

Lesson # 8 -- The Promise Regarding the Believer's Prayer Life.

Introduction

- A. The subject of prayer makes most of us feel apprehensive and a bit guilty. The reason is the contrast between how the prayer life is described in the Bible and how we live.
- B. It can safely be said that the greatest promises in all the holy Scripture have to do with prayer. This should encourage us in that we know God's enablement always accompanies His promises.
- C. As we study this lesson we must try to set aside our feelings of spiritual inferiority and -- as an expression of our faith -- ask God to teach us.

I. The Biblical Theme.

- A. The creation model.

*And they (Adam and Eve) heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day . . . . Genesis 3:8*

Comment: The scene before us in this passage is overwhelming in its implications. Here we see the LORD God -- talking with Adam and Eve -- His creation. As we read the complete story we see how we were created in a manner not shared by the animals. We were related in God in such a way that we could understand spiritual truths and talk with God!

This model is the key to understanding prayer. We have the ability, in creation and redemption, to fellowship with God. He invites us to come. The importance of this relationship is beyond our comprehension.

- B. The example of saints.

*And I will send an angel before thee . . . I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people . . . Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee . . . . Exodus 33:2,3,13*

Comment: This is undoubtedly one of the most important passages in the Old Testament concerning faith and prayer. The news that God was to withdraw His presence from Israel and would send an angel instead -- was a terrible blow to Moses. Instead of complaining and giving up, he submitted to God and prayed.

The trust that Moses expressed in his prayer made it possible for God to go with Israel -- even though they were so sinful. It was Moses that made the difference.

His willingness to submit to God, his determination to do God's will, created a spiritual resource that God could use to reach the entire nation. We must think about this truth in regard to our own life and family. Are we willing to be taught how to pray and live -- so we can be a spiritual resource God can use?

C. The personal invitation.

And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm 50:15

Comment: In the light of the two passages we have already considered -- this invitation should overwhelm us. If we have any understanding at all of the implications found in the truths before us -- we will radically revise our thinking and life -- so we can learn to pray.

God does not give promises that He will not keep. The difficulties all of us have had trying to pray are not to be traced to the lack of provision. The reasons for our failures are to be found in our own misunderstanding of spiritual truths which produces the sinful neglect of prayer and opens the door to Satan. His work in our life is to maintain our blindness to spiritual things, keep us discouraged, and make it extremely difficult for us when we try to learn or pray. As a result most believers live a life without spiritual growth, joy, fulfillment, without a grasp of spiritual truths, and in particular without Biblical prayer. One of the greatest tragedies in your life and mine -- is that we allow ourselves to continue living like this -- when it could be so very different.

II. The Biblical Explanation.

A. The believer's promise.

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if (since) we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. I John 5:14,15

Comment: The principles we have seen in the Old Testament are summarized and emphasized in these verses. It is appropriate, but very convicting to us, that the word "confidence" would be used to introduce the truths of prayer. If there is any area in our life that is devoid of such assurance -- it's usually concerning prayer.

What are we to say about our prayerlessness? It is our personal confession that God is not wise enough, not powerful enough, not faithful enough -- to do what He has said. When we live like this the Devil has us in a box -- and we continue to nail down the lid.

B. The believer's provision.

*But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Ephesians 2:12,18*

Comment: Because of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit -- every provision has been made so we can live in fellowship with God and pray.

When we add these truths to those of creation, we are brought to the realization that prayer is a dominant characteristic of the normal Christian life. We can come to God -- talk with Him -- present our requests -- and receive an answer. When we ask ourselves why we do not pray like this makes us realize that any and every answer is a confession of our sinfulness.

C. The believer's example.

*But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him (the Lord Jesus), and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. Luke 5:15,16*

Comment: When the Lord Jesus came into the world He laid aside His glory and use of His attributes. He chose to limit Himself to the spiritual resources available to all believers. The reason He prayed -- is because of His love of the Father, the privilege of prayer -- and because He had to.

The example of the Lord Jesus causes each of us to be spiritually embarrassed. If He had to pray -- then how profound our need must be!

D. The believer's instruction.

*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. Matthew 6:6*

Comment: Prayer is a personal and private meeting with God. It is Biblical for us to pray together in public, but nothing can take the place of private prayer. This is the foundation of everything else we are to do.

As we read this verse we immediately realize how high this practice must be on our list of priorities. Therefore, we must make some serious choices to obey God. Where do we begin? Perhaps by choosing the best time of our day and give that time to learning how to pray.

E. The believer's office.

*Ye also, as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. I Peter 2:5*

Comment: The Christian has been given unusual privileges and abilities. Chief among these is the priesthood. Every believer has the right and the power to represent God to men and men to God.

The words in this verse are not empty platitudes. They describe what may be the highest office given to man and what may be the believer's greatest source of power. Our neglect of our office of priest is an indication of our spiritual ignorance.

F. The believer's authority.

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

Comment: The believer has been given the highest authority that is possible in all heaven and earth. No name is greater than that of Jesus Christ. To be able to present our requests in His name means total acceptance by God, His undivided attention, and a response of "Yes" in the context of His love and wisdom.

Each of us must admit that our attitude toward this subject and our actions related to prayer are in direct contrast to the verses above. Something is wrong. We act as though God does not mean what He has said. We appear to say by our daily life that prayer, and the promises that accompany it, are irrelevant.

G. The believer's enablement.

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Ephesians 6:18*

Comment: The Holy Spirit has been given to each of us, not only to pray the prayers for which our longings cannot find words (Rom. 8:26,27), but also to teach us and enable us to pray.

Our neglect of prayer is a sin against the Holy Spirit. It is called "quenching the Spirit" I Thess. 5:19. We do not realize the serious nature or consequences of our attitude and actions -- but our daily life is the undisputable evidence. When confronted with a serious problem we rarely consider prayer to be a part of the solution. It may be the courteous and "spiritual" thing to do at the moment, but we do not conceive it as an indispensable part of the solution. We often pray because we do not know what else to do, or because we hope to find or bring comfort by prayer -- but rarely as an expression of faith -- believing it is, along with faith, love, and the truth, a necessary part of the response to God which will bring a change.

### III. The Biblical Application.

- A. We may not allow ourselves to make our usual response to such a list of verses as we have read.

We all know what to do with spiritual embarrassment and even with spiritual conviction. We have learned our lesson well. We know if we do not do anything -- the conviction and shame will soon pass and we can go on living as usual.

Have we already -- moments ago -- made that decision? Such a response has become so spontaneous for us and so natural we no longer realize it comes from the promptings of Satan and our calloused indifference.

- B. We must seek out the sins that have brought us to this place. We must honestly confess them before God, perhaps make restitution, and forsake them as the sources of death that they are.
- C. Our most important response must be the prayer of faith. Only God can change our hearts -- and that is where the problem is to be found.

We must give ourselves -- not our sins -- but ourselves to God. We must come to Him in submission and trust and ask Him in all simplicity to cleanse and change us.

**Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.** Psalm 50:15