

The New Testament Church # 8

Worship of the Church 2; “Prayer”

Introduction; Prayer is important.

A. We should pray often.

1. *1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
2. Some have taken this very seriously. In 1722 a man, Count Nikolas Zinzendorf in Germany provided refuge for a group of persecuted Moravian Christians.
3. He allowed them to start a community on his land. They called it ‘Herrnhut’ or ‘The Lord’s Watch’.
4. Count Zinzendorf was an ardent ‘Pietist’ (pious one). He joined the group of Moravians in 1727. Under his guidance they began practicing round-the-clock prayer meetings —*Christian History Made Easy; Timothy Paul Jones.*
5. They continued this **for over a hundred years**. They prayed without ceasing for over a hundred years. They also based this on the O.T.
6. *Lev 6:13 ‘A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.’*
7. While this was very noble and showed a great desire to serve God this was probably not the meaning of Leviticus 6 and 1 Thessalonians 5. There is no indication the N.T. church practiced any such thing.

B. While this extreme is not necessary, prayer is still very important.

1. Someone has said, “*God has had one Son without sin but no son without prayer.*” Certainly Jesus prayed often.
2. We have been studying about the N.T. church for a while. Now we are looking at the **worship** of the church. Last week we considered the Lord’s Supper.
3. The Lord’s supper is the main reason we assemble on Sunday. However it is not the only reason. Prayer was also a part of the N.T. worship.

C. Today we will study ‘Prayer’.

I. Jesus’ teaching on prayer

A. Jesus taught that prayer was important and effective.

1. **Luke 18:1-8;** This is Jesus’ ‘**Parable of the Persistent Widow**’. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified. He teaches many different people and different lessons on the way.
2. In **verse 1** we see the point He wants to make. God’s saints should pray and not lose heart. They should not give up and think that He is not listening or does not exist.
3. In **Luke 17:20-37** Jesus taught about the coming kingdom of God and about the destruction of Jerusalem. Some think this parable is based on this. During the great difficulties of the Roman-Jewish war the saints must not give up but should keep praying.
4. This may be His purpose. Or it may not. Luke gathers together a lot of Jesus’ teachings on the way to Jerusalem. They are not all dependent on each other. Regardless of this the lesson is universal. **Men need to pray often and not quit.**
5. The widow gets what she wants, and should get, because she is **persistent**. She does not quit and give up. Likewise we should pray continually to God in heaven for what we need.
6. I don’t think Jesus is suggesting God must be talked into doing things for His saints. Rather the Lord will do things in their proper time. We should not give up before He does answer our prayers.
7. *Rev 6:9-11 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*
8. I recognize that here the saints are dead. However they are still appealing to Jehovah God. They are told to wait until the answer comes. It will come in **His** time.
9. In **Luke 18:8** Jesus makes the point that God will avenge His saints speedily. Then Jesus asks the

question, *“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”*

10. This is a very serious question. Will men still be praying when the Son of Man comes? Will there still be faith on the earth? Regardless of whether He is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem or the end of the world, the point is the same. **Faith and prayer go together.**
11. Here faith is equated with prayer. Will there be men and women fervently praying because their faith does not waver when He comes? The implication may be **‘No!’**
12. When men are faithful and praying and waiting on the Lord, He has no need to come in judgment. However when men, as a whole, no longer trust in God and serve Him and pray, then judgment comes.
13. This doesn’t mean there is no one praying when He comes. Many will pray but their prayers do not go up to heaven. They don’t pray with the right attitude, understanding or character.
14. I don’t think this means that continual prayer, as the Moravians practiced for over a hundred years, will keep the Lord from returning. However it does show the important of prayer, both public and private.
15. Prayer is therefore not only important for us individually, but it is also important for the world. We need to pray honestly and sincerely and often.

