of worship (Exodus 24:4, cf. Rom. 9:4). Israel was fortunate to have the presence of the Lord go with them in the pillar of fire, the column of smoke, and for that presence to be associated with the tabernacle where they worshiped, it later becoming the Temple, and ultimately it was to that Temple where first Jesus came, and later his disciples, before and following Pentecost.

There are many elements we can glean regarding prayer, especially if we read the prayers of such as Hannah, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. However, the most powerful are within the Psalms, where are a never ending treasury of prayers offered to God by His people. We conclude that in O.T. times, men related to God as deeply as ever human beings have. Nor has the light cast by the Cross produced prayers of a deeper nature. Those prayers were *de profundis* 'out of the depths' (cf. Psalm 130), so that many of them are found on the lips of Christ (cf. Psalm 22:1ff.).

Within this conclusion, nevertheless, we must include the fact that such prayers, whilst often personal, were still prayed within the actions of God with His people. That is, they concerned the will of God, in the ultimate. This is, as ever, where the finest of prayer is found.

## **(ii) Prayer in the New Testament**

### **(a) The Actions of Prayer**

The new Testament story opens with the narratives concerning the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. Zechariah, John's father, is in the temple, praying, when the angel appears to him (Luke 1:10). His blessing of God and his own son has become part of a universal liturgy. Likewise the song of Mary, which is a most beautiful prayer of praise, resembling in many ways that of Hannah. Likewise the Song of Simeon is another beautiful prayer. However it is not until after Pentecost that the prayer-life of God's people burgeons out Jesus had had to expose much of the falsity of the prayers of many Jews, and teach of a simpler life of prayer based on a relationship with God their Father.

Following the ascension of Jesus, the small remnant, the true people of God, begin to pray (Luke 24:52f., Acts 1:12-14). Once the Spirit is poured out at Pentecost, there is rich and continuous prayer by the people of God, linked with the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and breaking of bread (Acts 2:42), 'the prayers' being made at the three hourly set times in the precincts of the Temple.

Doubtless this statement – 'the prayers' – covers a continuous ministry of prayer. At certain times of emergency special prayer is made, as in the powerful intercession of Acts 4:23-31. The result of this was a second powerful visitation of the Spirit, and a consequent renewal of power for proclamation of the Word of God. Stephen makes intercession for the hardened Jews in much the same way as Jesus did at his death (Acts 7:59-60). Prayer is undoubtedly made for the coming of the Spirit to the Samaritans (8:14-17), and again for some of John's disciples at Ephesus (19:1ff.). In Acts 9, Peter prays for the bedridden Aeneas, and the dead Tabitha, and they recover. In Acts 12, the church prays for the imprisoned Peter with results

which surprise even them. It is in the atmosphere of the prayers and fasting of the teachers and prophets at Antioch (ch. 13) that the Holy Spirit speaks and sends out Saul and Barnabas. In Acts 14:23 the elders of the first churches in Asia Minor are ordained with prayer. Doubtless prayer, with these churches was the same as that of the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch. In Europe, Paul and Silas are imprisoned at Philippi (16:19ff.), but they are found at midnight both singing and praying, the result of which was an earthquake, and the conversion of the gaoler's family. In Acts 21:5, we see a beautiful example of corporate prayer. Whilst prayer is rarely mentioned as such, it is assumed, from Acts 2:42 that is the true pattern of Christian living and worship. Hence, when we come to the Epistles, the exhortations to prayer, as well as teaching concerning it, are quite profuse.

### **(b) Teaching on Prayer**

All the epistles open with the salutation of prayer. The blessing always invokes the Father, for there is not one Pauline epistle which does not pray, 'Grace be to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ', thus indicating the focus of prayer, and the source of blessing. In addition, the writers indicate their constant prayers for their readers, e.g. Phil. 1:3–5, Col. 2:1–2, cf. Ephes. 6:18–19.

Some of the prayers are not only good models for us, but indicate the sort of things which should be prayed for. These should be studied closely, so that the following passages amongst others – ought to be read:– Ephes. 3:14–19, Phil. 1:9–11, Col. 1:9–13, I Thess. 1:2–3, 2:13. Also prayers are requested, such as in Ephes. 6:19, II Thess. 3:1–2, I Thess. 5:25, Romans 15:30–32. Now simply to seek the elements of prayer in this atomistic way is to miss the whole understanding of worship, of the body, of the unity and love of the Spirit, and of the church being stretched out to do the will of the Father, by the inspiration of the Spirit, under the Lordship of Christ. After all, they were the people of God, proclaiming the Word, building up themselves in their most holy faith, and looking to the end, or rather the consummation, when the Messianic plan would receive its fulfilment. In this they were certainly exercised in corporate worship, and personal as well as corporate prayer.

