

Prayer- Part 1

Fervent Prayer

“And He said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, ‘friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?’ And he from within shall answer and say, ‘Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I can not rise and give thee.’ I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth,” (Lu. 11:5-8).

Jesus gives this simple parable in Luke 11 to teach us to pray persistently, and not to give up. This parable was specifically taught after the teaching on the Lord’s Prayer, which asks us to have our motives right (to seek God’s glory and not our own). Once this is worked into our lives, then the exhortation not to give up in what we are asking is applied.

I. Seeing the Needs – The first point implied in the parable is that the host must have had an open and sensitive heart to have taken in a friend at midnight, and to have been concerned about his needs. In humility he recognizes that he did not have the ability to meet the need on his own, and he turned to his neighbor for help.

- A. A Sensitive Heart. We must open our eyes and recognize the needs of those around us. I Jn. 3:17-18.
 - 1. Jesus’ heart was broken as He saw the people’s need for God. Lu. 19:41-42; Mk. 6:34; Matt. 23:37.
 - 2. He touched the people at their point of need. Mk. 6:50; Matt. 14:14; Mk. 1:41.
 - 3. We must be willing to respond to the needs of those around us. Matt. 25:34-40; Lu. 10:33-37; Ac. 3:3-7.
 - 4. A sensitive heart will be quick to pray for others. I Tim. 2:1-4; Ja. 5:16.

IMPORTANT POINTS

What is meant by having a sensitive heart in prayer?

- B. A Humble Heart. This attitude was necessary or the host would have been too embarrassed to go next door for help; or as in the case of prayer, we will be self-sufficient and not turn to God for help.
1. Many men recognized their low position as compared to God's. Gen. 18:27, 32:10; Ex. 3:11; I Sam. 9:21; I Ki. 3:7; Matt. 8:8; Mk. 1:7.
 2. God regards the prayer of the humble and the brokenhearted. Ps. 102:17, 51:17, 34:18.
 3. It is God's movement in the lives of people that makes changes in them; it is not our own strength, or love, or willing hands. Ps. 44:3; Deu. 1:30; II Chr. 32:8.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Why is a "humble heart" necessary in prayer?

II. Actively Asking – The last hours in a person's life often have particular importance. Jesus' last hours with His disciples before His crucifixion were filled with invitations to pray. Jn. 14:13-14, 15:7-8, 16, 16:23-24.

- A. Verbalize Specific Requests. "Give me three loaves." When we pray specifically, we clearly see when and how God answers.
1. Do not ask God at random for things, for every idle word will be judged. Matt. 12:36-37; Ecc. 5:2.
 2. When the blind man called out for Jesus, the Lord asked him specifically what he wanted. Mk. 10:51.
 3. Hannah prayed specifically for a son, and then could testify that the Lord answered her. I Sam. 1:27.
 4. It strengthens our faith when we see God move in response to our prayers. II Chr. 33:12-13; I Ki. 8:41-43.
- B. Examples. We have several examples of men praying for other Christians, asking God that they would:
1. Be strengthened in the inner man to live righteously. Eph. 3:16-17a; I Thes. 3:13, 5:23.
 2. Know, experience, and move in God's love. II Thes. 3:5; Eph. 3:17b-19; I Thes. 3:12.

3. Fully know God's will and enabled to do it. Ph. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12; Heb. 13:20-21; Col. 4:12.
4. Know and trust God, and have the understanding of what He has made available. Eph. 1:17-19; Rom. 15:13.
5. Be a fearless channel for the Holy Spirit in actively sharing the Gospel. Philemon 6; Eph. 6:19.
6. Have good fellowship together. I Thes. 3:11; Rom. 1:10.

IMPORTANT POINTS

What were Paul and others specifically praying to God for?

III. Preparing for the Struggle – Prayer is sometimes described as a fierce struggle (Col. 2:1, 4:12-13; Rom. 15:30), which the fainthearted will not finish. It took strength for the man to go next door at such a late hour. There are several steps necessary to prepare for the battle:

- A. Repent of Sin. Sin will keep God from hearing our prayers, and the work of the Cross must be appropriated. Isa. 59:1-2, 1:15-16; Ps. 66:18; Micah 3:4. Here are some common sins hindering answers to prayer:
 1. Selfish motives. Ja. 4:1-3.
 2. Not living according to any truth revealed in the Word. Pr. 21:13, 28:9; I Pet. 3:7.
 3. Long past disobedience unatoned for. II Sam. 21:1-14; II Sam. 12:13-20; Deu. 1:40-45; I Sam. 14:24-38.
 4. Lack of whole-hearted devotion and dependence. II Chr. 15:2; Zech. 7:12-13; Pr. 1:28-29; Lu. 18:9-14; Matt. 6:5.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Detail the sins listed which will hinder prayer.

