

# ASKED AND ANSWERED

THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER!

## INTRODUCTION

The Bible speaks of prayer as the greatest privilege God has given the Christian; and it speaks of answered prayer as one of the highest joys we can know. There is no excitement quite like that of praying and receiving an answer to your prayer. By this means alone can we lift ourselves out of the limitations of the natural world into the unlimited resources of the spiritual world.

Yet the unhappy fact remains that a vast number of Christians have little or no experience of answered prayer; or at best their prayer life is fragmentary, and their requests seldom successful.

But Jesus said, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full!"

This book is designed to show you some of the secrets of successful prayer, so that you will be able to look back in your prayer life and say, "I asked and it was answered!"

## **SECTION I**

### **WHY WE SHOULD PRAY**

#### **Chapter 1**

#### **IN THESE LAST DAYS MEN OUGHT TO PRAY**

A few years ago I read of a Bible-seller in Syria who was forcibly taken to the local police court for selling what appeared to be inflammatory political propaganda. The judge examined these strange books carefully, and then demanded, "Where is that man, Paul, who wrote this book to the Romans? Bring him into this court!"

The Bible-seller did his best to explain to the judge that Paul had died almost two thousand years ago. The judge was reluctantly convinced, but finally he said to the Bible-seller, "Here, you sign a statement declaring that you will be personally responsible for everything written in this book to the Romans. This document is too contemporary, and its significance too timely, not to have someone personally responsible for its contents!"

This remarkable incident took place, of course, in a Muslim setting, with its bitter hatred of the Jews, and its hostility to anything Christian. In such surroundings the epistle to the Romans would indeed be an explosive pamphlet! But for all that, taking the Bible and the world generally, few Christians have the insight of this judge. How few people there are who really consider the Bible to be up-to-date. Yet there is no more modern book. It is up-to-date in its prophecy; up-to-date in its social ethics; up-to-date in its answers for today's great problems. There is nothing archaic in the Bible. It is vibrant with life and meaning, pungent in its challenge to our generation.

## **THE BIBLE AND THE END OF THE AGE**

The Bible speaks concerning these days in which we live. It contains graphic descriptions of those very things which are happening in the world today. The great events, natural and economic, political and physical, national and international, philosophic and scientific, social and religious, which are shaking the earth today are all foretold in the scriptures. Either by intimation or plain prophecy, the Bible gives an incredibly graphic picture of these age-ending days.

Seeing these things, we see the beginning of the great and dreadful day of the Lord God Almighty; we see the beginning of the outpouring of God's wrath against the injustice and oppressions and godlessness of the nations. We see Armageddon approaching. We know the coming of Christ is near at hand. God in heaven is moving upon the earth. The affairs of man are rapidly reaching their climax. It will not be very long before the kingdom of God is established throughout the whole earth!

## **WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES**

In reference to the last days and the time of his coming, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" Jesus turned his gaze across the centuries that yet lay before, and with prophetic insight he saw these very days in which we live. He saw the far-flung Christian Church. He took notice of the many millions who profess to believe in God. He heard the singing of myriad choirs, the sound of multiplied sermons. But he looked and listened almost in vain to find faith. He saw a world choked with religion, yet barren of faith, real faith, faith that would achieve the impossible, faith that would bring the miracle-working power of God to bear upon the troubled ways of men.

## **A PARABLE AND PRAYER**

Now, Jesus asked this question in connection with a parable he had just told the people. The whole passage is found in the 18th chapter of Luke, and we read: "Jesus spoke a parable to them for this purpose, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

It was a parable emphasising the urgent necessity of prayer - a parable about a woman who pleaded for justice; pleaded so incessantly that she constrained an unjust judge to avenge her of her enemy. And the Lord said, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him ... I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?"

It is faith which moves men; faith which will achieve the supernatural; faith which makes an unrighteous man righteous, a sick person healthy and strong; the faith of which Jesus spoke when he said, "Have faith in God, and you shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place and it shall be moved and nothing shall be impossible to you!"

People need this faith. The church needs this faith. If you want your loved ones saved, you need this faith. If there is a towering mountain of sickness or of fear or of

trouble in your life, you need this faith. Only by means of this faith can a miracle be wrought!

Yet, though faith such as this is so necessary, very few have it. HAVE FAITH IN GOD, Jesus said. Not just believing in God; but faith that through God, by the power of God, every mountain that obstructs your happiness and victorious living will be moved out of the way. HAVE FAITH IN GOD, Jesus said, and even as he said it, the Lord wondered how many would actually learn to have such faith.

Jesus did not say that he would find no faith at the time of his second advent - he merely expressed a doubt as to whether he would find faith. It remains with you and me to ensure that when Christ comes, he will find faith - at least in our lives, even if nowhere else.

### **HOW TO HAVE FAITH**

How can we have this faith?

The secret has already been given to us in the previous words of the Lord - "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

It is in prayer that faith which will move mountains is born. When your strength is fast running away, when you feel tempted to lose heart and give up, that is the time to PRAY. People! you ought always to pray! If you do this, you will not faint. If you do this, you will have faith in God. If you have faith in God, you will be able to face the heaped-up mountains of life, and command them to be removed, and be cast into the sea of God's deliverance. And if you do so command them - it will be done!

