

# GREAT PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE

An Outlined Study of Prayers in the Old and New Testaments



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## TABLE OF CONTENT

	Introduction	3
I	When men first began to pray – Genesis 4:1-26	6
II	Prayer in the life of Eliezer – Genesis 24:1-67	8
III	Prayer in the life of Jacob – Genesis v32:1-32	10
IV	Prayer in the life of Moses – Exodus 32:11-14; Psalm 90:1-17	15
V	Prayer in the life of Hannah – I Samuel 1:9-18; 2:1-10	18
VI	Prayer in the life of David – II Samuel 7 and Select Psalms	22
VII	Prayer in the life of Solomon – I Kings 8:22-66	33
VIII	Prayer in the life of Hezekiah – II Kings 19:14-19	38
IX	Prayer in the life of Jehoshophat – II Chronicles 20:1-30	42
X	Prayer in the life of Ezra – Ezra 9:1-10:17	46
XI	Prayer in the life of Daniel – Daniel 9:1-27	50
XII	Prayer in the life of Habakkuk – Habakkuk 3:1-19	55
XIII	Prayer in the life of Jesus Christ	59
	A. Christ's pattern prayer for His disciples – Matthew 6:5-18	59
	B. Christ's pattern prayer for His disciples – Luke 11:1-13	69
	C. Christ's glorification prayer – John 17:1-26	73
XIV	Prayer in the life of the early church – Acts 4:23-31	95
XV	Prayer in the life of the Apostle Paul	101
	A. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians' greater knowledge of God – Ephesians 1:15-23	101
	B. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians' greater love of Christ – Ephesians 3:14-21	107

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### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Definitions.

1. John Bunyan writes that,

Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.<sup>1</sup>

2. Benjamin B. Warfield writes:

The sacred idea of prayer per se is, therefore, to put it sharply, just communion with God. God may have communion with us without prayer; He may enter our souls beneath consciousness, and deal with us from within; and because He is within us we can be in communion with Him apart from prayer. Now, I think we may say, emphatically, that prayer is a means of grace above everything else because it is in all its forms conscious communion with God. This is the source of all grace. When the soul is in contact with God, in intercourse with God, in association with Him, it is not only in an attitude to receive grace; it is not only actually seeking grace; it [the soul of the saved individual] is already receiving and possessing grace, and intercourse with God is the very essence of prayer.<sup>2</sup>

3. James Montgomery, English poet, hymn writer, and publisher, wrote in 1818:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Unuttered or expressed;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear  
The upward glancing of an eye,  
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try;  
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach  
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
The Christian's native air,  
His watchword at the gates of death;  
He enters heaven with prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> John Bunyan, *Works*, I, p. 623.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Faith and Life*, p. 152.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,  
 Returning from his ways,  
 While angels in their songs rejoice  
 And cry, "Behold, he prays!"

The saints in prayer appear as one  
 In word, in deed, and mind,  
 While with the Father and the Son  
 Sweet fellowship they find.

No prayer is made by man alone  
 The Holy Spirit pleads,  
 And Jesus, on th'eternal throne,  
 For sinners intercedes.

O Thou by Whom we come to God,  
 The Life, the Truth, the Way,  
 The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:  
 Lord, teach us how to pray.

B. Select comments.

1. Jonathan Edwards, in a sermon titled *The Most High a Prayer-hearing God*, based on Psalm 65:2, declares:

Though He is infinitely above all, and stands in no need of creatures; yet He is graciously pleased to take merciful notice of worms of the dust [Job 25:4-6]. He manifests and presents Himself as the object of prayer, appears a sitting on a mercy-seat, that men may come to Him by prayer. When they stand in need of anything, He allows them to come, and ask it of Him; and He is wont [accustomed] to hear their prayers. . . . Why doth God require prayer in order to the bestowment of mercies? It is not in order that God may be informed of our wants [needs] or desires. He is omniscient, and with respect to His knowledge unchangeable. . . . There may be two reasons given why God requires prayer in order to the bestowment of mercy. . . . With respect to God, prayer is but a sensible acknowledgment of our dependence on him to his glory. . . . With respect to ourselves, God requires prayer of us in order to the bestowment of mercy, because it tends to prepare us for its reception.<sup>3</sup>

2. J. C. Ryle, in his *Practical Religion* and the chapter titled "Prayer," asserts that "prayer is the most important subject in practical religion." He provides seven reasons for this proposal which are listed as follows:<sup>4</sup>
  - Prayer is absolutely needful to a man's salvation.
  - A habit of prayer is one of the surest marks of a true Christian.
  - There is no duty in religion so neglected as private prayer.
  - Prayer is that act of religion to which there is the greatest encouragement.
  - Diligence in prayer is the secret of eminent holiness.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, II, pp. 114-116.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Practical Religion*, pp. 46-59.

- Neglect of prayer is one great cause of backsliding.
- Prayer is one of the best recipes for happiness and contentment.

However, is Ryle correct in declaring, without qualification, that prayer is “the most important subject in practical religion”? We would question this and try to strike a balance here. Is it more important to speak to God rather than to listen to God speaking? Definitely not. Hence, speaking to God in prayer ranks alongside of listening to God speak in His Word, the assumption being that both responses are authentic.

3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones seems to make a similar declaration to that of Ryle when he writes:

Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when, upon his knees, he comes face to face with God. . . . When a man is [authentically] speaking to God he is at his very acme. It is the highest activity of the human soul, and therefore it is at the same time the ultimate test of a man's true spiritual condition. There is nothing that tells the truth about us as Christian people so much as our prayer life. Everything we do in the Christian life is easier than prayer. . . . Even our concern for the salvation of souls, even our concern for God's blessing upon the preaching of the Word, even our concern for those who are near and dear to us may become truly Christian, even these things must never be given the first place, the first position [in our praying]. Still less must we ever start with our own circumstances and conditions. . . . Before we begin to think of ourselves and our own needs, even before our concern for others, we must start with this great concern about God and His honor and His glory. There is no principle in connection with the Christian life that exceeds this in importance<sup>5</sup>

Yet is praise and adoration in addressing God in prayer of greater importance than faith in His Word? Scripture would seem to uphold both as of equal importance. Indeed, prayer toward God and listening to God speak are indivisibly intertwined. This point is preeminently demonstrated in Jesus Christ's glorification prayer (John 17:2, 8, 14, 17, 26).

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<sup>5</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in The Sermon on the Mount*, II, pp. 45-46, 58.

## I WHEN MEN FIRST BEGAN TO PRAY – GENESIS 4:1-26

### A. Original righteousness, Genesis 1-2.

In unproven innocence, Adam and Eve freely communed with God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-9). There God walked, as a Theophany, and conversed with man (Gen 3:8). Such discourse, at the deepest level of man's chaste soul, was wholly free of detachment. Rather the first parents enjoyed constant soul communion with God as He embodied and imparted His holy truth to them.

### B. Original sin, Genesis 3.

Satan, as the serpent, interrupts the harmony of Eden and thrusts forth his conversation into that holy society, v. 1. As a result of Adam and Eve yielding to temptation, the following severance between God and man takes place.

1. Man chooses to flee converse with God (Gen. 3:8).
2. God converses only judgment with man (Gen. 3:16-19).
3. God banishes man from holy Eden and former unclouded fellowship (Gen. 3:22-24).
4. Man, as a consequence, is not disposed to converse with God, especially since the subject would, of necessity, concern guilt. Man is now brutish at heart so that communion with God, and thus prayer, has become antithetical to his soul. So today, the natural and carnal man, although often masquerading as religious (Matt. 6:5, 7; Luke 18:11), has no place for authentic prayer involving communion with God (Gal. 4:6-8).

### C. Original sin progresses, Genesis 4.

As a result of the Fall, the spread of unrighteousness becomes rampant in the midst of a rapidly expanding society. However, two contrasting lineages emerge which have continued to remain on through the centuries to our present society.

1. The worldly lineage of Cain (murderer of Abel), vs. 1-24.
  - a. Manifesting human religion, vs. 2-3; anger, jealousy, vs. 5-6; murder, v. 8; insolence, v. 9.
  - b. Manifesting city building, v. 17; polygamy, v. 19; agriculture, v. 20; music, v. 21; manufacturing, v. 22.
  - c. Manifesting violence and vengeance leading to murder and guilt of conscience, vs. 23-24.

2. The godly lineage of Seth (successor of Abel), vs. 25-26.
  - a. From this line of birth Luke traces the lineage of Jesus Christ as the son of Mary (Luke 3:23-38).
  - b. Matthew Henry comments: “Now began the distinction between professors and profane, which has been kept up ever since, and will be while the world stands.”<sup>6</sup>
  - c. So at the appearance of Enosh, Adam’s grandson whose name means “mortal, frail,” a significant characteristic is evident: “Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD,” v. 26, even as the moral declension of the human race accelerated toward the inevitable judgment by God in Genesis 6-8.

(1) Bunyan comments:

All true religion beginneth with fervent prayer: Or thus, That when men begin to be servants to God, they begin it with calling upon Him. Thus did Saul [who became Paul, for Ananias was to “inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, at which he observed], “Behold he prayeth” (Acts 9:11). And, “Lord have mercy upon me,” is the first of the groans of a sanctified heart.<sup>7</sup>

- (2) When man acknowledges his creatureliness, he is moved to dependently call upon God for grace; when man is at a point of extremity, sickness, confinement, limitation, he is moved to pray.
- (3) Stimulation to pray then begins with an awareness of our creatureliness, corruption, and limitations. Proud, self-sufficient man does not pray, except to display his religious excellence (Matt. 6:5).

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Bible*, I, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, II, p. 454.

## II PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF ELIEZER – GENESIS 24:1-67

### A. Eliezer is commissioned by Abraham, Genesis 24:1-9.

1. Abraham, now old over 150, Sarah being dead, seeks a suitable bride for Isaac, the heir of the promise (22:15-18). She must be from his own lineage, not the polluting influence of Canaanite paganism.
2. Eliezer, meaning “God is help,” Abraham’s oldest and most respected servant, is invested with authority to seek a bride at the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia where descendants of Abraham’s brothers live.
3. Note how Abraham reassures Eliezer that “the LORD, the God of heaven . . . will send His angel before you,” v. 7. This is surely the angel who Abraham, as well as Sarah and Israel as a nation, has previously encountered, a Theophany (16:7; 21:17; 22:11; Exod. 23:20, 23). This is significant in terms of Eliezer’s future prayers. In other words, when we pray, God has already fashioned means to accomplish His ends, often in the angelic realm (Dan. 9:20-23).

### B. Eliezer prays at Nahor, Genesis 24:10-14.

1. Using initiative, Eliezer reasons that the public well is a likely place to meet young ladies of the town. But he is restive as to who the right lady might be. After all, if he meets any woman eager for a husband, he might easily be deceived, v. 11.
2. As we shall see, Eliezer is a man who is frequent in prayer, probably having learned from his master. Here he seeks guidance from God who has covenanted with his master, who has ordained the course of Isaac’s life. Note that:
  - a. Eliezer is specific with regard to the God he is addressing; He is the only true and living God of covenant faithfulness who has already worked in miraculous ways in his master’s life. Isaac himself is a miracle child, v. 12.
  - b. Eliezer is not only specific, but also bold with regard to a stipulated answer. He believes that the wife God appoints for Isaac will be a woman of great kindness, for that is the Character of Abraham’s God, v. 14.

### C. Eliezer prays before Rebekah, Genesis 24:15-17.

1. Rebekah immediately appears, and she fulfills every detail of Eliezer’s request. Note how she is “quick” to provide a drink and “runs” to provide for his camels, and this is particularly hospitable, vs. 18, 20, 25.
2. Eliezer seems incredulous at such an immediate answer. How often we ask of God and then we doubt when He precisely answers, v. 21.



3. On learning that Rebekah is the daughter of Bethuel, he now knows for certain that she is related to Abraham. Now the answer to his prayer is as he asked God. He is overcome with awe at the grace of the divine reply and now desires to worship God in prayer, vs. 26-27.
  - a. Eleazer declares to God with great fervor the blessedness of God, that is the glory of his grace and truth and sovereign guidance. His earlier request has resulted in the prayerful praise of God, the end to which all prayer ought to be directed.
  - b. Eleazar could well have sung a verse of *The God of Abraham praise* by Thomas Olivers.

The God of Abraham praise,  
Whose all-sufficient grace  
Shall guide me all my happy days  
In all my ways.  
He calls a worm His friend,  
He calls Himself my God;  
And He shall save me to the end  
Through Jesu's blood.

D. Eliezer prays before Laban and Bethuel, Genesis 24:28-60.

1. Before partaking of generous hospitality, Eliezer recounts the purpose of His journey and the providential response of Rebekah, vs. 28-29.
2. Immediately following Laban and Bethuel's approval of Rebekah being wedded to Isaac, Eliezer prays again with thanks and praise to God, v. 52.

E. Isaac prays in the Negev, Genesis 24:61-67.

1. The death of Sarah has been an ongoing sadness for Isaac over many years. Now he prays in the desert, perhaps for a wife. Surely Abraham has not only told Isaac that he is the promised seed through whom the original promise will find fulfillment, but also the necessity of his marriage to a suitable, divinely appointed wife, is being looked into.
2. Lifting his eyes, perhaps following prayer after the manner of Eliezer, v. 15, his eyes behold an approaching camel train. It is Eliezer with Rebekah. So they marry. Surely this marriage was contracted in heaven.
3. Prayer has integrated all of the circumstances of Abraham, Eliezer, Rebekkah, and Isaac. God has been pleased to use "His angel," v. 7, to accomplish the requests of the faithful (Ps. 34:7; Jas. 5:16).

### III PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JACOB – GENESIS 32:1-32

#### A. Stages in the early life of Jacob.

1. Jacob's departure from Rebekah's womb (Gen. 25:19-26).
2. Jacob's desire for Esau's birthright (Gen. 25:27-34).
3. Jacob's deceitful obtaining of Isaac's blessing (Gen. 27:1-45).
4. Jacob's dream at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22).
5. Jacob's dealings at Haran (Gen. 29-30).
  - a. He acquires Rachel from Laban (Gen. 29:1-30).
  - b. He acquires a family from polygamy (Gen. 29:31-30:24).
  - c. He acquires wealth from Laban (Gen. 30:25-43).
6. Jacob's departure from Haran (Gen. 31).
  - a. Laban in pursuit of Jacob (Gen. 31:1-24).
  - b. Laban in conflict with Jacob (Gen. 31:25-42).
  - c. Laban offers a covenant to Jacob (Gen. 31:43-55).
7. Jacob desires reconciliation with Esau (Gen. 32:1-32).
  - a. He is fearful of revenge (Gen. 32:1-8).
  - b. He is desperate in prayer (Gen. 32:9-12).
  - c. He is resourceful for his family (Gen. 32:13-23).
  - d. He is blessed in prayer (Gen. 32:24-32).

#### B. Jacob's prayer of desperation, Genesis 32:9-12.

1. Introduction.
  - a. Whereas Jacob had previously encountered God in a dream and made a bargain with Him at Bethel (Gen. 28:20-21), now he gives the first indication of explicit prayer being initiated toward God. His earlier confidence in personal initiative, although still evident, has been severely weakened.

- b. It is doubtful if Jacob is presently and manifestly a child of God. His earlier encounter with God at Bethel resulted in a new-found God-consciousness, whereas now at Peniel he is about to experience true conversion. Here Jacob finds himself in deep distress (Gen. 32:7), that is the mortal fear of supposedly avenging Esau. So often desperate circumstances force us to focus our attention upon prayer. Consider Hezekiah re Sennacherib's threat (II Kgs. 19:14-15); Jonah (Jonah 2:1); the Psalmist (Ps. 102:1-11).
2. The structure of Jacob's prayer.
    - a. Invocation, v. 9.
      - (1) In other words, he first addresses God in a manner that is suitable to God, Jacob, and the pressing situation. This is a common characteristic of biblical prayers, as with Daniel (Dan. 9:4) and Jesus Christ (Matt. 6:9).
      - (2) Living in a world saturated with idolatry, Jacob is careful to identify the sole and specific God he is addressing. The intent here is also to give exclusive honor to God and no other.
      - (3) There is also a desire for proper access to God, which hearing cannot be presumed upon, except the approach be based upon God's terms. The appeal then is to the God of the Abrahamic covenant, the God who according to sovereign initiative has revealed Himself and spoken, the God of proven reliability.
    - b. Confession, v. 10.
      - (1) Here Jacob appears humbled to a degree, though no mention is made of his deception of Esau and father Isaac. He seems more impressed with his material prosperity gained while living with uncle Laban. Does he now fear losing it all?
      - (2) However, Jacob is now head of a large family with two wives, two concubines, eleven sons, and one daughter; these he values above all else. But could he in fact be wiped out if God had promised, through Abraham and Isaac and at Bethel, to multiply his descendants? At the moment, Jacob's assurance has weakened.
    - c. Petition, v. 11.
      - (1) Deliver my family from Esau.
      - (2) Deliver Your family according to Your Covenant.
    - d. Faith, v. 12.
      - (1) Jacob declares his faith in the terms of the Covenant, namely God's revelation of unilateral blessing upon the seed of Abraham, already ratified to himself (Gen. 28:1-8, 10-17; 31:13). Therefore, God must act and deliver.

- (2) There must be an element of faith in authentic prayer, otherwise why should we pray to begin with? Jesus Christ requires that we “ask in prayer, believing (Matt. 21:22; cf. 7:7-11; Jas. 1:5-6; 5:15).
- (3) However, faith does not save of itself; it is linkage to He who alone hears and saves. Hence, we must know the object of our faith; we must know the God in whom we believe; His character and Word.

### 3. The content of Jacob’s prayer.

Here, as with all of the prayers of the Bible, there is no mere vague sentiment, no abstract meandering, no indefinite form addressed. Rather, those who pray in Scripture are grounded upon the knowledge of God and His Word.

#### a. The knowledge of God.

Even in this short prayer the character of God is clearly defined. His attributes are the basis of Jacob’s access, petition, and hope.

- (1) Jacob’s God is “Elohim,” the God of all power, v. 9.
- (2) Jacob’s God is “Jehovah,” the eternal “I Am” (Exod. 3:13-15), the God of loyal covenant love, v. 9.
- (3) Jacob’s God is unchanging, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, vs. 9, 12.
- (4) Jacob’s God is living, for He has spoken, vs. 9, 12.
- (5) Jacob’s God is merciful, v. 10.
- (6) Jacob’s God is self-revealing, for He has spoken, vs. 9, 12.

#### b. The knowledge of God’s Word.

- (1) It is the Word passed on from Abraham and Isaac, v. 9.
- (2) It is the Word specifically passed on to Jacob, vs. 9, 12.

### C. Jacob’s prayer of determination, Genesis 32:24-32.

#### 1. Introduction.

- a. Jacob’s earlier request to God had been, “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau,” v. 11, cf. 27:41.
  - (1) God answers by changing the heart of Esau (Gen. 33:4).
  - (2) God answers by changing the heart of Jacob (Gen. 32:26-30).

- b. Jacob's earlier request to God had been not only desperate, but sincere. However, God's answer is not as he probably expected since Jacob's deliverance required that he be delivered from himself. Only then is he truly reconciled with Esau.

2. Jacob's plan of appeasing Esau (Gen. 32:13-21).

It is strictly a scheme of outward arrangements and bribery without any communication to Esau of inward repentance. In fact Jacob was very willing to subject his servants to possible danger before himself.

3. Jacob's retreat with his family (Gen. 32:22-23).

He appears to distance his family further away from Esau across the Jabbok stream, though not himself. Rather he remains between his family and Esau. This suggests that Jacob's supreme concern was the family as a whole, but especially his eleven sons. His great problem was how God could allow his seed, and himself, to perish as he was in fact heir of the promise given to Abraham and ratified by God to his father Isaac and himself (Gen. 28:13-15).

4. Jacob's lone encounter with God (Gen. 32:24-32).

- a. Who is the "man" who wrestles with Jacob?

It is God in human form, the Angel of Jehovah, a theophany or christophany (Gen. 22:11; 24:7; 48:15-16). In other words, Jesus Christ, though not here incarnate, accosts Jacob, perhaps in a way similar to that in which Paul was waylaid (Acts 9:3-5), v. 30.

- b. What is Jacob's experience here?

Jacob "the supplanter" is assailed by Jesus Christ and humbled, even to the point of being crippled, and renamed Israel, "wrestler with God." Jacob seems to recognize this Angel as the same Angel of Jehovah who has revealed himself to Abraham and Isaac. For this reason he desperately seeks for the confirmed blessing. Thus Jacob passionately clasps hold of Christ imploring Him: I will not let you go unless You bless me," v. 26. In other words, he wants assurance of the certainty of the Covenant as channeled through himself. From now on every limp will remind him of God's confirmed promise. So Charles Wesley wrote a hymn of twelve stanzas titled *Wrestling Jacob* that includes:

In vain Thou strugglest to get free;  
 I never will unloose my hold!  
 Art Thou the man that died for Me?  
 The secret of Thy love unfold.  
 Wrestling, I will not let Thee go,  
 Till Thy name, Thy nature know.

- c. Jacob's attitude in prayer has progressed.

His earnestness in prayer concerning Esau is now overshadowed by his desire for the blessing of God, that is through Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:51). His priorities in prayer will never be the same from this point on. He is now more that God-conscious (Gen. 28:16-17); he is dominated and owned by God. Consider his prayer of blessing in old age concerning Joseph and his sons: "The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Gen. 48:15-16).

#### IV PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF MOSES – EXODUS 32:11-14; PSALM 90:1-17

##### A. The revelation of God to Moses, Exodus 3:1-17.

Having been raised in Egypt for forty years, according to both Hebrew and Egyptian culture, Moses flees to the land of Midian where he marries Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro. After a further forty years, the Angel of the Lord, who had previously wrestled with Jacob, appears to Moses “in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush” (Acts 7:20-34). Again, like Jacob, he was never the same after this divine commissioning. In the Exodus 3 account we are told of three aspects of Moses’ calling by God.

##### 1. The calling of Moses by the LORD to Himself, vs. 1-6.

While Moses surely prayed in the Sinai wilderness as he cared for the flocks of his father-in-law, his subsequent “burning bush” experience brought about radical change in his life that also resulted in a change in his manner of praying.

##### 2. The calling of Moses by the LORD to deliver Israel, vs. 7-12.

Humanly speaking, and although sympathetic with the cause of Israel’s travail in Egypt, for Moses the appointed task seemed beyond his ability. Nevertheless, God gives assurance that, in His sovereignty, Moses and Israel will meet Him at Mt. Sinai, v. 12.

##### 3. The calling of Moses by the LORD to personal identification, vs. 13-15.

Moses’ uncertainty about Israel heeding his call to follow him is God’s opportunity to reveal His specific identity in a most personal and exclusive manner. This revelation of God as Jehovah, the “I AM” LORD, becomes the ground of access for Moses in prayer.

##### B. The intercessory prayer of Moses, Exodus 32:11-14; cf. Numbers 14:11-21.

Following Israel’s excursion with idolatry by means of the golden calf and the Lord’s resultant anger, vs. 9-10, Moses “entreated the LORD his God.” v. 11. That is, Moses addressed God according to His distinctive covenant name.

While the Lord tempts Moses with the prospect of a replacement nation being formed based upon his lineage, v. 10, His faithful servant is chiefly concerned with God’s holy reputation before the Egyptians and the integrity of His unilateral covenant promise made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses in his prayer is God-centered rather than self/man-centered. Later at Kadesh Barnea, upon further rebellion and unbelief concerning possession of the promised land, again God’s threatened dispossession of Israel prompts Moses to prayerfully intercede, again with the preservation of God’s honor chiefly in mind. So the Christian similarly addresses God:

His oath, his covenant, his blood  
 Support me in the whelming flood;  
 When all around my soul gives way,  
 He then is all my Hope and Stay.  
 On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;  
 All other ground is sinking sand.

C. The anxious prayer of Moses, Numbers 11:10-15.

Following Israel's complaint in the wilderness concerning displeasure with the divinely provided manna, the LORD's resultant anger is immediately followed with Moses' grievance concerning such an insubordinate people. The Lord's prophet is so discouraged that he prefers death to continuance in leading Israel; he plainly confesses his depression and anxiety, obviously "losing heart/growing weary in doing good" (Gal. 6:9; II Thess. 3:13). Moses complains that God does not appear to appreciate his leadership, that He is responsible for Israel

The result is that the Lord is merciful toward Moses' prayerful grievance so that seventy elders are provided to assist him in his governing responsibilities, along with the promise of a liberal supply of meat, that is quail, and a resultant plague because of greed in the face of divine liberality. Jonah also complained in prayer and similarly sought death, though he was rebuked through the parable of the gourd (Jonah 4:1-11); Habakkuk also complained in prayer concerning God's seeming indifference to Judah's sin, though he received an astonishing reply (Hab. 2:2).

D. The solicitous prayer of Moses, Psalm 90:1-17.

1. The glory of the eternal LORD of Israel, vs. 1-2.
  - a. He is Adonai, the abode of the people of God, v. 1.
  - b. He is El[ohim], the eternal ground of the whole creation, v. 2.
2. The transitoriness of guilty man, vs. 3-12.
  - a. The temporal condition of man before the eternal God, vs. 3-6.
  - b. The sinful condition of man before the eternal God, vs. 7-12.
3. The petition for satisfaction from the LORD, vs. 13-17.

Here Moses calls upon his LORD to "repent," that is turn from His former justifiable anger and wrath, especially on account of His "lovingkindness," רַחֲמֵי, chesed, or steadfast, loyal covenant love to Israel, v. 14, cf. Ps. 103:8-1. So today, the Christian who identifies with the failings of Israel can here learn to pray as taught by Moses.

- a. Let His nearness be restored, v. 13.
- b. Let His lovingkindness satisfy, v. 14.



- c. Let His gladness be regained, v. 15.
- d. Let His majesty be acknowledged, v. 16.
- e. Let His favor be fruitful, v. 17.

## V PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF HANNAH – I SAMUEL 1:9-18; 2:1-10

### A. Introduction.

1. The environment in which Hannah lived.
  - a. Israel had reached an unprecedented level of moral decadence during the reign of the Judges during 1100-1000 B.C. (Judg. 21:25), and even the sons of both Eli the high priest, and later Samuel the prophet, were not immune from corruption.
  - b. A faithful remnant still remained, like Ruth and Boaz, Hannah and Elkanah, who worshipped with faithfulness and sincerity while keeping the various Jewish feasts.
2. The character of Hannah as a woman of God.
  - a. Her name means “grace” or “compassion,” which qualities she was admired for by Elkanah and was ready to lavish them on Samuel (I Sam. 1:4-5; 2:19).
  - b. She was a woman of faith in spite of the fact of often being provoked in her barrenness by Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife (I Sam. 1:6, 18).
  - c. She had a godly husband, Elkanah, whose name means “God has possessed.” He worshipped regularly, and was devoted to Hannah. But possibly his prayer life was not to be compared with that of his wife (I Sam. 1:3, 5, 8).
  - d. She was intensely prayerful, whether in need or blessed.

### B. Hannah’s petition results in sorrow giving way to serenity, I Samuel 1:9-18.

1. Depression symptoms result with taunting from Hannah’s rival, vs. 9-10.
  - a. Lack of appetite, cf. v. 7.
  - b. Weeping, cf. v. 7.
  - c. Sadness, melancholia, cf. v. 8.
  - d. Bitterness, distress, v. 10.
2. The qualities of Hannah’s prayer of petition, vs. 11-18.
  - a. She was at the point of distress, intense need, and so turned, not indifferently, not to human help, but to the true and living God, the “LORD of hosts,” v. 11.
  - b. She was in deadly earnest and by her vow signified intense devotion, v. 11. Such a vow was binding on her except if vetoed by her husband (Num. 30:1-16), though in this case it appears that Elkanah was in full agreement.