B. Prayer was important in Jesus’ ‘Sermon of the Mount.’

1. **Matt 6:5-8;** While teaching on the proper way to pray Jesus plainly shows some things they were doing was wrong. Many were praying but were hypocrites. They would not be able to save Jerusalem, the world or anything by their prayers.
2. Folks who pray to be seen of men have their reward here. People who pray for men’s praise can not expect God to answer them. **Motives** are important when we pray.
3. Saying things over and over to try to talk God into something is also wrong. Men do not like those who use many words to say a little and God does not like this either. God knows our need and will help us if we ask properly.
4. *James 4:2-3 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask, 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*
5. There is a proper way to pray so the Heavenly Father will hear us. We need to pray secretly.
6. This does not mean no one ever knows that we are praying. This does not condemn public prayer. We will see this more later. It emphasizes the need to pray to the Father as loving children and not praying to be seen of men or to try to get our own way.
7. Jesus wants us to pray. However He wants us to pray properly and effectively. Jesus came to turn men back to God and to worship Him properly and effectively.

C. Jesus gave us a ‘model’ prayer.

1. **Matt 6:9-13;** Jesus says to pray, *“In this manner,”* or ‘way.’ This is an example of how we need to pray. He is not commanding this prayer to be repeated so many times a day or week.
2. **1st; We pray to God in heaven.** He is our Father and we need to respect and honor Him. Public prayer is not wrong. Yet it must be directed to God and not men. We must **‘hallow’** or **‘make holy’** Him and His name. To hallow is to *treat with respect* or to *treat as being holy or reverent*.
3. **2nd; We pray for His kingdom.** We do not pray for it to come today because it is here. The church is the kingdom of God today. Yet we need to pray for it to **grow and stand strong**. We need to pray for the church here and in other places.
4. **3rd; We pray for His will to be done on earth.** It is obeyed in heaven and should be on earth. Yet most men do not obey God. The saints should obey it though. We need to pray for all men to come to the truth. We need to pray for saints to be lights in all the world.
5. **4th; We need to pray for our daily bread.** The Jews picked up manna daily —except on Friday. If we plan ahead we only have to buy groceries weekly —or even less often. Yet we are not promised tomorrow. We need to pray daily for all our needs.
6. **5th; We need to pray for forgiveness.** We need forgiveness daily —and often several times a day. We need to pray for forgiveness so we will be ready to meet the Lord, whether in His return or in our death.
7. **6th; We need to pray to be forgiving.** We cannot ask for something we are not willing to give — Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matt 18:23 ff. We are forgiven of much. We must also forgive much —even 70 times 7; Matt 18:21,22. See also Matt 6:14,15.
8. **7th; We need to pray for direction and help in everyday living.** We must ask the Lord to not lead us into temptation. However the wicked one does try to lead us into temptation. We especially need God’s help at these times.
9. *1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

10. **8th; We need to honor and praise God in prayer.** He is our God. He has given us His own Son to die for us. He is the Creator and Judge. He is truth and righteousness and holiness. He deserves our respect. See Rev 5:8-9.
11. We see then, Jesus' teaching on praying and His model for us. This is not all we need to pray for. We cannot list them all. We will see some more in our study though.

D. Jesus teaches us to ask, seek and knock in prayer.

1. **Matt 7:7-11;** Here Jesus tells us about the willingness of the Heavenly Father to answer our prayers and help us.
2. We must **ask** to be given something. We must **look** for something to find it. And we must **knock** to have a door opened to us. When we do our part then God will do His.
3. Jesus makes the point clearly that earthly fathers give good things to their children. Our Father in Heaven is much more able and willing to give us good things. However we need to ask, seek and knock to have them.