When we look at the explicit exhortations to prayer, they are very few. This is probably because prayer was a recognised part of the life of the church. In Romans 12:12, Paul says 'Be constant in your prayers', couching this with 'Be patient in tribulation'. In I Corinthians 7:5, he shows the importance of prayer, singly, for each partner of the marriage. In Ephesians 6:18, he enjoins intercessory prayer, but enjoins all prayer to be 'in the Spirit', and this we will look at presently. Jude likewise enjoins the same kind of prayer – 'in the Spirit' (Jude 19–20). In Phil. 4:6 – a classic passage on prayer – he exhorts them not to have anxiety about anything, but to let their requests be made known to God, through prayer, in the context of thanksgiving. The same kind of thanksgiving is enjoined in Ephesians 5:20, 5:4, Col. 3:17, and I Thess. 5:18, the latter two being contexts of worship. In Col. 4:2–3, he enjoins watchfulness with prayer, as also he does in Ephes. 6:18, and gives a positive lead in the kind of prayer they should pray. In fact, it is to be for Paul and others who evangelise. In I Tim. 2:1, the widest injunction for prayer is given:– 'First of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way'. He has good advice for widows, setting out the model as 'She who is a real widow, and is left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day'. He opens a window on devotional and



intercessory prayer, someone who looks very much like Tabitha of Acts 9. In addition to the injunction of I Tim. 2:1–3, he adds in the 8th verse of the same chapter, ‘I desire then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling’. In I Thess. 5:17 he says, ‘Pray without ceasing’, doubtless meaning that all believers should live in the constant attitude of prayer.

To these injunctions Peter adds an exhortation that a husband should treat his wife considerately, ‘bestowing honour on the woman as the weaker vessel ... that your prayers be not hindered’. James, also, has advice on prayer. In regard to asking, he says it must be with faith, since a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive nothing from the Lord (1:5–8). He says that people do not have because they do not ask, and amongst those who do ask, there are some who ask with an evil and selfish motive. They too, will receive nothing. However, by contrast, the man who is sick or suffering should pray, and when in faith he calls for the elders of the church, their prayer over him will be effective. Every believer is to see that he is of the same flesh as Elijah, who also was a human being, yet who, when he prayed, on the one hand held back rain, and on the other hand induced it from God. (4:2, 5:13–18).

Finally, John points out that there is a person for whom prayer does not have to be offered. He is the one who is sinning a sin which leads to death. Whilst he does not forbid the prayer, explicitly, implicitly he is saying it is not necessary to pray for this kind of person. (I John 5:16).

In conclusion, we may look at Jude's advice in verse 1720. He contrasts people who are sensual (not having the Spirit) and those who do have the Spirit. He relates the building up of persons to love, and love to praying in the Holy Spirit. This is a good point to lead us on to our next heading.

### (e) The Spirit and Prayer

It is clear from the Pauline Epistles that the Spirit has much to do with the prayers of the people of God. Of course, the book of Acts also makes this apparent. One of the promises of the O.T. was that God would pour out on the house of David the Spirit of ‘compassion and supplication’ (Zech. 12:10). Hence, with Pentecost came a new era of prayer. See Acts 1:24, 6:6, 8:15, 9:11, 9:40, 10:9, 30, 11:5, 12:12, 14:23, 16:25, 21:5, 22: 17, 28:8. However, it is not the volume or quality of the prayer that matters so much, as the Spirit brought prayer after a fashion that had not been known before. This prayer, as was that of our Lord, was geared to the promotion of the will of God. What, then, is praying in the Spirit? This can be examined under two headings:

**1. Praying in the Spirit.** References are found to this in Ephes. 6:18, Jude 20, Luke 10:21, John 4:22–24, and I Cor. 14:15, with possible references to it in Romans 8:26 and Phil. 3:3. The key to such prayer is found in both regeneration and adoption. In this ministry of the Spirit, a person is brought into new life – ‘circumcision of the heart’, by effectual baptism, by new birth, by becoming a new creation. Without such it is not possible either to see or to enter the Kingdom of God (cf. John 3:3–14, II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15). From Romans 8:14–17, we gather that when a person is made a child of God, through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26), then that one has the cry of the Spirit in his heart (cf. Gal. 4:6, which is also the cry of his own heart, namely ‘Abba’ that is to say ‘Dear Father’ or, as some will have it, ‘Daddy’). Certainly it is an intimate cry. However, it signifies a relationship

which fallen man has not yet experienced. He is now a child of God, and to wit, a son of God' This is the best news he will ever receive.