So, our first scripture passage gives us a formula of prayer which brings faith, produces action, and creates deliverance. We want to examine these things more closely, especially what is meant by prayer.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **GOD INVITES US TO PRAY**

How wonderful it is to know that, in God, we have a Friend who cares a great deal about the things that happen to us day by day. The Bible tells us that Jesus "sticks closer than a brother." I like that word "sticks"; it is very expressive! But there are so few people who really know the friendship of God and his willingness and ability to stand by them. So few fully trust the Lord to help them, and guide them through the labyrinth of life.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to break the power of sin that dogs your steps. He wants to heal you of every sickness. He wants to give you victory over temptation and fear. He wants you to enjoy to the full a more abundant life. How can you know these things? How can they become a daily reality to you?

### **THE POWER OF PRAYER**

Quite simply - you only need to discover the secret of effective prayer. Jesus said, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." What a wonderful phrase that is - "that your joy may be full" (Jn 16:24).

Joy! Full joy! Joy is something more than happiness. Happiness is often followed by a hangover! And happiness is so transitory. People find happiness for a little time from many things, but how quickly it passes away; how unhappy very often is the end of it.

The snow falls and, for a while, the earth is lovely. But then the slush. But joy is different. Joy is put into your heart by the Lord. It becomes a bubbling spring, constantly welling up, constantly sparkling over. Things going on around you cannot effect this joy. It is impervious to the shocks of life. The apostle Peter called it "joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is not just theology, nor merely nice sounding words. This is fact. you can actually know a joy so wonderful as to be "unspeakable" - beyond description. It is possible for you to experience the "glory" of the Lord! (1 Pe 1:8-9) All of this can be yours if you learn to pray successfully.

### **THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER**

Prayer is the greatest privilege the Christian has. In many places and in many ways the Bible urges us to pray. Here are some passages which stress the importance of prayer, written in an expanded form so that you may more readily grasp their meaning.

"Always give careful attention to prayer, watching for the enemy so that you may be strong against temptation" (Mt 26:41).

"Pray at all times; on every occasion; in every condition. Pray with every kind of prayer and entreaty in the Spirit. And to help you in this, keep alert and watchful. Never let your determination to pray weaken, and never waver in your perseverance and interceding on behalf of all the saints" (Ep 6:18)

"Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything at all, but in every circumstance and in every need continually make your wants known to God by prayer. Let your requests be definite, and remember to give thanks to God" (Ph.4:6)

"Be earnest, and unwearied, and steadfast in your prayer-life, being both alert and determined to gain an answer to your prayer, and always give thanks" (Co 4:6).

"Never stop praying ... steadfastly persist in prayer" (1 Th 5:17).

"I desire therefore that in every place men should pray; and make sure that you are not praying out of anger, or quarrelling, or resentment; but pray lifting up hands that are clean in God's sight" (1 Ti 2:8).

It is evident, then, that God greatly desires that we should ask him for the things we need for a prosperous life; both for ourselves and others. The Lord said one time to

King Solomon, and he says to us, "ASK WHAT I SHALL GIVE YOU!" Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave him this and abundant honour and riches beside.

King David knew the power of prayer. He said, "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face continually."

Israel was favoured with many promises that God would hear their prayers; but they forgot the power of prayer and turned aside from the Lord, until the prophet Hosea cried out, "Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips" (Ho 14:2).

### THE VALUE OF PRAYER

We learn something of the great value the Lord God puts upon prayer by the fact that the Holy Spirit is given to help us pray properly. The scripture says, "In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Ro 8:26) according to the will of God. Then again, in his magnificent vision on the Island of Patmos, the apostle John saw something of how heaven views prayer. He discovered that the prayers of God's people are precious in the sight of God, and that they ascend as incense before the Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ) - Re 5:8.

When you pray with trust in God, the elders of heaven take your prayer and present it as sweet scent, sparkling in golden vessels!

A little later John saw another vision, and described it in these words: "Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand" (Re 8:3-4).

When you pray, the angel of the Lord takes your prayer, no matter how humble it may be, and mixes it with the precious incense of heaven, and so presents it to God. Clothed and presented like this, how could your prayer be other than acceptable to the Lord!

So the Bible exhorts us one and all to pray.

### **CHAPTER 3** **GOD'S PROVISION FOR PRAYER**

The Lord not only requires us to pray, but he has bound himself to answer prayer. Here are some of his promises - again the scriptures are expanded to clarify their meaning.

The Master says to us, "Ask and keep on asking, and it shall be given you; seek and keep on seeking, and you shall find; knock and keep on knocking, and the door shall be opened to you" (Lu 11:9)

ÒBefore you found Christ as Saviour you did not know how to pray in his name; but now ask and you will receive, so that your joy might be fullÓ (Jn 21:22).

ÒWhatever things you ask for in prayer, with real faith in your heart, you will receiveÓ (Mt 21:22).

God says of the person who trusts him, ÒBecause he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high because he acknowledges my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour himÓ (Ps 91:14-15).

When every other helper has failed, there is still help in prayer; ÒWhen the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, the eternal God of heaven will hear them, the Lord will never forsake themÓ (Is:41:17).

In fact, so ready is God to answer prayer that we read, ÒBefore they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hearÓ (Is 65:24). And again, ÒCall to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not knowÓ (Je.33:2-3).