- c. She addresses God on the basis of His proper covenant name, “LORD,” that is Jehovah or Yahweh, which occurs fifteen times in these prayer passages (cf. Exod. 3:13-15; 6:2-8). God’s real name was to her the ground of access, just as the name of Jesus Christ is the ground of access for the Christian (John 14:13-14, 26; 15:16; 16:23-26). Her prayer is based on a redemptive, covenantal relationship, not ritual or sterile religion, v. 11.
- d. She addresses God on the basis of His power and sovereignty over the “hosts”, first mentioned here in the Old Testament, that is all armies, angels, luminaries, v. 3, 11. This title is used prolifically by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.
- e. She is willing to be God’s debtor with regard to her child, to be in grateful subjection, v. 11.
  - (1) If given a son, she will offer him to God in lifelong service, which was more than that of a Levitical priest being from 25 to 50 years of age.
  - (2) If given a son, he will be a lifelong Nazirite, even for a longer term than normally required, usually from 30 to 100 days (Num. 6:1-21), as a sign of commitment, separation and consecration unto God.
- f. She is persistent, “having prayed much,” v. 12.
- g. She is misunderstood by Eli who considers her to be intoxicated with wine rather than sorrow, vs. 12-16.
- h. She receives the intercession of another, namely Eli the high priest, and so receives assurance, faith, serenity, vs. 17-18. Likewise the believer today receives comfort and peace of mind through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 4:14-16).

C. Hannah’s answered petition results in the exaltation of God, I Samuel 2:1-10.

- 1. Note the similarity of v. 1 with the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-47). Most likely Mary’s declaration of praise was stimulated by Hannah’s example. Here is a perfect illustration of learning to pray according to the pattern of Scripture. Consider also Christ’s cry or prayer on the cross (Matt. 27:46), and its origin in Psalm 22:1.
- 2. Hannah is preoccupied with the person of God, not creature benefits, not personal stimulation and self-gratification. True, her prayerful request for a son has been answered. But it is the glory of God that now possesses her soul, spontaneous overflowing praise for the justification of His person. Hannah’s vindication, even Peninnah’s humiliation, is for the honor of God.
  - a. By way of illustration, two girls are engaged to be married. One is seeking after happiness and believes that her fiancé is best suited to provide it since the ring is so beautiful, and he is so generous and attentive and qualified to do well in the world. The other is chiefly attracted to the character of her fiancé, his integrity, godliness, graciousness. Hence, she is happy and content as a consequence. Which marriage is likely to last and be happy? Surely the second since this lady loves for

what her fiancé is and not simply for what he does in terms of providing personal satisfaction.

- b. Note the emphasis of heaven in Revelation 5:11-13; it is not the accoutrements of streets of gold, but the adoration of the Savior first and foremost (Rev. 21:21-23).
  - c. Likewise for Hannah, God is not simply a means to an end, but a glorious end in Himself. He does provide enriching benefits, but her first love is for the Benefactor Himself.
3. “My heart exults in the LORD,” again indicates Hannah’s address to the only true God of Israel, the God of covenant faithfulness who will maintain His promises to His people. Because of this, He is readily approachable, v. 1.
  4. “My horn is exalted in the LORD,” draws upon the posture of the strength of an ox that is capable of repulsing the charge of an enemy (Deut. 33:17).
  5. “My mouth speaks boldly [is enlarged, KJV] against my enemies,” that is Hannah has received boldness from God in the face of much opposition (I Thess. 2:2).
  6. Notice how many attributes or perfections or characteristics of God are passionately mentioned as the basis of Hannah’s exultant emphasis. This is an exceedingly “God-centered” prayer, as is the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).
    - a. God is holy, v. 2a.
    - b. God is solitary, without equal, unique, v. 2b.
    - c. God is immutable, unchanging, so that He may be relied upon, even as a rock (Ps. 62:2, 6-7), v. 2c.
    - d. God is omniscient, all-knowing, and therefore not ignorant of our problems such as Hannah’s, v. 3.
    - e. God is omnipotent, all-powerful, especially against enemies, vs. 4-5.
    - f. God is benevolent, that is bountiful in His supply to the needy, v. 5.
    - g. God is sovereign, that is in total, unflustered control of mankind, and orders all things according to the good pleasure of His just and perfect will (Eph. 1:11). Only a sovereign God is worth praying to, vs. 6-8.
    - h. God is gracious, that is He upholds those who acknowledge their impotence and need of His sustaining power, v. 9.
    - i. God is just, that is history will vindicate His righteousness when Satan and his hosts are defeated and eternally punished, v. 10.

7. Hannah's prayer ends with a prophetic climax, v. 10b.
  - a. At the consummation of this age, God will judge the whole earth by means of the appointment of His King (Son). And He, Jesus Christ, will reign on earth for ever and ever (Ps. 2:4-9; Acts 17:31; Rev. 11:15). As Hannah has been both humiliated and then exalted, so likewise will be Messiah.
  - b. Hannah is inspired by the Holy Spirit to declare, at a time when Israel had no king, that after God's judgment, "He will give strength to His King, and will exalt the horn of His anointed [Hebrew, messiah]," cf. Ps:2:2. Here we see earnest prayer lifted to great heights as the Holy Spirit bears this servant lady along.

D. Conclusion.

1. In both prayers, Hannah has before her an understanding of a great and faithful God, irrespective of whether she is in need or blessed. She is governed by belief of the truth, not circumstances.
2. Hannah's ambition and delight is to raise her child, the fruit of prayer, in the service of God. Raising Samuel is to her not an interruption in her busy life, but a sacred task that not only required prayer to begin with, but also demands constant prayer.
3. The knowledge that our children are God's sovereign gift should cause us to prayerfully praise him for His goodness, and also intercede for His blessing.
4. The greater our knowledge of God, the greater will be our capacity to pray to God. When we pray to God, we should intercede for a broader and more intimate knowledge of His being. In both instances however, the greatest source of this knowledge will be the Word of God, written and incarnate, where He has most fully revealed Himself.

## VI PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF DAVID – II SAMUEL 7, AND SELECT PSALMS

### A. General introduction.

When David the shepherd boy was anointed with the Spirit of God to be king over Israel through Samuel the prophet (I Sam. 16:12-13), doubtless a new animation came to him in prayer, in playing his harp for disturbed Saul, and even in tending his father's flock at Bethlehem. Nevertheless, in slaying Goliath and defeating the Philistines, it is not until his prolonged flight from Saul that we read of his first prayerful cry in the besieged city of Keilah, "O LORD God of Israel, . . . Will the men of Keilah surrender me?" (I Sam. 23:10-11). In escaping to the wilderness because of God's advice, yet sparing Saul's life he prayerfully declares, "May the Lord judge between you and me, and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you" (I Sam. 24:12). While Saul degenerates in seeking the guidance of a spirit medium concerning the threat of a host of Philistines (I Sam. 28:1-25), David again "enquired of the LORD" concerning the threatening Amalekites and is promised victory (I Sam. 30:7-20). Following the death of Saul, David becomes king of Judah at which he prays for blessing on the men of Jabesh-Gilead since they buried the deceased king with dignity (II Sam. 2:4-7). Civil war results in the strengthening of the house of David at the subjection of the house of Saul. Upon David now being anointed king over Israel, aged 30, he further subdues the Philistines and recovers the Ark of the Covenant for settlement in Jerusalem. Then he proposes to Nathan the prophet a grandiose plan of a more permanent dwelling place for God in Jerusalem. However, upon the "Lord of hosts" making an astonishing reply (II Sam. 7:8-17), David responds with a profound prayer that reflects his wonder at the covenantal grace of his LORD.

### B. The covenantal prayer of David, early in his reign, II Samuel 7:18-29.

In view of all of David's great exploits, deep piety, and notorious sins, it is well to remember that Paul understood this greatest king of Israel to be justified in the sight of God through faith alone. Thus, "David also speaks [in Psalm 32:1-3] of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:6). So at the revelation of the Davidic Covenant to this son of Jesse, the same understanding of hope solely in God's covenant grace is expressed in prayer of bold faith.

#### 1. Introduction.

- a. God's unconditional promises, His unilateral agreements, are a source of great comfort to the objects of these agreements.

- (1) They magnify God's grace and integrity.

- (a) Israel's salvation is based upon God's immutability, His covenant faithfulness (Mal. 3:6, cf. v. 1).

- (b) Israel's hope is based upon God's steadfast covenant commitment to "the fathers" (Rom. 11:28-29).

- (2) They stimulate participants in God's covenants to fervent, spontaneous prayer.
  - (a) Ethan's praise of God's faithfulness (Ps. 89:1-4).
  - (b) Solomon's pleading for fulfillment (I Kings 8:22-26).
- b. God's unconditional covenants are His big promises, most of which are concerned with Abraham and his seed.
  - (1) The Noachic Covenant is unilateral, though it is directed toward the whole of the postdiluvian generation (Gen. 9:18-27; Jer. 33:19-21). However, the rainbow ought to stimulate all of mankind to prayer in gratitude for such steadfast benevolence.
  - (2) The Abrahamic Covenant promised to Abraham a land, a seed, and a blessing (Gen. 12:1-3), that was unilaterally signified (Gen. 15:1-21).
  - (3) The Davidic Covenant partly ratified the Abrahamic Covenant in that it detailed the promised seed, ultimately true Israelites and Jesus Christ (II Sam. 7:12-16; Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:29).
  - (4) The New Covenant partly ratified the Abrahamic Covenant in that it detailed the chief blessing promised, namely redemption to all flesh, Jew and Gentile, through Jesus Christ (Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 3:1-3; Gal. 3:16).
- c. Introduction to God's unconditional covenant with David (II Sam. 5:1-7:3).
  - (1) David's successes have not affected his deep piety.
    - (a) He captures Jerusalem, from the Jebusites, and calls it the City of David. His relationship with God is close (5:6-10).
    - (b) He is successful in his wars against the Philistines. Note how he enquires of the Lord (5:17-25), and also rests from all his enemies (7:1).
    - (c) He provides a resting place in Jerusalem for the Ark of the Covenant. As a result he is jubilant before God and provides for a festive meal (6:12-19).
    - (d) He is yet concerned for God dwelling in a house of rams' and porpoise skins (Exod. 25:5) while he dwells in a house of cedar wood (7:1-3). His desire was not carnal as some have supposed (I Kings 8:18, 27).
  - (2) God then declares to David, through the prophet Nathan, an astonishing revelation: "You may not build a house for Me. But I will build a far more splendid house for you!" Man's unworthiness is confronted with God's exceedingly abundant and sovereign grace.

2. The grace of God as a stimulus to prayer, II Samuel 7:4-17.
  - a. David is denied the privilege of building the temple since he is a man of war and bloodshed. However, he readily accepts the fact of his unworthiness (I Chron. 28:2-8).
  - b. God recalls His past gracious provisions for David, vs. 8-9a.
    - (1) I chose you as a favorite from the insignificant role of a shepherd, v. 8a.
    - (2) I chose you to rule over My people, v. 8b.
    - (3) I have given you victory over your enemies, v. 9a.
  - c. God declares His future gracious provisions for David, vs. 9b-17.
    - (1) I will give you international honor and esteem, v. 9b.
    - (2) Israel will eventually inhabit their land in peace, v. 10.
    - (3) I will build for David a “house” or “lineage” or “kingdom” that will stand forever, vs. 11-17.
      - (a) A child of David will perpetuate his kingdom, v. 12.
      - (b) He, that is Solomon, will build the temple that incorporates the features of a house, a throne, a kingdom, v. 13.
      - (c) The throne of David will be established unconditionally forever, cf. Ps. 89:34-37; vs. 13-16.
      - (d) Hence, in Luke 1:31-33 is confirmed the fact that Jesus Christ, David’s “greater son,” shall be the ultimate receiver of this promised throne, house, and kingdom, cf. vs. 13, 16.
3. The praise of God as a response in prayer, II Samuel 7:18-29.
  - a. David gives praise and thanks to God, vs. 18-24.
    - (1) He readily acknowledges that his blessings thus far have come as a result of free and sovereign grace, vs. 18-21.
      - (a) He is unworthy of past and present blessings, salvation, substance, status; “Who am I, O LORD God? . . .”, v. 18.
      - (b) He is unworthy of future blessings, cf. Jacob in Genesis 32:10-11; v. 19.
      - (c) He is astounded that God bestows on him high rank as is the manner of men in civil life. This is not a question as in the KJV, cf. I Chronicles 17:16-17, and the NASB; v. 19.



- (d) It is for “the sake of Your word” and “according to Your own heart” that God makes such unconditional promises, and this causes David to be speechless, astonished, amazed at such undeserved favor. The very essence of grace is here expressed; it is God’s goodness poured out upon the undeserving sinner since, “You know Your servant, O LORD God!” v. 20; it is based solely upon God’s nature and not man’s merit, cf. Eph. 1:5-9; vs. 20-21.
- (2) He extols God’s greatness, like Moses (Exod. 15:11), with a spontaneous declaration of praise. God is addressed as Jehovah 11 times in this prayer, usually as “Lord GOD” or “Adonai Jehovah.” While David is overcome with God’s blessings, yet the climax of his prayer is his appreciation of God Himself, v. 22.
- (3) He praises God’s redemptive goodness for taking an unholy people out of Egypt and making them holy (I Pet. 2:9), vs. 23-24.
  - (a) It is for the purpose of God making “a name for Himself, that is a reputation for being mighty, saving, gracious, holy, awesome, v. 23.
  - (b) It is for the purpose of making Israel God’s people “forever,” v. 24.
  - (c) It is for the purpose of God being acknowledged as “LORD” or “Jehovah,” in the face of the “gods” or “elohim” of the nations, vs. 23-24.
- b. David pleads that God’s Word be established, vs. 25-29.
  - (1) He boldly claims what has been promised, with a sense of eager desire. God’s promise is specified and embraced, v. 25.
    - (a) Are we weak and without strength? Claim Isaiah 40:29-31.
    - (b) Do we need guidance? Claim Proverbs 3:5-6.
    - (c) Are we tempted? Claim I Corinthians 10:13.
  - (2) David’s supreme desire is revealed, namely God’s glory through a proper understanding of God’s name, that is what His name essentially means. The glory of His name fills David with sheer delight (cf. Matt. 6:9; John 17:25-26). David’s desire for the establishment of his house, as promised, is subsidiary to the purpose of God’s glory. But it is David’s reverent love for the “LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,” that gives him boldness in prayer, v. 26-27.
    - (a) It is based upon God’s covenant name, which identifies Him as “Jehovah” in the midst of myriads of pagan gods. Notice that the three primary names of God are used here, v. 28a.

- (b) It is based upon God being true, that is His Word, and especially the covenant made here, v. 28b.
- (c) Note the “therefore,” which indicates that David’s hope for a favorable answer to his prayer is based on the character of God. He boldly claims the blessing of his house forever, even way beyond Solomon. Does He anticipate Christ? v. 29.

#### 4. Conclusion.

- a. The grace and steadfast love of God should be the greatest stimulus to prayer. Such a response is bound to focus attention upon God and not so much ourselves (I Tim. 1:15-17).
- b. The grace of God should stimulate us to pray for the full reign of grace (Matt.6:9-10; Eph. 2:7).
- c. The greater our knowledge of who God is, the greater will be our response of praise and trust and right boldness in prayer. As J. I. Packer has well illustrated, if believers look at God, “so to speak through the wrong end of a telescope, so reducing Him to pigmy proportions. [they] cannot hope to end up as more than pigmy Christians.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

#### C. The hymnic prayers of David.

While the Jews divided the Book of Psalms into five books, the first two are specifically attributed to David. So Psalm 72:20 concludes Book Two with the line, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” Here the word “prayer,” תְּפִלָּה, tephillah, leads us to conclude that the whole Book of Psalms is not only *hymnic* in form, *laudatory* in its primary attitude, but also *prayerful* in its mode of address. However Books Three, Four and Five also contain numerous specific prayers, such as Psalms 85, 86, 90, 102, 120, 122, 123, 129, 132, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, whose authors include Heman, Asaph and Ethan (Levitical musicians), also Moses and Korah. Then there are additional compositions attributed to David, that is, Psalms 86, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145, that are also prayerful in character.

##### 1. Introduction.

It becomes obvious that David prays most frequently when troubled by godless, treacherous, sometimes secretive adversaries. However his distress frequently provokes indomitable faith that expresses itself in praise of the character of God, but predominantly His “lovingkindness.” This is the primary term in the Old Testament for the love of God that has been otherwise translated as “grace” and “mercy.” While “lovingkindness/es,” חֶסֶד, chesed, or loyal and steadfast love, is used 183 times in the Old Testament (NASB), of these 125 occurrences are found in Psalms, including antiphonal usage in Psalms 107, 136. In a sinful world of infidelity and unreliability, even amongst the people of God, yet that same God of Abraham is unswerving in

<sup>8</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 6.

covenantal reliability and fidelity, Psalm 36. For this reason, His mercy is dependable, especially as it has been revealed to Israel historically, redemptively and scripturally; His goodness is unfailing, even in the seeming darkest of circumstances. Hence the lovingkindness of God is a dominant characteristic for David that he repeatedly delights to employ in his praying. Furthermore, he also relates God's loyal love to His covenant name that, in having been revealed to Israel, is so closely associated with steadfast love (21:7; 23:6; 25:10; 33:5; 36:5; 42:8, etc.) and salvation (6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 31:16; 40:10-11; 44:26; 51:1, etc.).

As a secondary priority, David prayerfully expresses concern for his inward corruption and the spiritual state of his soul. His honesty here concerning personal sin causes him to seek redemption, again based upon God's lovingkindness rather than any personal merit.

2. Psalm 3, a morning prayer; cf. Psalm 141, an evening prayer.

In Psalm 3, the world around David is tempestuous and godless, though closer to home there is also personal family strife such as involved revengeful, treacherous Absalom. While the world mocks the believer's faith under trial, vs. 1-2, fellowship with God on Mount Zion and the temple precincts is the best place for the sleeping child of God, v. 4. Before sleeping, he cries to the LORD in prayer who gives him assurance of preservation. So following a good night's sleep, he awakens with exultant praise, vs. 5-6. Hence, while the world counts sheep to promote sleep, David communes with God and becomes confident of His protection and reassurance, v. 3. While the world awakens with a hangover, David awakens with renewed confidence that, "salvation belongs to the LORD," vs. 7-8.

In Psalm 141, pilgrim David is sensitive of his own frailty, probably on account of reflection upon the day that is fast closing. Conversation and social intercourse with the wicked have troubled David's soul, vs. 3-4. Feeling polluted, he prays in the evening for sanctification from "the jaws of the trap which they [the wicked] have set for me, . . . from the snares of those who do iniquity," v. 9. Thus David travels in a manner similar to that of Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, who, with a prayerful attitude, was also delivered from "the valley of the shadow of death" and all of its hellish snares, v. 10, cf. Psalm 23:4.

3. Psalms 3, 10, 13, 17, 20, 25, 28, 35, 43, 54-55, 57-59, 64, 70-71, prayers concerning enemies, oppressors, persecutors, the treacherous, the wicked.

a. The categories of David's opposition.

(1) King Saul, David's king, Psalms 54, 57, 59, 142.

(2) National (pagan nations), ethnic (Philistines), partisan enemies (factions in Israel), Psalm 43.

(3) Absalom, David's son, Psalm 3.

(4) Familiar friends, confidants, Psalms 41:9; 55:12-15, 20-21.

- b. The triumph of David over opposition.

In the variety of opposition which David encountered, what was the confidence he expressed which anticipated deliverance? It supremely concerned the character of God, “Your name, . . . Your power,” Ps. 54:1; “grace” and “lovingkindness,” Ps. 57:1, 3; “strength” and “lovingkindness,” Ps. 59:9-10, 16-17. Consider also Psalms 25:6-7; 57:1-3; 59:16-17; 109:26-29.

4. Psalm 38, a prayer for a suffering penitent.

The suffering here is chiefly the discipline of the Lord, His heavy hand on account of confessed iniquity, though there is the secondary reproach of friends and kinsmen, vs. 1-8. Nevertheless, notwithstanding present “sorrow” and “anxiety,” vs. 17-18, David prays, “I hope in You, O LORD; You will answer, O LORD my God. . . . Make haste to help me, O LORD, my salvation!” vs. 15, 22.

5. Psalms 25, 32, 51, prayers for a contrite sinner’s pardon.

In openly confessing his sin, David has only one ground of hope for reconciliation, that is, “O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses, . . . Your goodness’ sake, O LORD,” Ps. 25:6-7. So in the light of “sin/iniquity/transgressions,” Ps. 32:5, “he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him,” Ps. 32:10. This is David’s conclusion after he has, most boldly, confessed his own corruption and testified to the blessed justification through faith that has resulted, Ps. 32:1-2; cf. Rom. 4:6-8. So, preeminently in Psalm 51:1-4, David, having grievously sinned against God, Israel, Bathsheba and her husband Uriah (II Sam. 11:1-12:15), makes his prayerful plea for forgiveness solely on the basis of “Your lovingkindness, . . . the greatness of Your compassion,” v. 1. It is not surprising then that David so frequently focused on this “charming sound” of the lovingkindness or grace of God, so “harmonious to the ear,” as Philip Doddridge has described it. Can any honest Christian do less?

- D. The concluding prayer of David, late in his reign, I Chronicles 29:10-19.

1. Introduction.

How we commence life and how we presently live are not nearly as important as to how we conclude our earthly sojourn. In a race, what counts supremely is how we finish; in a journey, what counts is that we arrive at our hoped for destination. So now we consider the end of David’s life, and for all of his triumphs and tragedies, according to this prayer, he finishes very well. Here is a sage prayer born of years of human experience. The outstanding feature is an enhanced vision of the grandeur of God that so entralls David, even as death nears.

- a. The plans for the Temple, I Chronicles 28:1-21.

Toward the end of his life, David’s passionate desire for the building of the Temple, in which God would dwell, is confronted with God’s disappointing revelation to him, to which he nevertheless consents. Because of David being a man of war, Solomon, a man of peace, shall succeed as ruler and builder of God’s earthly house. So David is given the Temple blueprints by means of written

revelation, v. 19. Then Solomon is charged by David to trust in “the LORD God, my God,” that is His faithfulness in this building enterprise, and be assured of the cooperation of the priesthood and skilled laity.

b. The offerings for the Temple, I Chronicles 29:1-9.

David’s generous offering of precious metals and stones, iron and wood, stimulates “the rulers of the father’s households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over king’s work,” to also give willingly. This liberal contribution causes both the people and David to “rejoice greatly,” v. 9.

2. David’s prayer of praise and petition, I Chronicles 29:10-20.

Here David leads his people in an exuberant prayer of blessing, v. 10, and then concludes by soliciting a learned prayerful response of similar blessing from his congregation, v. 20.

a. The praise of God’s greatness by David, vs. 10-13.

Jewish monotheism is concerned with the unique, sole God, specifically LORD or Jehovah, who has spoken and acted, supremely concerning Himself. He alone is rightly self-absorbed; His self-praise and that which results from His creation, as here, is to be encouraged as David recommends, and not suppressed.

(1) The praise of God’s covenant with Israel, v. 10.

David chiefly has in mind the glory of God that will fittingly inhabit the new Temple in Jerusalem, and not merely the splendor of its architecture. Solomon will later declare: “The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods. . . .But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built.”(II Chron. 2:5; I Kings 8:27).

The initial address concerns Jehovah Elohim, the God of Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, who is their national patriarch, the earthly progenitor of an eternal and heavenly kingdom.

(2) The praise of God’s omnipotent glory, v. 11.

Now David erupts with exultant praise that is full of reverent enjoyment and wonder concerning delightful aspects of the character of God. The exuberance here is primarily based upon substantial truth, not ecstatic gyration. It is significant that some later manuscripts of Matthew’s account of the Lord’s prayer incorporate this benediction (Matt. 6:13). Here is specific blessed acknowledgment of:

(a) His greatness over all.

(b) His power over all.

- (c) His glory over all.
- (d) His victory over all
- (e) His majesty over all.
- (f) His ownership of all.
- (g) His self-sufficiency over all.

Thus David, so God-focused in his prayer, would gladly sing with us the words of F. W. Faber:

My God, how wonderful Thou art,  
 Thy majesty so bright!  
 How beautiful Thy mercy seat,  
 In depths of burning light!  
 How wonderful, how beautiful,  
 The sight of Thee must be,  
 Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,  
 And awful purity.  
 Father of Jesus, love's reward,  
 What rapture will it be  
 Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,  
 And ever gaze on Thee.

- (3) The praise of God's sovereign dominion, v. 12.

From the realm of God's essential being we move to prayerful acknowledgment of the gracious, generous communication of His person to His children in terms of "riches and honor . . . and rule over all," as well as His sovereign providential maintenance of all. It seems implicit that David has especially in mind the nation of Israel, with Jehovah gloriously dwelling in Jerusalem, as being central in all of the LORD'S universe (Ps. 103:17-19).

- (4) The praise of God's glorious name, v. 13.

So thanksgiving is given for the maintenance of the LORD'S people. Accompanied with praise, it focuses upon His "glorious name," which for David and his subjects means salvation and preservation on account of covenant faithfulness. Later Solomon will pray "that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place" (I Kings 8:29). Also consider the prayed for influence of this "Name" upon the visiting Gentile" (I Kings 8:41-43).

- b. The praise of God's benevolence by David, vs. 14-17.

King David is overwhelmed with the generosity of his people who have responded to his leading. The opportunity to give to this God, so glorious, is regarded as a privilege of grace, of unworthiness.

- (1) Israel's generosity is God's generosity, vs. 14, 16.

Here is a model attitude for the child of God who makes an offering for the building of the house of God, the church of Jesus Christ. All of the substance we present is really a refund, a return on God's investment, His glorification through our received glory, signified by means of an offertory prayer of acknowledgment. So we also sing:

We give Thee but Thine own,  
Whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust. O Lord, from Thee.

- (2) God's generosity is David's delight, vs. 15, 17.

Earthly existence is humbly confessed to be transient; as tenants of this temporal inheritance, the hoarding of it for selfish reasons is unthinkable in the light of such a glorious Benefactor. It is better to offer back to God, by means of a ready, gladsome attitude, that which He first bestowed, so that He might be pleased with an upright offering. So prayer declares our motive.

May we Thy bounties thus  
As stewards true receive,  
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,  
To Thee our first-fruits give.

- c. The petition of God's faithfulness by David, vs. 18-19.

The intercessory employment of, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers," is the strong thrust of faith in the grace of God's unilateral promise, the Abrahamic Covenant.

- (1) Concerning His faithfulness to His people through the Fathers, v. 18.

What is to be the source of faith in the Abrahamic Covenant by the people of God? It is not human determination, but ultimately His sovereign action whereby He "directs their hearts to You." Thus David prays, on the grounds of this same Covenant, that God will faithfully bestow this "obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26) upon His people. Thus Christian leaders are also to pray for the faith of their flock in this manner!

- (2) Concerning His faithfulness to Solomon through the Fathers, v. 19.

Similarly, as a believing Father, David prays for His believing son regarding this same “obedience of faith.” He understands that ultimately it is God who “gives a perfect heart to keep His commandments.” It is this same God who also grants, through the agency of the prayer of His children, the building of His earthly dwelling place, both the Old Testament and New Testament edifices (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2;19-22; I Pet. 2:5).

- d. The blessing of God in agreement by the people, v. 20.

As David has prayed with a LORD-centered priority, so he exhorts his people to pray after this manner. As a result they pray vocally along with a physical posture that signifies deep humiliation before their LORD and His appointer king.



