

PRAYER FOUNDATIONS

Part 3

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Over the last few months we have started a study on prayer. The first foundational understandings we looked at was God's love toward us which produces grace; that grace produces faith and faith produces a hope that we can hear Him and pray as He asks. We also came to an understanding that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking with other tongues. We covered that last month, if you need to catch up. Click on the Archives Tab and go to the "November prayer 22" file.

I want to bring to our remembrance the fact that we are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:24). That is spiritual truth. When we accept Christ's sacrifice as our payment for sin, a miraculous exchange takes place. One of those exchanges is that God's righteousness passes to us, and as the Scripture passages above confirm, we become the righteousness of God in Christ. It is no longer our righteousness, but Christ's righteousness that we walk in.

Why would I encourage us this way as a foundational prayer teaching? Quite frequently as human beings, we wake up feeling good, painful, happy, depressed, energetic— I could go on and on with various and different feelings people wake up with. This is not our spiritual truth. I'm not asking you deny your feelings— good or bad— or even the medical condition some may be experiencing that their doctors tell them they have. What I am asking all of us to do is to agree with the truth of the Bible. Jesus never asked us to deny reality. Instead, He was always bringing spiritual truth to His hearers, asking them to believe in spite of whatever difficulty they were facing at the time.

We see the woman at the well (John 4:3-30, 39-43). First, she was working on her sixth husband. That kind of life difficulty has problems

all on its own. She was shunned by the whole village she lived in. So much so that she was getting water in the hottest part of the day to avoid their chatter and even their hateful behavior toward her. But what truth did Jesus bring to her that freed her from her fear? Remember, people's attitudes toward her were not changed at that moment. Rather, her belief in who she was had changed totally when she realized that the Messiah had come, and not only come to earth, but come to her specifically and first in her nation. This spiritual fact changed her whole outlook. We are not told exactly in what manner the people now treated her, but we have an idea. As soon as she broadcast in the village the truth she now knew — and she did so in the heat of the day — they came flocking out to see this Messiah she was now preaching. They came out to meet the man that had changed her whole demeanor.

I could give you a whole book of examples, but let's look at one more. In Luke 7, Jesus is coming into the city of Nain, and passes through the city gates where He meets a funeral procession (Luke 7:11-15). We know two things when we read this passage. A man has just died and that he is the only son of his widowed mother. Those facts tell us that because he was her only son, and her husband was also dead, she had not only lost someone whom she loved deeply, but she was now totally bereft financially as well. With her husband gone and her son also gone, there was no more support for her. These are facts. Jesus never tells her to deny them. Instead, He speaks the one phrase that she needed at that time: "Weep not."

Most people would freak out at that comment. "*Well, doesn't He know it's a normal response to cry when we lose a loved one and we are staring down the barrel of poverty?*" It might be an emotional response we all can have. But Jesus asked her to go above it and **turn to look at Him**. It's obvious that there had to be an agreement in the response of this woman because we are told Jesus walks to the bier and touched it and spoke these words: "*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.*" And the Bible tells us the young man sat up and spoke. We also have a small

insight: “And he (Jesus) delivered him to his mother.” The Bible could have said, well, he sat up and ran over to his mom. But Luke doesn’t record it that way. He is very clear that it is Jesus who delivered or brought the young man to his mother.

Why is this important? Because it shows us what may not be mentioned. This mother had to be in agreement on a level we don’t see recorded because Jesus, Himself, brings the young man to the woman who came in agreement with God’s word.

Over and over throughout the Scriptures it is clear that God gives us when we ask, and that it is God who gives and it must be in us to ask. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him” (Matthew 7:7-11)?

When we are having difficulty or facing an impossible situation, there has to be something in us that looks to Jesus. We see it here in this woman who had to turn to look *to* Jesus. When you’re looking at someone, you can also *turn to* someone. This has been my whole life; let me explain that. Whenever I find myself in a quandary or even in happiness, I always *turn to look to* Jesus. Why do I do that? Because it signals dependence and trust. Paul tells us why we should do this: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32)?

Sometimes when we haven’t had these prayer foundations in our lives, people will ask, ‘*Why pray when God can do all things; He knows all anyway*’? We are in a fallen world and as such there is a devil in it. We are in a war, believe it or not; and, you are on one side or the other. We

must accept spiritual truth and come in agreement with the side we're on. We must come in agreement with what the Bible says. The Bible contains the word of our God. When we come in agreement with Him, He then asks us to pray in order for Him to enter our environment and world in order to change it. When we do, when we believe and we pray according to the truth Father is presenting us, we receive an answer to that prayer.

He actually wants to partner with us in administrating this world. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (KJV).

When we have a lie in functioning power against what is God's knowledge, we must now come in agreement with God's truth— the spiritual reality— and confront the lie that we see functioning around us with God's truth. We are a beach-head in this world. God wants to bring us every blessing and meet our needs. He needs agreement on Earth and not just any agreement, but the agreement seen within the pages of the Bible. This is how we administer His kingdom here on earth.

It's one reason why Jesus taught us how to pray. As a last principle in our installment this month for prayer, let's review the Lord's Prayer:

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for

your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:5-8).

Jesus then proceeded to tell them how to pray. He made specific points within this prayer, that when we come in agreement with Him, we receive:

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:9-15).

When you agree with the side you’re on in a war front, you do as your commander says. Jesus starts with identifying who our commander is: Father in heaven. He made it clear where that Father is. Our confession is that He and His name is holy, and then we profess that His kingdom come, and His will be done, on earth as His will is done in heaven. He tells us to ask for sustenance. He tells us to ask to be delivered from our evil enemy and the temptations that he tries to ensnare us with. Then He says something else: Not to only ask for forgiveness, but He reminds us to forgive our debtors, or our trespassers, as well. The Holy Spirit showed me a very long time ago that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. He never stops giving me reminders, as well.

While whole sermons and books have been written about the Lord’s Prayer. In-depth analysis is not the purpose of this article. If you want to go further in your study of what Jesus said, there are plenty of good books available. I encourage you to look them up. What is important is that we come to an understanding that Jesus’ righteousness was given to us in the great exchange that took place when you asked Him to come

into your heart and professed your belief in Him. Remember that prayer is communication and because you have now become the righteousness of God in Christ— not on your own, but because of what Jesus did— you can go to Him and ask and receive.

So let's get started on the right footing or foundation. That foundation is always on the solid Rock of Christ, our Savior's atoning work. We don't have to be perfect because Jesus is already perfect. We don't have to use flowery language because He already told us how to pray. All we need to have is a heart to *turn to* Jesus to fulfill our needs and to help us when there is no help coming from anyone else. Have you ever been there? Well then, praying to Jesus is for you!

In case you have never made Jesus your Lord, the prayer is simple. It's written in the Bible in Romans 10:9-11: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