ÒNow unto him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within usÓ (Ep.3:20).

Then what is perhaps the most positive promise of all: ÒThis is the privilege and bold confidence that we have - we are sure that if we ask anything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the will of God, he will listen to every word we speak. And if we know for sure that he listens to whatever we ask, then we also have a settled and absolute assurance that our requests will be grantedÓ (1 Jn 5:14-15).

God has promised to answer our prayer because he is deeply interested in our welfare.

The Lord Jesus Christ clearly taught this when he said, ÒLook at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth more than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field, and watch how they grow, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his magnificence was not arrayed like one of these. But if God puts so much care into clothing the grass of the fields, will he not much more surely clothe you? ... And are not two little sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your FatherÓs notice ... Fear not then, for you are of more value than many sparrowsÓ (Mt 6:25-34; 10:29-31).

GodÓs tender care of us springs from his love. The Bible says that he has loved us with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness he draws us unto himself (Je 31:3). This interest and love that God has for his children causes him to draw close to all who call upon him, to hear their cry, to save them, to satisfy their desire, to preserve them at all times ... ÒThe Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call

on him in truth. He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them" (Ps 145:18-20).

People! God wants you to pray. He wants you to pray so that he can answer your prayer and meet your every need. James said, "You want something but don't get it ... You do not have because you do not ask God" (Ja 4:2). If you will delight yourself in the Lord and seek him earnestly, the Bible says you can have the desires of your heart. So we urge upon you the blessing and goodness of prayer. There is no joy like the joy of asking God and receiving from him the answer to your prayer. Jesus knew this, and that is why he urged us all to have faith in God and to ask for what we need. He said, "Ask ... )

## **SECTION TWO** **EXACTLY HOW TO PRAY SUCCESSFULLY**

### **CHAPTER 1** **THE UNIQUE WITNESS OF PRAYER**

If I were to ask you this question I wonder what your answer would be; "What do you consider is the most distinctive feature of the Christian faith?"

Is it the Saviour we boast of? or the Bible? our hymns? or our missionary zeal?

Christ is unique! No other in the universe can remotely compare with him. But nonetheless, other religions boast of their prophets and messiahs; so in this respect Christianity does not stand completely alone.

The Bible is unsurpassed by any other literary work; yet other faiths have their sacred scriptures and revere them deeply.

However, there is one respect in which Christianity stands completely alone; it claims answered prayer! Nobody really expects Mohammed, or Buddha, or Confucius, and so on, to answer prayer. But the Christian claim is emphatic and bold: "O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come" (Ps 65:2).

The Christian declares that the true God is and must be a prayer-answering God. We maintain that prayer, when it is presented before God properly, is always properly answered.

Unanswered prayer is the brand of a false religion

Christianity alone is able to prove the existence of God - God who sees, knows, and hears - by the simple and plain fact that he answers prayer.

### **DUMB IDOLS v THE LIVING GOD**

The prophet Elijah recognised that answered prayer gave proof of the existence of God. He challenged the prophets of Baal to show by answered prayer that their god lived!

The Bible says these priests called on the name of Baal, saying, Hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered. Throughout the weary hours they screamed and begged and tormented themselves, until with Elijah's taunts stinging in their ears, they dropped to the ground exhausted. Then Elijah spoke. For a few minutes he addressed himself to the God of heaven, Suddenly, with a crackling roar, fire flamed down from the skies and the sacrifice tumbled into a million smoking ashes. Elijah said no more; no more was needed, the demonstration was complete; none could gainsay the evidence of their own eyes, ears, and nostrils! And the people all thundered, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord he is God!" (1 Ki 18:25-39). Truly the distinguishing feature of our faith is its testimony of answered prayer. But how tragic is the multitude of Christian people who have no more experience of answered prayer than those who worship dumb idols!

### **OUR DEPENDENCE ON PRAYER**

This instinct to pray is something which God has built into the makeup of every man and woman. For this reason all men are familiar with the idea of prayer. No doubt you have prayed sometime in your life! You have probably had some answers to your prayers; but I wonder if you are really satisfied with the effectiveness of your prayer life? It is not enough to receive a few answers to a few of your prayers. You want to know the rich thrill of praying and every time having that prayer answered. It is possible for you to pray and always receive an answer to your prayer.

Learn this: we are utterly dependent upon prayer. It is the only direct link we have with God. All we are to receive from God and all we desire to receive will only become ours as we ask.

Why don't we have revival? Because we don't ask!  
Why don't we find healing? Because we don't ask!  
Why is our every need not met? Because we don't ask!

But, you say, "I do ask; I often pray. But there is no answer. How do you explain that?"

Let the Bible speak: "You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (Ja 4:2-3).

There are people who do not pray at all and so have never known the special excitement of getting an answer from heaven.

Then there are people who pray but still there is no response from the realm of God because they ask in the wrong spirit, "amiss," is the wrong way, and for the wrong things. Yet Jesus said, "ASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, AND YOUR JOY WILL BE COMPLETE" (Jn 16:24). So there is definitely a requesting and receiving that is ours if we will.

Here, then, in the following pages, are some of the secrets of this successful asking; asking that brings abundant joy along with heaven's answer!



