

HC 117-118 – The Method of Prayer and the Command to Pray

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Since prayer is the breath of the Christian, the only Christian who doesn't pray is a dead Christian. So you need to pray. Now from the last sermon you heard of the Necessity of Prayer – it is necessary to show thankfulness and it is necessary to get the things you and your neighbors need. Today you will hear from God's how to pray and be reminded of your duty to pray.

Our headings are:

The Method of Prayer

The Command To Pray

Our goals are: **That you will properly learn to pray, so that you will get what God has promised you, so that you can fulfill your covenant duties.**

117 Q. **HOW DOES GOD WANT US TO PRAY** SO THAT HE WILL LISTEN TO US?

A. First, we **must pray from the heart** to no other than the one true God, who has revealed himself in his Word, asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for. Second, we must **acknowledge our need and misery, hiding nothing**, and humble ourselves in his majestic presence. Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer **because of Christ our Lord**. That is what he promised us in his Word.

The Method of Prayer

1. Your prayer must be heartfelt(真心的, 真诚的). God despises insincere prayers.

a. This means that your prayer cannot be rote (机械的) ...simply repeating a prayer without thinking about it. That's Roman Catholic. That's Pentecostal. That's Hare Krishna's. That's not Christian. Carefully contemplate (思考) what your lips say. Does this mean that written prayers are wrong? No. You see written prayers throughout the Bible. Written prayer can be most helpful and they help you to focus and cover all your bases. But when you use written prayers, be mindful. Think about what you say.

b. Consider a few passages that remind you to be heartfelt/sincere in prayer.

Psalm 43: 1 Vindicate me, O God, And plead my cause against an ungodly nation; Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! (神啊, 求你伸我的冤, 向不虔诚的国为我辩屈; 求你救我脱离诡诈不义的人。) **2** For **You are the God of my strength**; Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? **3** Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! **Let them lead me**; Let them **bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle**. **4** Then I will go to the altar of God...

You can't help but see the Psalmist sincerity. He expresses his need for strength. He accepts that his strength comes from God – not himself. He asks to be led. He expresses dependence. If you

read the whole Psalm, the Psalmist shows his sincerity by being more concerned about the honor and praise of God, rather than his personal honor.

Psalm 145: 8 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill the **desire of those who fear Him**; He also will hear their cry and save them.

c. **Sincere prayer starts in the heart; the fear of God begins in the heart.**

Romans 8: 26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 **Now He who searches the hearts knows** what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And the Scriptures confirm that God's Spirit searches the heart. So he knows what is coming out of it!

2. Prayer must be Humbling (谦卑的)

a. **If you want answers to your prayer, you must be humble, not arrogant.** 2Chronicles 7:14. God said so.

2Chronicles 7: 14 "if My people who are called by My name **will humble themselves, and pray** and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

b. **When you are humble you show that you understand that prayer is about the honor of God and that** prayer is not your genie (精灵) – your magic potion (魔力药水). The humble Christian shows how completely dependent he is on God's directions on prayer. After all, who are you to tell God what he must do for you.

Isaiah 66: 1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? 2 For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. **"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.** (1 耶和华如此说：“天是我的座位，地是我的脚凳。你们要为我造何等的殿宇？哪里是我安息的地方呢？” 2 耶和华说：“这一切都是我手所造的，所以就都有了。但我所看顾的，就是虚心痛悔、因我话而战兢的人。)

You must be conscious of your weakness when you come to God in prayer.

Revelation 4: 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and **cast their crowns before the throne**, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

Psalm 34: 18 The LORD is near to **those who have a broken heart**, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. (耶和华靠近伤心的人，拯救灵性痛悔的人。)

c. The one who is humble keeps God in his place – as ruler over all. The humble man gives God the glory when God answers his prayers. He doesn't try to take credit for what God does.

3. Prayer must be through the merits and works of Jesus Christ. God is not some small “nobody” who talks a good talk but “can't deliver the goods.” There is no unfettered access to God – unlike what the Emergent church teaches. Sin blocks access to God. And the cost of access to God is a perfect human blood sacrifice. The only perfect human blood sacrifice is the Lord Jesus Christ. So you gain access to God through faith in his Son. There is no other way. When you hold on to Christ's sacrifice as your own, God then adopts you as his Son and guarantees to do what is best for you – something no father, mother, employer, or government can do. Those who don't pray through faith in Christ, their prayer is just be imitation (模仿) .