**VII PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON – I KINGS 8:22-66****A. Introduction.**

1. Forty years have passed since David desired to build God a house, with the result that he was denied his request yet graciously promised a house or lineage for himself according to the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:18-29).
  - a. However, God did advise David that one of his sons should build a physical house for His dwelling amongst His people. It would prefigure the presence of Immanuel, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; 2:19-21). Though a sinner, unlike Saul, he will not be cast aside (II Sam. 7:12-16).
  - b. This third king of Israel was Solomon, born to Bathsheba, though his ascension was not easy due to the opposition of rival Absalom.
2. Solomon’s name means “peaceful,” though his other name, Jedidiah, given by Nathan, means “beloved of Jehovah” (II Sam. 12:24-25). At the age of 30 he now rules from Egypt to the Euphrates.
  - a. He was a man of unsurpassed, divinely bestowed wisdom as a result of prayer (I Kings 3:6-13, 16-28; 10:7).
  - b. His gold income was over \$35 million annually, while silver was like gravel in Jerusalem.
  - c. He amassed over 40,000 horses, and a large navy of ships.
  - d. He collected 700 wives and 300 concubines who drew his heart to pagan idolatry (I Kings 11:3-6). One wife was a daughter of Pharaoh for whom he built a special wing at his palace.
  - e. He composed 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (I Kings 4:32).
  - f. He ignored God’s warning concerning the multiplying of horses, wives, and gold (Deut. 17:14-20).
3. The Temple has just been completed, according to Solomon’s stated purpose, “for the name of the LORD my God” (I Kings 5:5).
  - a. It took 180,000 people with 3,300 supervisors seven years to complete at an estimated cost of \$600 million. It measured approximately twice the size of the tabernacle, being 90' long, 30' wide, 45' High. The walls and ceilings were lined with cedar, then overlaid with gold. The front porch was girded by two brazen ornamented pillars, 26' high.

- b. The temple was enclosed in an inner court of the priests, then an outer or greater court for the people.

4. The immediate context of I Kings 8:1-21.

- a. The Ark of the Covenant has just been installed in the Temple having arrived from Mt. Zion where David was buried (I Kings 8:1-9).
- b. The glory of the LORD has filled the Temple in the form of a cloud, while the people praise God. Clearly, the blessing of God is upon this whole enterprise (I Kings 8:10-11; II Chron. 5:13-14).
- c. Solomon has concluded his sermon of explanation (I Kings 8:12-21).
  - (1) There is an initial prayer of address. The Temple is formerly offered for the LORD to dwell in while at the same time Solomon recognizes how God has come in the manner of Sinai in days of old, vs. 12-13, cf. Leviticus 16:2.
  - (2) Solomon confirms his participation in the promise given to his father David. Of paramount importance is the honor of God in the midst of His people, that is the upholding of His holy name, vs. 14-20.
  - (3) Solomon reminds God's people that the Ark contains the tablets of stone, that is the tokens of the Mosaic Covenant distinctively given to redeemed Israel. The implication is that of their present responsibility before the God of the Covenant who has just manifested Himself, v. 21.
- d. Solomon stands at the entrance to the inner Temple court on a special bronze pulpit before the people in the outer court by means of which he acted as an intercessor between God and His people (II Chron. 6:13).

B. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, I Kings 8:22-53.

1. Solomon prays with a posture of bodily humility, v. 22.

- a. With his back to the people in the outer court, facing the inner court Solomon addresses God where He dwells, between the cherubim above the mercy seat or lid of the Ark (Exod. 25:21-22).
- b. He falls to his knees; this is the first mention of this posture in the Bible (II Chron. 6:13). This was a most common signification of total subjection and unworthiness between a sovereign and his servant (Gen. 41:43; Ezra 9:5-6).
- c. He spread out his hands [palms] toward heaven," not as some ecstatic physical gyration, but rather as an expression of his purity of purpose, his holy approach, with clean hands before God, with "holy hands" (Isa. 1:15; I Tim. 2:8; Jas. 4:8).

2. Solomon prays making intercession through God's character, vs. 23-24.
  - a. He addresses God according to His proper covenant name, Jehovah, as the only means of gaining success. God delights in being distinguished according to His holy character, not vague and abstract identification, v. 23a.
  - b. He acknowledges that God is the unique, sole, true God, having no rivals, no competitors, widespread idolatry notwithstanding, v. 23b.
  - c. He confesses God's loyal, steadfast, covenant love, especially revealed to David and presently ratified at the Temple by means of His glorious, overwhelming presence (Num. 14:18-19; II Sam. 7:28-29), vs. 23c-24.
3. Solomon prays concerning the royal family, vs. 25-26.
  - a. On the basis of who God is, what He has promised and what He has done, "therefore," Solomon prays that David's seed will continue to rule, v. 25.
  - b. He prays for confirmation of the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:12-16). God responds positively and mightily at the conclusion of Solomon's prayer (II Chron. 7:1-3), v. 26.
4. Solomon prays concerning God's house, vs. 27-30.
  - a. He acknowledges that God cannot be so spatially contained or confined, as is the manner of pagan gods, yet he asks for gracious condescension, vs. 27-28.
    - (1) Liberal scholars have suggested that while Israel's conception of Jehovah was relatively advanced, yet it was nevertheless primitive and tribal since God was perceived as being contained within a tent or house. But, v. 27 refutes this. Remember that God has contained Himself in human flesh (John 1:14), yet He remains sovereign over all of the universe (John 1:10).
    - (2) Note the sudden change by Solomon from the transcendent to the immanent; God is greater than all of the heavens, yet He is able to stoop and be intensely interested in a speck of humanity, v. 28. Both concepts are vital to biblical Christianity (Jer. 23:23-24).
  - b. He desires God's continued presence in the Temple since Deuteronomy 12:10-11 promised that His name would abide there; this ensures that the prayers of Solomon and the people will be heard, vs. 29-30, specifically regarding the forgiveness of sin.
5. Solomon prays concerning specific national needs. Note the emphasis upon the word "house," the place of God's particular presence, vs. 27-53. It is for this reason that a Christian church is sometimes referred to as a "house/household of God" (I Tim. 3:15; I Pet. 4:17). The chief concern here is sin amongst the people of God!

- a. Concerning justice, against those who deal falsely in business, and for those who do business with integrity; let righteousness be maintained; let the covenants, to Moses and David, be upheld, vs. 31-32.
- b. Concerning mercy, when smitten by their enemies as a judgment for their sin, so that God's house will become a place of contrite prayer. Let there be reconciliation between God and His people, vs. 33-34.
- c. Concerning material deprivation as a judgment for their sin, so that repentance will be evidenced by contrite prayer and preference for "the good way," the way of blessing resulting from righteousness, vs. 35-36.
- d. Concerning afflictions and infirmities, let there be prayer toward God's house seeking justice with the result that Israel learns to fear God and possess the land of promise, vs. 37-40.
- e. Concerning the Gentile seeker after God, let him be encouraged to pray toward the Temple so that through him the nations of the world may learn to fear God's name, vs. 41-43.
- f. Concerning warfare with the enemy, maintain the cause of God's people when they pray toward Jerusalem for deliverance, that is when they pray using God's name for access, vs. 44-45.
- g. Concerning captivity in a foreign land due to sin, let them pray toward their land with deep repentance and discover the ready forgiveness of God. Note that here, as with the prior concerns, God is to be addressed in the Temple, yet He is expected to be heard "in heaven" (vs. 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49), vs. 46-50.
- h. Concerning Israel's covenant relationship with Jehovah based upon His integrity. This is a concluding bold plea that cannot be refused, especially since "Thy servant [Solomon]" prays with his people, vs. 51-53.

(1) Israel is a redeemed people, v. 51.

(2) Israel is a praying people, v. 52.

(3) Israel is a holy people, v. 53a.

(4) Israel is a called people, v. 53b.

C. Solomon's benediction on his people, I Kings 8:54-56.

1. He blesses Jehovah concerning His steadfast love, vs. 54-56.
  - a. True to His name, He has given rest to His people, v. 56a.
  - b. True to His name, He has kept His promises through Moses, v. 56b.
2. He commits his people to faithfulness toward God, vs. 57-61.

- a. Here is an example for all rulers to follow. His great desire is that his subjects should keep God's Word and maintain a heart relationship with Him.
  - b. Solomon's chief concern, and that of Israel, is not simply to be the maintenance of their own kingdom, but rather an international interest, that "all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God," v. 60.
3. He celebrates with the feast of dedication; 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were offered as peace offerings, expressing thanksgiving and communion, "for all the goodness that the LORD has shown to David His servant and to Israel His people," vs. 62-66.

D. Conclusion.

1. Physical posture and expression in prayer is of minor importance when compared with the need for us to approach God with holiness of heart and life (Jas. 5:16).
2. In a great nation, it is the leaders who show the way regarding prayer to their people. Solomon did not hide his faith from his subjects, rather he directed them to it.
3. The basis of prayer is the character of God to whom we are praying. Of itself, prayer may at best have temporary psychological value, and at worst the capacity to delude us into thinking that our requests are reaching beyond the level of the ceiling. But when our prayer is directed toward the only God of perfect integrity, great grace, and sovereignty, then it becomes as potentially powerful as that God.
4. As the faithful child of God prays, he places great confidence in Jehovah's covenant faithfulness, that is the certain fulfillment of His unconditional promises of blessing.
5. Solomon repeatedly indicates that the reputation and glory of God is the highest end for man to comprehend and desire through prayer. God's business and interests must come first.
6. The house of God, or holy temple (Eph. 2:21), that is the congregation of a Christian local church in our day, is vitally important as far as believer members involved in corporate prayer are concerned. The body of Christ should be drawn together as it prays for God's manifest justice, mercy, restoration, etc.

## VIII PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF HEZEKIAH – II KINGS 19:14-19

### A. Introduction.

1. There are three accounts of this prayer and Hezekiah's notable reign, namely II Kings 19; II Chronicles 37; Isaiah 37. There is a possibility that Psalm 46 may have been written by King Hezekiah during this crisis.
2. The name "Hezekiah" means "God is my strength" (cf. II Kings 18:4-6).
  - a. He reigned for 29 years over the southern kingdom of Judah, 715-690 BC, following after bad King Ahaz who desecrated the land with idolatry, closed the Temple, introduced child sacrifices, and became allied with Assyria (II Chron. 28:19, 23-25; Isa. 29:13). His son was Manasseh, the most wicked of the kings of Judah!
  - b. His revival of the true worship of Jehovah brought many changes (II Chron. 29:3-31:21).
    - (1) The Temple was cleansed and true worship reinstated (29:3-31:21).
    - (2) The Passover was reinstated (30:21-22).
    - (3) The brazen serpent (Num. 21:4-9), which had become an item of idolatry, was destroyed (II Kings 18:4).
    - (4) A tunnel, 1,777' long was excavated in solid rock to divert water, originating at the Gihon fountain away from the brook Kedron so as to frustrate besieging Assyrians (32:4).
    - (5) He set an example of personal faith and godliness in the face of religious declension (II Kings 18:4-6); 31:20-21.
3. Sennacherib, the assailing king of Assyria, was a highly successful military potentate.
  - a. In 701 BC he routed much of Judah including 46 walled cities, and as a result deported 200,000 captives. He also defeated the Egyptians, breaking their alliance with Hezekiah.
  - b. In 700 BC he recaptured Babylon.
  - c. He extracted tribute from Jerusalem (II Kings 18:14-16), causing Hezekiah to strip the Temple of its gold, etc., though later he seems to have ceased complying with this extortion. Archeological findings in Assyria have exactly confirmed these gold payments.
  - d. He boasted, as also confirmed in an archeological find, concerning Hezekiah, that "Himself I shut up like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem, his royal city."

- e. He dies in 631 BC as a result of being murdered by his two sons.
4. The immediate context of Hezekiah's prayer (II Kings 18:17-19:13).
- a. Assyrian hordes have camped outside Jerusalem while Rabshakeh, an Assyrian title for a senior military official, scornfully offers an ultimatum (18:17-37).
    - (1) Rabshakeh, probably a general, wanted total surrender.
    - (2) Hezekiah sent his palace governor, secretary of state, and a general to negotiate from the top of the walls of Jerusalem (18:18).
    - (3) Rabshakeh scorned Egyptian help since it was a "crushed reed" (18:21).
    - (4) He scorned Jerusalem's fighting men (18:23).
    - (5) He scorned Hezekiah's delegation, and would not talk in Aramaic, the diplomatic language, but Hebrew, so as to put fear into the Jews (18:26, 28).
    - (6) He scorned the people of Jerusalem; they would eat and drink their own human waste (18:27).
    - (7) He scorned Hezekiah (18:29).
    - (8) He scorned any trust in Jehovah (18:30).
    - (9) He scorned the gods of the nations (18:33-35).
  - b. Hezekiah sought the help of Jehovah through Isaiah (19:1-7; cf. Isa. 37:33-35). A special delegation requests prayer from the prophet who mediates from God the following assurances:
    - (1) The King of Assyria, in the person of Rabshakeh, will be led of God to return to his own land (II Kings 19:1-7).
    - (2) There will be no fighting against Jerusalem (Isa. 37:33).
    - (3) For God's sake and honor, as well as that of the promise made to David, Jerusalem will be delivered (Isa. 37:35).
  - c. As a consequence, Rabshakeh returned to his king, *not* with his army that remained surrounding Jerusalem, for the purpose of consultation. Because Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, was on his way to fight the King of Assyria, a letter of ultimatum was sent to Hezekiah to immediately submit (II Kings 19:8-13).

## B. Hezekiah's prayer in a day of distress, II Kings 19:14-19.

## 1. The basis of Hezekiah's prayer, the character of God, vs. 14-15.

It appears that the delegation sent to Isaiah has not yet returned with a response for Hezekiah, though in fact an answer is on the way (19:20).

## a. He spreads his problem before the Lord (Phil. 4:6-7), v. 14.

- (1) He seeks the Lord where He may be found, God's house.
- (2) He expresses child-like faith in Jehovah.
- (3) He recognizes that this is really God's problem.

## b. He approaches God on the basis of His attributes, v. 15.

- (1) Jehovah is Israel's covenant keeping God.
- (2) Jehovah is the holy God dwelling between the cherubin (cf. Exod. 25:18-22).
- (3) Jehovah is the only God of all the nations, including Assyria.
- (4) Jehovah is the sovereign God of all heaven and earth.

## 2. The content of Hezekiah's prayer, petition for divine arousal, vs. 16-18.

## a. Note the contrasting comprehension of God in vs. 15-16.

- (1) God is both immanent and transcendent.
- (2) God is both holy and merciful.

## b. Note the earnestness of his appeal pictured in human terms, v. 16.

- (1) In other words: "God, bend down Your ear from Your great and holy height so as to attentively listen to my urgent plea. Focus Your omniscience and omnipotence on the challenge of this crude barbarian," v. 16a.
- (2) Further, there is an appeal to God's honor. This arrogant pagan has thrown down the gauntlet to God Himself, v. 16b.

## c. He accepts the truth that Assyria has indeed devastated many nations and destroyed their impotent gods. Hence, God has sovereignly permitted this, cf. v. 15; vs. 17-18.

## 3. The purpose of Hezekiah's prayer, vindication through deliverance, v. 19.

## a. He calls on God for national and personal salvation, yet with an ultimate end in mind. Of course he realizes that in his predicament only Jehovah can save, v. 19a.



- b. God's glory, His justification, the victorious display of His attributes and character, His matchless person, proclaimed throughout the whole earth, is his goal. Consider the conclusion of Solomon's prayer in I Kings 8:59-60; cf. Ephesians 1:11-12. Here is the supreme purpose of God's plan of redemption, v. 19b.

C. Conclusion.

1. God hears, and 185,000 Assyrians are slain by the Angel of the Lord, namely Jesus Christ (II Kings 19:20, 28, 32, 34-37).
2. Hezekiah is a model for contemporary national leaders since, as a man of prayer, he did not trust the "arm of flesh" (II Chron. 32:7-8).
3. The character of God, His essential nature, perfections, attributes, experientially known, is the basis of biblical prayer. Consider Psalm 51:1 where David implores God to forgive him on the basis of his knowledge that God has "multitudes of tender mercies."
4. The supreme end of all prayer should be the glorification of God, in its essence and purpose, not the personal satisfaction of man. The reason that so many people are tied down to prayers that are whirlpools of subjectivism is that they have not had a sufficiently glorious and full-orbed faith view of the eternal God. This is not to say that personal satisfaction is of little import. But it is vital to realize that it comes as an indirect result of being occupied with God in all of His fullness, and not as a result of pursuing satisfaction for its own sake.

## IX PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JEHOSEPHAT – II CHRONICLES 20:1-30

### A. Introduction.

1. The name Jehosaphat means “Jehovah has judged.” He was Judah’s fourth ruler, and like his predecessor Asa (I Kings 15:9-24), he was a good king. His strengths were as follows:
  - a. He was a godly king (II Chron. 17:3-6; 19:3-4), who purged the land of sodomites (I Kings 22:46; cf. 15:12), as well as idolatry resulting from the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth.
  - b. He instructed his people in the Word of God through regional Bible conferences (II Chron. 17:7-9), led by princes and priests, which brought peaceful consequences (II Chron. 17:10-11).
  - c. He instituted judicial reform, local and central courts, and both priestly and lay judges; the required qualifications were high (II Chron. 19:6-11).
  - d. He established Judah as a strong kingdom, with fortified cities (II Chron. 17:2, 12), strong armies (II Chron. 17:13, 19), wealth and honor (II Chron. 17:5), and the respect of the heathen (II Chron. 17:11).
2. Jehosaphat’s weaknesses were as follows:
  - a. His alliance with wicked Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel (II Chron. 18:1-34), first through marriage, then in war.
    - (1) Peace comes between Ahab and Jehosaphat when Jehosaphat’s son marries Ahab’s daughter (II Chron. 18:1).
    - (2) In a joint war against Assyria, which the prophet Micaiah declares will be a disaster, Ahab’s treachery (II Chron. 18:2-3, 29), is averted by God’s sovereign intervention (II Chron. 18:30-34)
  - b. His reforms against idolatry were not complete (II Chron. 20:33).
  - c. His failure to learn from his alliance with Ahab. Hence he loses a fleet of ships for dealing with evil Ahaziah (II Chron. 20:35-37).
3. The threat of enemy invasion against Judah (II Chron. 20:1-4).
  - a. The threat comes from the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, whose combined forces are approximately a fifteen hour march away east of Jerusalem (II Chron. 20:1-2).
  - b. The fear of the enemy causes Jehosaphat to seek God (cf. II Chron. 19:3); the result is a nation also seeking after God due to his example (II Chron. 20:3-4).

B. Jehosaphat's prayer for deliverance, II Chronicles 20:5-13.

1. The basis of all prayer is the character of God, vs. 5-9.

- a. He seeks God where He is to be found, dwelling in His earthly tabernacle, the place of necessary sacrifice for continuous fellowship (Lev. 1:1-3). This is God's appointed place of meeting. But today (Heb. 10:19-22); v. 5.
  - (1) The exact place of his praying is the new or great court which surrounded the inner court where only the priests were allowed to enter. Probably this is the exact place where Solomon had prayed (I Kings 8:22).
  - (2) The assembly of the people is led in audible prayer by its king; his prayer becomes the prayer of all; they pray with agreement and common understanding.
- b. He pleads God's covenant name, Jehovah, the name of specific identification and access which Solomon had declared ought to be used in needy situations (I Kings 8:33, 35); vs. 4, 5-6.
  - (1) Jehovah is the God of the "fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the inviolate covenant.
  - (2) Jehovah is the God of glory "in the heavens," the God of supreme authority and unrivaled dominion.
  - (3) Jehovah is the God of sovereign power, the ruler of all the nations, even the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites!
- c. He claims God's faithfulness with regard to His past dealings with the people of Israel. For this reason He may be relied upon in the present; his nature and promises have not changed, v. 7.
  - (1) The original possession of the land was according to the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 12:7).
  - (2) The continued and future possession of the land was according to the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 17:8).
- d. He claims God's truthfulness as revealed through Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. Clearly Jehosaphat has been taught the details of his great grandfather's prayer (I Kings 8:22-53); vs. 8-9.
  - (1) At the present, God dwells with His people in the Temple, just as he did with Solomon. Hence, the suggestion is that the prospect of an assault upon Jerusalem is in fact a threat against God, v. 8.
  - (2) So the recommended prayer of Solomon, as he described situationally in specific detail, is now offered (cf. I Kings 8:33-34, 37-40, 44-45); v. 9.

2. The needy cause of Jehosophat's prayer of petition, vs. 10-11.
  - a. Those gentile nations who formerly received mercy are not prepared to give it. That is, when Israel moved northward to possess the land of promise, it passed along the edges of these territories and did not assault or deprive them (Num. 20:17-21; Deut. 2:1-29, 37). So why do the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites now threaten? v. 10.
  - b. They are challenging God since Judah dwells in the land that is "Your possession," and part of the covenant. So shall a pagan nation be allowed to rob God of His territory? Thus the needy cause of Jehosophat is really God's cause, v. 11.
  
3. The solid faith in Jehosophat's prayer of petition, vs. 12-13.
  - a. Let God manifest His justice for His redeemed through the exercise of His saving power, v. 12a.
  - b. We confess our impotence in the face of the enemy; we are ignorant of any responsible means of escape, v. 12b.
  - c. We look by faith alone to God in desperation, even as did Asa, the father of Jehosophat, when fighting the Ethiopians (II Chron. 14:11). The depth and leadership influence of this faith is evidenced by the presence of wives, children, and infants, vs. 12c-13.
  
- C. Jehosophat's prayer is answered, II Chronicles 20:14-30.
  1. The promise of victory, vs. 14-17.
    - a. Jahaziel, a Levite with the gift of prophecy, indicates that "the battle is the Lord's" (I Sam. 17:47), and this knowledge should promote peace of mind, vs. 14-15.
    - b. There is to be a glorious display of God's salvation (cf. Exod. 14:13); it will be all of His doing and will cast out fear (cf. Isa. 41:8-11); vs. 16-17.
  
  2. The praise of victory, vs. 18-21.
    - a. They prostrate themselves in praise, v. 18.
    - b. They speak God's praise, v. 19.
    - c. They believe to God's praise, v. 20.
    - d. They sing to God's praise (cf. Ps. 136); v. 21.

3. The possession of victory, vs. 22-25.
  - a. The Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites are ambushed by an unknown enemy, and in the confusion destroy each other, vs. 22-24.
  - b. Great spoil is the reward of the faithful, v. 25.
4. The peace of victory, vs. 26-30.
  - a. Peace issues in further praise, vs. 26-28.
  - b. Peace issues in the rest of faith, vs. 29-30.

D. Conclusion.

1. As with Jacob, Moses, Hannah, David, Solomon, and Hezekiah, so with Jehosaphat; the character of God, and especially a redemptive, covenantal relationship, is the basis of all prayer. “The people who know their God will display strength and take action” (Dan. 11:32; cf. Heb. 11:1-40).
2. Again, the fruitfulness of godly leadership in a nation is very evident. Here the people as whole families readily follow the holy example of a prayerful potentate.
3. Again, it is the quality of prayer that counts rather than quantity, as James 5:16 confirms.
4. Of seven verses in this prayer, the first four are devoted to God’s greatness and faithfulness. In spite of pressing national need, Jehosaphat still considered that God’s need of true worship and praise was more important. Yet at the same time a way was paved for a gracious and merciful reply.
5. The answers to prayer are frequently to be found in the Word of God, even as through a Jahaziel. The response to these answers should be active faith and praise, while God’s response to such true worship will be reward and rest.

## X PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF EZRA – EZRA 9:1-10:17

### A. Introduction.

1. Three returns of Jewish exiles followed the Babylonian captivity.
  - a. Under Zerubbabel, 537 B.C., at the end of 70 years captivity, who led 50,000 back to Jerusalem as a result of the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the Temple. He became governor of Jerusalem.
  - b. Under Ezra, 487 B.C., at the decree of the Persian king, Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26), to restore proper worship and rule according to the law, and return treasure that had been earlier captured by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 7:15). He was the first Scribe, a class of expert and devoted students of the law of Moses who frequently challenged, and were challenged by, Jesus Christ (Matt. 23:1-36; Luke 11:47-48). Some 2,000 exiles returned under his godly leadership (Ezra 7:10).
  - c. Under Nehemiah, 445 B.C., to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and institute social reform (Neh. 2:1-8). He was also appointed governor of the Jews.
2. Ezra's recruitment and journey, Ezra 8:1-36.
  - a. Amongst the returning band there is a shortage of Levites (Ezra 8:15), hence recruitment is necessary (Ezra 8:16-20).
  - b. They fast and pray for traveling mercies since they have no military escort (8:21-23, 31-32). The journey involved 900 miles taking four months, or seven miles per day.
  - c. The temple treasures are delivered being \$1,500,000 in silver and \$3,000,000 in gold (Ezra 8:24-30, 33-36).

### B. The prelude to Ezra's prayer of confession is awakening, Ezra 9:1-4.

1. The leaders of Israel are moved to confess their sin, vs. 1-2.
  - a. It includes the priests, Levites, princes, the last mentioned being the greatest offenders. Note that it is these princes that make this confession to Ezra, v. 1a, though perhaps from the newly arrived contingent.
  - b. They have married women from heathen nations, those who have caused Israel considerable trouble in the past. This was expressly forbidden by Moses (Deut. 7:1-4).
  - c. The "holy race [seed] has intermingled with "the peoples of the lands," v. 2. That is, God's holy people have acted in an unholy manner. They have become wedded to the world.

d. But now God's people have commenced to see that "sin would become utterly sinful" (Rom. 7:13), with the result that sorrow and contrition follow (Ps. 34:18; 51:17).

2. The leaders of Israel are moved to true repentance, vs. 3-4.

a. Ezra is moved to physical expression of inward dismay, sorrow, and indignation. This is not mandatory, though often the body will reflect the attitude of the soul. However, such a material response can be void of heartfelt experience (Joel 2:12-13).

b. It is "the words of the God of Israel" that causes the people to tremble. Presumably this has involved Ezra's faithful and effecting ministry (Ezra 7:9-10). This preacher has had people flocking to him on account of conviction and a desire for restoration. Was it revival?

c. Illustration. In 1737, Jonathan Edwards recounts recent revival in the region of Northampton, Massachusetts. "The place of resort was now altered; it was no longer the tavern, but the minister's house that was thronged far more than ever the tavern had been wont to be."<sup>9</sup>

d. Now there is evidence of true repentance as many come to Ezra confessing their sin and seeking reconciliation with God. No doubt these marriages have involved an increase in pagan practices. Probably it is the detail here that "appalls" Ezra. He now calls for purity in marriage relationships, not conflict.

C. The prayer of confession by Ezra, Ezra 9:5-15.

1. The posture of confession, v. 5.

"I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God," is bodily expression that recalls that of Solomon (I Kings 8:22, 54). It represents humiliation, earnestness of intent, and frank confession. However, it is only significant if a heart attitude is indicated (cf. Matt. 6:5-6).

2. The plea of transgression, vs. 6-15.

a. He pleads the covenant name of God, vs. 5b, 6a, 15a.

His opening and closing in prayer is with God's own unique name. Otherwise Ezra uses "Elohim."

b. He pleads extensive transgression, vs. 6-9.

(1) Overwhelming sin, like the waters of a great flood (cf. Ps. 38:4), that cannot but mount up to be noticed by God even in the heavens (cf. Jer. 51:9); v. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, Vol. I, p. 351.

- (2) Continuous sin, since the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that has rightly earned captivity, plunder, and shame, v. 7.
- (3) Blatant sin, in the face of merciful deliverance from captivity and the reviving of true worship in Jerusalem, vs. 8-9.

c. He pleads offensive transgression, vs. 10-15.

- (1) God's people have offended God's Word, v. 10.

In view of v. 9, this has been done in spite of divine clemency. The same is true today in the U.S. where God's Word is ignored in spite of unparalleled national privileges.