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PRAYER MADE INEFFECTUAL**

#### **PRAYER IS MADE INEFFECTUAL BY LACK OF A FIXED DESIRE**

A prayer which is no more than a half-hearted wish has little chance of reaching the ear of God. More than a vague hope for something because "it might be nice to have" is necessary to gain heaven's response. To answer prayer and "minister to the heirs of salvation" God is pleased to dispatch his holy angels, those mighty messengers of power and plenty (He 1:14). But it is not likely that God will disturb the angels from their glad work of rejoicing around the throne of heaven's glory (Re 5:11-12) unless we really need and deeply want the object of our prayer!

So, before you pray, establish the fact that you are asking for a good thing, and that you do indeed fervently desire it.

Yet we must go still further for we need more than just mere longing to have the things we desire!

Mark these scriptures. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Lu 11:9-10). This is a glorious promise, but it only holds true for those who will diligently ask and seek and knock. What Jesus really said was, "Ask and keep on asking ... seek and keep on seeking ... knock and keep on knocking ...!" And again the Master said, "Men ought always to pray and not faint." Then elsewhere in the scriptures, we are exhorted to "pray without ceasing," to be "instant in prayer," and to "never give place to the devil." (See Lu 18:1; 1 Th 5:17; Ro 12:12; Ep 4:27).

So, if you want to be sure that your request will be granted, then make a definite covenant of prayer before God - and his promise will hold true: "Everyone who asks, and keeps on asking, receives!"

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ACTION MUST FOLLOW ASKING**

We have seen that a prayer which is not the real wish of the heart is not a prayer, but just hollow-sounding, lifeless words. But if you really desire something, you will not only pray for it with all fervency, but you will also do all you can yourself to bring it to pass.

In other words, it is a cardinal role of prayer that, having made our request to God, all our activities from that time must be directed toward getting ourselves in a place to have that prayer answered. If YOU do nothing to help answer your own prayer, God cannot answer it, for it is plain that you have no real desire for his gift. (See James 2:14-26).

You are praying for victory over some powerful temptation or binding sin. But are you also using every endeavour to avoid being in circumstances where the devil can present that temptation or incite you to that sin? You can claim grace and extra help

from the Lord if you can't avoid the place of temptation, but, remember, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Lu 4:12). You are praying for your children. But are you doing all in your power to answer that prayer by example and teaching?

You are praying for healing of your body. But are you doing everything you can to facilitate your healing by taking every care of yourself physically? And are you preparing yourself spiritually by worship and meditation in the healing promises of the scripture? Cleanse your heart and life of unworthy attitudes and actions, and then you may be sure God will deliver you by his mighty power.

You are praying for revival. But God can never answer you until you show faith in your own praying by gearing all the activities and ministry and vision and programming of the church to receive and adequately handle a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

So - ASK - then ACT!

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **GOD ONLY ANSWERS THE PRAYER OF FAITH**

Jesus said, "If you BELIEVE, you will receive whatever you ask for" (Mt 21:22).

Prayer alone is not sufficient we must pray the prayer of faith.

What is the prayer of faith?

How can we ask in prayer, believing? To pray the prayer of faith, four things are essential.

#### **1. YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT GOD IS ABLE**

Deep in your heart there must be an unwavering conviction that God is easily able to answer your prayer. And this conviction must be alive and vibrant? Many people can say, "God can do anything," but their words are cold and dispassionate, there is no responding tingle of faith in their inmost soul, no thrill of joy at the immense ability of our mighty God.

When the saints of old spoke about the ability of God there was a note of exultant joy, of swelling awe, of expanding faith, of breath-catching excitement, in their fervent praise.

Detect it in these few passages ...

"... because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (He 7:24-25).

"(Jesus) is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ep 3:20).

"... the God we serve, is able to save us ... and he will rescue us!" (Da 3:17).

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times having all that you need you will abound in every good work" (2 Co 9:8).

A graphic example of the Lord's requirement of faith in his ability to answer our prayer is seen in his words to the two blind men: "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith it will be done to you"; and their sight was restored. (Mt 9:27-30).

Notice also that Jesus was very particular in his question to the blind men. He said, not just "do you believe that I am able," but, "do you believe that I am able to DO THIS?" "This!" This particular thing! So many say "all things are possible." But that is a very broad statement. What is important is the more personal challenge, "Is this thing possible?" This particular miracle that you need right now? We often find that people in times of abundance will easily say that God can do anything; but when faced with a sudden great need, their certainty begins to waver, the problem looms like a massive mountain, and they are not so sure that God can really help them.

Our faith in God's ability must be a particular and personal faith. We must have an absolute certainty that God is able to do exactly what we require. Every time we pray, the Lord in effect challenges us as he did the blind men and says, "Before we go any further, do you believe that I am able to do this?" If we can instantly and confidently respond, "Yes, Lord!" then he will certainly say to us, as he did to them, "According to your faith it will be done to you!"

## **2. YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL**

To be successful, all prayer must be made on the basis of God's absolute trustworthiness. It is useless for you to pray if you are in two minds as to the desire of the Lord to answer you. The psalmist recognised this need for a united heart and an unwavering confidence in God's trustworthiness, when he cried, "Teach me your way, O Lord. and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name" (Ps 86:11). And again, when we ask we are exhorted to "... believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does" (Ja 1:6-8). Again, we are told very plainly, and bluntly, "Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God, because anyone who comes to him MUST BELIEVE that he exists, and that HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM!" (He 11:6).

