

Crossroad of Truth Ministry

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Why Is Prayer Important?

In prayer, we

1. Are cleansed of all unrighteousness

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2. Are filled by the Holy Spirit

Acts 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Why Is Prayer Important?

3. Receive His mighty power

Jer 33:3

"Call unto Me and I will answer and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not"

James 5:16

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

4. Fight temptation

Matthew 26:41

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Why Is Prayer Important?

5. To Rejoice

1 Thess 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

6. Receive His wisdom

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him

Why Is Prayer Important?

7. Pray for what matters

Romans 8:26

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

Ultimately, our highest aim should be to bring glory to God

1 Cor 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

What Shall I Pray For?

1. Pray for the things for which the Bible commands us to pray. We are told to
 - a. pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44);
 - b. for God to send missionaries (Luke 10:2);
 - c. that we do not enter temptation (Matthew 26:41);
 - d. for ministers of the Word (Colossians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:1);
 - e. for government authorities (1 Timothy 2:1-3);
 - f. for relief from affliction (James 5:13); and
 - g. for the healing of fellow believers (James 5:16).

What Shall I Pray For?

2. Follow the example of godly characters in Scripture

- Paul prayed for the salvation of Israel (Romans 10:1).
- David prayed for mercy and forgiveness when he sinned (Psalm 51:1-2).
- The early church prayed for boldness to witness (Acts 4:29).

What Shall I Pray For?

3. Pray with the right motivation.

- Selfish motives will not be blessed by God.
 - “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3).

4. Pray with a spirit of forgiveness toward others (Mark 11:25)

- A spirit of bitterness, anger, revenge or hatred toward others will prevent our hearts from praying in total submission to God.
- Just as we are told not to give offerings to God while there is conflict between ourselves and another Christian (Matthew 5:23-24), God does not want the offering of our prayers until we have reconciled with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

What Shall I Pray For?

5. Pray with thanksgiving - Colossians 4:2; Philippians 4:6-7

- There is always something we can be grateful to God for

6) Pray with persistence (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

- We should persevere in prayer and not quit or be dejected because we have not received an immediate answer.
- Part of praying in God's will is believing that, whether His answer is "yes," "no," or "wait," we accept His judgment, submit to His will, and continue to pray.

What Shall I Pray For?

7. Rely on the Spirit of God in prayer.

- “We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” - Romans 8:26-27
- We have the Spirit’s help in praying.
- At the times of our deepest depression or sorrow, those times when we feel that we “just cannot pray,” we have the comfort of knowing that the Holy Spirit is actually praying for us

The Publican's Prayer

The Publican's Prayer

Luke 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

The Publican's Prayer

Luke 18:9-14

9 To some who were confident of their own **righteousness** and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

10 “Two men * went up to the temple to **pray**, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that **I am not like other people**—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I **fast twice a week** ** and **give a tenth of all I get** ***

Spiritual teaching against the self-righteous

We are to go church with a specific task

Only God declares/judges who is righteousness:
Rom 3:10; 3:23

This prayer is directed towards himself and boasts of his works of being “good”: Eph 2: 8-9

The Publican's Prayer

Luke 18:9-14

13 “But the tax collector **stood at a distance**. He would not even **look up to heaven**, but **beat his breast** and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home **justified** before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen - Matt 20:16

Fear of the Lord; humility

The burden of his sin was too great.

Why beat his chest? He knew sin lay within his heart.

The Pharisee, a teacher of the Word, is rejected by God, and the sinner (tax collector) is exalted by Jesus.

Context

To properly understand Jesus' intended teaching, we must keep in mind the context of this parable, which is the subject of the kingdom of God.

This was a major focus beginning in Luke 17:20-21 (and extending through Luke 18:30) when He was "...questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming,"

Jesus explained that "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

- Luke 17:20-21

The question following this is, "Who will get to enter the Kingdom of God?" Who is qualified? Who is acceptable to God in the kingdom?

Jesus answers these questions in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Context

No doubt humility in prayer is at the heart of the story, but in his introduction Luke tells his readers that the main focus of the parable is righteousness and those who believe they can reach that pious goal by means of their own efforts.

In God's eyes,

"THERE IS NONE (absolutely none!) RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE!"

- Rom 3:10

“Two men went up into the temple...”

It is well for us to worship in public

Public worship is an open declaration of our faith in God, and of our belief in prayer.

Our Lord Jesus promised his special presence to the gatherings of his people

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” - Matt 18:20

Public worship is a rehearsal for the eternal service of heaven.

- The little heaven here on earth prepares us for the great heaven above.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray.”

It is well for us to have an errand when we go up to public worship

We should go to Church to pray, and not simply from custom *

We would do well to not just meet in God's presence to only hear sermons.