This is the highest experience he will have, in this life. Without the Spirit, it is impossible for this to happen. This is underlined by the fact that Jesus, in the Holy Spirit cried, 'Father, Lord of heaven and earth' (Luke 10:21). At that moment he rejoiced. Similarly, the true son rejoices, through the Spirit, in his sonship. This also accords with Jesus' statements that God is Spirit and those who worship must worship him with affinity – i.e. 'spirit and truth', or 'sonship with Fatherhood, through the Spirit'. Hence Paul distinguishes between those who worship after the flesh and after the Spirit (Phil. 3:3). These are those whose hearts are circumcised.

All of this throws a different light on prayer. It is now after the order of that prayer-relationship which Jesus had with His Father, when he was seeking to do the Father's will. When we look back at Jesus, we have to conclude that his prayers had always been in and by the Spirit, and no less after his baptismal anointing when God had declared his (Messianic) sonship. It throws light on the whole prayer relationship as shown within John's Gospel. It gives meaning to Gal. 4:5, where we are told that God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba' Father' Not simply the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Son, i.e. of Sonship, and therefore sonship' Within the heart, the Spirit is leading into all truth, and enlightening the new son as to all things – the 'things of the Son, and the things of the Father' (John 16:12–15, I Cor. 2:12–13).

2. **The Spirit Praying in Us.** In Romans 8:26–27, Paul speaks of our inability both to know what to pray, and to be able to pray. He speaks of a relationship in which the Spirit prays within us, and so closely identifies with us, that actual groans are initiated within us, but not to be uttered. These profound cries are authored by the Spirit, and God, searching the heart, reads the mind of the Spirit, and accepts the identification of Spirit and (our) mindheart. Some have identified this with charismatic prayer such as is seen in I Cor. 14:15. In I Cor. chs. 12 and 14 much is said of praying by means of the Spirit. For example, in I Cor. 14:14 Paul speaks of praying in one's spirit without that being intelligible to one's mind. He speaks in the next verse of having both kinds of prayer, one intelligible only to the spirit, and the other to the mind. Yet he refers to these as 'manifestations of the Spirit' (I Cor. 12:7, 14:12). In I Cor. 14:2 he speaks of those who use glossolalia (tongues), and says that such a one speaks 'not to men but to God', and 'he utters mysteries in the Spirit'. It is obvious that here there is a very deep ministry of the Holy Spirit. We cannot dogmatically link Romans 8:26–27 with I Cor. 14:2, 13–14. Yet it may be so.

Whatever this may be, it is clear that true prayer is by the Spirit. In I Cor. 11:5ff., both men and women pray and prophesy, and in this case it is obvious that such is by the Spirit. Prophecy is an utterance of the Spirit, and although prayer is not, as such called a charism, it is, in the case mentioned, charismatic. We cannot say that directly of the prayer enjoined in Ephes. 6:18, and Jude 20, but we can conclude that all prayer, whether it be called 'regular' or 'charismatic', when genuine, is by the Spirit.

We have to conclude then, that the prayer we make is through the Spirit. He gives us our sense of sonship, and so relates us to the obedience we must accordingly exercise (Rom. 8:14) At the same time he floods our

hearts with love (Rom. 5:5), so that Paul can speak of ‘your love in the Spirit’ (Col. 1:8). Love is the motivating power for true obedience (John 14:15, II Cor. 5:14, etc.). Hence, prayer is not a dreary operation, but one springing from desire for fellowship with God, and to intercede for needy man. Also the Spirit prays through us, as in charismatic prayer, and for us as in intercessory prayer. Somehow this latter must parallel the intercessory prayer of Christ in heaven (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25).

## ***4. The Principles, Patterns, and Powers of Prayer***

### **(i) The Nature of Prayer**

We are now in a position to crystallise the principles and patterns of prayer and look at its effectual nature. Not that doing this gives us much more than an intellectual appreciation of what it is. To be men and women of prayer, we need to be redeemed persons, and both anointed and led by the Spirit. To grasp a mental understanding of such principles might even be delusive if we will not pray in the Spirit to the Father.

#### **(a) Prayer is Relationship with God**

This we have seen most clearly. In the O.T. men and women speak to God as their Creator, Provider and Sustainer. Mostly they speak to Him through covenant relationship, through sacrifice, an altar, humbly acknowledging their dependence upon Him, and so often praising and adoring Him, bowing the body, raising arms of adoration, or kneeling. They bring their problems; they request help; they acknowledge goodness. They do this as single persons or in common, corporate worship. They Pray in families, or they pray as a nation. In covenant—relationship they acknowledge the obligation of obedience, and the grace of sacrifices by which they may be restored from their levels of sin and guilt. In this general way they acknowledge their obligation to do the will of God.