E. We see then Jesus' teaching about the need and importance of Prayer.

II. Pray in the N.T. church

A. Early Christians prayed as a group.

1. Certainly we recognize that prayer is also private and individual. However we are concerned about **public prayer today**. God's saints have always prayed as a group. This was the occasion of the hypocrite praying in the synagogue —Matt 6:5.
2. There was the **hour of prayer** in the temple when many went to pray. In **Acts 3:1** Peter and John go up to the temple. They probably intend to teach those who are gathered to pray.
3. There are many examples of public prayer in the O.T. One is the example of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. God's presence filled the temple when Solomon and the congregation prayed there. Jesus prayed with others.
4. *Mark 14:22-23 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 23 Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.*
5. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 shows this was done in all the churches. They prayed and gave thanks for the bread and cup. We saw last week the L.S. is partaken of by the church assembled. This is just one example of public prayer.
6. *Acts 12:5 & 12 Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. 12 So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.*
7. The early church (about AD 44) prayed for Peter while He was in prison. I think they prayed privately for Peter. But it is plain here they also got together and prayed as the church.
8. When Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch the H.S. called them to go out and preach to the Gentiles. Before sending them out the church in Antioch prayed and fasted. They fasted to appeal to God and show the seriousness of their appeal.
9. *Acts 13:2-3 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*
10. *Acts 21:4-5 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.*
11. Here Paul is on his way to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. There are many prophecies of his capture and imprisonment. The church at Tyre met on the seashore to pray for him as he left.
12. 1 Corinthians 14 is about the use of miraculous gifts in the public assembly —vs 4, 19, 23, 26-13, 34. Paul discusses their praying in a tongue or foreign language. If no one knows the language being spoken they cannot say, 'Amen' at the end. Pray so folks can understand.
13. *1 Cor 14:14-16 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who*

occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

14. These are a few example of the early church praying as the church. We should pray daily privately. We should also pray whenever we meet as the people of God.

B. Lets look at one of Paul's prayers.

1. *Phil 1:3-4 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,*
2. Paul prayed often and prayed long prayers. He prayed for all the churches he knew and had worked with. Some, like Philippi, brought great joy to him when he prayed.
3. *Phil 1:9-11 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*
2. **1st**, Paul prayed for their **love to abound more and more**. This love can be for many things. It can be for one another as brethren. It can be for God as our Father. It can be for the truth that saves us.
3. **2nd**, Paul prays that their love may grow in **knowledge and discernment**. We need to use wisdom, judgment and understanding in things that we love. We need to love one another properly. We need to love God in the right way. We need to love truth and stand up for it.
4. *2 Thess 3:14-15 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*
5. *Matt 22:37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."*
6. *2 Thess 2:10 ...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*
7. **3rd**, Paul prays that they might **approve the things that are best**. They need to make the best choices in life. This comes from having *knowledge and discernment*. There are things that seem harmless but are not. We need to make choices carefully.
8. **4th**, Paul prays they will be **sincere and without offense in the day of Christ's return**. This comes from approving the things that are excellent. This prepares us for the day of Christ. This man is a good example to the world.
9. *Matt 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*
10. **5th**, Paul wants them to be **filled with the fruits of righteousness**. This prepares us to meet the Lord in the day of judgment. When we are righteous as we should be we praise and glorify our God and father in heaven.
11. This is just one example of Paul's prayers for the church. We need to pray for the church here and in other places. Paul shows us the kinds of things to pray for. We have already seen a number of things we should also pray for.

C. We see then the need for the church to pray as part of our worship.

Conclusion; We should pray without ceasing.

A. This doesn't mean we all take turns so that someone is always praying in the building.

1. I think it means an **attitude of prayer**. It means we do **pray often**. It means we live a **life of prayer and dependence** on God.
2. If God's saints throughout the world are doing this then there is faith on the earth. We season the earth and make it acceptable to God. It may survive longer because of us.
3. We think of Abraham and Sodom. God would not destroy the city if there were ten righteous ones in the city. How could God tell if there were righteous ones? By their lives and by their fervent prayers.

B. Before we can pray we need to become a child of God.

1. We become Christians by **faith, repentance and baptism**. We believe in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. We trust in Him and obey Him and depend on Him for our salvation.
2. We repent of our sins and turn from them. We turn to Jesus Christ and righteousness. We are then

baptized into Christ death so we can share His resurrection —Rom 6:3-7.

3. We are immersed in water to be baptized —Acts 8:36-39, Matt 3:13-17. Our sins are washed away and we become pure and sinless in the eyes of God.
4. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
5. *Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
6. *Gal 3:26-29 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
7. Our salvation begins in faith and repentance and ends in baptism. Until we are buried with Christ in the watery grave our sins are not washed away by His blood and we are not Christians.

C. If we can help anyone in their service to the Lord please let us know what we can do.

March 7, 2004

Clearwater church of Christ

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