- (2) God's people have offended God's holiness, vs. 11-12.

His desire for holiness in marriage, that is the union only of true believers, has been met with unholy marriages. They have sought union with the world rather than separation from it.

- (3) God's people have offended God's mercy, vs. 13-14.

Forbearance from God, in the face of past sin, has only been met with present sin. Ought His grace be so trampled upon?

- (4) God's people have offended God's righteousness, v. 15.

Since fresh guilt has been added to old, the plight of Israel is mirrored against the pure righteousness of God. Implicit here is the only hope of the mercy of God, but especially on account of genuine repentance (cf. Ps. 130:3-4).

D. The result of Ezra's prayer of confession is consecration, Ezra 10:1-17.

- 1. The implied request of his prayer is answered, vs. 1-5.
  - a. The people confess their sins, vs. 1-2.
  - b. The people prepare or covenant to right the problem, vs. 3-5.
- 2. Failure to comply brings expulsion (cf. I Cor. 5:1-5); vs. 6-8.
- 3. Acknowledgment of sin is followed by departure from sin; they rid themselves of their foreign wives, v. 9-17.
  - a. A solemn assembly of all the men of Judah is accompanied with fearful trembling and rain, v. 9.
  - b. Ezra calls the men of Judah to formal confession and agreement with the covenant of dissolution, vs. 10-12.



- c. From the leaders down, repentance follows, vs. 14, 16-17.
- d. Judicial courts deal with each individual case, cf. v. 3; vs. 11, 14.
- e. Some refuse to cooperate, v. 15.

E. Conclusion.

1. The people of God are called to purity and holiness. The living Word of God accomplishes this end, and at the same time reveals apostates.
2. National confession, especially in a monarchy, should start at the top and work its way downward. God delights to see men in responsible positions lead their people in ways of righteousness (Prov. 14:34).
3. True confession in prayer is not simply the vocalizing of sins by name, but a profound awareness of their offensiveness when measured against divine righteousness. Such an awareness provides a greater appreciation of that greater grace whereby we are pardoned.
4. The evidence of a true prayer of confession is an expressed desire to depart from those sins confessed.
5. When a genuine prayer of confession comes before God, there is always abounding grace available for pardon (Rom. 5:20).

## XI PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF DANIEL – DANIEL 9:1-27

### A. Introduction.

1. The contextual importance of Daniel's prayer.
  - a. It is preparatory to the significant Seventy Weeks Prophecy which concerns "your people," vs. 20-27. In the midst of captivity in Babylon, gloom, and a deep sense of guilt, Daniel's prayer is immediately answered, so that he is given hope and the assurance that in spite of Israel's yet future trials, Messiah is assuredly coming "to bring in everlasting righteousness," v. 24.
  - b. It is a pattern prayer for believers today. Though perplexed concerning Israel's future, yet comforted by the Word of God, Daniel saw the need for both himself and all of God's people to confess their backsliding and place all of their hope for pardon and cleaning in the righteousness and mercy of God.
2. The dilemma of Daniel concerning Israel's future.
  - a. The previous prophecies had left him sick in mind and body since they revealed Israel under persecution (7:28; 8:27).
  - b. What is the explanation of the dreadful fourth beast that "would make war with the saints" (7:19-21, 23-25)?
  - c. Who is the fierce king that will "destroy the mighty and the holy people" (8:23-24)?
  - d. Finally, what of God's promise according to Jeremiah that Israel would shortly return to the land (9:2)?

### B. Daniel's prayer as a prelude to the Seventy Weeks Prophecy, Daniel 9:1-19.

1. Historical background, vs. 1-2.
  - a. The time is 538 B.C., approximately 67 years after Daniel was first brought to Babylon, v. 1.
    - (1) It is the same year that Darius the Mede captured Babylon (Dan. 5:30-31).
    - (2) It is the same year that Daniel was placed in the lion's den (Dan. 6:1-28).
    - (3) It is the same year that Cyrus's decree went forth for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple (Ezra 1:1-4).
  - b. Daniel is a student of prophecy, and consequently he derives hope from God's promise that Israel would be captive for seventy years, since this period has nearly

expired (Isa. 44:28; Jer. 25:11-12; 29:4-10). In the midst of difficulty, Bible prophecy is always a comfort for the believer (I Thess. 4:18; 5:11); v. 2.

2. Daniel's prayer to God for Israel, vs. 3-19.

a. Daniel's manner of prayer, v. 3.

- (1) It was governed by meditation on the Word of God, the Book of Jeremiah in particular. There is a desperate need today for a return to biblical prayer. This is not to say that God will not hear the unlearned, inarticulate, stammering, feeble cry of a believer in need. However, it does mean that God ought to be the focal point of prayer and not man. It is the Word of God that gives us such a focus.
- (2) It was disciplined prayer, humble prayer, persistent prayer three times daily (Dan. 6:10-11), yet no less sincere on this account. Discipline need not be legalism; it is simply the orderly subjection of all things in our ives, under our responsible control, to the will of God (I Cor. 9:24-27; II Cor. 10:5).

b. Daniel's basis of prayer, the character of God, v. 4.

- (1) Expressed in the three primary names of God, all of which are contained in this verse.
  - (a) LORD or Jehovah/Yahweh, meaning "I am that I am," and "the eternally self-existing one" (Exod. 3:14-15), as "the one who causes to be for His own" (Exod. 6:2-8). This is God's own personal name used of no one else; it speaks of His unchanging covenant relationship with His people. It is appropriately used here since Daniel is pleading on the basis of God's righteousness, that is with regard to His steadfast unchanging promises that were given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and still apply to the true seed of Abraham today. As the Christian prays to the Father on the basis of Christ's name and hence His mediatorial work, so the Old Testament saint prayed in the name of Jehovah which in a similar way speaks of a redemptive relationship.
  - (b) God or Elohim, meaning "the strong, mighty one," appropriately used in Genesis 1:1. It is a generic term and is not personal. Hence in Exodus 23:24 it also refers to heathen gods.
  - (c) Lord or Adonai, meaning "master," and "the one as sovereign owner" requiring obedience and subjection as a servant to his lord, also generic.
- (2) Expressed in the attributes, perfections, or characteristics of God.
  - (a) His transcendent holiness and justice, being "great and awesome," reflecting God's righteous reign and punishment of Israel's wickedness.
  - (b) His steadfast, covenant love (Jer. 30:18, 22), to true Israelites (Ps. 73:1).

- (c) Consider also God's righteousness, mercy, and the perfections expressed in His name, vs. 14, 16, 18-19.
- (3) Expressed in all prayer that is worthy of such a designation as biblical prayer. Most of the prayers in this study give similar primary acknowledgment. The approach to God is not initially to be my needs or problems, but God's glorious person. The foundation of our salvation and sanctification is the very essence and nature of God, and so it is with this prayer. The problem today with so much prayer is man-centeredness, morbid introspection and self-preoccupation. Our great need is not so much a proper self-image as an exulted God-image. The believer is changed by looking to Christ (II Cor. 3:18), not himself. Likewise, the believer is first to focus this attention on the One to whom he is praying in true worship, and so ratify his confidence in Him concerning whatever matters may be later declared.
- (4) By way of illustration, C. H. Spurgeon wrote:

The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. . . . Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And, whilst humbling and expanding, the subject is eminently consolatory. . . . Would you lose your sorrow? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.<sup>10</sup>

c. Daniel's prayer of confession, vs. 5-15.

- (1) The catalog of Israel's sins.
- (a) Note Daniel's personal identification with Israel when he repeatedly uses the inclusive "we," vs. 5-6.
- (b) Israel has rebelled against the Word of God, vs. 5, 11.
- (c) Israel has rejected the testimony of God's spokesmen, vs. 6, 10.
- (d) Israel has not sought the Lord in prayer and truth, v. 13.
- (e) By way of application, Israel has done what many professing believers are guilty of doing today. They have become lazy and indifferent with regard to the Word and prayer. They demean serious and substantial preaching. They refuse to subject themselves to the leaders of a local

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted by J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 13-14.

church, and in poverty of soul are ignorant of holy and profound communion with God.

- (2) The consequences of Israel's sins.
  - (a) Shame at severe and humiliating punishment, vs. 7-8.
  - (b) Dispersion to Gentile captivity, v. 7.
  - (c) Cursing according to the law of Moses (Deut. 27:15-26; 30:17-19); vs. 11, 13.
  - (d) Desolation of Jerusalem, v. 12.
  - (e) Calamity on account of disobedience, v. 14.
  - (f) Bondage for the redeemed, v. 15.
  - (g) By way of application, any nation with a godly heritage that acts in a manner similar to Israel will also be put to shame, or else God will be obliged to apologize to His ancient people.
- d. Daniel's prayer for pardon, vs. 16-19.
  - (1) It is based upon God's righteousness, vs. 7, 16.
    - (a) In v. 7. it is the righteousness of God which condemns. His holy demands find Israel utterly lacking. Daniel does not flinch from making a full confession here.
    - (b) But in v. 16 Daniel pleads for God's pardoning righteousness, or more accurately "righteousnesses." In other words, God's saving righteousness manifested towards Israel in the past is now once again claimed. This saving reputation of God is based upon His covenant faithfulness, His promise to preserve Abraham's seed.
    - (c) By way of application, this reminds us of God's saving righteousness displayed in the gospel, especially as described in Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-26. Though a believer may sin, yet his hope is based upon Christ's blood-covenant faithfulness (I John 1:9).
  - (2) It is based upon God's reputation, that is "Your sake, O LORD," His glory, v. 17, cf. v. 15. Moses similarly pleaded for Israel on the ground of God's honor (Num. 14:11-21). To know the character of God in an intimate way, especially His holiness, sovereignty, holiness, grace, and veracity, is to possess great boldness in the light of His promises.
  - (3) It is based upon God's great mercies that are appealed to on account of Israel's agony in captivity and desire for relief. Human righteousness is

totally excluded. Though again, God's reputation is related to the maintenance of His people, v. 18.

- (4) It is based upon the upholding of the essential significance of God's particular name revealed exclusively to His people, v. 19. Both Israel and Jerusalem are inextricably bound up with "Jehovah/Yahweh," who has covenanted to save, keep, and prosper His people. Therefore Daniel may have had in mind the declaration of his contemporary, Ezekiel (Ezek. 36:21-25); v. 19.

C. Daniel's prayer receives an immediate answer, Daniel 9:20-27.

1. He receives a swift answer, apparently because he is "highly esteemed," (cf. Jas. 5:16); vs. 20-23.
2. He receives a saving answer concerning the coming of "Messiah the Prince," who will be "cut off," and eventually "bring in everlasting righteousness," vs. 24-26.

D. Conclusion.

1. This beautiful prayer should humble us when we consider the poverty of contemporary Christians in their speaking to God. Our mundane, sterile, grocery list, materialistic, stereotyped prayers undoubtedly reflect the shallowness of our relationship with God and desire for holy fellowship with him.
2. The true child of God will, till his groaning ceases in this body (Rom. 8:23), always be painfully sensitive concerning his troublesome sin nature. This is in no way meant to minimize the need for us to overcome and be victorious in the face of sin; but it is meant to make us understand that no such victory will be easy or casually obtained, especially apart from personal and serious involvement with the Word and prayer.
3. We should greatly delight ourselves in the person of God, not simply because of obligation as a creature, but rather because we genuinely delight to do no other. God is not to be used as a means to an end, but rather is a glorious end in Himself. It was no chore for Daniel to spend time with God, whether in prayer or with His Word, even though he was not exempt from "extreme weariness," v. 21. To know God in both truth and experience is to desire to know about Him even more. To have little interest in prayer or God's Word is simply to indicate, at best, our impoverished condition, and at worst, our unconverted state.
4. It seems that Daniel had a deep appreciation of salvation truth, especially as it is understood in the righteousness of God. Paul's frequent and vital use of this term presupposes an understanding of this fundamental attribute as found in the Old Testament (Isa. 59:9, 14-17). Christians should likewise be aware of the glorious truth that this subject involves, and allow it to pervade their praying.

## XII PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF HABAKKUK – HABAKKUK 3:1-19

## A. Introduction.

1. The Book of Habakkuk was written c. 609-606 B.C., just before Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah, and after the death of good King Josiah, probably during the reign of bad King Jehoiakim.
  - a. His name means "to embrace" or "being embraced," which is appropriate considering the faithful nature of this prayer.
  - b. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel.
  - c. He may have been a musician and a Levite (3:19), though little is known about him. There are several fanciful Jewish tales written about him.
2. The theme of Habakkuk is "The Righteousness of God in History." God is holy and gracious, but He does not forget injustice. He has all of the nations under His control, dealing with them according to His sovereign wise pleasure; even the heathen have a purpose. But in the midst of international turmoil the justified man will live through faith in Jehovah. A summary of the first two chapters is as follows:
  - a. *Habakkuk's burden*; continuing wickedness amongst God's people that apparently remains unjudged (1:1-4).
  - b. *God's reply*; the Chaldeans will punish Judah with terrifying ferocity yet with accountability (1:5-11).
  - c. *Habakkuk's problem*; it seems unjust that God's people should be judged by a nation that is more wicked than Judah, even the heathen (1:12-2:1).
  - d. *God's reply*; the justified man shall live by faith, and not die, in the midst of this imminent season of judgment and terror (2:2-5).
    - (1) This judgment is certain, vs. 2-3.
    - (2) This faith is solely in Jehovah (cf. Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 3:10-14; Heb. 10:32-39); v. 4.
    - (3) This judgment is severe, v. 5.
  - e. *Habakkuk's prophetic denunciation and declaration*; that God's justice will triumph, whether it be opposed explicitly by the Chaldeans, or implicitly by Judah (2:6-20).
    - (1) He condemns those, especially Babylon, who violently plunder to satisfy materialistic lusting, vs. 5-8.

- (2) He condemns those who both wantonly exploit and vainly attempt to fortify their ill-gotten gains, vs. 9-11.
- (3) He condemns those who futilely attempt to build their empires through bloodshed since God's kingdom will prevail, vs. 12-14.
- (4) He condemns those who seduce neighboring communities for the sake of depraved enjoyment. But further, he now advises that he who disgraces shall be disgraced; he who has given violence shall receive violence, vs. 15-17.
- (5) He condemns those who are idolatrous, their foolish worship of lifeless matter instead of the living and holy God of Israel. His awesome and mouth-stopping presence will soon be felt, vs. 18-20.

B. Habakkuk's prayer of triumphant faith, Habakkuk 3:1-19.

1. The prophet's introductory address, vs. 1-2.

a. It is a prayer, a hymn, and a theodicy, v. 1.

- (1) As a prayer, it is a response to the truth, to God's recent revelation (1:5-11; 2:2-20). Again, the Word of God is a stimulus to prayer.
- (2) As a hymn "according to the Shigionoth," perhaps "according to musical excitement, emotion," this form is to complement this response to the truth (cf. v. 19).
- (3) As a theodicy, that is a vindication of God's character, truth, and direction of history, in the face of a narrow focus on present apparent injustice.

b. It is an address to Jehovah or "LORD" on the basis of covenant relationship, v. 2.

- (1) Habakkuk is fearful, but not faithless.
- (2) Habakkuk calls on God to implement what He has decreed (cf. 1:5).
- (3) Habakkuk asks that God's wrath be tempered with mercy; let righteousness and peace kiss each other (Ps. 85:10), as has been Israel's past experience (Exod. 34:6-7).

2. The prophet's graphic symphony of praise to God's dominion over the whole earth, vs. 3-16.

a. God's sovereign dominion over the earth in general, vs. 3-11.

- (1) It is possible that a theophany is being described here, even the Angel of Jehovah, who went before and behind Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 13:21; 14:19).



- (2) The regions of Teman and Mt. Paran are probably representative of the Arabian Peninsula, from Mt. Sinai in the south to Edom in the north, where God directed and preserved His covenant people. He seems to have been aroused now. But for what cause? v. 3a.
  - (3) The earthly elements seem to bow in praise, awe, and submission as Jehovah furiously passes by, vs. 3b-11.
    - (a) The inhabitants of Cush and Midian watched with great trembling, perhaps recalling earlier encounters with this God, v. 7.
    - (b) Notice how earthly features all acknowledge and yield to the greatness of God, sunlight, v. 4, pestilence, plague, v. 5, gentile nations, v. 6a, mountains, v. 6b, rivers and the sea, vs. 8-9, flooding rivers, v. 10, sun and moon, v. 11.
  - (4) God is described according to His attributes, but in a most magnificent and spectacular manner, vs. 3b-11.
    - (a) His holiness is splendid and radiant, vs. 3-4. His omnipotence is earth-shattering, vs. 5-6, 10. His wrath is terrifying, vs. 7-9.
    - (b) But further, God seems to be on a military campaign; He rides His chariots of salvation with bow drawn and other implements at the ready, vs. 8-9. For what reason? His spear and arrows are at the ready, v. 11.
- b. God's sovereign dominion over Israel in particular, vs. 12-15.
- (1) The whole preceding scenario is primarily concerned with God's furious intent with regard to the saving of His people. It portrays His jealous indignation with regard to both the Chaldeans and Israel, His ultimate settlement with both groups, v. 12.
  - (2) In spite of what Habakkuk might have earlier thought regarding God's revealed severe judgment, yet it was still discipline, not divorcement. Thus He now comes with jealous indignation for "His people, . . . His anointed." God's zeal for His people knows no bounds, v. 13a.
  - (3) At the same time God takes terrible vengeance upon Chaldea, especially Babylon, by destroying the whole dynasty from top to bottom, v. 13b. The justice served will be appropriate by means of the trampling under of the enemy with "Your horses," vs. 14-15.
- c. God's sovereign dominion over Habakkuk as a prophet of Israel, vs. 16.
- (1) There seems to be a prophetic element in Habakkuk's prayer which he now reflects upon. He has prayed as God has led him.

- (2) At first consideration he trembles at the revelation of the immediate prospects of national discipline.
  - (a) Stomach spasms, tremors, nausea.
  - (b) Quivering lips, sweaty palms.
  - (c) Shock that penetrates his bones.
3. The prophet's triumphant faith rises above circumstances, vs. 17-19.
  - a. Faith in the Word of God, of an assured salvation that excludes circumstances and is productive of joy (cf. 2:2), vs. 17-18.
  - b. Faith in God's sovereign and enabling power (cf. Isa. 40:29-31), which is personally appropriated, v. 19.
  - c. Faith alone in God for salvation. Habakkuk here is the very embodiment of 2:4; he trusts solely in God to save him; he does not in the slightest boast in good works, only sovereign grace. By way of illustration, in 1974 two O.M.F. missionaries were captured in southern Thailand by guerrilla terrorists, Minka Hanskamp of New Zealand and Margaret Morgan of Great Britain. A ransom demand was not paid so that later their two missionary bodies were found, shot and buried. However, they did rite a final message and quoted Habakkuk 3:17-18 as their sure hope.

### C. Conclusion.

1. Circumstances do not excuse our faith, they merely measure it. Habakkuk was confronted with the prospect of participation in God's severe judgment, yet his prayer was one of steadfast confidence, as a justified man living by faith.
2. The greater part of this prayer focuses attention upon the vindication of God's righteous character and not Habakkuk's problems. It was especially the reminder he received of God's covenant faithfulness that caused him to eventually conclude with such a triumphant declaration of faith, akin to that of Job (Job 13:15) and Esther (Esther 4:16).
3. The passion of God for His elect must never be underestimated (Matt. 24:22; Luke 18:7; cf. Gen. 18:32; 19:22). He has not unfailingly saved them to then disregard them. If they sin, He will discipline them and assuredly restore them to fellowship (John 17:12).
4. The result of such a prayer of confidence in God is joy (3:18), not because the immediate future looked bright, but because the God of Habakkuk's salvation was Jehovah, the God whose promises to His children cannot fail.

### XIII PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

#### A. CHRIST'S PATTERN PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES –MATTHEW 6:5-18

##### A. Introduction.

1. The Lord's Prayer has often challenged believers concerning its use and doctrine.
  - a. Should it be used repeatedly as a conclusion to a main prayer?
  - b. Does it teach that God's forgiveness is conditional?
  - c. Is it dispensationally legal and thus superseded by grace?
2. There are two accounts (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4), which may possibly occur at different occasions, but we shall deal with Matthew in the main. There are slight differences, but the chief ideas and emphases are identical.
3. The broad context of Matthew's account is that of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus expounds kingdom truth for all true children of the kingdom of God.
  - a. It is addressed to Christian's today while it does anticipate the future Messianic age (6:10).
  - b. There is no gospel in this discourse since it is not primarily addressed to unbelievers. However, the demands of "the righteousness of the law" (Rom. 8:3-4) are constantly directed towards true disciples of Christ (5:17-48).
  - c. It occurs in Galilee during the second year of Jesus' public ministry. He has separated himself from multitudes that seek healing and now He addresses his disciples more privately on a mountainside (4:23-5:2).
  - d. Jesus has just spoken out against parading religionists who delight to display their "righteousness before men" (6:1-4). Religion is man's search for God and his zealous endeavor to earn His favor. Christianity is God's determined search for lost man and His gracious endeavor to save him.

##### B. The pattern of the hypocrite, pagan, and true disciple concerning prayer, Matthew 6:5-8.

1. The hypocrite's motive and method, v. 5.
  - a. A hypocrite, ὑποκρίτης, *hupocritēs*, in classical Greek was a stage actor who would wear different masks to portray different characters; he was not what he appeared to be.

- b. Here the hypocrite in prayer presents a religious charade. He inwardly lusts for the applause of man, self-glorification, by means of the pretext of outward piety.
- c. Hence he receives in full an appropriate reward.
  - (1) The praise of men, memorials, recognition.
  - (2) The condemnation of God: “depart from Me, I never knew you” (7:22-23); exclusion from the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 23:13); “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (24:50-51).

2. The pagan or Gentile’s motive and method, v. 7.

- a. A pagan or Gentile would be represented by the Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Assyrians. Their praying would be repetitious with an emphasis on thoughtless, ecstatic and trance enhancing mantras.
  - (1) As at Ephesus where a large crowd of idolaters shouted for two hours, “Great is Artemis (Diana) of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:34).
  - (2) As the Mohammedans call out, “God is God,” or “There is one God Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet.”
  - (3) As the Buddhist monks will cry out “Um” for hours on end.
  - (4) As the Hari Krishna, and similar Hindu followers do with their chanting mantras.
  - (5) As those who recite numerous “Hail Mary’s and “Pater Nosters,” as well as the Rosary.
- b. By way of illustration, Augustine called this “much speaking in prayer, not much praying.”

3. The disciple’s contrasting motive and method, vs. 6, 8.

- a. He is primarily concerned with communion with God rather than posturing; his heart has a deep desire for God (Ps. 42:1-2), v. 6.
- b. He is content with the solitude of private prayer, even as was Jesus (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; 22:41).
- c. He is not out to inform or impress God with incessant, repetitious prayers. Rather he prays with his mind to ratify his trust, v. 8.

4. Applications.

- a. Prayer is essentially a private rather than a public activity. This principle applies even when we participate in corporate prayer. In such a situation we can more

easily be distracted, yet we are also encouraged when we pray with others. Communal prayer was clearly a frequent early church activity (Acts 1:14; 2:42).

- b. Our prayers should not be intended to change God's mind, but rather should confirm our submission to His will (Luke 22:42); John 17:4).
- c. God is not primarily concerned with a lot of information so far as He is concerned. He knows more than we can tell. However, our mentioning of the details, even our frequent pressing home of our requests (Luke 18:1-8), ought to reflect the degree of our belief that God will certainly delight to hear and answer.
- d. Quality in prayer, viz. individual and in private, is more important than quantity (Jas. 5:16). This is especially important with regard to modern evangelism.

C. The pattern of Jesus Christ concerning prayer, Matthew 6:9-15.

1. Introduction.

a. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments:

This prayer is undoubtedly a pattern prayer. . . . There is a sense in which you can never add to the Lord's Prayer; nothing is left out. . . . To say that this prayer is all-inclusive, and is a perfect summary, simply means, therefore, that it really does contain all the principles. We might say that what we have in the Lord's Prayer is a kind of skeleton.<sup>11</sup>

b. Charles Simeon comments:

Highly as the Lord's Prayer is esteemed amongst us [in the Episcopal/Anglican Church], and frequently as it is used, there is scarcely any part of Scripture less considered: we are contented with repeating the words, without ever attending to its true import. The fact is, that though it is written for the use of all, none can use it aright but the true Christian: it is the Christian only, whose heart can embrace the subjects contained in it.<sup>12</sup>

2. The injunction or command, v. 9a.

- a. "Pray, then, in this way [after his manner]," not "with these words," suggests a general guide, not a recitation. But consider Luke 11:2, "say/speak," λέγω, legō.
- b. The pattern here is not so much concerning words as doctrinal structure, order, priorities, content.
- c. As John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray, not with any known verbal pattern (Luke 11:1), so Jesus Christ provides an orderly truth model that establishes universal principles.

<sup>11</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*, II, pp. 48-49.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Simeon, *Works*, XI, p. 185.

3. The invocation or call to God, v. 9b.
  - a. “Father” here does not refer to the Fatherhood of God, hence the brotherhood of all mankind. If, according to John 8:44, God is not the Father of some, He is not the Father of all. All who partake of human flesh are one with Adam and alienated from God. All who partake of the Holy Spirit are one with Christ by whom God has become their adopted Father (Rom. 8:8-9, 14-17; but cf. Acts 17:28-29).
    - (1) To the Jew this title indicated a distinctive covenant relationship (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 64:8-9), but it was obtained on the basis of faith (Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:7-9).
    - (2) To Jesus, in His conversation and prayer directed toward heaven, the operative title was “Father,” πατήρ, patēr. Jesus does not directly refer to Him as Jehovah, but cf. John 8:58; 17:6, 11, 12, 25-26.
    - (3) To the Christian this title indicates an adopted relationship established through faith (John 1:12; I John 3:1-2), so that as a result he partakes of the blessings of Abraham (Gal. 3:9, 26).
    - (4) This privilege of access as a son to the Father does not confer the right of casual and nonchalant address. Cf. Mark 14:36; John 17:11, 25, where Jesus prays with reverence.
  - b. “Our” Father suggests communal prayer in contrast with the individual recommendation of v. 6. However, as a consequence, surely we can also pray “My” Father as John 8:19; 14:7 suggest. Here Jesus stresses the difference between a fact and a relationship in the use of this possessive personal pronoun. The difference is similar when we say, “That is a house,” and “That is my house.” The great difference is that in the latter instance, I live in the house which is so much more than cognitive awareness. It is one thing to address God as “Father,” but quite another to genuinely know Him on the basis of personal faith in Christ, and so address Him as “my” Father.
  - c. “Who is in heaven,” or more literally “the heavens,” speaks of God’s abode where He dwells in unclouded holy glory, transcendent in majesty yet also immanent (Jer. 23:23-24), calling forth awe and respect (Ps. 8:1; 113:4). Remember that Jesus has come from this place of glory of which He speaks (John 1:18; 3:31-32; 6:33).
4. The petitions concerning the affairs of God (theocentric), vs. 9c-10).

In the prayers of the Old Testament we have easily recognized a repeated emphasis on the priority of the character of God. Even in the face of great and terrifying danger, the child of God has not neglected to first address God with comprehensive and reverent adoration, and especially with regard to addressing Him as Jehovah/Yahweh, the name of Israel’s covenant Head. In the same manner the Son of God instructs his disciples to pray according to this order. In simple terms, whenever we pray, it is God’s business and glory that should take precedence over man’s business and status.