Lying, deceit, dishonesty, trickery, unreliability - these are the trade-marks of the world. Unhappily, we have breathed this atmosphere all our lives, and distrust toward others has been deeply ingrained in us. We carry much of this when we come before the Lord and so often we have reserve in our hearts toward God.

**Faith in God is simply absolute trust or confidence in God**, and the scripture says without such faith it is impossible for us to please God. This is quite reasonable. As a father, it would hurt me deeply if my son showed that he did not trust me and had no confidence in my word. Yet God is vastly more reliable than we are. So Jesus said, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?" (Mt 7:11).

So we must break through our inward distrust if we would successfully pray. We can do this by remembering such promises as, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?" (Nu 23:19).

Believe it then - GOD WILL ANSWER YOUR PRAYER.

### 3. BELIEVE THAT NOW IS GOD'S TIME TO ANSWER YOUR PRAYER

Frequently people pray just on the off chance that God might hear them, and perhaps answer. Others are not quite so casual, but they still pray without any real expectancy that God will answer them. They scarcely dare hope for any more than an approximate answer some time in the indefinite future. But we must learn that immediate expectation is just as important as prayer. **A settled belief that God heard and granted our request the moment we prayed is a vital requirement of successful prayer.**

Two scriptures press this truth upon us very firmly. Jesus said ... "Whatever you ask for in prayer, BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED IT, and it will be yours" (Mk 11:24). Phillips translates it this way - **"Whatever you pray about and ask for, believe that you have it and it will be yours."**

Then the beloved disciple, John, who knew the heart of the Master so well, expanded Jesus; words and wrote, "God has given us the privilege of coming to him boldly in prayer, having perfect confidence and assurance that if we ask him for anything according to his will, he will listen to us. God invariably hears us when we pray in his will. And, since we know positively that he takes notice of us in whatever we ask, **we also know beyond any doubt that God has granted us the things we asked him for, and we already have them as our present possession!**" (1 Jn 5:14-15, paraphrased).

So, we must ask; then ...

we must believe that God listened to us; then ...

we must believe that he has granted our request; then ...

we must count ourselves as already being the owners of the thing we ask for;

then ...

we shall certainly receive it!

A graphic example of praying with this kind of expectation is given in the Bible account of the prophet Elijah.

Elijah had prophesied drought and the country had dried to a crisp during nearly forty months without rain or dew. Now the time had come for the drought to be broken, and it was to be broken by his prayer. Elijah took his servant to the top of the mountain and there bowed himself before the Lord and prayed earnestly for rain. He prayed for rain; and he expected rain. So he sent his servant to the top of the hill to look for rain clouds. The servant came back and said, "There is nothing there." Six times Elijah sent him to look and six times he returned with a negative report, the observation of his natural senses. But Elijah, who spoke from his faith and his knowledge of the power of God told his servant to go back the seventh time and look again. Six times the servant said, "There is no rain." Six times Elijah retorted,

ÒThere **IS** rain!Ó And the seventh time the man came running back shouting that a tiny cloud had just formed above the horizon. RAIN WAS COMING! Before the day was through a great deluge drenched the land (1 Ki 18:41-45).

People! No matter how impossible it may seem, IF YOU HAVE GOD'S PROMISE ON IT, THEN PRAY WITH ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE, BELIEVE WITH SIMPLE, UNSHAKABLE TRUST, AND KNOW THAT GOD HAS ANSWERED YOUR PRAYER, DON'T ACCEPT ANOTHER PERSON'S PESSIMISTIC REPORT. BELIEVE GOD'S REPORT! HE IS NOT A MAN, HE CANNOT LIE. WHAT HE HAS PROMISED, HE WILL PERFORM!

So Elijah found it. He prayed with expectation. His expectation did not waver. No opposition, no outward evidence, could destroy his inward certainty that God had heard and had answered his prayer.

In those far distant days the scale of the earth's need was great. But one man was sufficient for it. The need was great, and Elijah prayed for great rain. And God gave it to him. Your need may be great also. But your prayer, coupled with expectation of an immediate answer, is sufficient for it. Pray for great things, believe that your request is promptly granted; stand your ground without hesitating; and God will do great things for you.

#### **4. BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF YOUR OWN PRAYER**

A great number of people satisfactorily observe all the principles that we have mentioned; their faith in God, to all outward appearance, is sure and confident, yet still they fail. Why? **It is often because their faith in God is not linked with faith in themselves.**

Let me explain that. What is faith?

Faith is that unwavering confidence in God which is built upon absolute trust in the integrity of his Word. We read that Ófaith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of ChristÓ (Ro 10:17). So faith is based on the truth of the scripture. We accept the reliability of the Word of God, and from that we have faith in God.