In the New Testament, to know God and His Son is life eternal (John 17:3, I John 5:20). Through the work of redemption and the operation of the Spirit one is now a child of God, a son or a daughter of the Father. This makes the prayer—life of Jesus both a pattern and a guide for the child of God. Prayer is part of that purposeful relationship. In communion one comes, more and more, to know the Father.

#### **(b) Prayer is to do with the Will of God**

‘Be not foolish but wise, knowing the will of the Lord’. (Ephes. 5:17). We have seen that Jesus spent long hours in prayer, although not regularly, after some form or order, as such, but as occasion demanded. In this prayer he enhanced his immediate knowledge of his Father, and kept clearly in his understanding, the will of God. Also he gained power to carry out and fulfil that will. He needed ‘prayer and fasting’, not as a price of knowing God’s will, but as the desirable way of being assured of it.

#### **(c) Prayer is the Source of Faith and Power**

We have seen that the disciples at least on one occasion could not exorcise a demon because of the lack of prayer and faith, these two going

hand-in-hand. Again, it is simply that prayer sweeps aside the other conditioning influences and helps us to know the mind of God. Romans 12:1–2 speaks of being transformed (from within), so that we counter the conforming powers of the (evil) world, and thus prove in practice the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. Now we have to put two things together – the knowledge of God's will, and the faith that receives what it asks. Mark 11:24 says, 'Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will'. This accords with 'Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you'. It accords with 'Ask, nothing doubting'. Also 'The prayer of faith shall raise the sick'. What does all this mean but that as we know the will of God, then we can ask in faith. Scripture does not really give us permission to make unbridled requests. To know the will is to pray in accordance with it, with faith and assurance. Without true prayer, how does one know that will?

#### **(d) Prayer is in the Context of Abiding in Christ**

We are now in a position to go back to the 14th to 16th chapters of John's Gospel. Here we saw the principle that as Christ dwelt in the Father, being dependent upon Him, he was enabled to know and to do the Father's will. However, he was to ascend to the Father, and so the work on earth was to be done by his disciples, his church. If they lived in him, the Son, then they too, would know and do the Father's will. It was as simple as that. See John 14:6–13, 15:1–11, 16:23–24. Abiding is simply living in obedience to the Lord of the church, and drawing upon his life-giving resources. Asking in his name is really the same thing. 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you'. This accords with the three points above. So when Jesus says, 'If you ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in my name', he was really saying 'You would ask nothing but what I would ask, in fact what I am asking, hence the Father will do it, for that was ever His will, anyway'.

#### **(e) Prayer is the Power by which God Effects His Plan**

We have already said this in so many words. Yet it is good to emphasise it. Some have twisted predestination in their thinking, to cry fatalistically, 'Anyway, what will be, will be'. This may be true, but not in that fatalistic, and even despairing way. Habakkuk knew God's plan would go through, and even his prayerful objections did not prevent it. However, his dialogue with God changed him, and his attitude. More, the Syro-Phoenician woman battled for what she wanted, and she got it. She had moral right on her side. Prayer is a spiritual exercise, not a fatalistic resignation to God's will. It is, when true prayer, a getting-to-know God's will, as it really is, and then coming behind it with the gift of prayer. Hence in Revelation chapter eight, the prayers of the saints are said to have been gathered, and mixed with incense, they are thrown to the earth, 'and there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightning and an earthquake'. This is the apocalyptic way of saying 'Prayer produces dynamic effects', or as James says, '**The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects**'.

## (ii) The Pattern of Prayer

### (a) The Lord's Prayer

It seems generally accepted that this is the true pattern of prayer. Perhaps it is this general acceptance which is somewhat delusive, or a reasonable mode of prayer. It is the most dynamic mode of prayer, the really powerful pattern. At first this does not appear so, probably because usage has made us all too familiar with its form, so that we have missed much of its substance.

The prayer is found in its fullest form in Matthew 6:9–13, and in shorter form in Luke 11:2–4. Both prayers have introduction. In Matthew 6:7–8 there is warning against empty repetitions, and the statement that the Father knows our needs before we ask, so that we should pray the prayer given. In Luke, one of the disciples is moved to ask Jesus to teach the disciples to pray even as John had so done. The thrust of the passage is, 'John taught his disciples, in accordance with his mission, how and what to pray. Please teach us similarly'.

