

A BRIEF BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAYER¹

PATTERNS OF PRAYER FROM SCRIPTURE:

Nehemiah 1:4-11:

- A. Praised and Worshipped God – v. 5
- B. Confessed Sin – vv. 6-7
- C. He Pleaded God's Promises – vv. 8-10
- D. He Asked for Help – v. 11

Daniel 9:3-19:

- A. Praised & Worshipped God – v. 4
- B. Confessed Sin – vv. 5-15
- C. He Pleaded God's Covenant – vv. 13, 17-18
- D. He Asked for Help – vv. 17-19

WHY WE CAN PRAY: "Study **I Timothy 2:5** and **I John 2:1**. In these two passages the words *mediator* and *advocate* mean basically the same thing: Christ is literally your *lawyer*... [***If you are saved!***—*mwe*] ...Christ pleads our case before God, showing Him that you are under His blood. When God looks at your sin, He sees only the righteousness of Christ (II Cor. 5:21; Rev. 6:11 cf. Isa. 61:10). Note Hebrews 10:19-22. **With what attitude can you approach God in prayer?** [Answer: ***Boldness!*** cf. Eph. 3:12]. According to verse 19, **What did Christ do that you might come boldly to the Father in prayer?** [Answer: ***He shed his blood!***]."²

SOME "BASICS" REGARDING PRAYER: (Read **Eph. 5:20; John 14:6, 13-14; 15:16; 16:23, 26-27**)

- **TO WHOM TO PRAY.** Hamrick & Dean ask: "*Should you pray to the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit? The Father.* ...According to these verses would it wrong to pray, 'Dear Jesus?'" [To which they answer yes.]

However I'll have to disagree a little bit with Hamrick & Dean on this point. Stephen prayed to *Jesus* (Acts 7:59-60) and there are other NT examples of praying to Him (e.g. Acts 9:14 cf. vv. 17-18, 21; Romans 10:9-10, 12-13). In addition, Jesus *is* also God and *one* with God the Father—*though we certainly recognize the distinction of their Persons*. (A side point: the world is becoming more and more outspoken in their opposition to Christians even praying publicly "*in Jesus' name*"—which I would maintain *is all the more reason to do so!* The apostle John bluntly declared that "*whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either...*" – I Jn. 2:23 NKJV). Nevertheless I would agree that the "*normal*" pattern when praying *should be* to pray **TO God the Father, IN the name of Christ, BY the power of the Holy Spirit**—though there a few exceptions to that general biblical pattern. In that regard we should note that when Jesus gave specific instructions to his disciples regarding *how to pray*, He told them to pray: "**Our Father, which art in heaven...** (Matt. 6:9-ff).

- "**IN WHOSE NAME TO PRAY.** What one phrase occurs over and over again in these verses? - "***In My name***". Whose name are these verses speaking of? - *Jesus*. Therefore, in whose name should we pray? – "***In Jesus' name...***"
- "**IN WHOSE POWER TO PRAY.** When Christ went back to heaven, He promised to send the Comforter. Read **John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7**. Who is this Comforter? - The Holy Spirit. What does He do for you when you pray (Romans 8:26) - He intercedes for us."³

DEFINITION OF PRAYER: "*Prayer is worship, addressed to the Father, in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.*"⁴

POWERFUL PROMISES REGARDING PRAYER: Mt. 7:7-8; 21:22; John 14:13-14; 15:16; Romans 8:26; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:16; James 5:16.

¹ Compiled by Mike Edwards, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, c. 1988 (revised and expanded, March, 2013, St. Vincent, West Indies and Nov. 2013, June 2017 & Sept. 2019, Madison, Ohio).