But it is not possible to effectively claim faith in one part of the scripture while rejecting another. Or, to be more precise, **you cannot successfully claim to believe what the Bible says about God and his promises unless you also believe what it says about you and your prayer.**

Now we so often hear the complaint, ÓI am not worthy,Ó ÓGod won't listen to my prayer,Ó ÓI have no faith,Ó ÓI am too weak,Ó ÓMy need is too great,Ó ÓI am too miserable to pray,Ó ÓThe devil stops me from praying,Ó ÓSatan prevents me from believing,Ó ÓI am still in darknessÓ - and a host of other such-like negative, defeated, fearful scripture-denying sobbings.

But into the teeth of these complaints and murmurings is hurled the emphatic declaration of God saying what you really are, in Christ. **The Bible urges us to**

**stop seeing ourselves as we may be in the flesh, but to compel our attention upon what we are in Christ.** We must fasten our thoughts onto our new life in Christ and believe with all our heart that what God says we are and have in the heavenly realm is more real and more powerful than what our natural senses tell us we are and have in the earthly realm.

We have a two-fold choice - to close our natural eyes and open the spiritual eyes of faith; or to close our spiritual eyes, and look only with the natural eyes of our senses. If our vision is wholly caught up with natural evidences, then the things of earth and the flesh will dominate and ultimately destroy us. Our prayers will remain unanswered. But if we resolutely turn away from purely natural considerations and fasten our gaze on the heavenly realm and on Christ, and on what we are and have in Christ, then the splendour of these spiritual realities will dominate and ultimately deliver us. Our prayers will be abundantly answered.

The Bible says Christ is risen from the dead; but it also says we are risen with him, and have been raised with him, and are (already) seated with him in heavenly places.

The Bible says Christ is triumphant; this is true; but it says that we too are more than conquerors in him.

The Bible says that Christ is stupendously wealthy; but it also says that we are co-heirs with Christ, and that the riches of his glory belong to us too.

And so, on we could go, with scores of similar statements.

Now the fact is that what the Bible says of the Lord Jesus Christ is gloriously true. We believe implicitly the record of Christ and his glory. But when the Bible, just as emphatically, just as definitely, just as factually, ascribes the same glories and honour and victory and wealth to us, by virtue of our union with Christ in the new birth, we hesitate to accept the record. We either frankly don't believe it, or else we take refuge behind the false assumption that these things cannot be fulfilled until the day of resurrection. Yet the Bible declares that **whatever God has already accomplished in Christ is already accomplished in us.** We only need to believe it, to count yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Ro 6:11). to stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Ga 5:1); and the fruits of Jesus' immense victory will begin to manifest themselves in us.

Space will not permit any further discussion on this point. I can only emphatically reiterate that you dare not claim to have faith in God and to believe his Word unless, along with your acceptance of the Bible revelation of Christ and his victory, you accept the revelation that is given of what we are in Christ. But to help you further in this here is a list of relevant Bible passages. Read them; meditate on them; eagerly accept them as absolutely true; here is the truth as heaven sees it, the truth that Jesus said, if we would learn it, would set us free! (Jn 8:32, 36).

Read: Mt 17:20; Mk 11:23-24; Lu 10:19-20; Ro 6:11; 8:31-32; 37-39; 2 Co 2:14; 9:8; Ga 5:1; Ep 1:19-20; 2:1,5-6; 3:20; 6:10; Ph 4:13-19; Co 1:11,27; 2:10,13; He 10:19-23; etc.

And having read these passages, meditate on them; then it will be true of you as of the psalmist, "whatsoever you do will prosper," (Ps 1:2-3; see also Jos 1:8-9; Psalm 63:5-6; 77:12-14; 104: 33-34; 1 Ti 4:15).

**And may you pray as David, "May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer: (Ps 19:14).**

So then, knowing what you are in Christ, be rid of all hesitancy and the reluctance that comes from a false humility; do what God tells you to do, take your stand in the heavenly realms in Christ, far above all principality and power, and come boldly into God's presence with full assurance of faith. Remember "Elijah was a man just like us ... "

(Ja 5:17-18), yet he prayed with confidence in his own words, and harnessed the whole heavens to his faith! (1 Ki 17:11; 18:1-2, 36-38, 41, 45.)

**Your prayer has power if you will only believe in the power of your prayer!**

## **5. MAKE YOUR PRAYER AN ACTIVE ONE**

We have already spoken of the general activity that must precede and follow prayer. Now I want to mention activity in prayer itself. Many prayers fail because they are too passive, they lack aggression, and the bold actions that result from real faith.

Jesus said, " ... **the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it**" (Mt 11:12).

Then again Jesus placed the emphasis on human command and action, rather than merely asking God to do something, when he said " **SAY to this mountain,** "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing shall be impossible for you" (Mt 17:20). And again, " **... you can SAY to this mountain,** "Go, throw yourself into the sea; and it will be done" (Mt 21:21; Mk 11:23). And " **... you can SAY to this mulberry tree,** "Be uprooted, and planted in the sea; and it will obey you" (Lu 17:6).

References like these indicate that it is not sufficient to pray only. It is by prayer that faith is given birth in our hearts and we gain confidence in knowing that our request is granted. But having received that full assurance, it is then necessary to rise up in vigorous faith and claim the answer from heaven.

In fact, we should go even further, and take hold of our God-given authority, and stand before the mountain that hinders us and, in complete confidence, knowing that we have the right to do so, command it to be removed. You can boldly and forcefully charge the "mulberry tree" of sin and sickness to be uprooted from your life, and cast into the ocean depths of God's deliverance.