- a. “Hallowed be Your name/let Your name be hallowed, [on earth as it is in heaven]” v. 9c.
- (1) Here is the first of six imperatives of desire or entreaty. The first two, having an obvious heavenly perspective, most likely assume the conclusion of the third imperative, “on earth as it is in heaven.”
  - (2) To “hallow” the name of God is to sanctify it, that is set it apart from defiling influences and tendencies; it is to treat it as holy, sacred, revered, in a manner that differs from common worldly regard. In other words, God’s reputation is to be preserved from soiling and displayed only as totally pure (John 17:11).
  - (3) By way of illustration, before I was married, “Ann” was just one name among many; but now it is set apart, hallowed, because it is my wife’s name. Likewise with the names “Rachael” and “Alicia,” and the names of my parents. How much more then ought God’s name be hallowed, instead of being cheapened by means of vain and flippant oaths!
  - (4) What then exactly is God’s name? Again, our study of the primary names of God in the Old Testament ought to have helped us here. Remember that Jesus Christ was the perfect Jew who was the embodiment of the Law.
    - (a) It is not “Elohim,” or “Eloah,” or “El.” The root here means “strength” or “might,” hence it is most appropriate for Genesis 1:1. Notice how it is used twice in I Samuel 5:7, and in particular the second reference which designates a heathen deity.
    - (b) It is not “Adonai,” meaning “Lord/lord” or “Master,” the Jews’ substitute name for Jehovah. Note Psalm 35:23 where “Elohim” is equated with “Adonai,” and Malachi 1:6 where “Adonai” refers to God as Master and man as master.
    - (c) It is “Jehovah” or “Yahweh” (Exod. 3:13-15), which is based upon the verb “to be,” hence “the self-existing One.” Note also Exodus 6:2-8 where Jehovah is “the One who causes to be.” The tetragrammaton or four-lettered Hebrew name of God, יהוה, Yahweh, was mistranslated as Jehovah about 1520 by a German scholar. Even so the actual sound of יהוה, Yahweh, is not definitely known. It is God’s real covenant name of redemptive relationship (Ps. 5:11; 8:1). Also note Daniel 9:4 where all three primary names are used.
  - (5) God’s name is holy, not because of distinctive sounds, but because of its distinctive meaning. It was considered of great and particular importance to Christ (John 17:6, 11, 12, 26) having a fullness of meaning, hence it is not to be used lightly, but respectfully. Even more, the name of God has a priority here that ought to profoundly impress the Christian. This is particularly so if the expression in v. 10, “on earth as it is in heaven,” is also applicable to the first two imperatives. The heavenly accolade is well described in Isaiah 6:3;

Revelation 4:8. Thus “holy and awesome/reverend is His name” (Ps. 111:9; cf. 148:13).

- b. “Your kingdom come/let Your kingdom come, [on earth as it is in heaven]” v. 10a.
- (1) Implicit in this imperative of desire or emtreaty, prayed by true children of God, is the acknowledgment that it is God who, according to His sovereignty, establishes His kingdom, and not man.
  - (2) But what is this “Kingdom of God” described here? It seems also to be implied here that this kingdom has not yet manifestly come. Nevertheless, is not the kingdom now with us (Luke 17:20-21)? The answer may be understood in terms of the kingdoms of men confronted with the Kingdom of God; it is more specifically the following items c through f, yet chiefly f.
    - (a) The kingdom of God in absentia, that is the void of the reign of God through the rebellious reign of man (Gen. 11:1-9; Judg. 21:25; Ps. 2:2-3).
    - (b) The kingdom of God promised, prior to the coming of the King of the kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 7:27; Mic. 4:1-8; Zech. 14:9-11).
    - (c) The kingdom of God inaugurated, at the first coming of the King of the kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28; Mark 9:1-2; Luke 11:20; 17:20-21).
    - (d) The kingdom of God developed, along with inter-advent recruitment (Mat. 13:31-33, 47-50; Luke 16:16; Col. 1:13-14), while the King of the kingdom has gone to “a distant country” (Luke 19:11-15).
    - (e) The kingdom of God anticipated in its fullness, prior to the second coming of the King of the kingdom (Matt. 25:31-34; Luke 19:11-27; 21:25-31; 22:14-18; Acts 14:22).
    - (f) The kingdom of God consummated, at the second coming of the King of the kingdom (Acts 3:19-21; I Thess. 2:12; II Tim. 4:1, 18; II Pet. 1:10-11).
  - (3) Here then is the true Christian’s fervent hope in the midst of a perverse and wicked generation (Tit. 2:11-13; II Pet. 3:13). More specifically he prays for:
    - (a) God’s King to have exclusive recognition, the Lord Jesus Christ, not man’s.
    - (b) God’s kingdom dominion, His exclusive reign over the whole earth, not man’s.
    - (c) God’s kingdom righteousness, not man’s unrighteousness (Matt. 5:10; 6:33).



- (d) God's kingdom acknowledgment, where His name is hallowed (Ps. 86:9).
- c. "Your will be done/let Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," v. 10b.
- (1) There is obviously a very close connection between the second imperative of desire or entreaty and this third yearning concern. So Dr. Lloyd-Jones comments:
- The result of the coming of the kingdom of God amongst men will be that the will of God will be done amongst men. In heaven the will of God is always done perfectly. . . . What is characteristic of heaven is that everyone and everything is waiting upon God and anxious to glorify and magnify His name. The angels, as it were, are on the wing ready and waiting to do His bidding. The supreme desire of all in heaven is to do the will of God, and thereby to praise and worship Him. And it should be the desire of every true Christian, says our Lord here, that all on earth should be the same. Here, again, we are looking forward to the coming of the kingdom, because this petition will never be fulfilled and granted until the kingdom of God shall indeed be established here on earth amongst men. Then the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven.<sup>13</sup>
- (2) However, does this request imply that the will of God is *not* always done on earth? If He is sovereign, are His plans ever frustrated? There are four aspects to the will of God.
- (a) The sovereign will of God. This is His will of purpose and all-encompassing decree; it is the final cause of all things, incorporating secondary causes, good and bad, pleasure and suffering, prosperity and disaster (Ps. 135:6; Jer. 18:6; Luke 22:42; Eph. 1:11; Jas. 4:15; I Pet. 3:17).
- (b) The preceptive will of God. This is His will of holy good pleasure; this is His will of desire that shall ultimately triumph over the events of His permissive will (Isa. 46:10-13; Matt. 7:21; 12:50; I Thess. 4:3-6).
- (c) The permissive will of God. This is His will of displeasure by which He allows events without approval; He is sovereign over all such creaturely acts, yet not the author of them (Acts 4:27-28; 17:29-30).
- (d) The secret will of God. This is His hidden will, as distinct from that which is revealed (John 7:17; Rom. 12:2), which calls for submission rather than understanding (Deut. 29:29; Ps. 115:3; Rom. 9:18-20).
- (3) Men ought not to pray for God to change His will; rather they pray, as part of the will of God, to acknowledge the will of God (Luke 22:42). The Christian will always desire, as here, that God's preceptive will supplant His permissive will.

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<sup>13</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*, II, pp. 64-65.

## 5. The petitions concerning the affairs of man (anthropocentric), vs. 11-12.

As man's first interest and duty ought to be to God and then second to man (Matt. 22:35-40), so this order is to be reflected in the prayer life of true disciples of Jesus Christ. However, Thomas Manton explains:

In those [first three] petitions, the benefits are not God's, but ours. When His name is sanctified, his kingdom cometh, and His will is done; these things do not only concern the glory of God, but also our benefit. It is our advantage when God is honored by the coming of Christ's kingdom and the subjection of our hearts unto himself. But these latter petitions do more immediately concern us.<sup>14</sup>

## a. "Give us our necessary bread each day," v. 11.

- (1) This is a table petition which is just as proper as a table grace. It may well imply the modesty expressed in Proverbs 30:8-9. Hence, the child of God is not to pray for either meager or excessive rations.
- (2) This is not to deny mediate causes which God employs in the distribution of such a great variety of items which crowd His inexhaustible pantry. However, fruit and vegetables, meat and poultry, dairy products, and grain, have been set forth by God for man to discover and profit from (Acts 14:17).
- (3) Several virtues ought to be present when we pray this way.
  - (a) Dependence, since God is the acknowledged "giver" who has, amongst other characteristics, the quality of generous providence (Job 36:31; Matt. 9:26).
  - (b) Concern for others, since "us" suggests that the one who prays has concern for the needs of others.
  - (c) Modesty, since "necessary" bread suggests that the believer who prays will be content with what is needed rather than with what is indulgently wanted.
  - (d) Trust, since bread for "each day" suggests daily confidence, hence daily prayer, and not presumption.

## b. "Forgive our debts, as we have forgiven others," v. 12.

- (1) "Debts" here are legal debts, such as malpractice in business, and it is probable that this is representative of the "debts" that a believer is spoken of as forgiving. But God's forgiveness of the believer must surely refer to his "debts" that have offended God's holy character, and with regard to which he has mercifully received a full pardon.
- (2) "Debts" here with regard to God are those incurred by children of the kingdom since they address God as "Father." Hence, this is not concerned

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Manton, *Works*, I, p. 149.

with forgiveness for initial salvation, but restoration to full fellowship (I John 1:9).

- (3) This is not a prayer that seeks God's conditional forgiveness, that is on account of the worth of our own forgiving attitude. Note that the conjunction here is "as also," not "because." The true believer feels the constraint to forgive his neighbor; so as a child of God yet he asks that God will feel that same sense of constraint towards him. As an authentic Christian he is bold to ask for forgiveness knowing that God is "faithful and just" (I John 1:9).
- (4) God's great forgiveness should manifest forgiveness in those really forgiven (Matt. 18:23-35). A believer who will not forgive provides justification for assuming that he is not in fact a true believer. However, the true believer will continue to cry out, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13), and thus in the local church he will be tender to other such sinners as he (Eph. 4:31-5:2).

c. "Deliver us from the evil [one], and his temptations, v. 13a.

- (1) Contrary to the KJV, NASB, and ESV, the NKJV and NIV appear to be more accurate when they translate, "the evil one" (cf. Matt. 13:19, 38). Christ's temptations were not a confrontation with abstract evil (Matt. 4:1-11).
- (2) In relation to the previous command, prevention is better than cure; that is, deliverance from Satan is preferable to being forgiven for yielding to Satan.
- (3) Negatively, do not allow us to be led into situations in which Satan will solely try our weaknesses (Mat. 26:41).
- (4) Positively, deliver us from Satan's devices, even ultimately his very presence!

Why should we ask that we may be kept from evil? For the great and wonderful reason that our fellowship with God may never be broken. If a man merely wants to be holy as such, there is something wrong with him. Our supreme desire should be to have a right relationship with God, to know Him, to have uninterrupted fellowship and communion with Him. That is why we pray this prayer, that nothing may come between us and the brightness and the radiance of the glory of our Father which is in heaven.<sup>15</sup>

6. The doxology or glorification of God, v. 13b.

- a. There is a serious question as to whether this declaration was uttered by the Son of God at the time that this prayer was taught. There has been a matter of doubt here since the days of the early church fathers. It is impossible to be dogmatic, though everyone seems to agree that the truth expressed here is most appropriate. Many believe that it was a suitable liturgical conclusion, having many variations, that was added to complement formal worship. However, it does seem likely that the truth of this fitting declaration has been derived from I Chronicles 29:10-13

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<sup>15</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon on the Mount*, II, p. 77.

where David offers this doxology as he anticipates the building of the temple. Here it offers praise to God on account of His incarnate Temple.

- b. Reverting to the thrust of concern for God's business in vs. 9c-10, here is a parallel three-fold declaration of God's transcendent glory.

- (1) To the Father belongs eternal dominion.
- (2) To the Father belongs the sovereign dominion.
- (3) To the Father belongs the radiant glory.

- 7. The qualifications concerning forgiveness, vs. 14-15.

- a. Could the apparent lack of understanding on the part of the disciples concerning the necessity of a forgiving attitude, have prompted this emphatic repetition of the injunction of v. 12?
- b. There seems to be a more conditional emphasis here that yet may more strongly underscore the inevitable quality of forgiveness in the forgiven. On the other hand, could it be that Jesus is advising his true disciples that if they will not be forgiving, then God will hold their sins as believers against them and thus discipline them (Heb. 12:5-11)?

- D. The pattern of the hypocrite re-emphasized, Matthew 6:16-18.

- 1. Note that while this section deals only with fasting and not specifically prayer, yet it is so closely related with what precedes as to be most applicable.
- 2. Beware of fasting poses, hence prayerful poses and affectations, somberness, tears, gestures, etc., which can be simply a human display, as in v. 5; v. 16.
- 3. Rather, be careful to avoid giving the impression that you are fasting and praying, v. 17.
- 4. Remember, you are to seek God's attention, not man's. Hence prayer is not to be an explicit form of witnessing, even in a restaurant, v. 18.

**B. CHRIST'S PATTERN PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES – LUKE II:1-13**

A. Introduction.

1. Whereas the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 was taught near the commencement of Christ's Great Galilean Ministry, according to most chronologists of the four Gospels, this similar prayer was yet taught during Christ's final year of ministry, under different circumstances, approximately two years later.
2. Here there are several omissions which suggest that repetition of the exact words is not intended. Here we also have five rather than six imperatives; there is also a shortened introduction and no doxology.

B. The pattern of Jesus Christ concerning prayer, Luke 11:1-4.

1. The desire for prayer instruction, v. 1.

There is something very attractive about the prayer of a person who is thoroughly genuine, intimate in union with God, and verbally articulate. It is also something that the earnest child of God covets. So it is the case here with one disciple of Jesus in particular.

- a. This disciple has just observed the praying of Jesus; never was there prayer like this; he desires this whole manner of prayer.
- b. This disciple then recalls that prayer can be taught; John the Baptist had done this. So he desires the instruction of one so much greater than John. This is a good and acknowledged attitude.

2. The injunction or command, v. 2a.

3. The invocation or call to God, v. 2b.

4. The petitions concerning the affairs of God (theocentric), v. 2c.

- a. "Let your name be hallowed."

- b. "Let your kingdom come."

5. The petitions concerning the affairs of man (anthropocentric), vs. 3-4.

- a. "Give us our necessary bread each day," v. 3.

- b. "Forgive our debts as we forgive others," v. 4a.

- c. "Lead us not into temptation," v. 4b.

## C. The parable of the persistent friend, Luke 11:5-10.

Up to this point the emphasis has been upon the priorities of biblical prayer; now the added requirement of fervent resolve is added. It is not enough to pray correctly, liturgically; we must also pray with intense desire. Thus Jesus encourages the following attitudes.

1. Pray spontaneously, immediately, according to the need, v. 5.
2. Pray sympathetically, concerning the needs of others, v. 6.
3. Pray persistently, as distinct from repetitiously, on the basis of a deep relationship; but it is dogged insistence that is stressed, vs. 7-8.
4. Pray expectantly, confidently, intensely, vs. 9-10.
  - a. "Ask," involves vocal entreaty.
  - b. "Seek," involves mental entreaty.
  - c. "Knock," involves physical entreaty.

## D. The parable of the considerate earthly father, Luke 11:11-13.

While we ought to pray with right priorities and an animated spirit, yet one more element is of crucial importance, and that of motivation, namely a deep appreciation of the goodness of God with regard to His children.

1. The human father gives bread rather than a stone, v. 11a.
2. The human father gives fish instead of a serpent, v. 11b.
3. The human father gives an egg instead of a scorpion, v. 12.
4. The heavenly Father gives infinitely better gifts, v. 13.

## E. Should then a believer today pray for the Holy Spirit?

1. Concerning Jesus Christ's recommendation of the Father here, there have been varying explanations. The problem is essentially twofold.
  - a. If the invitation is universal, that is to an unbelieving world, then Ryle comments:

That no man can pray acceptably without the Holy Spirit, I am well aware. In what way can a man ask for the Holy Spirit unless he has first received the Holy Spirit, I do not pretend to explain.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, II, p. 16.

- b. If the invitation is limited, that is to true believers only, as John Owen comments,<sup>17</sup> then in what sense do those indwelt by the Holy Spirit yet make request for Him!
2. Consider the following textual matters that may help.
- a. Refer to Matthew 7:7-11 where the same phraseology is used to describe the Father giving “good gifts” NIV, in parallel with the Holy Spirit, to His children. Could it be that “good gifts” will come from the Father through the agency of the Holy Spirit? Or could the “good gifts” be distinctive workings of the Holy Spirit?
- b. The context of Luke 11:1-2, 5, and especially v. 11 where the parable is based upon a father/son relationship, would seem to suggest that the recommendation of v. 13. is addressed only to true believers.
- c. Yet there are few, if any, references, especially in the New Testament where true believers specifically pray for the Holy Spirit.
- (1) The instance of Elisha asking for a “double portion of your [Elijah’s] spirit” (II Kings 2:9-11) is really a request for the inheritance of Elijah’s prophetic office (Deut. 21:17). Elisha was Elijah’s spiritual, first-born son.
  - (2) The instance of David in Psalm 51:11 imploring God that He “not take Your Holy Spirit from me,” is in parallel with the previous line, “Do not cast me away from Your presence.” Obviously the Holy Spirit remains with David at the height of his present anxiety. He has “grieved” and “quenched” the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19), and like Paul has no desire to be “disqualified” (I Cor, 9:27), even as Saul (I Sam. 16:1, 4). He recalls the *gift* of the Spirit bestowed upon him when he was anointed by Samuel as king (I Sam. 16:13), and thus fears being discarded by God. Note that in vs. 12-17 there is implied abiding confidence that yet God will not utterly cast aside His child forever.
  - (3) The instance of I Cor. 12:31 may in some translations suggest a seeking, a praying for “the greater gifts [charismata].” However a better translation reads, “But you are earnestly desiring the greater gifts.” This is a statement of fact rather than a command.
- d. The only specific request for the Holy Spirit was by Jesus Christ to the Father for true believers (John 14:16-17), which outpouring at Pentecost was also sovereignly given.
- e. For the true believer, there are four commands given in Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit.
- (1) “Walk in the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25).
  - (2) “Grieve not the Spirit” (Eph. 4:30).

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<sup>17</sup> John Owen, *Works*, IV, pp. 386-387.

- (3) “Quench not the Spirit” (I Thess. 5:19).
  - (4) “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). As with the above, this command assumes that the Spirit of God indwells the believer. This last passage is speaking of the control of the Spirit through responsible deportment and means of grace, especially in the realm of congregational hymnody. Consider the context of vs. 15-21, not just v. 18, also Colossians 3:16.
3. In conclusion, it is important to consider the Holy Spirit in personal rather than fluid terms. This Third Person of the Triune God is bestowed by the Father and so are His distinctive operations. Thus the true believer does not ask the Father for the Spirit who already indwells him; rather he asks the Father for more powerful influences of that indwelling Spirit. Such prayer will include requests for many “good gifts” (Eph. 1:18-19; 3:14-16; Col. 1:9; II Thess. 1:11-12).

#### F. Conclusion.

1. The Lord’s Prayer should be a pattern for the believer, not a ritual. Its repetition is not to be discouraged absolutely since it is probable that if our Savior used its basic form on two separate occasions, then He used it even more frequently, and as a consequence so would His disciples, Possibly the early church used it as part of “the prayers” in Acts 2:42. What is most important, if repetition is used, is that of understanding, of focus upon the truth that is being repeated, of spirit animation, of appreciation of the character and glory of God.
2. The pattern of this prayer is chiefly one of priorities, that is a prayer that is preeminently theocentric rather than anthropocentric. It is “Our Father who is in heaven,” who is of supreme importance. He is not simply a divine Benefactor, an on-call heavenly Helper, but the eternal and glorious holy Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our needs are important, witness their place in this prayer, but they are not firstly our justification for praying. It is God’s needs that must readily have first place, His glory, His kingdom, His will, His name, which our Savior so magnified.
3. Our prayers are not less spiritual because they include material needs. However, even in terms of human needs, the stress of our Savior is that of the need of personal righteousness expressed toward our neighbor as well as God.



## C. CHRIST'S GLORIFICATION PRAYER. – JOHN 17:1-26

## A. Introduction.

Thomas Manton preached that: “The Holy Spirit seems to have put a mark of respect upon this prayer above other prayers which Christ conceived in the days of His flesh. Elsewhere the Scripture tells us that Christ prayed; but this is expressed at large. This was, as it were, His dying blaze. Natural motion is swifter and stronger in the end; so was Christ’s love hottest and strongest in the close of His life; and here you have the eruption and flame of it. He would now open to us the bottom of His heart, and give us a copy of His continual intercession.”<sup>18</sup> For this reason, J. C. Ryle declares that this chapter is “the most remarkable in the Bible. It stands alone and there is nothing like it.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly John Brown writes that this passage is, “without doubt, the most remarkable portion of the most remarkable book in the world.”<sup>20</sup>

## 1. The location of this prayer.

The setting of this prayer cannot be asserted with certainty. If the command of 14:31 was delayed, then as Alford suggests, obviously the upper room was the actual location of this discourse/prayer that closely relates to the preceding ministry in 15:1-16:33. This would mean that there is no account of Christ’s ministry in transit to the garden called Gethsemane. However it is more likely that, upon immediate departure according to 14:31, this exalted revelation took place at some location between the upper room and the crossing of the brook in the Kidron Valley. Westcott suggests the temple area where architectural symbolism stimulated the discourse imagery of 15:1-11. However we would suggest that, at least with 17:1-26, it was peripatetic prayer ministry, or as Ryle believes, “it was prayed in some quiet place outside the wall, before our Lord ‘crossed the brook Cedron.’”<sup>21</sup>

The Lord Jesus had earlier declared to Simon Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32), on account of the apostle being tested after the manner of Job (Job 1:6-2:10). But now there is made known the tenor of this effectual intercessory prayer, it being a profound wrestling before His Father’s throne in heaven, vs.1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25, that at the same time confronts Satan’s earthly domain, that is “the world,” vs. 6, 9, 11, 13-16, 18, 23, 25, and seeks to preserve those given to Him by His Father from “the evil *one*,” v. 15.

## 2. The purposes of this prayer.

It is a complex of purposes that is cyclical as the following diagram illustrates. In other words, the Son prays that the Father might glorify Him so that He might glorify His

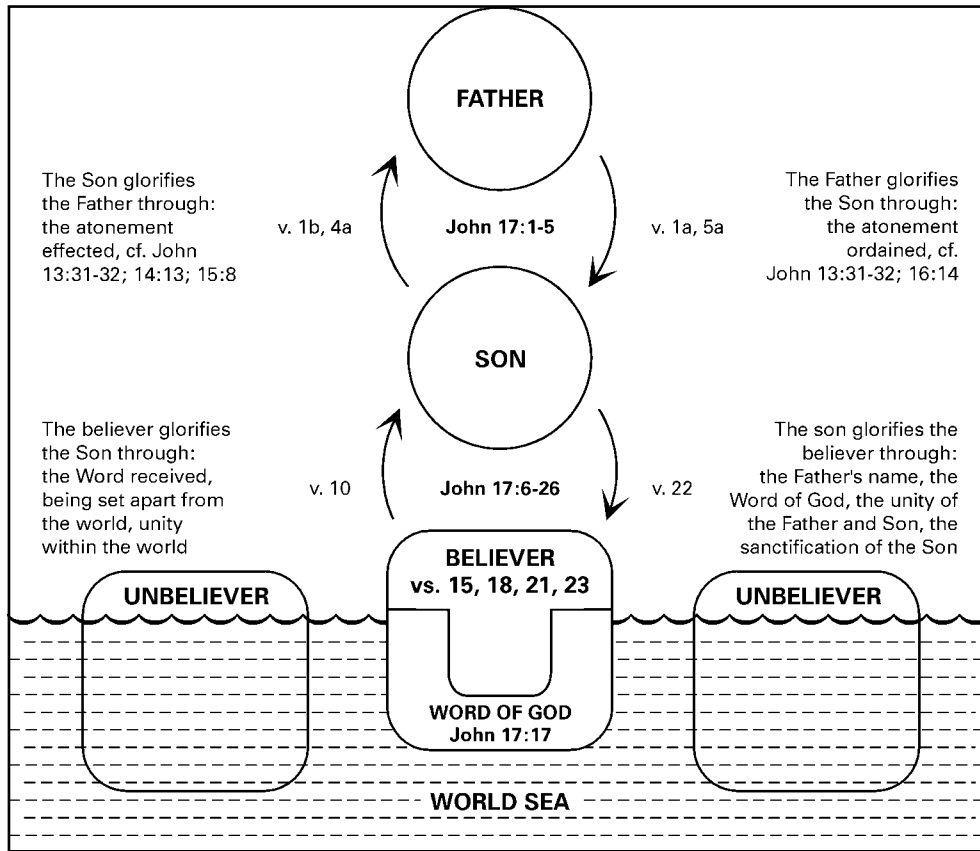
<sup>18</sup> Thomas Manton, *Works*, X, p. 109.

<sup>19</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, III, p. 192.

<sup>20</sup> John Brown, *An Exposition of Our Lord’s Intercessory Prayer*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ryle, *John*, III, p. 193.

Father. At the same time, the Son prays that the glory He has received from the Father might glorify the disciples given to Him. Consequently He also prays that the glorified disciples might glory Him, and in turn He might glorify His Father.



This prayer continues the glorification purpose and theme of John. To an unbelieving world, Jesus Christ declares His glory (2:11; 11:4; 12:27-28). To a believing upper room assembly Jesus expounds upon the glory of God with regard to triune relationships (13:31-32; 14:13; cf. 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4-5, 22, 24). Consider the synonymous use of "light" (3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46, cf. Isa. 9:1-2; 60:1-3), and "name" (17:6, 11-12, 26).

a. The meaning of "glory" and "glorification."

- (1) In the Old Testament concerning "glory," קָבוֹד, kabod, of which John's Gospel is full of references and allusions, there is described the rich honor, the impressive quality, the radiant holiness, the weighty reputation of God (Gen. 45:23 re Joseph; Exod. 24:15-17; Ps. 19:1; Isa. 43:7). To give God glory is to recognize and acknowledge what is so admirable and impressive in Himself, and especially in the spheres of His holiness and sovereignty.
- (2) In the New Testament concerning "glory," δόξα, doxa, the meaning is essentially the same (Acts 7:55; I Cor. 10:31; II Cor. 4:17; Jude 25; Rev. 19:1), except that there is recognized the aspect of brilliant splendor, divine radiance, and especially in the divine person of the Lord Jesus Christ (John

1:14, cf. Matt. 17:2; John 2:11; 8:12; 11:4; 12:41, cf. Isa. 6:1-10; John 14:13; 17:5).

(3) To glorify the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is to recognize, and reflect by life and voice, the resplendent being of God to the exclusion of giving credit to any other source and especially man.

(a) By way of illustration, a girl announces to her parents that she has met the young man she longs to marry, and so fervently describes his every feature and strength. He is kind, handsome, strong, educated, refined, loyal, virtuous, a Christian, and has overall integrity. In other words, she glorifies her boyfriend.

(b) The capacity to glorify then, to a large extent, depends on one's intimate knowledge of the person who is to be glorified. The more you know about God, the greater will be your capacity for glorifying, that is boasting, exalting in Him through worship and works that please Him (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 1:11).

b. The ultimate purpose in John 17.

Supremely, the Son prays that the Father might be glorified by means of His obedience to the redemptive plan of the Father, vs. 1b, 4; cf. 13:31. Thus Jesus Christ is preeminently patercentric/fathercentric (Matt. 5:16; 16:27; Mark 8:38).

c. The complementary purposes in John 17.

(1) *Evangelism* unto faith that "Jesus is the Christ," concerning those given to the Son by the Father, that is inseparable from subsequent sanctification, vs. 2, 6, 8, 18, 20-21, 26; cf. 20:31a.

(2) *Sanctification* unto unity and union, concerning those given to Christ by the Father, who have believed in the Son and thus "have life in His name, vs. 8, 11-17, 19, 20-24, 26; cf. 20:31b.

c. The pattern purpose in John 17.

