

## BIBLICAL PRAYER (28)

When we get to the place where we can thank God for burdens, trials, setbacks, disciplines, sufferings and sorrows, we are becoming very spiritually minded.

**The assumption that one makes in being able to thank God for all kinds of things is that God is sovereign over everything that He permits.**

It is also clear that the Apostle Paul demonstrated this attitude of thankfulness in his own prayer life just prior to his own death when he was in a Roman prison. One of the things that enabled him to thank God for Timothy and for all things was the fact that he had served God with a clear conscience (**II Timothy 1:3**).

John Chrysostom, a Bible scholar and pastor in Constantinople who was exiled because of his stand for God and His Word in A.D. 404, said on his way to his own exile: “Thank God for everything” (J. Oswald Sanders, *Prayer Power Unlimited*, p. 30).

Samuel Rutherford, a Scottish theologian and pastor of the 1600s, suffered much criticism and abandonment for many reasons during his ministry, including his strong stand against Arminianism. He too was exiled and in one of his famous letters which he wrote after being banished to Aberdeen between 1636-1638, he thanked God saying, “O, what I owe to the furnace, the file and the hammer of my Lord Jesus” (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

**When believers reach heaven, it is important to understand that most forms of prayer will cease.** Obviously, when we are in the presence of God, most prayer will no longer be needed. However, thanksgiving and worship will continue throughout all eternity. Therefore, this is one type of prayer that is extremely important to us and to God.

The normal tendency in prayer is to invest most of the time in making requests or petitioning God for some need. These certainly are legitimate uses for prayer, but they must never become the only type of prayer that we offer to God, for such a focus will make one’s prayer life very stale.

Someone has wisely said, “All sunshine makes a desert.” What we need to learn is that even our moments of trial and testing have been ordained by a Sovereign God in order to make us become more of the blossoming and beautiful person that He wants us to be. If we think of adverse circumstances in this way, it is much easier to thank God in every context.

A thankful heart is a godly heart and one who thanks God, honors God.

**Type #6** - There is the prayer of petition or request.

The word translated “petition” or “request” (αἰτέω) is a word that means to ask something or request something or petition someone for something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 14).

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Petitionary prayer or request prayer is prayer that goes to God for the purpose of asking Him for something. Any prayer that requests that God do something or give something or move in some way may be classified under this category. The specific emphasis of the word seems to be to make some personal request to the proper authority.

- 1) **Luke 23:24** - In the use of the word here, Pilate sentenced Jesus in direct relationship to the people's petitions or demands.
- 2) **Philippians 4:6** - Here is a verse that incorporates four different types of prayer. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer (προσευχομαι) and supplication (δεησις) with thanksgiving (ευχαριστια) let your requests (αιτεω) be made known to God."

We could analyze this prayer by saying God wants us to go to Him in prayer, with our specific needs (supplication) and thank Him and make our requests to Him. This formula has much to do with not being anxious.

- 3) **I John 5:15** - This verse repeats the word "request" or "ask" three times. The contextual point is that once we have eternal life, we may be absolutely certain that we have the right to ask God things and He will hear us (**I John 5:13-15**). In order to generate an answer from God, what we ask must be consistent with His will.

**Type #7** - There is the prayer of confession . **I John 1:9**

The word "confess" (ομολογεω) is one that means to speak in the same language in the sense of agreeing with, confessing and acknowledging the same thing (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 317).

In the context of **I John**, the issue that needs to be agreed to is the issue of calling our own sin as a believer exactly the same as what God calls it so that we may maintain harmonious fellowship with God.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer has great doctrinal insight into this prayer:

"Confession, being the outward expression of an inward conviction, is closely related to repentance. The problem before the believer who has sinned is not restoration to the saved estate, which estate depends wholly upon the immutable Person and merit of Christ and therefore continues what it is so long as the basis abides upon which it rests; it becomes rather a matter of fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed and God cannot have communion with evil; however, when the sinning Christian turns to God in full acknowledgment of the sin, accepting God's estimation of it, agreement is established again and restoration to fellowship is at once experienced. On the Divine side, there is both cleansing and forgiveness required and also provided, and these are in the faithfulness of God to His promise and purpose, and in justice since Christ has borne the sin in question (**I John 1:9**).

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Naturally, such provisions are intended only for those who are actually sons of God and thus enter into a union with God which cannot be broken. Confession should always be unto God and to no one else unless, perchance, some other person has been injured by the sin. It should be recognized also that true confession is a complete admission of the evil wrought. Asking God to forgive is wholly beside the issue. He has said that He will forgive and cleanse the saved one who confesses his sin. This promise should be taken exactly as given, and faith should reckon that when sincere confession has been made the promise is kept, regardless of emotions respecting the sin which may continue. Two important passages bear on the Christian's confession of sin: "For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (**I Corinthians 11:31-32**); "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7, pp. 90-91).

We may recall that David was miserable until he finally faced and confessed his sin. It was this crucial heartfelt confession that ultimately led to him finding God's forgiveness and restoration (**Psalm 32:1-5**).

When it comes to the subject of confessing sin, one problem arises as to whether or not the sin should be confessed just to God or to others also. In answering this question, it will be observed that when a believer sins, he must always confess it to God in order to maintain sweet fellowship with Him, and there are times when the sin also needs to be confessed to others. The general principle is this - **the extent of the confession directly corresponds to the extent of the sin**.

For example, a sin against God alone needs to be confessed to God alone. As J. Oswald Sanders writes, in such a case "to confess to someone else would serve no purpose other than to give that person knowledge of the sin, and there is no benefit in that" (*Prayer Power Unlimited*, p. 35).

If the sin were committed against another human and against God, the confession needs to be made to God and to the offended party. In fact, generally speaking, the matter would not be resolved until such a confession were made (**James 5:16**).

A good illustration of this is found in **Luke 15:21** in which the prodigal son knew he had sinned against God and against his father. Sanders observed, "Confession to God would have been inadequate and would not have brought peace of conscience; nor would it have restored him to the old filial relationship with his father. Once full confession was made, restoration was complete" (*Ibid.*, p. 35).

Jesus Christ clearly taught that wrongs against a brother need to be made right in order for true worship to take place (**Matthew 5:23-24**). At times it is necessary to confess to others. If the sin were committed that affects the whole group or church, the confession needs to be as public as the sin. Such a confession has a very sobering effect and ultimately may bring healing to the one making the confession and those hearing the confession. When this type of confession is made, the entire group can begin the process of forgiveness and possible restoration.