Prayer gives you strength, courage, and determination, so that your faith will become immovable. When such an immovable, irresistible faith strikes against the mountain of sickness or sin, of debt or of bondage, that mountain must disintegrate. Prayer will graft into your life the strong right arm of faith. But then you must act and

use that arm of strength in authoritative command, maintaining a steadfast confidence that what you speak in faith will come to pass.

Moses prayed, laid hold of the faith of God, then arose from his knees, struck the Red Sea with his rod, and watched while the waters rolled back (Ex 14:15-16, 21-23).

Joshua, in the fury of a great battle, saw the sun descending and night fast approaching. He knew if the battle were to be won, the day had to be extended. He fell on his knees and prayed. Faith dawned. Then he arose, and in a voice of thunder, commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him. Israel won a great victory that day (Jos 10:12-13).

The sick king, Hezekiah, earnestly sought God for healing. In another place in the city the prophet Isaiah was also praying. The faith of God flashed into the hearts of both these men. Isaiah stood up and hurried to where the king lay and told Hezekiah that God would heal him. And, to prove it, Isaiah spoke to the sun and commanded it to recede ten degrees. It obeyed him, and the king's life was spared (Is 4:39).

Jesus spent a night in prayer, and then commanded the winds and the waves, and they were instantly quieted at the sound of his voice (Mk 4:39).

If you have a great need in your life that towers like a mountain, then learn this secret. Jesus said, 'Men ought always to pray, and not faint'; rather, faith will be given to them so that they may speak and remove every difficulty.

Have faith in God; and it will be done!

## **CHAPTER 5 YOUR REQUEST MUST BE REASONABLE**

**Someone has observed that we cannot have faith for the unreasonable.** We are so built that we can believe for only those things that seem to us to be reasonable.

I do not mean that we have to fully understand a thing before we can believe it, or that it has to be reasonable from an ordinary person's point of view. But we do have to be convinced of the truth and possibility and probability of the object of our belief.

In prayer this means that we must be convinced that we are asking for something which is correct, that it is possible to receive it, and that it is probable that God will grant our request.

For example, if it is healing you stand in need of, you must know that healing has been promised in the Bible, that God is able to heal, and that God will heal you in particular. If you are convinced of these things your request for healing will appear reasonable to you, and you will have little difficulty in praying the prayer of faith.

Now, there are two things which prevent people from feeling that it is reasonable for God to answer their prayer ...



## 1. **BECAUSE THEY SEE THEMSELVES TO BE UNWORTHY**

As long as we feel unworthy to pray, or undeserving of an answer, it will appear unreasonable for God to hear us and grant our request, and so we shall be unable to pray the prayer of faith.

Two things arise here ...

**Firstly, this feeling of unworthiness is often warranted**, and stems from the inward conviction of the Holy Spirit. As long as we pay no heed to the divine voice there is no possibility of God allowing us to pray the prayer of faith. Hence we read ... ÒIf I had cherished sin in my heart the Lord would not have listenedÓ (Ps 66:18); and Òthe Lord is far from the wicked; but he hears the prayer of the righteousÓ (Pr 15:29).

If we are deliberately harbouring sin and wilfully and continually giving place to temptation, it is impossible for God to accept our prayer. Jesus said that we could ask what we will and it would be given to us, but this would be true only as we Òremain in him and his words remain in usÓ (Jn 15:7). And wise Solomon said, ÒIf anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestableÓ (Pr 28:9).

**Secondly, this feeling of unworthiness is often quite unwarranted**, and stems, not from the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but from the false condemnation of Satan. It is the voice of the devil trying to bring our past sins between us and God, accusing us, and seeking to undo the work of God's grace by casting us into guilt and despair. You and I are endowed with an inward prompting we call our conscience. But conscience does not always guide us rightly; the direction it gives us depends largely on our faith and attitude toward God. Sometimes conscience can be stirred up, not by the Lord, but by the devil. It then brings us into a false sense of condemnation. Recognising this the apostle spoke of an Òevil conscience,Ó that is, a conscience that was coming into God's presence. He said, ÒLet us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from A GUILTY CONSCIENCEÓ (He 10:22).

How shall we do this? How can we shake ourselves free from an accusing and condemning conscience, a conscience that is thrusting at us with the bitter pangs of guilt even though we have turned from sin?

The secret is in the word ÒsprinkledÓ. It is not to be done by any effort or merit of ours, but solely by reliance on the shed blood of Jesus. So John said - ÒIf we confess our sins, he is FAITHFUL and JUST and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousnessÓ (1 Jn 1:9). And again, if our heart persists in condemning us, despite every effort to secure rest by believing in Jesus, John adds - ÒThis, then, is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how WE SET OUR HEARTS AT REST in his presence WHENEVER OUR HEARTS CONDEMN US, GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEARTS and he knows everythingÓ (1 Jn 3:19-21). (This grace overrides the accusing voice of conscience) But, better still, if by faith we can subdue the sense of guilt and grasp hold of reassurance in Christ, the next word will be true - ÒDear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and RECEIVE FROM HIM ANYTHING WE ASKÓ (1 Jn 3:21-22).