² Frank Hamrick & Jerry Dean, *Basic Training* (Milk & Meat), Positive Action for Christ, Inc.: Rocky Mount, NC, 1984), p. 23 (except words in brackets)

³ Ibid, pp. 23-24

⁴ Ibid, p. 24

CONDITIONS TO ANSWERED PRAYER:

- **WE NEED TO BE A CHILD OF GOD** i.e. a true Christian as the Bible defines one – **Jn. 9:31; Isa. 1:15; Ezek. 8:18; Mic. 3:4** (also Ps. 18:41; 34:15; Prov. 1:28; 15:29; 28:9; Jer. 11:11; Zech. 7:13 & Job 27:8-9). If a person expects to make requests of God in prayer and see answers, he or she must first be a Christian. The above verses state that God does not hear sinners. Of course God hears and knows *everything* done by *everyone*. The meaning rather is that God does not *obligate* Himself to answer the prayers of a lost person. It does *not* mean that God never answers an unsaved person's prayers. God in His mercy and grace can, and often does. Naturally He can answer anyone's prayer if He chooses to do so. However He has not *obligated* Himself to answer the prayers of unsaved individuals as He has the prayers of His children. So the first step to answered prayer is to make sure that you are saved i.e. *born again*. (see **John 3:3-7**)
- **WE SHOULD BE CLEAN BEFORE GOD** – **Psalm 66:17-20; Prov. 15:29**. A person may be a true believer, but if he has known, unconfessed sin in his life of which he is unwilling to repent, the Psalmist says God will not “hear” that person i.e. hear with a view to answering (cf. Achan Josh. 7)
- **WE NEED TO BE CLEAN BEFORE MEN** – **Mt. 5:23-24; Mark 11:25**. God will not bless and answer our prayers as He would normally, if we have unresolved conflicts with others or have engaged in sinful behavior towards others which we haven't made right, etc. We need a clear conscience toward man, as well as God. cf. **Acts 24:16; I Peter 3:12**
- **WE MUST HAVE PURE AND PROPER MOTIVES** – **James 4:2-3**. Here we learn that sometimes believers pray but don't receive an answer because they ask with wrong or selfish motives.
- **WE SHOULD BE LIVING A LIFE THAT IS OBEDIENT TO GOD'S WORD** – **I John 3:22**. This doesn't mean that we're perfect, because none of us are. But in our daily life we should attempt as much as possible to live in thought, word, and deed, according to the Scriptures.
- **WE MUST ASK ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL** – **I John 5:14-15**. If God has made something clear in His Word, there is no need to waste your time praying in a way contrary to that. For instance, there is no point in asking God to give you traveling mercies on the way to the pub or bar, or ask God to bless you with a winning ticket as you gamble! The Word of God clearly speaks against those activities, so there is no need to “pray” about doing them or for God's blessing upon them!
- **WE SHOULD ASK BELIEVING** – **Mt. 21:22; Mk. 11:24**. Have you ever prayed yet really didn't believe God would answer? That kind of prayer will never storm heaven's gates and bring answers!

WHEN, WHERE & HOW OFTEN TO PRAY?

Anytime! You should have a definite time that you set aside each day for extended prayer. Christ often chose the early morning and in a private place alone (**Mk. 1:35; Matt. 6:5-6**). We can and should pray throughout each day (e.g. while riding in a car [but don't forget to keep your eyes open if you're driving ☺], walking to class, while working out, riding on a bus, etc.). We should be in a constant attitude of prayer (**Romans 12:12; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17**).

WHO TO PRAY FOR & WHAT TO PRAY ABOUT

- A. Pray about *everything* – **Phil. 4:6; Luke 18:1**
- B. Pray for *Christian brothers and sisters* – **Eph. 6:18**
- C. Pray for the *unsaved and enemies* – **Matt. 5:44; I Tim. 2:1**
- D. Pray for the *leaders of our countries*, both saved and unsaved – **I Tim. 2:1-2**

A SIMPLE FORMULA TO HELP YOU MAINTAIN A BALANCED PRAYER LIFE: “CAT” & “ACT”

C-Confess any sin to God – **I John 1:9; Ps. 32:1-5**

A-Adore (i.e. praise & worship) God for who He is – **Psalm 8; I Chronicles 29:11-13**

T-Thank Him for His blessings & what He has done for you – **Psalm 100:4**

Then flip the first two letters around and ask God to... “ACT!” – **Phil. 4:6-7** i.e. Give God your requests, concerns, burdens, needs, etc., and leave them with Him, thanking Him in advance for whatever He chooses to do!