This gives deep meaning to the prayer. John was very much in action. He was having the first prophetic ministry for centuries in Israel's history. This is why he was so sought by the multitudes. His message had three clear elements:

- (i) The Kingdom of God, which required preparation is repentance and confession of sins;
- (ii) The (universal, but not universalistic) forgiveness of sins, and
- (iii) The outpouring (or baptism) of the Holy Spirit, in universal manner.

Hence, his prayer must have been related to this.

Jesus, then, in response to such an urging by a disciple, who, himself may have been a disciple of John (cf. John 1:35–37), taught them the prayer which we are considering. We must therefore understand it, not as a domestic prayer, but one related to the power and urgency of the Kingdom, as also to our sonship within it. This action of the Kingdom is contested by evil, hence the final petitions are not lazy requests, but relating to immediate needs and conflicts.

We can see that it is the prayer of God's people in action. The answers it will receive will trouble society, and will confront people with the Kingdom of God. If we realise this, then we will know its pattern is not static but dynamic, not away in some religious sphere, but rooted in the affairs of God and man. Let us, then, look at its principles.

**'Our Father'**. This address comes from the 'Abba' relation which Jesus had with God. The cry expresses an intimate and personal relationship which immediately involves obedience to the will and plan of God. One is in the family with others, with whom one is linked by the Father. Together, all pray to the Father, knowing what He is about.

**'Which art in heaven'**. The Kingdom is of heaven, i.e. of God, which means it is not of man. God's Fatherhood is not primarily approached through human fatherhood – which is deficient – but through the revelation of the Son. (Matt. 11:27). We find the quality of God's Fatherhood as

infinitely transcending that fatherhood which is of man, and which so often disappoints and confuses us. This Fatherhood hears, and cares, and gives, as is so clearly pointed out in the context of the Sermon on the Mount in which the Lord's Prayer is firmly embedded.

**'Hallowed be Thy name'**. Jesus had cried on the last night, 'Holy Father'. Had God not been holy, then there had been no Cross. The hope of a polluted world lies in the holiness of God, and the purification of sins. Ephes. 1:3–4 tells us that the aim of the Father is a pure and holy family. I Peter 1:14–17 says that the holiness of the Father is mandatory for the children. They must be obedient in every part of their beings, when they call on God as 'Father' (Cf. II Cor. 6:14–7:1).

The Name (cf. Rev. 14:1f.) signifies the authority, power, person and character of the one concerned. It is the mighty name of God which reveals His being. Here His name signifies utter holiness, and apart from this holiness, neither His love nor wrath can be fully understood.

**'Thy Kingdom come'**. John's announcement, followed by that of Jesus, concerned the Kingdom. The Kingdom was present in the person of Jesus the Messiah, and its victory sealed by his cross. However, the Kingdom will not have come in fulness to the end, so that if this petition is not empty but filled with desire and assurance that God will hear, it must surely constitute the most powerful of all prayers. Such a petition would have been very relevant to the disciples, to John and to Jesus. It is asking God to complete that which He had planned from the foundation of creation (cf. Matt. 25:34). Without expounding, fully, the Kingdom, let us be reminded that it is 'of God' or 'of heaven', i.e. not of man. Again its quality transcends that of earthly equivalents. The one who prays must necessarily be involved in the action of the Kingdom's coming.

**'Thy will be done'**. A simple prayer with enormous effects. Mankind is opposed to the will of God, and will not act in conformity with Him. The prayer is personal. The prayer is corporate. Congruent with this prayer, the one praying must submit to the Lordship of God. The will is not merely the desire of general attitude of God, but all He has planned to do, and shall surely accomplish. To pray this petition, 'Thy will be done', is to be committed to that will, that is obedient to it, as it works out down through all time.

The will, of course, is to be done in this world as it is done in the unseen realm of celestial creatures, and angelic beings. There, the will is perfectly obeyed where knowledge of God is full. Here, in the mundane affairs of rebellious men, and fallen angels, the devotee of God seeks to have this will obeyed. The will is working now, as the devotee, in faith, believes. God's plan is moving forward until 'every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father'.

**'Give us this day our daily bread'**. The whole earth is the Lord's, and in and from it He gives us all things, richly to enjoy. Such receiving acknowledges the Giver. He knows we have need of these things – things for the body and the mind and the spirit, things for the whole man. There is nothing unspiritual about food and drinks and the provision for the spirit is on no higher level than that for the body. Most of all, he who prays is aware that all life is contingent upon the goodness of the Father–Creator. Such a prayer is the sign of active humility and glad dependence. In this moment, man is both creature and son. However, he is a son of the Kingdom, with other sons. He is not fed merely in order to be replete, but in order

to share with the sons of the Kingdom the coming of that Kingdom, to which he adds his valuable modicum, doing the will of the Father. As we have said, this prayer is for those on the march. It is for the soldier of God as well as for the citizen of the Eternal City.