While the Lord's Prayers of Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 have a common emphasis about them concerning the priority of God-centeredness, yet this glorification prayer has a more exalted pattern that is less obviously structured. It particularly elaborates upon what it really means to pray, "Our Father" or "My Father," cf. vs. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25. There is the believer's heavenly perspective of union with the Father through the Son, after the pattern of the Son's union with His Father, and the believer's earthly perspective of union amongst the brethren, after the pattern of the Son's union with the Father.

## 3. The Person of this prayer.

He is the eternal Son of God who, in a matter of hours, will provide the supreme manifestation of His glory on the cross (John 17:5, 24; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:9; I Pet. 1:21).

- a. He has the same essential nature as God; He is God (John 1:1). He has come from the bosom of His Father (John 1:18; 6:38) and now anticipates returning to that place of unclouded glory (John 17:4-5, 11, 13).
- b. He is the second person of the Trinity who has willingly taken upon Himself “the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:8; cf. John 13:1-11). In this servant role He now prays to His Father, yet He remains fully and essentially God (Col. 2:9).

## B. Prayer for the glorification of the Father, through the glorification of the Son, vs. 1-5.

As with the Lord’s Prayers (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4), here verses 1-5 have an exclusive theocentric focus. The Son’s initial passion concerns the glorification of His Father on earth in a manner that replicates former glory experienced in the bosom of the Father in eternity past. Only after this acknowledgment is there complementary interest in “the men whom you gave Me out of the world,” v. 6.

## 1. The Father glorified through the Son’s dominion over all flesh, vs. 1-2.

Again, as with the Lord’s Prayers (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:1), this is also a teaching prayer, though in this instance, as earlier suggested, it may have been peripatetic in mode. The disciples were surely transfixed as their Master changed the direction of His address. Whereas in 13:1-16:33 Jesus privately speaks in the main to the disciples, now He speaks to His Father in their presence, and it is this new perspective that causes a profound change in manner and tone. Probably John was so indelibly impressed with what he heard that, through the Holy Spirit’s enabling, he had little difficulty in eventually making a record of this sublime laying bare of the Son of God’s distressed soul (12:27).

## a. The hour of the Son’s glory over all flesh, vs. 1-2a

“Jesus having spoken these things, He also lifted up His eyes toward heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify [δοξάζω, doxazō] Your Son in order that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority [ἐξουσία, exousia] over all flesh/humanity.’” Jesus posture in prayer varied (Matt. 26:39; cf. Luke 18:13; Acts 7:55); probably he is in the open air. However it was noticeable that the direction of Jesus’ gaze changed from the disciples to the regions above. Here the motivation to prayer was the fact that “the hour has come.” Earlier in Jesus public ministry John has recorded that Jesus’ hour “has not yet come” (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). But now, during passion week, we read that “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23, cf. 27; 13:1; 16:32). So Ryle well describes this climactic hour of glorification as follows:

I think the meaning of this sentence must be this: “Give glory to Thy Son, by carrying Him through the cross and the grave, to a triumphant completion of the

work He came to do, and by placing Him at Thy right hand, and highly exalting Him above every name that is named. Do this, in order He may glorify Thee and Thy attributes. Do this, that He may bring fresh glory to Thy holiness, and justice, and mercy, and faithfulness, and prove to the world that Thou art a just God, a holy God, a merciful God, and a God that keepeth His word. My vicarious death and my resurrection will prove this, and bring glory to Thee. Finish the mighty work. Glorify Me, and in so doing glorify Thyself. Finish Thy work, not least, that Thy Son may glorify Thee by bringing many redeemed souls to heaven, to the glory of Thy grace.”<sup>22</sup>

Here Jesus prays proleptically with an imperative of desire or entreaty, whereby this imminent hour of glory is considered to be immediate, that is His death, burial and resurrection, and even His subsequent ascension, and session with the Father after forty days. This is also an imperative of desire or entreaty. The Son’s intent in the whole of His earthly ministry was to exhibit, through obedience, the glory of the Father (John 4:34; 14:13; Phil. 2:10-11). Thus everything that follows in this prayer falls under this governing principle, including Christ’s intercession for those who have been given by the Father to the Son for His saving and keeping.

Note that the accomplishment of this ultimate purpose of glorification was to be guaranteed by means of the Father having given to His Son, in eternity past, “authority over all flesh/humanity,” that is Jew and Gentile, so that the decreed plan of particular redemption might certainly be accomplished (Matt. 11:27; 28:18). Hence the Son is contemplating the near completion of that which He agreed to fulfill when abiding in the Father’s bosom.

While this overriding principle of glorification was such a passionate concern of the Son of God, and the Christian is to follow in the steps of his Master, yet today in so much of evangelical Christianity this priority is almost lost to sight. Sometimes confessional orthodoxy will recite this fundamental truth, but there is rarely any heartfelt fervency, as this prayer manifests. While dying of tuberculosis, David Brainerd exclaimed three weeks before he expired:

Near night, while I attempted to walk a little, my thoughts turned thus; “How infinitely sweet it is to love God, and be all for Him!” Upon which it was suggested to me, “You are not an angel, not lively and active.” To which my soul immediately replied, “I as sincerely desire to love and glorify God, as any angel in heaven.” Upon which it was suggested again, “But you are filthy, not fit for heaven.” Hereupon instantly appeared the blessed robes of Christ’s *righteousness*, which I could not but exalt and triumph in; and I viewed the infinite excellency of God, and my soul even broke with longings that God should be *glorified*. I thought of dignity in heaven; but instantly the thought returned, “I do not go to heaven to get honor, but to give all possible glory and praise” Oh, how I longed that God should be glorified on *earth* also!<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 383.

- b. The bestowal of the Son's glory through eternal life, v. 2b.

“Just as/so that [καθώς, kathōs] all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.” At this juncture, to Arminians there might be given the advice: “Abandon hope, all who enter here!” I recall in a biography of A. W. Tozer it being related that in his studying of John 17 he gave up any possible thought of a genuine Christian loosing his salvation. Surely the reason is the repeated and emphatic stress that is placed here upon the awesome truth concerning the sovereignty of God's particular elective grace, in eternity past (vs. 6, 9, 24). Here we are led to the borders of the secret will of God (Deut. 29:29), as previously revealed (6:37, 39), beyond which even Calvinists should not stray, especially by means of logical extension. Thus individual conversion is rooted in the will and forelove of the Father (Rom. 8:29) to which His Son obediently ascends, and not merely autonomous human faith. This is not to deny the significant biblical role of faith, vs. 8, 20-21, but rather understand it as divinely enabled linkage to Christ, the effectual Mediator of His Father's will. However this saving purpose is not merely elective, but as has been repeatedly emphasized, the impartation of “eternal life” (3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; I John 1:2; 2:25; 5:11, 13, 20), that is participation in “the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4), concerning those captive to death in body, soul, and spirit (John 5:24; 8:51-2; I John 3:14). But further, since this eternal life is divinely donated by Christ (10:27-28), like original natural life (Acts 17:28), it is the gift of pure grace (Rom. 6:23, χάρισμα, charisma).

2. The Father known through the Son's heaven-sent commission, v. 3.

“And this is eternal life in order that they may know You, the only [μόνος, monos] true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Here is a fundamental definition of “eternal life,” it being more a profound dynamic relationship with God rather than life that is forever linear. It is, when rightly understood, the knowledge of God. So J. I. Packer challenges:

What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the “eternal life” that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me” (Jer. 9:23f.). What, of all the states God ever sees in man, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of Himself. “I desire . . . the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Says God (Hos. 6:6).<sup>24</sup>

Of course the amplification of this eternal life makes this knowledge of God to be a matter that challenges spiritual imagination. So Thomas Manton comments:

It is life eternal; not like the earthly life, which is but as a vapor, a little warm breath, or warm smoke, turned in and out by the nostrils. Our present life is a lamp that may be soon quenched; it is in the power of every ruffian and assassinate. But this is life eternal. In heaven there is a fair estate; the tenure is for life; but we need not take thought for

<sup>24</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 33.

heirs; we and our happiness shall always live together. The blossoms of paradise are for ever fresh and green: therefore if we love life, why should we not love heaven? This is a life that is never spent, and we are never weary of living. This life is short, yet we soon grow weary of it. The shortest life is long enough to be encumbered with a thousand miseries. If you live to old age, age is a burden to itself: “The days shall come in which they shall say, We have no pleasure” (Eccles. 12:1). Life itself may become a burden, but you will never wish for an end of eternal life; that is a long date of days without misery and without weariness. Eternity is every day more lovely. Well might David say, “The loving-kindness of God is better than life” [Ps. 63:3]. Men have cursed the day of their birth, but never the day of their new birth. Those that have once tasted the sweet and benefit of God’s life never grow weary of it.<sup>25</sup>

Further note the exclusive, definitive qualification here. The God that John commends here is “the only true God” who undoubtedly is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). However the qualification goes further, for this “only God” (5:44) has an “only begotten/sole and unique Son” (1:14; 3:16, 18; I John 4:9) whom He has sent. Why this commission? So that the believer in Jesus Christ may truly see, and consequently know His Father (14:7, 9). Thus truly to know Jesus is truly to know His Father (5:23; 8:19).

3. The Father glorified on earth through the glory of the Son, vs. 4-5.

The proleptic manner continues,<sup>26</sup> principally for the purpose of informing Jesus’ disciples, both present and future. The content here has been taught before at various points in Jesus’ earthly ministry, but this is a final thrust and compaction that here, according to the medium of prayer, impresses the heavenly mandate of the Father upon the auditors. A prayer tells us a lot about the person who is praying.

a. By means of the earthly work of the Son, v. 4.

“I glorified You on the earth having completed/finished [τελειόω, teleioō] the work which You have given Me to do.” Yet again the Son is supremely patercentric/fathercentric. His ministry up to the present has involved three key elements.

(1) Jesus’ commission at the Father’s bosom conference, v. 4c.

A specific warrant has been given by God the Father to God the Son, but when? The repeated language of Jesus being “sent” (5:24, 30, 36-38; 6:29, 38-39, 44, 57; 7:16, 18, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4, 7; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5) from His Father indicates eternity past in “the bosom of the Father” (1:18) when “the decree of the Lord . . . [to redeem] the nations” (Ps. 2:7-9) was promulgated, and the Son came forth “to do Your will, O God” (Heb. 10:7; cf. 1:2; John 4:34) with unqualified obedience (Phil. 2:5-8). This was Jesus’ supreme earthly passion.

<sup>25</sup> Manton, *Works*, 10, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> One commentator, not worth mentioning, suggested that because Jesus here declares He *has* completed the work given to him by the Father, that is apparently before His actual crucifixion, then the saving work of Christ had indeed now been completed. Such foolishness is not worthy of a reply.

- (2) Jesus' compliance with the Father's earthly commission, v. 4b.

Now Jesus confesses climactic fulfillment of His redemptive vocation, yet again proleptically. So on the cross Jesus will declare, "It is [has been] finished [τελέω, teleō]" (19:30). While the listening disciples are presently void of understanding, soon, following Jesus' ascension to His Father, they will recollect these details and, with the Holy Spirit's enabling, better appreciate this note of completion, and the model for following in His obedient steps. So Isaac Watts has written:

Such was Thy truth, and such Thy zeal,  
Such deference to Thy Father's will,  
Such love, and meekness so divine,  
I would transcribe and make them mine.

- (3) Jesus' completion for the Father's earthly glory. v. 4a.

The focus of Jesus' ministry was never glory for Himself as an end in itself (8:50, 54). He even sought more than strict compliance with His Father's will; rather His ultimate goal was the glorification, that is the holy justification and exaltation of His Father before a world of sin and woe (13:31; 14:13). Thus at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus declares a divine QED, an affirmation of total completion of that which had been commanded, spanning his years of preparation as well as approximately four years of public ministry. Now the spotless Lamb of God has come to that climax of redemption whereby the New Covenant was actually cut, to the shame of earth's spite and the glory of heaven's triumphant grace (Gen. 50:20).

- b. By means of the heavenly glory of the Son, v. 5.

"And now You glorify Me, Father, with/alongside of Your own glory which I had in Your presence before the world existed." Still once more the thought is proleptic, presently anticipating imminent glory. Certainly the glory described in v. 4 encompasses the full redemptive work of Christ, including His ascension and session with His Father. Nevertheless here there is movement toward greater understanding of the Son's anticipation of that divine ecstasy which shall be His having returned to that place of supreme delight, His Father's bosom (1:18). Thus we have briefly unveiled the mystery of personal and subordinate distinctions within the triunity of the Godhead.

- (1) Jesus' heavenly glory in eternity past, v. 5b.

The "time" here is eternity past prior to the creation of "all things" by "the Word [λόγος, logos]," the pre-existing Lord Jesus Christ (1:3, 10; 8:58). This intimate "face-to-face" relationship (1:1-2) between the Son and His Father is likened to a son fondly reclining upon the "bosom [κόλπος, kolpos]" of his father (1:18). Strongly intimated here is privileged access before a Father who smiles upon the devotion of His Son.



- (2) Jesus' heavenly glory in eternity future, v. 5a.

In recollection of eternity past, the Son further prays, with an imperative of desire, concerning his imminent death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and especially His welcome session beside “the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3; cf. Ps. 110:1; Rom. 6:4; Heb. 10:12), that is His Father. This reunion anticipated “the joy set before Him . . . at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Hence the glorification which the Son desires, with no thought for the accolade of man, especially concerns His perfect completion of the work formerly assigned to Him, as confessed in v. 4.

- C. Prayer for the glorification of the Son through the sanctification of believers, vs. 6-19.

In a manner similar with the Lord's Prayers where God's business has priority over man's business (Matt. 6:9-14; Luke 11:2-4), so here, vs. 1-5 having first focused on the relation of Christ with His Father, now vs. 6-26 focus on Christ's relationship with His disciples.

1. The Son's sanctification of believers given by the Father, vs. 6-12.

It is not difficult to appreciate that man has a world view which comes about by means of focusing through human lens. On the other hand it is difficult for this same human being, especially as a sinner, to focus with a divine perspective, that is to think God's thoughts and perceive with God's perception concerning this same human realm. Yet here Jesus Christ desires that His very earthy, human disciples should be transported heavenward so as to better understand the divine perspective concerning how God determines to save sinners.

- a. Christ's revelation of the Father's name, vs. 6-8.

Here Jesus provides for His Father and auditors, in the form of prayer, a vocation update. Hence He commences to place considerable emphasis upon the revelatory character of “the name” of His Father, as in vs. 6, 11, 12, 26 (cf. Matt. 6:9; John 5:43; 10:25; 12:28; III John 7). Surely John's pervasive Hebrew orientation further enhances the emphatic nomenclature here. Consequently the distinctive meaning is undoubtedly that of, in Hebrew, “hashem,” the name, the unique, ineffable name of Jehovah or Yahweh, יהוה, the God of Israel's own personal name, and not the more generic Elohim or Adonai.

- (1) It is revelation to the disciples given to the Son, v. 6.

“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You [initially] gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” Here is messianic prophetic fulfillment of Psalm 22:22; cf. Proverbs 18:10. But how has Jesus affectively accomplished this revelation of “the name,” this glorification of the Father upon earth, vs. 4, 26? Surely by means of the incarnation as a whole (1:1, 14, 18; Col. 2:9), but more specifically His “I-Am” identification (6:35; 8:12, 58; 9:5; 10:14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1) that obviously identified Him with the revelation given to Moses (Exod. 3:13-15; 6:2-8), as well as His words (10:30-31; 14:9), and His works (5:16-18, 36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11).

However, another aspect of Christ's revelation of His Father's name is by means of that very term "Father" which Jesus repeatedly employed, especially here in vs. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25. In other words, having come from the Father, the Son reveals Him as His Father (14:9; cf. 1:14; 3:35; 5:17, 19-23, 26, 36; 6:46, 57; 8:18-19, 54; 10:15, 30, 36-38; 12:49-50; 13:1, 3; 14:6-7, 9-13, 20, 31; 15:15; 16:15, 27-28, 32). Thus to truly know God as the "I-Am" Jehovah of the Old Testament is also to know Him as the Father of the New Testament through His only beloved Son.

The disciples present with Jesus are especially in mind at this juncture, though also consider v. 20. The reason is that the chain of sovereign dealing with them moves from the Father's initial elective possession to transference to the Son's saving keeping (6:44-45) with the result that "they have kept Your word." This keeping of the Father's word is not so much with regard to practical, obedient godly virtue as faithful confession that Jesus is the Son of God come from the Father, vs. 8, 25, cf. vs. 3, 18, 21, 23. Hence Jesus' prayer is a report of obedience that has resulted in initial personal redemptive success, that yet anticipates a much greater ingathering from and for the Father, v. 18, 21, 23.

- (2) It is revelation of the Son's reliance on His Father, v. 7.

"Now they have known that everything You have given Me is from You." Once again Jesus speaks proleptically (cf. vs. 1, 4-5). While believing that Jesus is the Son of God (16:30), yet up to this point the disciples have remained dull concerning their perception of the climax of Jesus' earthly ministry, and even the next few hours will see little improvement. But then will come, following Christ's ascension to His Father, a radical change at Pentecost (Luke 22:32; John 7:38-39) when new perception will result in more substantial understanding concerning the Son's relationship with His Father. From v. 8 we learn that "everything" here very much focuses upon the words of the Father which the disciples "now" comprehend; yet the truth of these words may also incorporate the revelation of the Father to the Son concerning "the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession" (Ps. 2:8) which the Father promises to lavish upon His Son. However the overriding emphasis is once again the patercentric appreciation of the Son being of related importance to true disciples of Christ who really grasp this truth.

- (3) It is revelation of the Father's words mediated via the Son, v. 8.

"Because the words [τὰ ῥήματα, ta rhēmata] which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received/welcomed [them] and have come to know truly that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me." Here is allusion to "bosom conversation" between the Father and His Son in eternity past, that is when the Son learned of His redemptive appointment. In simple terms, the words of God the Son are the very words of God the Father mediated to the disciples; thus red letter Bibles are of no importance. But what exactly was the meaning of these words, this instruction? John records that these "words" chiefly focused on who Jesus is in relation to His Father

in heaven, and especially His vocation designated by His Father in relation to the saving of those given to Him (3:31-35; 6:68; 8:28, 38; 12:48-49; 14:10). Here is the essence of Messiah's person and origin as the Lord's anointed; so the disciples have, in sequence, rightly "received/welcome" and "truly understood" and "believed," with considerable adjustment in the light of popular Jewish understanding, that Jesus is this same, heaven sent, divine Messiah (16:29-30).

b. Christ's mediation with the Father, vs. 9-10.

When a father gives a trust to his son for safe-keeping, the dutiful son will take his responsibility seriously, especially the maintenance and preservation of family tradition and assets. So Christ is jealously concerned about His inheritance of the elect from the Father that nevertheless retains heavenly ancestry.

(1) His concern for the chosen of the Father, v. 9.

"I ask [ἐρωτάω, erōtaō] concerning them; I do not ask concerning the world but concerning whom you have given Me, because they are Yours." Here is the discriminating, particular, eclectic love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd (10:3, 11, 14-16), the parameters of which have been established by His Father. In marriage a man covenants that, "forsaking all others," he gives a pledge of exclusive love. A man who declares his love for all woman is sure to have trouble with all women! Here, because of Jesus' singular devotion to His Father, He jealously intercedes for these precious souls that remain the possession of His Father, and His attitude here is one of confident expectation that He will be heard. But the world at large is not included here within the distinguishing love of Jesus, even though He came to the world he had made as its Savior (1:10, 29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 6:33; 12:47). Nevertheless,

[h]owever wide is the love of God (3:16, however salvific the stance of Jesus toward the world (12:47), there is a peculiar relationship of love, intimacy, disclosure, obedience, faith, dependence, joy, peace, eschatological blessing and fruitfulness that binds the disciples together and with the Godhead.<sup>27</sup>

So the world is not impressed here with this particularity of love. It becomes offended at this sovereignty of the grace of God, employed by Jesus, even though it does not hesitate to discriminate over the works of its own hands. But further, the world hates those Jesus has chosen on behalf of the Father (15:16, 18-20; 17:14). For this reason in particular He intercedes here for the safe keeping of His own (vs. 11, 15, 17).

(2) His concern for glorification by the chosen, v. 10.

"And all the things that are Mine are Yours and all the things that are Yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them." More simply, "All My things are Your things and all Your things are My things." Here the Father and the Son are in perfect reciprocal union. What are the "all things" here (cf. "every thing" v. 2)? They are surely the disciples regarded as objects selected out of

<sup>27</sup> D. A. Carson, *John*, p. 560.

this world for the purpose of mutual possession by the Father and the Son (cf. 10:30), but not only the disciples; also included are “the nations” and “the very ends of the earth” (Psalm 2:8; cf. 22:27; John 16:14-15). Hence the point of focus here concerns not so much the individuality of each elect thing/person as their being equally possessed by the Father in heaven and the Son presently upon earth. So in this divine transaction, ordained by the Father and accomplished by the Son, the end result is exaltation and glorification of the Son, yet again, proleptically speaking. In other words, Christ is glorified by the chosen disciples as is the vine by means of its branches and fruit (15:5, 8-9).

c. Christ’s security in the Father’s name, v. 11-12.

The instructive intent of this prayer is further evident here, that is Christ’s desire for the disciples to be comforted by means of further details with regard to His intercessory concern, in view of His imminent departure. With the disciples being left behind in such a savage, devilish world, they need additional assurance that Christ will not abandon them as “orphans” (14:18). So here with paternal concern expressed in fervent prayer, He makes further preparation that calls for their ongoing divine “keeping,” “guarding,” and “sanctification” (vs. 11-12, 15, 17, 19).

(1) He asks the Father to keep the disciples, v. 11.

“And I am no longer in the world, and [yet] they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, in order that they may be one just as we [are one].” Once more, proleptically speaking, Christ anticipates His departure that would, on the surface, appear to leave the disciples alone. Without Him, like bleating lambs, they are defenseless before the devouring wolves of this Christ-hating world. Hence the earnestness of Christ’s plea is expressed by His reverent address of transcendence and imminence, “Holy Father.” It may be that in Jesus’ desire that the disciples be sanctified, that is kept holy in an unholy world (vs. 17, 19), He invokes the holiness of God the Father. However, while Christ has been “keeping them in Your name,” v. 12, up to this point, how is it possible for this “keeping” to be maintained following His departure? Surely the manifold answer is adoption by the Holy Spirit (14:18, 26; 16:26; 16:7, 12-14), the “truth [that is Your word]” (v. 17), and supremely Christ’s atonement sanctification: “I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in the truth,” v. 19, the result being a unity/oneness after the divine model of the unity/oneness that the Father and Son evidence. Here is essential divine unity with the diversity of the distinctive divine Persons that is to be the basis of Christian unit that yet manifests diversity in gifts and gender. This is more fully described in vs. 20-23.

(2) He asserts He has kept the disciples, v. 12.

“While I was with them, I was keeping/preserving [τηρέω, tēreō] them in Your name which You have given Me, and I kept/guarded [φυλάσσω,

phulassō] them, and none of them perished [ἀπόλλυμι, apollumi] except the son of perdition/destruction [ἀπώλεια, apōleia], in order that the Scripture [γραφῆ, graphē] might be fulfilled.” The Son is not backward in declaring His perfect faithfulness to the task appointed by His Father. However, the purpose in mind is the ongoing keeping of the eleven upon His departure. Now Christ more deliberately defines His betrayer (cf. 13:21-30). There is a sense in which Judas also has been kept temporarily in a social, nominal sense, but not savingly; hence while the eleven will be saved, Judas will ultimately perish in body and soul, as one who, while being addressed as a wonder-worker in Christ’s name, is told by that same Christ, “I never knew you [not ‘I once knew you but now I don’t’]; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23). His designation as “the son of perdition/destruction/damnation” is a description of his essential character; he is a child of the pit whose whole purpose is to recruit others to fulfill his satanic and antichrist designs! He may additionally be associated with “the man of lawlessness” who is similarly designated as “the son of destruction” (II Thess. 2:3). However the destiny of Judas may also be included here, that is his eventual consignment to hell with his master (Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8). Hence Judas was not savingly given to the Son by the Father (6:37; 17:2, 6, 9, 24), though he was chosen by Christ to participate for a while as a usurper (John 6:70-71). Such is the prophetic expectation of Scripture that will unfailingly come to pass (Ps. 41:9; John 13:18), concerning Satan’s worst than cannot thwart the ultimate triumph of heaven’s best (Gen. 50:20).

2. The Son’s sanctification of believers sent into the world, vs. 13-19.

With increasing pastoral concern, Christ fervently pleads for the eleven with an intensity of soul and spirit. His future hope is that the disciples experience divine “joy,” v. 13, “preservation,” v. 15, “sanctification,” vs. 17, 19, and a sense of “vocation,” v. 18, all within the environment of a hostile world.

a. Sanctification by Christ’s joy, v. 13.

“But now I am coming to You, and I speak these things [by way of prayer] in the world in order that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” The anticipation by the Son of His return to the bosom of His Father is one of exquisite delight and unbounded joy, not withstanding commitment to His imminent “Via Dolorosa”. Here is a further indication of Jesus Christ’s didactic purpose at this time. He seems not to have earlier revealed such a degree of prayerful intimacy, enjoyed with His Father, as here. But now He prays “in the [arena of the] world,” that is more openly for the sake of His listening disciples. With regard to “the joy set before Him” (Heb. 12:2), He anticipates the time of redemptive fulfillment, ushered in by Jesus’ post-resurrection ascension and session, that is now shortly to occur. Then the disciples will obtain a fullness of understanding and joy concerning the atonement’s completion, through the Holy Spirit’s outpouring, that will parallel to a degree His anticipation of a triumphant reception by His appreciative and adoring Father.

## b. Sanctification by the Father's Word, vs. 14-17.

While the disciples of Christ will be provided with inner joy, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, there will be outer conflict from a hateful world that is under the direction of Satan. What then will be the objective, instrumental means of their insulation from the world while being in the world and yet not isolated from it? The answer is the truth of the Father's word, vs. 6, 8, 14, 17, 19, mediated by the Son.

## (1) It is revelation antithetical to the world, v. 14.

"I have given to them Your word [λόγος, *logos*]; and the world has hated [μισέω, *miseō*] them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." This is the objective, concrete, God-breathed (II Tim. 3:16) word revelation that the Father has spoken to His Son, v. 8, and the complementary Old Testament that has been mediated with christological enlightenment by the Christ. Thus, to the two Emmaus disciples, "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). Then, having been raised from the dead, Jesus also addressed His disciples: "'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:44-47; cf. Matt. 28:19-20). The disciples have already commenced witnessing about Jesus as the Christ (Matt. 10:5-15; Luke 9:1-6), very imperfectly at this stage, by means of biblical exposition that they have already received from their Master and confirming signs. As a result of this identification with Jesus, they have already been spurned (15:19), this being a prelude to more concerted rejection by the world at large, which is to follow.

## (2) It is revelation opposed by the evil one, v. 15.

"I do not ask in order that You would take them out of the world, but in order that You would keep them from the evil [one]." If Jesus' sole concern was for the disciples, then their removal from the earth with Him would make sense; but He has a vision of necessary apostolic ministry of universal proportions (v. 18; Matt. 24:14) that will confront this exceedingly treacherous world. Hence this will require ongoing sanctification, that is shielding from Satanic assault and penetration (Matt. 6:13; I John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19) at a personal level. Notwithstanding Jesus' awareness that "all power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18), He is particularly sensitive to the reality that "the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (14:30; cf. 12:31; 16:11). Nevertheless, at the same time a world-wide gospel offensive is to be divinely accomplished in the midst of this world of fearful darkness (Eph. 5:15-16), and for this reason the earthly sanctification of Jesus' disciples is a vital necessity, it being no minor task that human ingenuity can accomplish (10:11-12).

