

The Prayer of Faith

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Introduction: Are we praying in such a way to show real faith in God?

- A. Jesus raised this possibility in a parable about prayer. **(Lk 18:1-8)**
 - 1. What if the answer to the question in verse 8 was no. Does this mean there would be no one confessing Christ?
 - 2. We can allow the immediate demands of this life to crowd out real prayer.
- B. What does this have to do with prayer?
 - 1. If a man does not pray, he does not have faith. **(Jas 2:17-18)**
 - 2. Will a man be lost for not praying?
 - 3. Years ago brother Homer Hailey made this comment: "If I had to come to one criticism of God's people today, it would be our failure to pray as we ought."

I. We pray to a God in whom we trust.

- A. What does it mean to trust God? **(Heb 11:6)**
 - 1. We pray to a personal God and not just a force. **(2Kgs 19:14-16)**
 - 2. What is prayer? In essence it is talking with God.
 - 3. Do you rush to talk at length with a friend about your problems but only say a few sentences to God?
- B. We will have a hard time understanding the great power in a prayer of faith. **(Eph 3:20)**
 - 1. He is able to do: a. above **all that we ask or think** b. **abundantly** above all that we ask or think c. **exceedingly** abundantly above all that we ask or think
 - 2. When we realize this is God speaking then this is hard to grasp.
- C. The Bible contrasts those who Christianity is only the outward form verses the heart of genuine faith.
 - 1. We can have the form without power. **(2 Tim 3:5)**
 - 2. Or we can allow God's power to be used through us. **(1 Thess 2:13)**
 - 3. Today people will pay thousands of dollars for access to the president. What about access to God! **(1 Jn 5:14-15)**
 - 4. Our prayers will make a difference.

II. We ought to always pray and not to lose heart.

- A. It is possible to "faint", "lack courage" concerning our effort in prayer.
 - 1. What would a person think when they lose heart?
 - 2. Some have never been taught to pray in a proper manner.
 - B. God will only work with those who are humble. **(Jas 4:6-10)**
 - 1. It is when we are crushed and feel helpless that the prayer of faith will avail much! Who does God chose to work with? **(2 Cor 12:9-10)**
- "Hudson Taylor once noted that "God uses men who are weak and feeble enough to lean on him."
- 2. The times of my greatest growth and blessing will come during suffering. Do you pray for personal growth?

III. The Example of Jesus and the Apostles

- A. The example of Jesus stimulated his apostles to ask to be taught about prayer. **(Lk 11:1)**

1. Jesus prayed at His baptism in the beginning of His ministry. (**Lk 3:21**)
 2. Jesus at times prayed all night. (**Lk 6:12**)
 3. Jesus prayed three times in the course of one hour. (**Mt 26:36-44**)
- B. For many this kind of praying is unknown, why?
1. Because they fail to distinguish between public prayer and private prayer. What is the purpose of a public prayer?
 2. There are several concerns about the motive and manner of a public prayer. (**Mt 6:5-7**)
 3. Sadly many Christians repeat in their private prayer the same kind of prayer they hear in public. Why is this lacking?
 4. What kind of things should we mention in private prayer that would be inappropriate in public prayer?
- C. How did the apostles view the importance of prayer?
1. What did they say came first? (**Acts 6:4**)
 2. Consider the churches Paul prayed for. (**Rom 1:9; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3, 9; 1 Thess 1:2**)
 3. Consider some of the individuals Paul prayed for. (**2 Tim 1:3; Philemon 4**)
 4. These are just some of whom he wrote! How many others did Paul pray for?
 5. This was not just a general statement: "for all whom is our duty to pray."
 6. Paul did not pray like this in a public assembly!

IV. What if we apply this material?

- A. We will begin asking like never before. (**Jas 4:1-3**)
1. We may have to build our faith and our endurance!
 2. We will likely begin taking notes.
- B. Consider some possible list.
1. Find out about home studies and pray for them.
 2. Pray for the preachers we support by name.
 3. Pray for everyone in your class by name, for everyone in the church by name.
 4. Pray for those who teach.
- C. Is there a greater value in many praying? Yes! (**Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; 2 Cor 1:11**)

Conclusion: What if we begin applying our faith? (**Eph 3:20**)

- A. How do we use the promises of God, as pieces of paper or power to be used?
(**2 Pt 1:3-4**)

Here is an interesting conversation between a Swedish peasant woman and her persistent visitor.
"Does your son in America never send you any money?" was asked of a poverty-stricken old Swedish woman. "Never!" was the bitter answer "He writes often and speaks of sending money, but never a bit have I seen from him. I am getting old and poor and soon I must die or go to the poorhouse. Yet he is rich and prosperous. Such is the ingratitude of children!"

"Is there never anything in the letters?" asked the persistent visitor.

Oh, yes, he always sends pictures; but I do not need pictures: I need money."

"Have you saved those pictures?"

"They are all pasted on the wall in my bedroom. Would you like to see them?"

"Certainly," answered the visitor. When she looked into the bare little room she saw pasted on the walls a small fortune in American paper money.

She had a room full of money but she failed to see its value. The very presence of this gift suggested that someone loved her and cared for her though that one lived in another land.