

Morning Service ~ June 3, 2007

Prayer is not just something we do. Prayer is the very fabric from which the Christian is cut. Think about it: your salvation and mine comes from God the Father responding to the prayer of His Son from the Cross when Jesus prayed, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

Prayer is the lifeblood of the saint.

When the apostle Paul wrote, "*Pray without ceasing,*" he was talking about a lifestyle that overflowed with prayer.

Prayer pours forth from us always... it spills forth from us because it springs forth within us. Unceasing prayer is as unconscious as the breath in our lungs and beat of our hearts.

Consider that the victory that our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, has given you at Calvary to have the kind of the answer for a situation without regret and without second-guessing.

Have you ever been put on the spot with making a decision; then after you've made it, wondered for the next few days whether it was the right one, whether it honored God?

How about in speaking forth the Word of God?

Or in keeping silent?

I have had fewer and fewer times like that as the years pass. It's because God wants to develop in us a lifestyle of unceasing prayer and communion with Him.

Yet, this is born overnight. This kind of walk is developed through dedicated, diligent, and determined times of communion with God in the CLOSET OF PRAYER.

Last week we examined entering the closet and shutting the door of that closet.

Entering the closet meant to make a determined commitment to be alone with the heavenly Father to commune with Him. This was setting a time and place to meet with God.

Shutting the door to that closet was to make every effort to remove the distractions that would keep you from giving God your undivided attention.

All prayer is centered in the truth that Jesus spoke to His

disciples on the night He was betrayed:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6).

THE WAY (the Cross of Christ)

True prayer is Cross-accessed.

As Jesus Christ said that He was the way to God, the only way, He was speaking of His substitutionary death upon the Cross.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).

And I mentioned last week, trying to enter the presence of God through steps, gimmicks, extra things (lighting candles, burning incense, the sign of the Cross), brings DISHONOR to the Cross of Christ because their use suggests that Jesus' death wasn't good enough, wasn't sufficient enough to get you to God.

You and I, as Christian believers, have access to God through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

THE TRUTH (the Word of Christ)

True prayer is Bible-founded.

As Jesus said that He was the truth, the only truth, He was saying that He was the Living Word, and the entire Bible is centered in Him.

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Prayer without the Word and apart from the Word is futile.

The Bible without prayer and apart from prayer is fruitless.

THE LIFE (the Person of Christ)

True prayer is Christ-exalted.

"And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (**Philippians 2:8-11**).

Prayer that does not exalt Christ is prayer that exalts something other than God, i.e., self, world, Satan

"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (**Matthew 12:30**).

TRI-CENTERED PRAYER

Prayer that is:

ACCESSED BY THE CROSS

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

ALWAYS EXALTING CHRIST

Violating any one of these things hinders our prayers. Certainly, there are many things that can hinder our prayers, but a closer study of those hindrances (i.e., **James 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:7**) will reveal that its root is really a violation of one of those three truths above.

The prayer that is powerful and effective, the prayer that accomplishes much, is the prayer that contains all three, as it is written,

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much..." (**James 5:16**).

Confessing our faults for healing is merciful Cross-centered prayer.

Praying for one another for healing is intercessory Christ-centered prayer.

Morning Service ~ June 3, 2007

Since we pray, not in our own righteousness, but in the power of Christ's righteousness, that would be the Scripture-centered prayer of the prophet (as **James 5:17-18** even gives us the example of the prophet Elijah).

Remember, that doesn't necessarily mean that we shouldn't pray for things that we want.

Brand new Christians must begin with praying for things... just as babies do ask for things and not how they can please the parents. Babies do please parents just by being babies. But as we mature...

I often pray for something and sometimes it's answered positively and I get what I've prayed for; sometimes it's answered negatively, and God had something better in mind for me. It is written,

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

FATHER WHICH SEETH SECRETLY

Notice that the verse says that the Father SEES us in prayer, not HEAR us in prayer.

What is more important? HIS WILL or YOURS?

I have already mentioned **Romans 8:26**, that the Bible tells us that the Spirit has to help us in our weaknesses, *"for we know not what we should pray as we ought..."*

Our heavenly Father knows the end from the beginning. HE KNOWS.

We do not.

Therefore, it is more important that WE HEAR HIM.

Years ago I prayed a prayer that the Father would make me like Jesus. Although I didn't know it specifically at the time, but I was praying according to Scripture: **Romans 8:29**

I've come to realize that I don't need to pray for TO BE HOLY; TO BE RIGHTEOUS; TO BE A MAN OF GOD; TO BE A MAN OF PRAYER...

Morning Service ~ June 3, 2007

1st, TO BE WITH HIM

2nd, TO PRAY ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

BOTH ARE BY HIS WORD

Our Father seeth in secret means that we don't have to be pretentious with Him. HE KNOWS ALL THINGS!

As Paul writes to the Romans, "*I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing...*"

God knows that we don't want to be holy. We don't really want to be righteous. We want things to be good NOW. We want our circumstances to be pleasant NOW. We want health, wealth, and prosperity NOW.

We're not fooling God.

But when we come to Him, applying the first truth of this Sermon on the Mount, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit,*" coming to God in humility and brokenness, realizing that I have nothing of myself to offer Him, **THEN...**

OUR FATHER SHALL REWARD THEE OPENLY

The outcome, the result, the effect, the product, the fruit of our secret prayer life...

IS A LIFE OF **HOLINESS** (noticeably holy to those around you)

IS A LIFE OF **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (noticeably righteous to others)

IS A LIFE OF **ANSWERED PRAYER** (noticeable in your circumstances)

IS A LIFE OF **UNCEASING PRAYER** (sensitive to pray always to Him)

IS A LIFE OF **FULFILLMENT** (joy & peace amidst the trials)

IS A LIFE OF **THANKSGIVING** (recognizing God's provision in all)

IS A LIFE OF **PURE WORSHIP** (can't wait for church & can't wait to get out of church to tell others about the goodness of God)

AND THE LIST IS ENDLESS...

BECAUSE HE...

Morning Service ~ June 3, 2007

"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

12. Closing Prayer
13. Closing Hymn: **Hymn 325** - "Have Thine Own Way"
14. Benediction