

Lesson 4 -- Prayer and the Will of God

Introduction

- A. The Christian is one who can speak to God! All believers realize, due to our sinfulness, that we are not worthy of the most fleeting thought by God. In sharp contrast, however, God sent His Son to die for us and has brought us, through grace and faith, into a living relationship with Himself. Now - we can pray!
- B. The Bible reminds us that prayer includes worship, praise, thanksgiving, commitments of faith, intercession and the presenting of requests. In this lesson we wish to answer the question, "What requests may I present to God?"

I. The Promise Regarding Prayer, I John 5:14.

And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will. He heareth us.

Observation: This is a great promise. We are instructed to get our eyes off ourselves and put our faith in God. Our confidence concerning the prayer life is to revolve around Him. We are assured that when we ask anything according to His will - He will hear us.

II. The Example Regarding Prayer, Colossians 4:12.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Observation: Here Epaphras is commended and presented to us as an example of how to pray. He is not only held up as an example of compassion and hard work - but in particular for the content of his prayer - the will of God. If we are to succeed we must learn to pray like this.

III. The Reminder Regarding Prayer, I Peter 2:5.

Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Observation: The Christian is a priest. We have the office, with all the rights and privileges, so that we can pray. We can represent God to man and in particular, we can represent man to God. It is important that the believer assume this responsible position and pray.

IV. The Directives Regarding Prayer.

- A. It is the will of God that believers cooperate in spiritual ministry, II Cor. 8:5.

And this they did, not (merely) as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

Observation: Paul is here commending the Christians in Macedonia. He was taking up a collection of money for the saints in Palestine. These Christians responded to the need by a deliberate banding together under God to meet this need. We should daily pray that this aspect of the will of God would come true in our lives and those for whom we intercede.

B. It is the will of God that believers be delivered from the world, Gal. 1:4.

Who (Jesus Christ) gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

Observation: This is more than a statement regarding the truth of getting to heaven. It is God's will that we live separated from the influence of the sinful world system. The world is described in I John 2:15,16 as essentially a selfish way of living. We should daily pray that we may understand the sinfulness of living for ourselves and more and more learn how to live for God and His glory. This is a request we may present to God for others as well.

C. It is the will of God that believers be sanctified, I Thess. 4:3.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.

Observation: By use of the word "sanctification" the Apostle Paul is referring to holiness of daily life. In particular the emphasis in the context has to do with freedom from sexual sins. However, it would also be correct to apply the passage to the godliness of life that would keep one from all immoral practices. This facet of the will of God is particularly needed today.

D. It is the will of God that believers rejoice, pray and give thanks, I Thess. 5:16-18.

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Observation: These three areas, rejoicing, praying, and the giving of thanks are presented as absolutely necessary for the Christian who wants to live in the will of God. Our natural tendency is to accept discouragement, to be lazy in praying and to be unthankful. When we do this it often results in coveting. We may not permit this. We must pray for illumination, conviction and expressing of faith in this area for ourselves and those we represent.

E. It is the will of God that believers have a good testimony, I Peter 2:15.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Observation: The Biblical way for the Gospel to be spread is not only by all forms of communication but also by the testimony of daily life. God has promised that He will use the godly Christian to stop the argument of the non-Christian. We all know the devastation that has been caused by a believer living an inconsistent life! This should constantly be a matter of prayer - that we would live a consistent life and that those for whom we are concerned should also so honor God.

Conclusion: Now that we have seen these expressions of the will of God we can also add to our prayer list the commandments of God (Matt. 28:16-20), the promises (Phil. 4:19), the exhortations of the Bible (Hebrews 4:1-3) and those prayers which are given as examples of intercession (Eph. 1:17-23; 3:14-21). God expects us to pray - and to do so with confidence and faith.

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Lesson 4 -- The Biblical Concept of Truth (2)

Introduction.

- A. You have to work hard to find something more valuable than the truth.
- B. When the Lord Jesus said, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) He meant that He was the cause or source of the truth. This is where it is helpful to begin - recognizing that truth is first of all a person and then it is what He has said and what He has done.
- C. It is interesting to look into the Scripture and see those things that accompany truth. We find by this that truth is related to some of the most important things in the world.

I. The Presence of God is Associated with the Truth, Psalm 145:13.

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.

Observation: God is truth in His very being. When a person makes the choice to live in such a way that truth is violated - then that person is choosing to close the door on God in his daily life. We must recognize this and choose to open the door to God and all His mercy, grace, power, joy and fulfillment that He has for us.

II. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit is Associated with the Truth, John 16:13,14.

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will shew you things to come. He shall, glorify Me

Observation: The Holy Spirit is called by the very name of "truth". He has come to teach us the truth and to enable us to live a life in harmony with truth. Again the emphasis here is on being a truthful person and having the truth high on the list of our priorities.

III. The Person and Work of the Lord Jesus is Associated with the Truth, John 18:37,38.

Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness onto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?

Observation: This statement of the Lord Jesus again emphasizes the high regard He had for the truth and how important this must be to us. We recognize how all of His life and work was a witness to the truth. How sad that Pilate did not see this.

IV. The Judgment of God is Associated with the Truth, Romans 2:2.

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

Observation: There will be a day when all right and wrong will be evaluated. It will be a judgment according to truth. This will be true for the Christian as well as the non-Christian. We must face our responsibility to know and practice the truth. We cannot escape the consequences of our daily life. (See also II These. 2:12)

V. A Good Testimony is Associated with the Truth, II Cor. 4:2.

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Observation: Here the Apostle Paul testifies to the one basis and motivation of his life - the truth. He could explain to people why he lived the way he did and why he held the priorities he did - all by the truth. When we live a selfish life as a pretender, liar, and cheat - we fail to bear a good testimony.

VI. Protection against Satan is Associated with the Truth, Ephesians 6:14.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness.

Observation: The Roman soldier wore, a wide leather belt that held the rest of the armor in place. This verse reminds us that only the truth will enable us to have the other virtues and victories of the Christian life. To "put on the girdle of truth" is to make a genuine affirmation before God that we will live according to the truth and make this our protection. When we do not wear the armor God has provided for us we are vulnerable to the enemy.

VII. The New Birth is Associated with the Truth, James 1:18.

Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Observation: Repentance, believing the gospel and receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are the correct responses to the truth God has revealed to us in the Scripture. The relationship of the new birth and truth is why we must carry out the Great Commission.

VIII. Love is Associated with the Truth, I John 3:16-18.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth.

Observation: The test for true love is found in actions that conform to the truth. We are so prone to state our love or perform an act that is not in harmony with the truth (real need). We must love God according to the truth and love one another like that.

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