- (3) It is revelation that sanctifies from the world, v. 16.

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” By way of repetition, cf. v. 14, concerning exceeding abhorrence of “the evil one,” v. 15, and anticipation of a major imperative of entreaty, v. 17, for Jesus this present decadent, anti-Christ world is antithetical to His kingdom, and consequently His disciples. Here is profound pastoral concern. So Thomas Manton warns us that,

[w]e can never enough be cautioned against the world. . . . 1. Because of our proneness to it. . . . It is a great part of religion to ‘keep ourselves unspotted from the world’ (Jas. 1:27). 2. Because of the heinousness and danger of it. It is called adultery: ‘Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God’ (Jas. 4:4). 3. Because of the unsuitableness to the divine nature. ‘Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world’ (I John 5:4). . . . It is contrary to the aim of Christ; His whole aim in coming and going was to bring us to heaven (Heb. 11:16).<sup>28</sup>

- (4) It is revelation that is the truth, v. 17.

“Sanctify [ἀγιάζω, *hagiazō*] them in the truth [τῆ ἀλήθεια, *tē alētheia*]; Your word is truth.” “Sanctification” essentially means to keep *from* and *unto*, especially here in terms of being kept *from* worldly defilement *unto* being kept in righteous union with Christ. Jesus having personally sanctified this small band of disciples to date, that is preserved them from “the evil one,” vs. 12, 15; 15:3, the fact of His imminent departure and the prospective vast increase in the number of disciples comprising the church, v. 20, anticipates a new strategy of sanctification. While Jesus is the embodiment of “the truth,” (14:6), and He has mediated the verbal truth of the Father to His disciples, v. 8, now a new revelation of “the truth” is at hand, as v. 19 suggests. Specifically “the truth” here is not truth in general or even the broad expanse of Bible truth. Rather it is gospel truth that sanctifies in a declarative sense (I Cor. 1:2; Heb. 10:9-10), hitherto unknown by the disciples. In 8:31-32, it is continuation in “My [Jesus] word” defined as “the truth,” leading to the outworking of the gospel, that emancipates. Likewise 14:6 suggests “the truth” is Jesus as the mediatorial means by which a person “comes to the Father.” Further in 15:26, the ministry of the promised “Helper/Holy Spirit” will be to testify of “the truth” which Jesus defines as being “about Me,” especially His atonement. Nevertheless, every word of Jesus, as with His Father, is also “the truth,” which Scripture objectively and truthfully reveals. Thus, “the sum of Your Word is truth” (Ps. 119: 160).

- c. Sanctification by the Father’s truth, vs. 18-19.

The reason for Jesus not taking His disciples with Him to His Father in heaven is now further explained. The vocation of the Son in relation to His Father is to become the ground of the related vocation of the disciples appointed by the Son. However the cross becomes the fulcrum which connects both vocations.

<sup>28</sup> Manton, *Works*, 10, pp. 406-407.

- (1) Christ's sanctifying commission of believers, v. 18.

“Just as You sent [ἀποστέλλω, *apostellō*] Me into the world, I also sent [apostellō] them into the world.” As Jesus is the Father's Apostle come from the Father to testify of Him, so the disciples are the Son's apostles who will have come from the Son to testify of Him and His Father. Following Jesus' resurrection, this truth is reiterated (20:21; cf. 13:20; 15:26-27). Here the distinctive role of the apostle is intimated, that of being personally commissioned and sent by Christ Himself (Acts 1:21-22), and uniquely sanctified in that office. Subsequent sanctified believers, not having been directly sent, will testify of “the apostle's teaching” (Acts 2:42; cf. Eph. 3:4-5; Jude 3, 17). Hence this hazardous calling necessitates sanctification of the twelve by the Father through the word, v. 17 as well as sanctification by means of the Son's atonement, v. 19. These are really two aspects of the one fundamental sanctification process, that is conversion of the twelve by means of the Father's appointment and the Son's obedience. Such a plan has earlier been established in eternity past; now the Son prays to the Father about its fulfillment, in the hearing of the disciple for their edification.

- (2) Christ's self-sanctification for believers, v. 19.

“And on behalf of them I sanctify/consecrate Myself in order that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.” It seems suggested here that what the Son prayed for from the Father in v. 17, in terms of sanctification, will at the same time be accomplished by the Son. In other words, what the Son actively performs will have been according to the direction of His Father since, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (5:30; cf. 5:19; 8:28). The sanctification of the Son here is not moral improvement, but self-consecration as a reflection of His moral perfection, His commitment to redeem, through total obedience, those given to Him by His Father (Luke 9:51; John 15:13). For the purpose of His saving of them, He sets Himself apart, He purposes to die, He “lays down His life so that He might take it again. No one has taken it away from Him, but He lays it down on His own initiative. He has authority to lay it down, and He has authority to take it up again” (John 10:17-18; cf. Matt. 26:53; John 2:19; 5:26; Eph. 5:25-26; Tit. 2:14), so that the disciples might be set apart as a consequence by the gospel. Here is Jesus' true active obedience. Furthermore, the divine salvation of a sinner is at the same time the sanctification of that sinner in a most definitive and final sense, that is, transference from darkness to light, the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ (Isa. 9:2; 42:16; Col. 1:13; I Pet. 2:9). So John Murray has rightly explained that,

in the New Testament the most characteristic terms that refer to sanctification are used, not of a process, but a once-for-all definitive act. . . . This means that there is a decisive and definitive breach with the power and service of sin in the case of every one who has come under the control of the provisions of grace.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> John Murray, *Collected Writings*, II, pp. 277, 280.



D. Prayer for the glorification of believers through the glorification of the Son, vs. 20-26.

Here further aspects of the doctrine of the true disciple's union with the triune God come to the fore. Union through the Holy Spirit has already been anticipated (7:38-39; 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14). Now that the Son is about to return to His Father, union with both of these Persons, and consequent union of true disciples on a universal scale, is of vital importance. It is significant that this is the desire of God ever before the desire of man!

1. Believers are glorified as they manifest a united, glorious body, vs. 20-23.

The union of the Father and the Son is foundational here, though along with this the imminent cry of the Son to the Father, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46), raises some profound questions. The Son having come from perfect union in the bosom of His Father (1:18), has experienced a degree of alienation because of His appointed earthly vocation. However, presently confident that He will not ultimately be "forsaken" by the Father at His hour of trial, He anticipates a restoration of that perfect union which particularly, it seems, is to be the ideal model for true believers. The Son's recovered glorious union will have added redemptive luster that will especially be the ground of spiritual fusion amongst believers in the church, world-wide.

a. The broad intercession of Christ for the unity of the faithful, v. 20.

"Not concerning these only do I ask, but also concerning those believing in Me through their word." Here is anticipation of the coming church age that will be inaugurated by the initial twelve apostles (Matt. 16:18-19; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:19-20; 3:5). Jesus' vision here is authentically ecumenical; the doctrinal connecting link is "the apostle's teaching" (Acts 2:42), the "word" of the Father given to the Son, then passed on to the initial apostles, v. 8, then passed on to "those also who believe in Me" throughout the world (Matt. 28:16-20). So our prayer should have universal dimensions concerning the spread of the gospel. From another perspective, "believing in Me" is to be the justifying ground of true ecumenical relations. Of course such "faith" presupposes the particular terms of "faith" that the Gospel of John establishes, especially concerning the divine person (as the Son of God) and atoning work of Christ (as the Lamb of God). For Christians in the present, it is comforting to be assured of not only Christ's past prayer for believers in the future, but also past believer's prayer for believers in the future.

b. The unity of Father and Son passed on to unite the faithful v. 21.

"In order that they all may be one, just as You, Father [are] in Me and I in You, in order that they also may be in Us, in order that the world may believe that You sent Me." The "all" here is certainly universal in its perspective in the light of v. 21b, and "all whom You have given Him," v. 2. But is the "oneness" here to be of form or faith, of an ecumenical movement or an ecumenical Spirit?

- (1) It is to be a universal spiritual oneness or union.

Here is no mention of union under papal administration by the “King of the kings of the earth,” no physical apostolic succession, no episcopal authoritarianism, no conciliar authoritarianism, no denominational authoritarianism, no institutional conformity, etc. It is the union of Psalm 133:1-3 that is rooted in divine anointing, divine life, which at the same time reflects the diversity that existed within the unity of the twelve tribes of Israel. Such union also looks ahead to the diversity of the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch under the unity of the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), and the diversity of Spiritual gifts that comprise the unity of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:14-28; Eph. 4:4-6; I Pet. 1:2). Hence union here, not simply unity, concerns essential spiritual truth, at a common experiential level, that is not fractured by secondary diversity. Thus Carson comments that this union,

is not achieved by hunting enthusiastically for the lowest common theological denominator, but by common adherence to the apostolic gospel, by love that is joyfully self-sacrificing, by undaunted commitment to the shared goals of the mission with which Jesus’ followers have been charged, by self-conscious dependence on God himself for life and fruitfulness. It is a unity necessarily present, at least *in nuce* [in a nutshell], amongst genuine believers; it is a unity that must be brought to perfection.<sup>30</sup>

So John Newton has written of the essential grounds of true Christian union.

Jesus, where’er Thy people meet,  
 There they behold Thy mercy seat;  
 Where’er they seek Thee Thou art found,  
 And every place is hallowed ground.  
 For Thou, within no walls confined,  
 Inhabitest the humble mind;  
 Such ever bring Thee, where they come,  
 And, going, take Thee to their home.  
 Dear Shepherd of Thy chosen few,  
 Thy former mercies here renew;  
 Here, to our waiting hearts, proclaim  
 The sweetness of Thy saving Name.  
 Here may we prove the power of prayer  
 To strengthen faith and sweeten care;  
 To teach our faint desires to rise,  
 And bring all Heav’n before our eyes.  
 Behold at Thy commanding word,  
 We stretch the curtain and the cord;  
 Come Thou, and fill this wider space,  
 And bless us with a large increase.

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<sup>30</sup> Carson, *John*, p. 568.

Lord, we are few, but Thou art near;  
Nor short Thine arm, nor deaf Thine ear;  
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,  
And make a thousand hearts Thine own!

- (2) It is to be modeled after the oneness or union of the Godhead.

The bosom union of the Father and the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit, is of personal diversity within essential holy unity. In one sense this union which Jesus prays for is not humanly attainable; but in another sense which Jesus has in mind, it is to be sought for in prayer and may be achieved. Consider in John the relationship between the Father in heaven while His Son dutifully ministers upon earth, that is the devoted, overshadowing concern of the Father for the Son's fulfillment of His appointed, redemptive task (3:35; 5:20); then consider the Son's whole-hearted, earthly consecration to the will of His Father (4:34; Luke 22:42). Then extend this to the heavenly consummation when the Father receives the Son back to His side and declares His "Well done!", while the Son basks in the perfect accomplishment of redemption that so magnifies His Father's original plan! Then consider how Christians are to model this mutual devotion in local church life! Hence Thomas Manton so excellently expounds:

Let us strive to imitate the Trinity in our respects both to the head and our fellow-members, that you may neither dishonor the head nor dissolve the union between the members. Christ useth this expression to draw us up to the highest and closest union with himself and one another. . . . Let your union with him [Christ] be more close and sensible, that you may lie in the bosom of Christ, as Christ doth in the bosom of God. Is Christ in us as God is in Christ? Are we made partakers of the divine nature as he is of ours? [II Pet. 1:2-4], that you may say to him, as Laban to Jacob: "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh" (Gen. 29:14), that you may [spiritually] feel Christ in you (Gal. 2:20).<sup>31</sup>

- (3) It is to be an effecting oneness or union.

This is a visible, noticeable spiritual union, having the intent "that the world may believe that You sent Me." The word "world," κόσμος, kosmos, is used 18 times in this chapter, having the greatest chapter concentration in the whole Bible; it is also found 22 times in I John! In John 17 "world" is the unbelieving global populace, 1:10, especially unbelieving Israel, 1:11, enshrouded in unholy global darkness, in the midst of which Christ is the only light come from heaven, while His disciples are divinely consecrated to be witnesses in this alien environment. From v. 20, it seems that more than the elect alone are here in mind. Rather "world" simply encompasses a universal audience that hears the gospel and gives general acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ sent from the Father, though not necessarily with true saving faith, as v. 23 also seems to indicate. Of the early church, not exclusively comprised of the elect, a watching world declared, "Behold, how

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<sup>31</sup> Manton, Works, XI, pp. 36-37.

these Christians love one another,”<sup>32</sup> even as reflected in the triunity of God. Alfred Plummer makes an interesting observation:

The parallel between this verse and I John 1:3 is remarkable. If ἀπαγγέλλομεν, [apangellomen, proclaim] refers to the Gospel and not to the Epistle, as is probable, then Ssint John wrote his Gospel in order that this prayer of Christ might be fulfilled.<sup>33</sup>

- c. The glory of Father and Son passed on to unite the faithful, v. 22.

“The glory which You have given to Me I also have given to them in order that they may be one just as We are one.” What is this transferred, effecting “glory,” obviously related to vs. 1, 5, 10, 24? The thrust of v. 21 continues with the perspective of glory being injected. Here is further proleptic announcement concerning what is about to be fully accomplished. Further proof is the immediate scattering (16:32) that is then followed by a new-found unity concerning “them,” eventually the twelve in the upper room (Acts 1:14; 2:1), that is now described. Hence the “glory” of Christ is that which shall be bestowed by the Father upon Jesus’ completion of His redemptive vocation not far hence, as vs. 1, 5 suggest (cf. Rom. 6:4; Phil. 2:9-11). As the Mediator, Jesus bestows the glory of grace through the Spirit on those He has redeemed (I Pet. 4:14). According to Manton, the Christian’s glory then is,

the full period of the present change and transformation into Christ’s image: “We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory” (II Cor. 3:18). Glory is but the consummation of grace, or our full conformity to Christ, or that final estate which is suitable to the dignity of the children of God. Therefore every one that looketh for eternal life in Christ, must be like him in this life.<sup>34</sup>

The result then is to be a divinely stimulated unity, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Thus union upon earth is rooted in the triune unity of the one God of Abraham. So John William Hewett, a nineteenth century country curate has well written:

O Christ, Who for Thy flock didst pray  
That all might be as one,  
Unite us all ere fades the day,  
Thou sole begotten Son;  
The East, the West, together bind  
In love’s unbroken chain;  
Give each one hope, one heart, one mind,  
One glory, and one gain.

<sup>32</sup> Manton writes that, “by the world is meant the reprobate lost world, who shall continue in final obstinacy. By believing is meant not true saving faith, but common conviction, . . . a temporary faith, or some general profession of religion (John 2:23-24; 12:42-43)” *Works*, II, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 303.

<sup>34</sup> Manton, *Works*, II, pp. 56-57.

- d. The glory of Father and Son passed on to perfect the faithful, v. 23.

“I in them and You in Me, in order that they may have been perfected [perfect tense of τελειόω, teleiōō] in oneness, in order that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them [past, present, and future disciples] just as You loved Me.” The thrust of vs. 21-22 continues whereby the unity of the Father and Son is communicated to unite true disciples of Christ, except that the perspective of perfection is now injected. “That they may have been perfected” suggests a growth in oneness that will come to completion (cf. Col. 4:12; Jas. 1:4), after the heavenly model. Manton illustrates the unity here as follows:

The golden cherubim did so look to the ark and mercy seat, that they did also look one towards another (Exod. 25:20). So in this union, as we respect God and Christ, so we must also look to our fellow-members.<sup>35</sup>

Again, as with v. 21, there is expressed here Christ’s desire that this unity should impact the world, with the added thought being that of the Father’s loving motivation in sending His Son to save His elect. There is also the nuance here that apart from the attractive, united fellowship of true believers, the unbelieving, spiritually ignorant world, v. 25, in spite of its soul darkness, is to be confronted with unavoidable, undeniable evidence of this divine visitation that even it can, to a degree, acknowledge.

2. Believers are glorified as they behold the glory of Christ, vs. 24-26.

This conclusion supremely anticipates Christ in heavenly, triumphant glory with His Father, being confronted with His redeemed, fully perfected, ascended disciples. However, in this present earthly state, these same disciples can, through Spirit activated faith, love, and unity, enjoy and view as well as anticipate this glory. In Christ’s description of this glorious hope by means of didactic prayer, it is the person of His Father who is dominant in terms of adoration and administration.

- a. The glory of Christ has made known the eternal Father, v. 24.

“Father, whom You have given to Me, I wish that where I Myself am, they also may be with Me in order that they may see My glory, which you have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation [καταβολή, katabolē] of the world.” This fourth of six references to “Father” in John 17 is Jesus’ invariable means of address in this Gospel, it never being “God.” His reference to “where I myself am” must surely be proleptic with reference to his imminent return to His Father (cf. v. 11), and not some location in Jerusalem. It is there, in bosom fellowship with His Father, that He desires the admiring fellowship of His disciples. There they will see His consummated glory and the Father’s adoring gaze (Phil. 2:9-11). There they will have better vision of the source of the plan of redemption and its eternal dimensions. There they will appreciate the love of God in its unveiled magnificence as never before! There they will behold Jesus as the Son of God as never before! There they will comprehend the promise that they would follow Jesus (13:36) as well as the preparation that Jesus had designed for them (14:2-3).

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

- b. The glory of Christ has made known the righteous Father, v. 25.

“Righteous Father, even though the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.” In conjunction with “Holy Father”, v. 11, we see Jesus’ reverent adoration of the infinite moral glory of His Father which at the same time He as the Son embodies (John 12:40, cf. Isa. 6:1-10; II Cor, 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Because of this holy, moral perfection, the unholy, immoral world does not know the Father by nature and choice, its vain professions notwithstanding, even as the holy, spotless, moral Son of God most intimately does. Here the “like father, like son” principle applies, and even with respect to redeemed children of God. It should be kept in mind that it was because the world does not know God that Jesus was sent by His Father to effect that knowledge in the souls of whoever it was determined should be enlightened (Matt. 11:27; John 12:46). In this process, the present disciples, in spite of their evident weakness, have had revealed to them by Jesus that “You [Father] sent Me,” while v. 24 has expounded upon that fulfillment of knowledge concerning the Father and Son that will ultimately be embraced.

- c. The glory of Christ has made known the name of the Father, v. 26.

“And I have made known to them Your name and I will make [Your name] known, in order that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” In the light of v. 25, the knowledge of God is identical with the knowledge of His name, though the essence of this name is holy love (I John 4:7-19). However in Jesus, the knowledge of Jehovah, as the name of “I Am” represents, far surpasses any knowledge of “the Name” or “ha Shem” such as the Hebrew people previously understood. Further the present knowledge of God will yield to greater future knowledge that is subsequent to Pentecost and complete when the disciple eventually attains the presence of Christ in heaven. So the divine attribute of love is intended to be communicated toward true disciples of Christ. As Carson explains: “The love with which they learn to love is nothing less than the love amongst the persons of the Godhead.”<sup>36</sup>

Hence, with the conclusion of this greatest biblical prayer, so revelatory of the triune God in His heaven, so profound and transcendent, we take to heart the final commendation of Ryle.

Let us leave this wonderful prayer with a solemn recollection of the three great petitions which it contains. Let holiness and unity by the way, and Christ’s company in the end, be subjects never long out of our thoughts or distant from our minds. Happy is that Christian who cares for nothing so much as to be holy and loving like his Master, while he lives, and a companion to his Master when he dies.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Carson, *John*, p. 570.

<sup>37</sup> Ryle, *John*, III, p. 223.

#### XIV PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH – ACTS 4:23-31

Acts 4:1-22 follows the healing of the lame beggar at the temple gate Beautiful by Peter, in company with John (Acts 3:1-10); there immediately follows Peter's second sermon at the "portico of Solomon" that both exalts in a resurrected Christ and condemns unbelief by the Jewish people and their leaders (Acts 3:11-26). Hence Peter and John are arrested by "the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Saducees" (Acts 4:1-3). Yet through the Holy Spirit's continued outpouring, some 5000 believe (Acts 4:1-4). On trial the next day, Peter again boldly proclaims a resurrected Christ in Whom "there is salvation in no one else" (Acts 4:12).

The Jewish leaders being perplexed by the great confidence of Peter and John's Christ-reflecting ministry (Acts 4:13), as well as the healed man's presence, they are determined in warning the apostles that they are prohibited from speaking and teaching further "to any man in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:13-18). To this they respond, "we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen or heard" (Acts 4:20). After being given further warning, the Jewish leaders having been influenced by the people because "they were glorifying God for what had happened" (Acts 4:21), Peter and John are released, at which they return to the Jerusalem fellowship in the upper room.

##### A. The fellowship of the saints, v. 23-24a.

Peter and John probably interrupt a prayer meeting on their behalf, at which they report concerning both opposition and blessing. So, "when they [Peter and John] had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they [the Jerusalem fellowship] heard this, they [preeminently Peter and also John?] lifted up their voices to God with one accord and said [prayed, cf. v. 31]." Perhaps the thought here is of Peter's leadership in prayer at which the people followed in prayer with fervent amens and glad agreement. This is reflected often in church life when it is said that a certain person will "lead us in prayer."

##### B. The prayer of the saints, vs. 24b-30.

There is nothing like the practical ministry of the gospel to stimulate prayer, that is resultant persecution, a spiritual harvest, and the illuminated Word of God, all of these responses being overshadowed by the sovereign presence of the Holy Spirit who has so freshly manifested Himself.

##### 1. The prayerful exposition of the Word, vs. 24b-26.

Here the referencing of Psalm 146 and Psalm 2 indicates the biblically saturated souls of Peter and John that, being stimulated to *pray* by the Holy Spirit, then subsequently being "filled with the Holy Spirit . . . began to *speak* the Word of God with boldness," v. 31. Prayer and preaching/teaching go together.

##### a. The stimulus of Psalm 146:6 to prayer, v. 24b.

"Sovereign Lord [δεσπότης, *despotēs*, cf. 'Master,' II Pet. 2:1; Jude 4], You are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them." Here is that commonly ascribed approach to God we have seen so often before

whereby a child of God first prays concerning the greatness of God before the current concerns in his life; to begin with he reverently addresses God according to the glory of His holy character. Of course here it is also the awesome events of the past few months that have come to so possess these early Christians. The sovereignty of God in the historic outworking of personal salvation is wondrous to behold, especially in the light of such concerted opposition by the world, both Jewish and pagan, as vs. 27-28 indicate.

The reference to the sovereignty of God in creation loosely draws upon Psalm 146:6, but also II Kings 19:15; Nehemiah 9:6. In other words, the God of creative power is the God of saving power (II Cor. 4:6), and that with repeated effect in Acts 1:9-11; 2:1-4, 41-47; 3:1-10. With the background of the creation, Habakkuk describes the Lord coming with great saving power: "In indignation You marched through the earth; in anger you trampled the nations. You went forth for the salvation of Your people" (Hab. 3:3-15). However, Psalm 2 much more explicitly describes this sovereignty of God in salvation, in spite of the furious opposition that mankind designs.

b. The stimulus of Psalm 2:1-2 to prayer, vs. 25-26.

Here the divine/human nature of Scripture is described, that is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who mediates the truth of God through King David (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:20-21). In prayer, surely God delights to hear His children recite His Word as the basis of their praise and entreaty of God. It is Scripture that directs our steps in prayer.

(1) David's question concerning intense international, futile rage, v. 25.

"Who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our Father David Your servant, said, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?' (Ps. 2:1). The whole of Psalm 2 is in view here, except that vs. 1-2 so well describe the tension between God and man as has recently been so evident in the region of Jerusalem.

Why are the nations in such a thunderous, perpetual, hostile uproar? Why are they studiously concocting futile schemes? What is your answer to this most basic and timeless of questions? There are many popular reasons given; they include the struggle for existence in the midst of an exploding population; fierce competition for natural resources such as oil, gold, minerals, food basics; conflicting ideologies such as Communism, Capitalism, Zionism, Mohammedanism, etc. Yet do we not suspect a more basic, universal reason in the light of man's inability to live at peace with his neighbor? Yes we do, and the Bible at this point gives a most profound and penetrating answer. It concerns man's most fundamental relationship, which is not with His neighbor, but with God his creator. There is also a sense then in which the answer here to such a basic question is also a result of prayerful study of the Word, perhaps as even earlier Peter and John were taught by their Master concerning this very passage (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:27, 44-47). Of course at its heart, the answer here concerns the conflict that has recently played out in Israel, namely that "we do not want this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14); "the world was made through Him, and the world



did not know [welcome] Him” (John 1:10); “the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light” (John 3:19).

(2) David’s response concerning intense international antipathy to Christ, v. 26.

“The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ” (Ps. 2:2). To begin with an international perspective may immediately come to mind, that of the leaders of the world arrayed against Messiah. However Peter and John focus on the immediate Jerusalem scene, a microcosm of the macrocosm. The “kings” and “rulers” signify that not only the plebeians and proletarians, as suggested in v. 25, are involved, but also the patricians and bourgeoisie. In other words, potentates and parliamentarians, dictators and delegates, sovereigns and senators, are all contaminated with this plague of defiance, of course allowing for exceptions (Phil. 4:22). Thus this uprising is orchestrated by the finest talent this world affords. So the Lord Jesus Christ suffered from the common throng that cried out, “We do not want this man to reign over us (Luke 19:14), hence, “Crucify, crucify Him” (Luke 23:21), but also the “kings” and “rulers” of His day, as with Herod the Great, Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Herod Philip, Pontius Pilate, along with the Jewish leaders such as Annas and Caiaphas being high priests (John 11:49-50; 18:13; cf. Acts 4:27).

Thus the nations agree to unite and complain in concert. Allusion here to the ungodly United Nations is not difficult to grasp. It is important to note that this earthly revolt is exclusively against “the LORD and against His Christ,” that is the Jehovah/Yahweh of Abraham and Israel, and not deity in the abstract. However, as the subsequent verses of Psalm 2 indicate, the earthly focus of the world’s animosity is chiefly upon the Son of God, that is “My King,” v. 6, “My Son,” vs. 7, 12.

2. The prayerful application to current events, vs. 27-28.

It should be remembered that back of this recollection of man’s shameful revolt against his Creator and God is the knowledge, by those who now pray, that this Jehovah and His Son have gloriously triumphed over the supreme act of collective human anarchy by means of the Father’s “sovereign hand” and “predestinating purpose,” v. 28. In this sense, the sin of man on earth, in all of its vileness, by way of reflection only enhances the vastly surpassing accomplishment of heaven (Gen. 50:20; I Tim. 1:13-14).

a. Jewish and Gentile complicity, v. 27.

Here the answer to the question, “Who was responsible for putting Jesus Christ to death?” is answered. It was “the nations” (Ps. 2:1) or “the peoples” (Acts 4:25) that included “both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.” So “He [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world [the human race, preeminently Gentiles, within planet earth] did not know [recognize] Him. He came to His own [things, inheritance, Israel], and those who were His own [people] did not receive [welcome] Him” (John 1:10-11). Here again both Gentile and Jew spurn God’s

Son sent from heaven. However, all participants here, of whatever status, are accountable since in the freedom of their sinful nature, that is yet subject to God's overriding sovereignty, v. 28, they unhesitatingly agreed to do what they did. Unholy in nature, man vehemently opposed "Your [the Father's] holy servant Jesus whom You [the Father] anointed [as Messiah, Ps. 2:6-7]." Here was great anti-God human intellect, military might, and religious acumen united in Jerusalem over which Jesus wept, especially on account of inevitable divine judgment and destruction (Matt. 23:37-38).

b. Divine, overriding conquest, v. 28.