“To pray” embodied all worship activities.

- The Temple, according to Jesus in Matthew 21:13,
 - "SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER" (quoting from Isaiah 56:7)
- “Prayer” was used synonymously with worship - a house where you go to offer yourself, your petitions, and your praises to God.

“TWO men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.”

It is remarkable that a Pharisee would forget his errand to pray. He went up to the temple to pray, and he did not pray. He never prayed a word, but he did other things.

Why did this man forget his purpose to visit the temple?

He did so because he was so full of himself that there was no room for God in his heart; he was so satisfied with himself that he felt no need of prayer.

He acted as though he was in his own house, praising himself, instead of being in God's house, where the Lord alone is to be praised.

Pharisee v.s. Tax Collector

A Pharisee was a teacher and often was a scribe.

The Pharisees were the most influential of the three major Jewish sects: the other two being the Sadducees and the Essenes

The Pharisees were meticulous about studying and following God's law *

Their zeal for the law caused them to become hyper-focused on rituals and externally keeping the law. They lost sight of genuine faith of the heart for outward actions

E.g. Apostle Paul, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee"
- Acts 23"6; Phil. 3:5

Pharisee v.s. Publican

Tax-collectors were typically Jews who served the Romans by collecting taxes for them.

They were often greedy and took advantage of fellow Jews by overtaxing them and keeping the profits. Roman authorities typically contracted individuals to collect taxes. As long as the Roman quota was met, the Romans were satisfied.

The people viewed tax collectors as traitors and thieves. *

“Tax collector” often used in combination with “sinners” (Luke 5:30; 7:34; 15:1; cf. Matt 9:10–11; 11:19; Mark 2:15–16) and even “prostitutes” (Matt 21:31–32).

E.g. In NT, Matthew, Levi (James son of Alpheus, not brother of John), and Zacchaeus

Pharisee v.s. Publican

Two Attitudes toward God:

1. The Pharisee's prayer - Prideful
 - a. Self-centered
 - b. Conceited
 - c. Morality based on negatives
 - d. Worship based on externals i.e. works

2. The Tax Collector's prayer - Repentant
 - a. Humble before God and man.
 - b. More aware of his own sins than those of others.
 - c. Not concerned about obtaining material wealth
 - d. Conscious of his standing before God.

The Pharisee's Prayer

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed:

“God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get”

This is a classic example of how NOT to pray *

Implied that the Pharisee took up a showy position to be seen by others

The Pharisee asks God for nothing because in his eyes there is nothing he thinks he needs from God **

The Pharisee's Prayer

Pharisees used prayer as a means of getting public recognition and not as a spiritual exercise to glorify God.

He thought he was accepted by God because of what he did or what he did not do.

This prayer has "no confession, no petition, no acknowledgment of guilt and emptiness, no supplication for mercy and grace.

It is merely boasting of merits followed by an uncharitable judgment on a fellow brother sinner.

Self-Righteousness = Self-Deceit = Sin

It is one of the most deadly of sins because when a person is deceived, by definition they do not know they are deceived.

Heb. 3:13

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Jer 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked

Self-Righteousness = Self-Deceit = Sin

Sin has one purpose and that is to deceive.

Questions to ponder:

1. If man and woman in the Garden of Eden, in their perfectness, was so readily deceived by sin, what do you think of yourself who is fallen and inclined to evil? What makes us think we can overcome Satan's deception on our own?
2. If sin overcame angels, how can we think we can overcome it?
3. If sin entangled even the pure spirits of heaven, will you, sons and daughters of fallen parents, not soon be deceived by it, unless the grace of God shall make you 'wise unto salvation'? *

Self-Righteousness = Self-Deceit = Sin

Signs of a hardened heart (Rom 1:21):

1. The truth does not move you as it did.
2. Not deeply moved by thoughts of God's love.

Results of a hardened heart:

1. Spiritual blindness, deafness, lack of understanding and remembering (Mark 8:17-19)
2. Lack of Holy Spirit's fruits - see Darryl's Judgment Seat of Christ notes
3. Eternal death - Rom 2:5

VIDEO

The Publican's Prayer

Luke 18:9-14

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I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

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“I fast twice a week”

OT prescribed only one fasting on Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31)

But Jewish tradition came up with requiring fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12)

Note:

Pharisee's typically fasted on Monday and Thursday because that was market day and that was the day they wanted to fast to be seen because there were more people in town than any other days of the week.

“...and give a tenth of all I get”

OT prescribed tithing was:

1. 10% to national government
2. 10% to national festivals and feasts, and
3. 10% every third year for the poor.

= Equivalent annually to ~23.3% tax

Pharisees invented laws to make them appear more righteous, even tithing mint and dill and cumin. They went above and beyond the law (Luke 11:42)