

10.03.2012 THE PROMISE OF PRAYER

Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. Psalm 55:17

Our lessons this quarter are called 'Glimpses of God'. When we study the topic of prayer in the Bible, what does it reveal to us of God? And why does God call us to communicate with Him through prayer?

What Prayer reveals to us of the Person and character of God:

1. The Fatherhood of God
2. The Intercession of God
3. The Power of God
4. The Humility of God

The Fatherhood of God

'Our Father who art in heaven...'

God who dwells in light ineffable, whose throne is surrounded by angels who cover their faces as they declared His holiness; who cannot be known to sinful man except by revelation, has adopted us and invites us to call Him 'Father'; the word used in the Greek is the informal word that children use in simplicity, trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness and the certainty of being loved.

How can sinful man thus approach God? It is only through Christ Jesus, through whom God has reconciled the world to Himself (2Cor 5:17-19). Christ declares before the Father that He comes before the throne of God with 'the children God has given Him' (Heb 2:13), the ransomed of the ages. In Christ Jesus, we are now the sons of God and have the right to call Him 'Father'.

The Gifts of the Father

All our physical and material needs. Matthew 6:32, Luke 12:30

The Holy Spirit, who is the best gift of all. Luke 11:9-13

It is His pleasure to give us the Kingdom of God. Luke 12:32

"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus". Philippians 4:19

The Intercession of God

Christ prays for us.

'But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail...' Luke 22:32

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. John 17:20, 21

The Spirit intercedes for us when we pray.

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts

knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26, 27

The Power of God

God is gracious to manifest His power on His children's behalf. Matthew 6:13

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' Jeremiah 3:3

Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. Psalm 91:9-11

He keeps us from falling.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy... Jude 1:24

He has power to forgive our sins. Matthew 9:6

All power and authority is given to Christ and He shares this power with believers that they may share in His work of healing and calling men to salvation. Matthew 28:18, Mark 3:15, 6:7.

Those who call on God will abound in hope, be filled with joy and peace and be established in the gospel, by the power of God. Romans 15:13, 16:25

...I make mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...that you may know...what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. Ephesians 1:16-19

The Humility of God

When we talk of the humility of God, we are reminded of Christ's humbling of Himself described in Isaiah 53 and Philippians 2:5-9. But God has also humbled Himself by giving to the church, the Body of Christ, His mission of salvation to the entire world. He has also given to us the ministry of intercession and reconciliation. When one contemplates on how perfectly God could accomplish this by the working of the Godhead and unfallen angels alone; and yet He trusts us with this great work, we must bow down before Him and acknowledge that we are totally unworthy and incapable of ourselves to do the task. It is only as we recognise that we are earthen vessels, that we are weak, and no human might or power counts for anything in doing the work of God, that we will lay our glory in the dust and beseech God to work in us and through us by His Spirit, to give the good news of the gospel to all the world.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2 Cor 4:7

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 18:19, 20

The Believer and Prayer

'Prayer is the breath of the soul...'

In our physical lives, we would not live meaningful lives after 5 minutes of cessation of our breathing. How essential then it is for the believer to understand the importance of prayer in the spiritual life. Most of us do not experience the perpetual joy and peace and assurance that come from knowing God intimately. And yet, this is but a fraction of

what we can experience if we spend time unceasingly with God in prayer. We will get to know God's heart; His desire for our lives and we will ask Him for only that which we know is His will for our lives. He will show us the desires and hidden longings of other men's hearts as well, so that we will always have a word to speak in season to him that is weary. We will understand the power of God, and know that it is not given to us because of our goodness, but because we ask in faith and in the Name of Jesus. We will not wait for sudden crises to kneel before God and plead with Him, but when crises do come, we will calmly go to God and acknowledge that He is the sovereign LORD, and that we ask for His will to be done for His glory alone. As we grow nearer to Him through a life of constant prayer and meditation on His Word, we will come to the place that we continually claim the promises of God as we come to Him in prayer, and the life of prayer will also be a life of continual praise to God 'who does all things well'.

All this we know from the One who has gone before us, Christ Jesus. His ministry on earth was perfect, because, busy as He was, He nevertheless spent hours every day in the secret place of prayer, communing with His Father, learning of Him His will for the day.

When we understand this, we shall have to confess that the lack of power and ministry in the church is primarily due to our lack of prayer.

For Reflection:

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; Col 4:2

Continue steadfastly in prayer...Romans 12:12

Pray without ceasing... for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess 5:17

Do I even pray for one hour a day?

"What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matt 26:40, 41

Christ is here telling us that no matter how willing we may be in spirit, our flesh will always let us down, unless we are always praying.

The Lack of Prayer

You do not have because you do not ask. James 4:2

No one calls on Your name or strives to lay hold on You. Isa 64:7

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Isa 59:16

Am I an intercessor with God for my people and my church?

I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. Isa 62:6-7

We pray always for you. 2 Thess 1:11

Am I abiding in Christ and trusting only in Him for my righteousness?

If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. John 15:7

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

We have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. 1 John 3:21, 22

Prayerlessness is Sin

Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. 1 Samuel 12:23

Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? What would we gain by praying to Him? Job 21:15

Do I have confidence in the God I pray to?

And all things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:24

Do I ask for my own pleasure or in accordance with the will of God?

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:3

Do I ask in the name of Jesus and for the glory of God?

And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:13

My Response:

Lord, teach me to pray. Luke 11:1