- B. Be Ready for Bad Circumstances. The host was told he could not have his request, “The door is shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.”
1. Our senses will often tell us that we cannot have what we ask of God, and those senses can nullify our faith. II Cor. 5:7; Mk. 5:35-36.
 2. Our faith must rest only on His Word. Rom. 4:19-20, 10:17.
 3. Thomas is an example of one who had to see before he could believe. Jn. 20:25-29.
- C. Pray Fervently. “...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” (Ja. 5:16). This involves stirring up our spirit when praying, for it must overcome the weakness of the flesh. Mk. 14:37-38.
1. Prayer is not measured by time as much as by fervency and right standing with God. Matt. 23:14; Lu. 20:47, 18:10-14.
 2. There are godly examples of prayer coming forth from the inner man anointed by the Holy Spirit. Ezra 10:1; Ac. 12:5; Ex. 32:31-32; Ja. 5:17-18; Esther 4:1-3; Lu. 22:44.
 3. Sometimes fasting is needed to stir up this prayer. Ezra 8:23.
 - a. Jesus taught that prayer with fasting was necessary to bring God’s power. Matt. 17:21, 9:15.
 - b. There are definite times when God calls us to prayer and fasting. Joel 1:14; Matt. 4:1-2.
 - c. Fasting must be done as unto the Lord, and not to impress man. Matt. 6:16-18; Isa. 58:6-9.
 - d. Fasting is useless without also living right. Jer. 14:10-12; Zech. 7:4-6, 13; Isa. 58:3-5.
 4. Sometimes prayer with other Christians is needed to stir up prayer ruled by the Spirit.
 - a. Jesus revealed to us the power of joint prayer. Matt. 18:19-20.
 - b. The emphasis in praying together is to be of “one accord.” Ac. 1:14, 4:24; Ph. 2:2.
 - c. The church would gather together to pray about important matters. Ac. 12:5-12, 21:5.

IMPORTANT POINTS

What is involved in stirring up the spirit within to really pray?

D. Bind Satan. We must realize that prayer takes us into battle with Satan. It is in prayer that we can receive spiritual victory which can then be walked out and lived in the natural. Dan. 10:12-14.

1. To pray, we put on all the armor God has given us. Eph. 6:10-11, 13-18; I Th. 5:8.
2. In prayer, we cease fighting with circumstances and with the attitudes and words of those around us, and we take our stand against our spiritual enemy. Eph. 6:12; II Cor. 10:3-5; Ps. 149:6-9.
3. We have the necessary authority in Jesus to overcome Satan's work. Lu. 10:19; Col. 2:10; Matt. 16:18; I Jn. 3:8.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Describe the war that should be fought against Satan in prayer.

E. Have Faith. Lack of faith in God will also keep our prayers from being answered. Matt. 17:19-20, 21:21-22; Mk. 11:22-24.

1. Do not go back and forth with believing and then doubting. Ja. 1:5-8.
2. Trust in God's ability. Rom. 4:21; Lu. 1:34-38.
3. God is willing to move on our behalf. Matt. 8:3.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Describe the forms of doubt that will hinder prayer.

IV. Actively Waiting – Many prayers go unanswered because we are willing to accept “no” for an answer from the enemy, (Lu. 18:4-5). The host knocking at the friend’s door refused to give up. He was then rewarded with “as many as he needeth.”

- A. Perseverance. “And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened,” (Lu. 11:9-10). The Greek literally says to “ask and keep on asking.”
 - 1. Jacob was determined to receive from God. Gen. 32:26.
 - 2. God is more than willing to give us all things in Christ. Rom. 5:6-11; Lu. 12:32; Matt. 7:11.
 - 3. If we do not grow weary in prayer, we will reap if we faint not. Gal. 6:9; Lu. 18:7-8; Matt. 15:22-28.

- B. God’s Abundant Provision. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Lu. 11:13). By promising to give us the Holy Spirit, God has provided us with:
 - 1. Power. Micah 3:8; Ac. 1:8; I Cor. 2:4; II Tim. 1:7; Rom. 15:19.
 - 2. Leading and direction. Matt. 4:1; Rom. 8:14; Lu. 2:27; Ac. 8:29, 16:7.
 - 3. Quickening of the Word in evangelism. Lu. 12:12; Jn. 14:26; Ac. 4:7-12.
 - 4. Freedom from sin. Rom. 8:1-5, 12-14; Gal. 5:16.
 - 5. Revelation. I Cor. 2:9-11; Ac. 11:28, 21:4.
 - 6. Gifts and fruit. I Cor. 12:1-8; Gal. 5:22.
 - 7. Help with prayer and worship. Rom. 8:26; Jn. 4:23-24.
 - 8. Conviction and salvation. Jn. 16:7-11; Rev. 22:17; Jn. 3:5-8.
 - 9. Sanctification and bring into the image of Jesus. II Th. 2:13; II Cor. 3:18; I Cor. 6:11.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Describe God’s abundant provision in promising the Holy Spirit.

V. Point of Decision – Jesus challenges us in this parable to be fervent and persistent in prayer. It is when we realize our own inability to meet our needs of those around us that we will most diligently seek our God who can meet those needs. As long as we feel strong in ourselves, we will work and not pray. But when we catch a glimpse of the great need, our own inability to meet that need, and the vast resources and mercy of our God, we will begin to pray with diligence. We do this by allowing our inner man to be quickened by the Holy Spirit, and to keep away from sin and unbelief. As we actively wait on the Lord’s promises, we find that, “No good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless,” (Ps. 84:11).

PERSONAL APPLICATION - FERVENT PRAYER

1. What changes can I make in my day to day living that will help me to know more of what to pray through an open and humble heart?

2. What specific steps should I take to prepare for the fierce struggle of prayer, and then to see answers to my prayers?

3. What has the Holy Spirit made available to me that I’m not taking advantage of?

4. At this point of decision, I see the need to move from “lazy prayer” to more earnest prayer quickened by the Spirit. In order to do this, I want to...