As a Christian, you have an advocate (辩护者) in heaven. So for whatever you pray that is good for you and brings glory to God, Christ advocates for that before his Father and says: “Do this for her. Don't do this to him.”

Daniel 9: 17 "Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 "O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You **because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.**

Daniel 9, shows that you have no merit of your own to approach God in heaven.

John 16: 23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, **whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.**

Notice now how Jesus shows through whom you may pray.

James 1: 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But **let him ask in faith, with no doubting,** for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (5 你们中间若有缺少智慧的, 应当求那厚赐与众人, 也不斥责人的神, 主就比赐给他。6 只要凭信心求, 一点不疑惑; 因为那疑惑的人, 就象海中的波浪, 被风吹动翻腾。)

And then notice the encouragement to pray through faith – faith in Jesus Christ after you enter his kingdom.

Matthew 6: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all these things shall be added to you.**

One minister wrote: **Prayer without trust (in Jesus Christ) is like a soap bubble that is little more than empty shell** - soon broken and dissipated (消散) .

4. Prayer must be directed to the Father. It is a perversion (歪曲, 颠倒) to pray to Mary or other dead saints. Praying to dead saints reduces the standards for prayer. It is the height of madness to pray to someone who has no ability to answer a single prayer you make. So you must pray for those whose prayers have no direction!

Matthew 6:9 "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

And know that your heavenly Father, will give you what you need.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (各样美善的恩赐, 和各样全备的赏赐, 都是从上头来的; 从众光之父那里降下来的; 在他并没有改变, 也没有转动的影儿。)

The Command to Pray

118 Q. WHAT DID **GOD COMMAND US** TO PRAY FOR?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically, as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

1. You must pray for good things you need.

Matthew 7:8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Question: So what do you need? You need to be saved, you need to be sanctified (被圣化), and you need to serve God and man. "**Need**" is determined as **what is necessary to do what God wants you to do.** You don't need 3 meals and 2 desserts per day. You may not need a husband or a wife. You may not need money in the bank or RRSP's. You don't need a 6 figure salary. Those are all graces.

Why is it important to identify what "need is"?

a. So that you may not pray that God will fit into "your plans," but that you will fit into "God's plans."

Illustration borrowed: You are not to be the architect (设计师) of your life – draw up the plans in details and expect God to build it according to your desires. No, you are to let God design and build your life to please him. You must say: "God, give me what I need so I can praise your name and serve you as you desire." God, give me what I need to do good for my neighbor.

b. So that if you don't get something, you will know that that is not a need – but maybe a desire!

2. You may also pray for what you desire. So pray for 3 meals and 2 desserts, for more RRSP's, or a good salary. But distinguish what is a need and what is a desire.

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Conclusion:

Prayer is the breath of the Christian. If you don't pray you are dead. Don't ignore prayer. But your prayer must be sincere and from a humble heart. Your prayer must come (and can only come) through Christ your Redeemer. And your prayer must be limited to that which is for the glory of God.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. How is your prayer life? Do you see how necessary it is to have a good prayer life? Prayer shows you total dependence up on God. How counter-cultural! Do you have the right method to pray? Do you pray as much as you ought to and for the things which are proper so that you can fulfill your duties as a Christian? This is what God expects.
2. Now what happens when you don't get what YOU want through your prayer? Do you get angry with God? Remember, prayer is about the glory of God. So ask God to help you more and more to die to your own desire and live your life for the glory of his Son, your eternal Redeemer (救贖主) .

One final word for one who is not a believer: Generic prayer as a form of therapy is superstitious (迷信的) . Your prayer means nothing if it were not offered through Christ. Your prayer may be sincere, but it is sinful. Any prayer not offered through Christ goes into thin air (and to the Devil) and it is an insult to the true God. Only if you become a child of God and are adopted because Christ took the punishment for yours sin, can you pray. May you ask God to adopt you today.