**‘Forgive us our trespasses, for we have forgiven them their trespasses’.** This is probably the thrust. Forgiveness is part of the Kingdom. In the Kingdom, all are forgiven. In the Kingdom, all forgive (Matt. 18:21ff.). Not to forgive is as not to be in the Kingdom, but in the gaol of God's displeasure. He who has been forgiven is he who forgives. To know God as the forgiving Father is to know God truly. No Cross is mentioned in this prayer, but the Jew knew there was no forgiveness apart from the altar and its sacrificial victim. This prayer presupposes the Cross, at least for the Christian. It also says the whole life of the Kingdom is in the context of forgiveness, from God and to all others. Only then is the human spirit secure from the incursions of fearful evil. It is the prayer which assumes God's forgiveness, but never presumes upon it. It does not buy the forgiveness of the Father by forgiving others. It forgives because it is forgiven.

**‘And lead us not into temptation’.** This for human philosophical thinking is the most difficult of all the petitions. Does God lead into temptation? Obviously He must, or such a prayer would be pointless. James 1: 2–4 says that it is profitable to be tempted, that is, tested. It leads to endurance of character. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by Satan. The Spirit would similarly, lead us into testings. There must be something more behind the prayer than evasion of proper and profitable testings. It must mean on the one hand that certain testings are not profitable, and we wish, rightly enough, to evade these. It must mean also that some testings can be destructive. Surely the one who prays is asking to be kept in such, and not allowed to fall. I Cor. 10:13 tells us that God does not allow testings beyond our capacity to bear, and gives us a way out of such. Even more, behind this prayer is the fear that we will so fail God that the testing of actual judgements may come upon us. We pray, prophylactically, ‘Let us never need these, Lord’

**‘But deliver us from the Evil One’.** Notice this is a contrast. Deliver us from the Evil One, especially when it comes to evil testings. Because we are in the work and life, and coming of the Kingdom, and brethren of Christ, and as the family of God, we are attacked, all the day long, by the evil powers. ‘We are being killed all the day long; we are being accounted as sheep for the slaughter’. Let us constantly be delivered from the wiles of Satan, his threatenings and his seductions. Make us aware of his devices, and keep us from his clutches. Let the Kingdom triumph in and for, all Your people’

**The Added Ascription.** ‘For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen’. This ascription is in later manuscripts of the gospels, but not in the earliest. It does not greatly matter, seeing it is clearly the mind of the apostolic church. The prayer is rounded off with praise. However, praise is not empty when it is genuine praise. Praise is always based on something of the nature of God, generally shown by His actions. All that has been asked in the petitions, is based upon the fact that His is the glory, the power, the honour and the Kingdom, so that the ascription is the fitting conclusion to the prayer which is the living pattern for all prayer.

**Conclusion on the Lord's Prayer.** Because we pray ‘Our Father’, it means at once that we are children of the Father, of the Covenant, and of the Kingdom. It means the prayer is prayed by the sons, as true prayer was prayed by the Son. It is an ‘on–themarch’ prayer, a prayer of action, a

prayer of submission to, and co-operation with the will of God. It is the prayer which helps in the ultimate coming of the Kingdom. It is at once personal, filial, familial, present and eschatological. It is prayed this way because it is commanded, and because it is the truly natural prayer of the regenerate heart, and the people of God.

### (b) Scriptural Prayers

These are many, e.g., the prayers of Isaac, of Jacob, or Joseph, or Moses, Samuel and Daniel, amongst many others in the O.T. A profitable exercise would be to read these. The prayer of Daniel acts as an excellent model for a heart prepared to pray for its people, especially a people who has greatly sinned. In the N.T. there are also a number of prayers. We are selecting only one of the Apostles – Paul.

**Paul's Prayers.** Paul's ministry of prayer must have its roots away back in his early history of godly zeal. We first meet it when the Lord told Ananias, concerning Paul, 'Behold, he prayeth' It was in this time of prayer – the three days in the house in Damascus – that he worked out his theology. His prayer life has to be traced through the Acts and his epistles to see how deep it was. 'My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they may be saved', was his claim (Rom. 10:1). It was at a time of prayer with the church at Antioch, when the Spirit singled him out for ministry ahead of a missionary nature. We could record many such instances. However, in order to see his prayers as pattern prayers, we need to read them through time and again, and always in the light of his action and his doctrine.