However, the preceding details, while having an earthly perspective, are understood by Peter and John to be subservient to the glorious plan of the Father whereby He conceived of sending His Son in eternity past to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Hence this prayer, of considerable historic detail, is yet one of praise on account of the triumphant reign of God over the worst that man could conceive. So, "man proposes, but God disposes," as is attributed to Thomas a Kempis (c. 1380-1471). So "the wrath of man shall praise You [Lord]" (Ps. 76:10). Here prayer is the glad acknowledgment of God's saving omnipotence that confounds the arrogance of man through a Roman cross and thus exclusively brings glory to God (I Cor. 1:27-29). Hence further note that this prayer, in the circumstances of great opposition, yet is submissive primarily to the profound will of God, not that of man (Matt. 6:10). However, as we shall now see, such a perspective of God's overriding control of the history of redemption becomes a ground of confidence for intercessory prayer, vs. 29-30. There are grounds for hope, by the believer, in the consistency of God's holy, saving ways, if we have experientially learned of them as have Peter and John.

3. The prayerful invocation of the Lord, vs. 29-30.

The biblical details of vs. 25-26 are not proclaimed in prayer to advise God, but rather indicate the believers' discernment of the Word in relation to recent events. So vs. 27-28 reveal contemporary fulfillment and application of Scripture. In other words, vs. 25-28 reflect the prayer of faith (Jas. 5:15) that anticipates further indications of God's sovereign overruling of hindrances to the bold proclamation of the Word of God.

a. Let Your Word be proclaimed, v. 29.

Tension between the agenda of this world, especially its religious framework, and the Word of God is nothing new, as Jesus Himself experienced at His initial temptations (Matt. 4:1-7). There is the story of the infidel French philosopher Voltaire who declared that Christianity would come to nothing within a generation. Yet after his death, his house became the site of a Bible distribution society. So Luther writes of his ministry under the dominion of God:

See how much He has been able to accomplish through me, though I did no more that pray and preach. The Word did it all. Had I wished I might have started a

conflagration at Worms. But while I sat still and drank beer with Philip and Amsdorf, God dealt the papacy a mighty blow.<sup>38</sup>

The Holy Spirit has already granted both the desire and unction that accompany ministry of the Word (Acts 2-3); now Peter and John pray for fresh anointing.

b. Let Your holy servant Jesus be exalted, v. 30.

The apostles have already ministered in terms of attention getting “signs and wonders,” after the manner of their Master, and in His name (John 3:2; Acts 2:1-4; 2:22, 43; 3:1-10; cf. 5:12; 14:3; 15:12). However, there seems a direct apostolic connection here, even with Stephen (Acts 6:5-6, 8; cf. II Cor. 12:12), which inaugural ministry diminishes as the church of Christ leaves behind that direct association with the apostolic witness (Acts 1:21-22).

C. The anointing of the saints, v. 31.

The prayer of Peter and John, along with the supporting prayer of the believers, pleased God, the result being further outpouring and infilling by the Holy Spirit. By this means the early church expanded, without any thought for seeker-friendly strategy or statistical projections or church growth methodology. Here the early church was “rich” and shook the world, while today the modern church, notwithstanding its scholarship, is shaken by the world and consequently is “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17-18).

1. The visitation of the Holy Spirit, v. 31a.

These are spiritual believers who have already experienced spiritual visitation in a most extraordinary manner. As at Pentecost, being the inauguration of a new gospel dispensation, there was physical signification whereby “the place where they had gathered together was shaken [σαλεύω, saleuō, like an earthquake, cf. Luke 6:48; Acts 16:46].” It would seem to be divine approval of Peter and John’s prayer. Having acknowledged God’s sovereignty over creation, v. 24, so the earth is moved in reply.

2. The filling of the Holy Spirit, v. 31b.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,” is heaven’s benediction in reply. It is inadequate to regard this “filling” in mere fluid terms. Similar expressions in Acts 4:8; 2:4; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 13:9, 52 do not even indicate a necessary filling because of emptiness, but rather periodic effusions of the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of fruitful ministry, upon those who have already been baptized with and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Also consider the historic sequence of John 7:37-39; Acts 1:5.

3. The constraint of the Holy Spirit, v. 31c.

“And [they] began to speak the word of God with boldness,” even as Peter and John have already done (2:14-43; 3:12-26; 4:8-14, 19-20). So Paul declares that when he and Timothy first came to Thessalonica, “our gospel did not come in word only, but

<sup>38</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 166.

also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (I Thess. 1:5). Paul also writes that subsequently at Corinth his “message and preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Cor. 2:4).

## XV PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### A PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS' GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF GOD – EPHESIANS 1:15-23

#### A. Introduction.

1. There is a present tendency for believers to be ignorant of the scope and magnitude of Christ's work of redemption, and hence to minimize it rather than perpetually glorying in it. Salvation is regarded as being coolly transactional and initiatory rather than presently glorious and vastly encompassing in its effect on believers.
  - a. Often we hear, "I accepted Christ as my Savior several years ago," with the implication that it "all" happened at that time. Such an emphasis is upon resultant positional salvation in the present with an unbiblical lack of heart fervency.
  - b. By way of illustration, in 1750 Jonathan Edwards was dismissed by the congregation of his church at Northampton, Massachusetts, after 24 years of pastoral service. He recalls one of a number of problems he had during his ministry as follows:
 

Another thing, that evidently had contributed to our calamities, is, that the people had got so established in certain wrong notions and ways in religion, which I found them in, and could never beat them out of. Particularly: it was too much their method to lay almost all the stress of their hopes in religion, on the particular shape and method of their first work; i.e. the first work of the Spirit of God on their hearts, in their conviction and conversion; and to look but little at the abiding sense and temper of their hearts, and the course of their exercises, and trials of grace, for evidences of their good estate.<sup>39</sup>
2. Paul's two main Ephesian prayers are a remedy for this lack in that they portray the glories of the gospel as a present reality and enjoyment. The Apostle prays for a continuing and deepening appreciation of redemption as that vastly wonderful work of Christ's humiliation and exaltation decreed by an infinitely loving God. This expansive work of the cross has abiding consequences.
  - a. His prayer for a greater knowledge of our redeeming God (Eph. 1:15-23).
  - b. His prayer for a greater knowledge of the love of our Redeemer (Eph. 3:14-21).
3. Consider the context of Paul's offered praise to God on account of the believers' position in Christ (Eph. 1:3-14). He is:
  - a. Blessed with every spiritual blessing, v. 3.
  - b. Elected by the Father through Christ, v. 4a.
  - c. Holy before God, v. 4b.

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, I, p. cxxxii.

- d. Predestined unto sonship through Christ, v. 5.
- e. Glorifying to God through grace, v. 6.
- f. Redeemed through the grace of Christ's blood, v. 7.
- g. The object of wisdom and insight, v. 8.
- h. Given the knowledge of the mystery of God's will, vs. 9-10.
- i. Made an heir through Christ, v. 11.
- j. An object bringing glory to God, vs. 12, 14.
- k. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, v. 13.

B. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians' greater knowledge of God, Ephesians 1:15-23.

1. Introduction, vs. 15-16.

- a. "Wherefore" KJV, or "For this reason" NASB, connects us with what has just been written. Paul's passionate eulogy concerning the believer's blessed standing in Christ stimulates him to prayer for the Ephesians. His fond desire is for their advancing knowledge of the Father, v. 15a.
- b. Paul's prayer essentially stresses thanksgiving and petition, vs. 15b-16.
  - (1) Thanksgiving, for their "faith in the Lord Jesus" (vertical) vs. 15b, 16a, and their "love unto all the saints" (horizontal), vs. 15c, 16a.
  - (2) Petition, for an accumulating knowledge of our redeeming God, vs. 16b-23.

2. Paul's prayer for an accumulating knowledge of God, vs. 17-23.

- a. His petition summarized, v. 17.
  - (1) The address is to God the Father, specified as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," He who is accessible only through the merit of His Son (Eph. 1:5).
  - (2) The address is to "the Father of *the* glory," He who dwells in indescribable heavenly glory and is lauded by the cry of the seraphim around His throne, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:1-3).
  - (3) The dominant assumption at the commencement of this prayer is that it is God alone who grants spiritual understanding, which is about to be described in detail. It is not latent in the natural man, and not even in bloom in many believers (Jas. 1:5).
  - (4) The dominant desire for the Ephesian saints is "the knowledge of Him." More specifically, this is an accumulating, maturing spiritual knowledge that

has a quality of depth about it. The reference here to “knowledge” ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis, of “Him,” that is God, concerns an intensified form of γνώσις, gnōsis, meaning “a deeper, fuller, more intimate and mature experiential knowledge.”

It is bringing me better acquainted with a thing I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off. That little portion of knowledge which we had here shall be much improved, our eye shall be raised to see the same things more strongly and clearly.<sup>40</sup>

Notice that in I Corinthians 13:12 how “gnōsis” and “epignōsis” are contrasted (cf. Rom. 3:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10; II Tim. 3:7; II Pet. 1:2-3).

- (5) The resultant effect of this knowledge is “a spirit/Spirit[?] of wisdom and of revelation” (cf. John 6:44-45; I Cor. 2:6-13). So Lloyd-Jones comments:

The Apostle prays for the Ephesian believers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give them “the Spirit of revelation”, the ability to see it and receive it and revel in it and to enjoy it (Testimonium Spiritus Internus). What a perfect provision for damned, blind, helpless, wretched sinners! All the truth I need to know and the ability to receive it and to apprehend it!<sup>41</sup>

b. His petition elaborated, vs. 18-23.

- (1) Note the progressive descent that follows into the deeper realms of glorious biblical truth, the “epignōsis” of God, as the subsequent diagram indicates.
- (2) The desired enlightenment of the soul, vs. 18-23.
  - (a) The act of soul enlightenment, v. 18a.

Greater spiritual enlightenment in the inner man (cf. 3:16), is passionately desired by Paul as he lays bare his pastor’s heart. “The eyes of your heart being enlightened,” looks to enlargement of the soul through divine operation upon the intellect, will, and emotions. Paul prays that debilitating scales might be scraped away so that truth might flood in. For Paul, souls saved is not the end but the beginning of a path that leads to full, mature, soul-changing knowledge. He now details three areas of knowledge which he considers to be of particular importance.

(b) The apprehension of soul enlightenment, vs. 18b-23

- 1) “The hope of His calling,” v. 18b.

Here Paul desires reinforced assurance concerning God’s particular call. “Paul knows that the best way to drive away old sinful

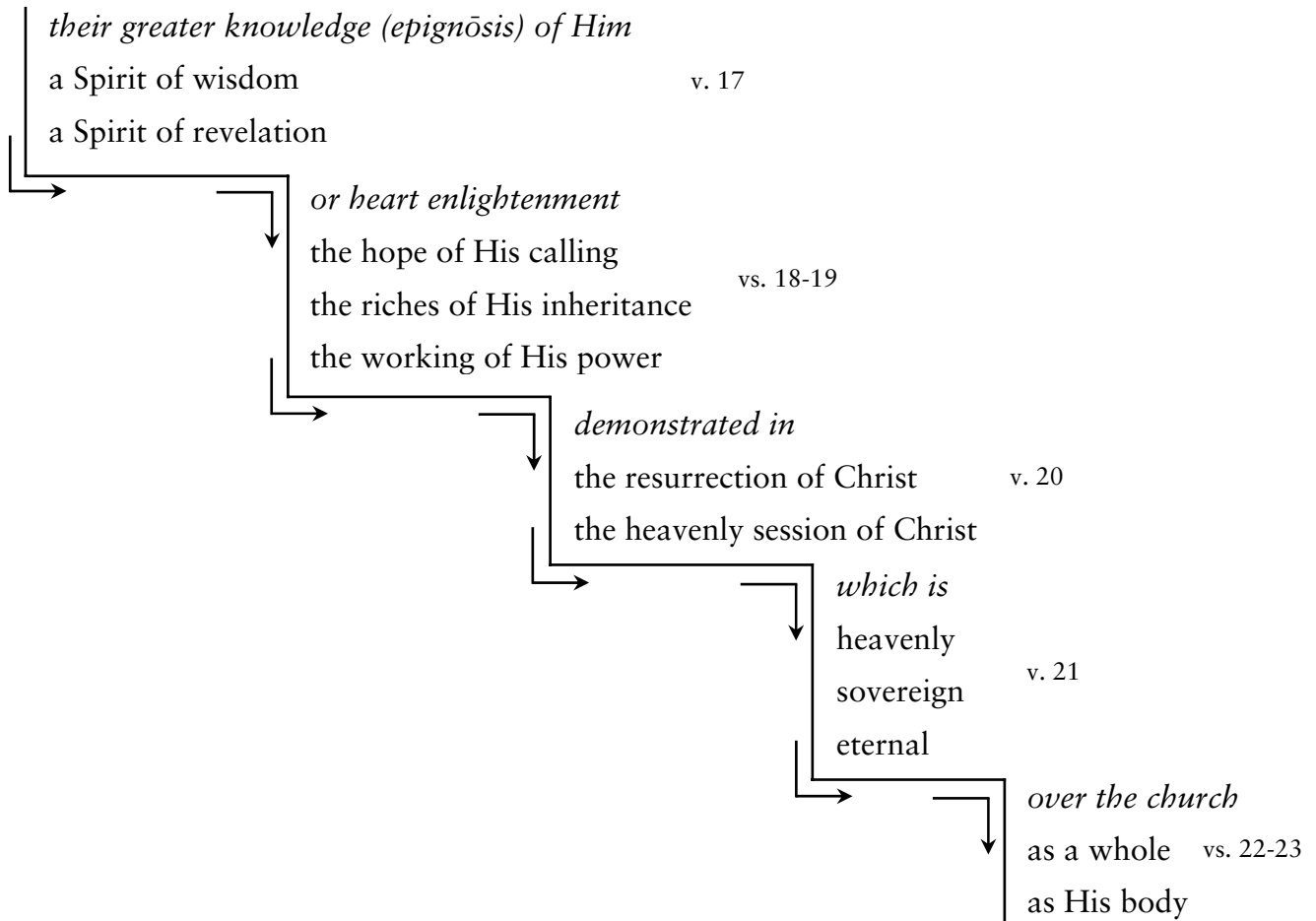
<sup>40</sup> R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 285.

<sup>41</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Ephesians*, I, pp. 362-363.

tendencies is no longer to concentrate on them but rather on the blessings of salvation.”<sup>42</sup>

### A DIAGRAM OF PAUL’S FIRST EPHESIAN PRAYER

Paul’s prayer to the Father concerning the Ephesians (1:17-23) for



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- a) God’s general call is to all of mankind (Mark 16:15-16; John :16; 7:37). It is a bona fide call to a human race dead in sin.
  - b) God’s particular, special, effectual call is given to His elect (Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 1:23-24, 26; I Pet. 2:9). It may be given repeatedly, but it cannot ultimately fail.
  - c) Paul’s emphasis here is upon “hope,” that is the enthralling prospects that belong to the particularly called child of God (John 10:3). Of course the Apostle must have in mind here an effectual call, a call that secures, or else there is no real reason

<sup>42</sup> William Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, p. 99.



for hope, is there? It is for this reason that George Wade Robinson writes:

Loved with everlasting love,  
 Led by grace that love to know;  
 Gracious Spirit from above,  
 Thou hast taught me it is so!  
 O this full and perfect peace!  
 O this transport all divine!  
 In a love which cannot cease,  
 I am His, and He is mine.  
 In a love which cannot cease,  
 I am His, and He is mine.  
 His forever, only His;  
 Who the Lord and me shall part?  
 Ah, with what a rest of bliss  
 Christ can fill the loving heart!  
 Heav'n and earth may fade and flee,  
 Firstborn light in gloom decline;  
 But while God and I shall be,  
 I am His, and He is mine.  
 But while God and I shall be,  
 I am His, and He is mine.

- 2) “The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,” v. 18c.

This “inheritance” is more likely that which the Ephesian believers have in store than that which they are (cf. 1:11, 14; 2:7; 3:8, 16).

- a) By way of illustration, many a prospective immigrant parent has encouraged its children with rapturous stories of the opportunities and delights that await arrival on a distant shore. So it is with the Christian (I Cor. 2:9; Col. 3:2-4).
- b) Hence a true child of God will delight to be illuminated regarding his future heavenly inheritance. Lloyd-Jones comments:

I do not hesitate to assert that the more spiritual we are, the more we will think about heaven. The nearer we are to Christ the more we will meditate upon the glory which He has prepared for us. This is an invariable and infallible test of true spirituality.<sup>43</sup>

- 3) “The surpassing greatness of His power,” vs. 19-23.

- a) Designated to believers, v. 19a.

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<sup>43</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Ephesians*, I, p. 386.

This is the power of God working “toward us who believe. Cf. I Peter 1:3-5 where God has begotten the believer unto a “hope,” an “inheritance,” and “power.” Now Paul contemplates the scope and magnitude and application of that power in vs. 20-23.

- b) Demonstrated by Christ’s resurrection, which power dwells in the believer (cf. Rom. 8:11), vs. 19b-20a.
- c) Demonstrated by Christ’s session, from a state of humiliation (cf. Phil. 2:7-8; Heb. 1:3), which suggests present dominion and sovereignty, vs. 20b-23.
  - i) Heavenly session, v. 20b.
  - ii) Sovereign session, v. 21a.
  - iii) Eternal session, v. 21b.
  - iv) Corporate session, vs. 22-23.
    - a. Over the church as a whole, v. 22.
    - b. Over the church as His collective body, v. 23.

### C. Conclusion.

1. In this intensely doctrinal section of Paul’s epistle, yet doctrine is an integral part of the Apostle’s understanding of prayer. Further it is doctrine that gives substance and purpose in prayer.
2. Paul is trinitarian in his approach to prayer. He prays to the Father, v. 17, through the gospel power of the Son, vs. 20-23, while reliant upon the “Spirit of wisdom and revelation,” v. 17.
3. Paul’s prayerful pastoral concern is clearly seen. Souls saved is not the end of his ministry, but souls reaching full maturity through an expanding knowledge of the Father (I Thess. 2:19; 3:12-13).
4. Prayer is not so much a formal recitation as a progressive descent into the heart of God. Witness how Paul plunges deeper and deeper into the Father and the Son, both here and in 3:14-21. So we are to progress in our prayer life from “gnōsis” to “epignōsis,” from earth drawing closer and closer to heaven.

**B. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS' GREATER LOVE OF CHRIST – EPHESIANS 3:14-21****A. Introduction.**

1. "For this cause/reason," points us to the proper context, v. 14a.
  - a. Note that this same phrase occurs in 3:1. Hence what is between is a parenthetical explanation, a Pauline "anacoluthon," a form of literary detour.
    - (1) The church, with its incorporation of Gentiles into the body of Christ, was a mystery in terms of the past, prior to Pentecost. A "mystery" here refers to something not understood in the Old Testament dispensation, though now is revealed, vs. 4-6, 9.
    - (2) Paul is an appointed minister to the Gentiles in this new church administration, vs. 3-5, 8.
    - (3) This new facet of God's eternal purpose is designed to declare the "wisdom of God," especially to admiring heavenly authorities or powers, vs. 10-11.
    - (4) Hence, Paul's interruption of the main stream of his thought is for the purpose of displaying the glorious role of the church in world history during the "last days" (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:1-2), according to the plan of God. This is an aspect distinct from the erection of the church in 2:19-22; 4:11-16.
    - (5) This aside of Paul is significant since it enlarges upon who he is praying to in vs. 14-21; it is for the body of Christ which he desires should glorify God, v. 21.
  - b. The original context then is 2:11-22. Here the fabrication of the church is in mind, particularly in vs. 19-22. The spiritual construction described here contrasts with the material construction of the then existing temple in Jerusalem.
    - (1) Its distinctive fellowship, incorporating "fellow citizens with the saints, v. 19.
    - (2) Its distinctive foundation, Christ and the apostles, v. 20.
    - (3) Its distinctive framework, believer-priests forming an holy temple, v. 21.
    - (4) Its distinctive function, a more permanent dwelling-place of God the Holy Spirit, v. 22.
2. By way of application, the church of Jesus Christ, the wonder of its spiritual construction and constituency, is a stimulus to prayer for Paul. Specifically this involves his concern for members growing spiritually in Christ from "gnōsis" to "epignōsis," (1:17; 4:13).

## B. Paul's prayer for greater knowledge of Christ's transcendent love, Ephesians 3:14-19.

1. He addresses the Father, not the Son or the Holy Spirit, vs. 14b-15.
  - a. The KJV and NKJV include "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" the NASB and NIV exclude (cf. 1:3; 3:17, 19, 21). Hodge includes while Hendriksen excludes. There is a strong triune emphasis here, of prayer to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jude 20), vs. 16-17.
  - b. Most likely Paul's physical position in prison, as elsewhere, was that of kneeling in subjection before the God of heaven rather than Caesar (cf. Acts 20:36; 21:5). The Jews often prayed standing, though kneeling, included in the broader idea of worship, undoubtedly reflected unconditional submission and deep humility.
  - c. Paul's appreciation of God as his Father is very lofty, though this title was well understood by Israel in former days (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 64:8-9). God is the absolute Father over "every family in heaven and on earth," in the sense of "offspring" (Acts 17:28-29), and not adopted heirs. Heavenly "Fatherhood" is the original ideal for the earthly model, v. 15.
2. He prays to the Father that believers might plumb the depths of the love of Christ, vs. 16-19.
  - a. That they might have inner strength by the Holy Spirit, v. 16.
    - (1) Note that as with 1:17, it is God who sovereignly grants the requested answer. The believer is not to presume upon the power of God that already indwells him. Like a new-borne babe, he is to continually cry out "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15). Such a cry suggests a longing for a greater appreciation of the knowledge and power of God (1:17, 19; 3:16-19; cf. Phil. 3:10).
    - (2) Paul elsewhere gives great emphasis concerning God's saving power; as the personal object of it, so he commends it. There seem to be two main perspectives, though Christ is the great mediator of this power through the gospel (I Cor. 1:24).
      - (a) The power of God in initial salvation (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:18; II Cor. 4:6-7).
      - (b) The power of God in ongoing salvation (I Cor. 2:5; II Cor. 6:4-7; 12:9; 13:4; Col. 1:10-11; II Tim. 1:8).
    - (3) Here the emphasis is clearly upon the power of God being a strengthening agent in "the inner man," that is the "new man/self" (4:24), in contrast with the "outer man" (II Cor. 4:16), which continues to decay. Hence this power of God is an inner working in the soul rather than an outer carnal phenomena.

- b. That they might have Christ in their hearts by faith, v. 17a.
  - (1) It is true that Christ indwells the hearts of those to whom Paul writes (1:1), that is “in one Spirit” (2:18, cf. I John 3:24). Yet, in view of the following petition, the apostle desires a more profound union with Christ that may be described as even more deep-seated, pervasive, and conscious residency.
  - (2) “Dwell” has the same root meaning as “dwelling” in 2:22, where the intensive *oikētērion* means “a more permanent dwelling place.” Hence, initial saving faith is not so much in mind as maturing and strengthening faith.
- c. That they might have a firmer foundation in Christ’s love, v. 17b.
  - (1) Since they are like a plant, so they must have an enlarged appreciation of their stabilizing roots (Col. 2:7). The root is already there; but they need to learn more about it; it is the tap root of the sovereign grace of God, that is the love of Christ for sinners that is so multi-faceted.
  - (2) Since they are like a building, so they must have an enlarged appreciation of their foundation (Col. 1:23). The foundation is already there (2:19-20); but they need to inspect it and esteem it all the more; it is the basic sub-structure of the effectual mercy of God, that is the love of Christ for sinners that is so many faced (I John 4:10).
- d. That they might have an expanding comprehension of Christ’s love, v. 18.
  - (1) “With all the saints,” indicates a unity in the truth, fellowship in the gospel, not uncommon saintliness amongst Christians. Paul desires spiritual health in the whole body of Christ (4:13).
  - (2) The breadth of Christ’s love, its comprehensiveness (Ps. 103:12; Rev. 5:9).
  - (3) The length of Christ’s love, its patience and endurance (Ps. 89:33-37; I Tim. 1:16).
  - (4) The depth of Christ’s love, his willing humiliation from heaven to planet earth, his lowly servitude in human flesh (Eph. 4:9-10; Phil. 2:5-8).
- e. That they might have a finite comprehension of the infinite love of God in Christ, v. 19.
  - (1) Strictly speaking, Paul the finite is not speaking of knowing the infinite dimensions of the love of Christ, but rather of knowing the finite limits of this transcendent love.
  - (2) Paul longs to know of the fullness of God (4:13), in a uniting and transforming and enthralling sense (II Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:19; 2:9-10). So passionate is he in this regard that he fervently prays for the Ephesian believers to have a like thirst and realization.

- C. Paul's prayer that God may be glorified through the love of Christ manifest in the church, Ephesians 3:20-21.
1. This benediction, and conclusion to this prayer, ends the great doctrinal section of Ephesians. After it will follow the believer's duty in the light of this doctrine.
  2. The ground of God's glory in the church is His life in its living members, v. 20.
    - a. This life of power may be called upon with superabundant expectation, grace upon grace, and then more (II Cor. 9:8; Eph. 3:7).
    - b. This life of effectual power, works within us, "in the inner man, v. 16 (cf. 1:19), both individually and corporately (4:16).
  3. The goal of the church is the glory of God, v. 21.
    - a. Note the agent of glory is Christ Jesus, the head of the body.
    - b. Note the place where God is glorified, "in the church."
    - c. Note the extent of God's glorification, "to all generations."
    - d. Note the eager salute to God's glory, "Amen," so let it be.
- D. Conclusion.
1. The Bible, as here, presents a proper order regarding our approach toward God in prayer. We are to pray to the Father through the mediation of the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. To pray directly to the Son or the Spirit is to confuse the distinctive Persona of the Trinity.
  2. Desire for the working of God's power in the life of church members ought to be a major concern of each member. The Old Testament understanding of God as the "living God" ought to be a vital truth for New Testament Christians.
  3. Biblical prayer ought to lead the believer into the vortex of God's heart out of a longing to draw near and be filled with "all the fullness of God."
  4. A comprehension of the love of Christ is the means to a practical expression and spontaneous display of that love. Such an understanding comes through the Word of God and prayer. We do not simply determine to love by pressing the button of our volition, even though the will is a fundamental element in biblical love. Practical Christian living is the result of our encounter with Christ, and in direct proportion to that encounter. Such an encounter comes only through our learning of Him in the Word of God. Concerning such knowledge we then pray. It is the teaching of this living, vibrant, powerful Word that energizes the believer and teaches him how to pray.
    - a. In Romans 6:17, it is the Word or teaching of doctrine whereby we become servants of righteousness and not servants of sin.

- b. In Philippians 1:9-11, it is an increasing knowledge of the Word that produces the fruit of righteousness in the believer.
  - c. In Colossians 1:9-10, it is an increasing knowledge (epignōsis) of the will (Word) of God that leads the believer in a “worthy walk” that leads to “fruitful” consequences.
  - d. Yet this same Word and doctrine teach us to pray that truth may be vital, vibrant, and visible through us. We learn to pray from the Word, and we pray that the Word may be yet more dynamic in us.
5. We conclude with the perceptive comment of John Bunyan with regard to the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican which distinguishes between counterfeit and genuine prayer (Luke 18:10-13).

It doth not always follow, that they that pray do know God, or love Him or trust in him. This conclusion is evident by the Pharisee in the text; he prayed, but he knew not God, he loved not God, he trusted not in God; that is, he knew him not in his Son, nor so loved, nor trusted in him. He was, though a praying man, far off from this. . . . It is the sensible sinner, the self-bemoaning sinner, and the self-condemning sinner, whose prayers prevail with God for mercy. Hence I infer, that one reason why men make so many prayers, and prevail no more with God, is because their prayers are rather the floatings of pharisaical fancies, than the fruits of sound sense of sin, and sincere desire of enjoying God in mercy, and in the fruits of the Holy Ghost.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> John Bunyan, *Works*, II, pp. 276-277.