The list of Paul's prayers include Phil. 1:9–11, Ephes. 1:15–23, 3:14–21, Col. 1:9–14, I Thess. 3:11–13, II Thess. 3:5. In addition to these selected passages, we find that Paul is saying that he constantly remembers his converts in prayer, and also prays for many whom he has never seen, for example those at Colossae (2:1–3). Again, Paul many times asks prayer for himself, thus revealing that he never thinks that because he prays for others he is above the need of prayer himself. So see Ephes. 6:18–19, Romans 15:30, II Cor. 1:1–11, Col. 4:3, I Thess. 5:25, II Thess. 3:1, Phil. 1:19–20.

As to the actual pattern of his prayer, we may say that they are firstly positive. He requests certain things of God for the objects of his intercession. In Phil. 1:9–11, he prays for an increase in maturity of their love, so that it will be love that is filled with true discernment, and so produce the harvest of righteousness. This principle is repeated in I Thess. 3:11–13. In Ephes. 3:14–19, he prays much the same principle, that, commencing from God's Fatherhood, through Christ, and their mutual experience of love they may know the 'dimensions of God', the love of Christ, mutual love as brethren, and so be 'filled unto all the fulness of God'. In Ephes. 1: 15–23, he prays they will have a spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the experiential knowledge of God, and so see

- (a) The hope of their vocation,
- (b) The glorious inheritance to come, and
- (c) The greatness of God's power working towards them.

These and similar prayers (e.g. Col. 2:1–3) show Paul asking for the richest experience of God for his people. Such prayers, when answered, would catch up all other ordinary elements of daily Christian living. Paul is only praying for others what he has found for himself, and which he desired to experience habitually in his own life. We do well to follow his patterns.



### **(iii) Hindrances to Prayer**

In praying, we are undoubtedly doing battle with evil powers. That is clear from Ephes. 6:10–20. Having on the armour of God, we pray. Hence, the powers of darkness will fear prayer, and seek to dull our sensitivity to it. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus actually coveted the prayers and fellowship of his disciples, but they did not share these things with him. He said, ‘Could you not watch with me, one hour?’ No, they could not, because as he explained, ‘the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak’. Their bodies and persons were tired with the ministry and conflicts they had known within that week. Jesus wanted them to be ready for the tests to come, and prayer would have prepared them for those; but they failed. Likewise Satan will seek to defeat prayer situations by appealing to our self-pity and concerns.

The Scripture speaks of hindrances to prayer. In I Peter 3:7, Peter points out that where a husband does not honour his wife, as the weaker vessel, that the prayers of both will be hindered. In James 4:1–4, we see that prayer is effective when its motives are good. God does not answer prayers which seek the selfish or impure elements of fulfilment. This is similar to Psalm 66:18 which reads, ‘If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened’.

More generally, it is apparent from what we have seen of the Son, and the true sons, that abiding in the Son we will come to know the will of the Father, and so will pray according to that will. In fact, this is the true conclusion of all prayer, that which is intended by God to be prayed, and that which is harnessed, as power, to assist in the accomplishment of His plan and purpose. All true prayer relates to the ultimate goal.

### **(iv) Prayer is in Love, Flowing from that Source**

In Romans 15:30, when Paul is requesting prayer, he does so, ‘by the love of the Spirit’. Love of course, flows from the Spirit into God's people (Rom. 5:5, cf. Gall. 5:22). In Col. 1:8, Paul speaks of the Colossians as having ‘love in the Spirit’. We may just be collecting ‘proof verses’ here, but behind all prayer is concern and care, and none of this can be genuine without God's love motivating it, and drawing people on to real prayer. Prayer seeks out the needs of others, and then seeks to have them fulfilled through direct action, where one can minister, and through prayer when the resources needed are not to hand. On the wider scale, all God's purposes are love for His children (Rom. 8:28), and so all prayer is ultimately geared to love. An example of this can be seen in Matt. 5:43–48, where God's children are to love their enemies and pray for them that despitefully use them. The prayer is for the welfare of those in sinful ignorance, and no doubt for their ultimate salvation.

## ***5. Conclusion On Prayer***

We have really stated this conclusion in the last paragraph of 4 (iii) above. It is this:

Man is created by God to share with Him in His entire plan for His creation. By habitual prayer he is enabled to know God, have fellowship with Him, and have increasing knowledge of His nature and purposes, such as we have seen Jesus did. Knowing God, he will know His will, and in responsive

love to God's grace will desire to serve Him. Man's prayer, harnessed to God's purposes, is a power which God has incorporated in His operations. To come to know the will of God, and then to pray for it, is to do the will of God, and in fact aid it in reaching its fulfilment. One cannot think of a higher, nor more enriching ministry. When we remember that both the Son, and the Holy Spirit are constantly, incessantly, occupied in this ministry, and in fact that this is one of the reasons that Jesus rose from the dead, then we are sure that intercession is a high ministry. When also we see that God searches the heart to know the mind of the Spirit, and so our intercession, we are amazed that He has given such ministry to men.

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## ***APPENDIX ONE***

### **MODES OF PRAYER**

Although we have talked of the principles of prayer, and included in them the pattern–prayer given by the Lord, and observed that there are patterns in prayer of the men and women of God whose prayers have been recorded, yet there are elements in prayer which can be helpful to examine. They constitute, among many things, praise, adoration, petition, thanksgiving, supplication and intercession. For the one who prays, there can scarcely be a methodology, for this would tend to make prayer mechanical. On the other hand, a certain order of prayer seems innate. For example, the one coming to God with the intention of praying, will doubtless seek to praise and adore Him, and in doing this will feel his sins and failures, and will find in confession, repentance and faith, a new surge of purity and joy, out of which will come renewed praise, adoration and thanksgiving. The supplicant will not be afraid to place all his needs before the Father–God, and then the needs of others, so that intercessory ministry will have begun. Doubtless such prayer will already have been contested by the powers of evil, and something of conflict will have begun. This will provide the test for the sincerity and depth of love of the one who prays. He will be too weak, of himself (the transcendent power is of God; II Cor. 4:7, Rom. 8:26) to pray successfully, but the Holy Spirit will enable him, both by giving him the confident ‘Abba’ cry, and by enabling him to pray. To trace the nature of the elements we have just mentioned, would be to compose another paper on these very modes and elements, but personal study and practice of them is indicated as extremely useful, as well as necessary.

## ***APPENDIX TWO***

### **UNANSWERED PRAYER**

It has been suggested that God answers all prayer, some with a ‘Yes’, and some with a ‘No’. This is possible, but it seems that some prayers are left unanswered, simply because they are wrong and offensive. I Peter 3:7 speaks of the hindering of prayer, meaning both in the praying as in the effect. Psalm 66:18 makes it clear that God will not hear the prayer of a man who cherishes iniquity in his heart. Likewise James indicates (James 4:1–3) that a doubled–minded man is praying foolishly. The use of vain repetition (Matt. 6), and public display are offensive to God, and this kind of prayer remains unanswered. The prayer to God by Abraham, for Sodom was not unanswered, but shows that God has certain conditions – those of His own nature – when it comes to acceding to man's petitions. Similar situations show this, e.g., Moses petition to see Canaan (Deut. 3:23–27), King Saul's prayers to God (I Sam. 14:37, cf. 28:5–7). David's prayer for his child failed (II Sam. 12:22, cf. Psa. 10:1, 13:1). Isaiah 59:1–3 shows that God does not listen where there is iniquity in Israel, although in the same

chapter He raises up an intercessor, who is a great warrior in intervention. Prayer lies slack and cold where there is sin (Isaiah 64:7).

We can conclude then, that God is often as One who hides Himself, and this with a view to bringing the unrepentant supplicant to repentance and faith. To those who seek Him sincerely, He is ever ready to hear their prayers and to give the answers judiciously, and at the right time.

## ***APPENDIX THREE***

### **PRAYER 'IN THE NAME'**

We saw the principle from John chs. 14–16, that prayer is made in the name of Jesus, but that such prayer can only be made when we abide in him. To abide in him is to live and dwell in and through him, after the same manner that he lives and dwells in the Father, and is obedient to Him. Hence 'prayer in the Name' is no light thing. In fact, rightly understood it is the key to all prayer. To be one with the Son (by the Spirit) is to relate to the Father through Him, to know His will and so to be able to do it.

In Mark 16:17, Jesus says that his disciples will 'cast out demons in my name ... they will lay hands on the sick and they shall recover'. In speaking of his own works he had already said, 'Greater works than these will you do'. Hence in Acts everything is done in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is also a large study on its own. In prayer it simply means that one trusts upon the power, authority and person of the one named. Hence, in Acts 3, when the people think Peter and John possess great powers, they are told, 'And by his (Jesus) name, by faith in his name has made this man strong'. The Sanhedrin fears the name, and bids the apostles not to use it. In Romans 10:14ff., to call on the name of the Lord is to be saved. In Acts 19, an incident occurs where the name of Jesus is invoked, but because the ones invoking it do not abide in that name, they are exposed to demonic forces. In the Book of the Revelation, the name of the Son and the Father is often used. In fact, their names are written on the foreheads of believers (e.g. 14:1, 22:4), which means they are totally identified with God, as are those evil persons who bear the mark (name) of the Beast upon their foreheads.

Prayer, then, rightly understood and properly practised, in the name of Jesus, is powerful and effective.

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