## 2. BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT SURE OF THE WILL OF GOD

This is perhaps the most common reason of all why people do not feel it is reasonable to have deep assurance that God will answer their prayers.

The Bible says emphatically that we can only have confidence in prayer, and be assured that we have the things we ask for as soon as we ask, as we know that **we are asking according to God's will** (1 Jn 5:14-15).

Being uncertain of God's will, people are not sure that God wants to give them their desire, and therefore they cannot possibly pray the prayer of faith. The focal point of their prayer is not 'I believe' but 'if ...!' This is hope, not faith. And while it is possible that God in his mercy and kindness may be pleased to answer such a prayer, there is no guarantee that it will be so. **If we want to be positively sure that our prayer has been heard and our request granted, we must first discover God's will; then we can pray with total confidence and the knowledge that we must receive the thing we asked for.**

But so many people are far from sure of God's will when they pray, and quite often, scarcely bother to enquire as to what is the true will of God in the matter.

This is inexcusable, for with a little effort and patience and trust, the will of God can always be discovered.

How can we learn the will of God? How can we discover what God himself wants to do, and what he wants us to have?

As his children and as his servants we have an inviolable right to know the will of God; and he will reveal his will by the following means ...

- |     |                 |   |                              |
|-----|-----------------|---|------------------------------|
| (a) | Obedience       | - | Is 32:17; Jn 14:21; Co 1:10  |
| (b) | His Word        | - | Ps 119:105, 130 133          |
| (c) | Prayer          | - | Ja 1:5; Ac 1:23-24           |
| (d) | Circumstances   | - | Re 3:8; 1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12 |
| (e) | Godly counsel   | - | Pr 15:22; Ac 19:30-31        |
| (f) | The Holy Spirit | - | Ro 8:26-27                   |

In matters of comparatively small importance, or where the scripture expressly states God's will, only one or two of these indications will be needed to give you confidence in prayer.

But when coupled with the decision and action which may result from it, your prayer will determine the course of your whole life, or will affect the lives of many people, then it would be wise to seek for a positive witness from all of these means before proceeding any further.

### WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO!'

But then the question arises, 'Sometimes God says 'NO!' ... what shall we do then?'

It is true that God ignores unrepentant sinners; but he always listens to the prayers of the righteous, and always answers their prayer. But it is also true that there are occasions when the Lord refuses some request. This was once the experience of the apostle Paul. It arose when what he called "a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me,"

pressed hard upon him. It brought him much infirmity until Paul earnestly "three times pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me." But God's answer to the apostle was, "My grace is sufficient for you; for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Co 12:7).

God said, "No!" to Paul's actual request, but he gave Paul a better answer, a better promise. Paul heard the answer of the Lord, accepted it, and said, "therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, **that Christ's power may rest on me.**" And I think you know how mightily God's power did rest upon the great apostle.

A little later on the Bible records that God did in fact remove that thorn in the flesh.

So there may be some problem or burden in your life which is not God's immediate desire to remove. But, even though the Lord should refuse your initial request, he certainly will not leave you to struggle on alone, but he will surely give you abundant grace, and strength, and the power of Christ to give you victory.

To give us confidence in this, we have this wonderful promise - "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in our time of need" (He 4:15-16).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY OF SECRETS**

So, then, in answer to the question, "How can I pray successfully?" we must adhere to the following pattern ...

#### **1. CONFESS ALL KNOWN SIN**

If we hold sin in our hearts God will not hear us (Ps 66:18; Is 59:1-2).

But God will hear the prayer of a righteous man (Ja 5:16; 1 Pe 3:12).

If we cover our sins, God cannot forgive them (Pr 28:13) - and in any case it is really impossible to hide anything from God (He 4:13). But if we confess our sins, the Lord will readily forgive them, and make us clean before him (1 Jn 1:9).

Sometimes we must go even further than mere confession to God. James said, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed" (see Ja 5:16).

And Jesus said " ... if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24; 6:14-15; Mk 11:25-26).

So the Lord may require of you that you make confession or reconciliation or forgiveness or restoration to others, before your prayer will be answered. (See 1 Pe 3:7; 1 Jn 3:18-21).

## **2. COME HUMBLY BEFORE GOD**

The Lord will resist the proud (1 Pe 5:5; Ja 4:6).

But he will hear those who humble themselves, and are lowly of heart (2 Ch 7:14; Ps 138:6; Is 57:15).

And in this respect, too, **we should learn to wait upon God**. The Bible says, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." (Is 40:30-31). And again, the psalmist said, "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Ps 27:13-14).

He believed that he would see God's hand outstretched to give him good things. Because he believed, he had no fear. Because he believed, he also strengthened his courage and increased his confidence by waiting on the Lord.

You will receive no answer from God if you rush pell-pell into the presence of the Lord, rattle off a few words of prayer and then rush out again. Remember that you are coming into the presence of the King of heaven and the Lord of all the earth. So we read, "As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress; so our eyes look to the Lord our God till he shows us his mercy" (Ps 123:2).

So we need to learn not only to wait upon the Lord in lingering communion, but also to have PATIENCE. The scripture says, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (He 10:36). So many people are denied an answer to their prayer simply because they will not wait to discover the will of God, or having discovered his will, do not allow time for the answer to come. After a few days, or even a few hours, they lose hope and consider that God did not hear them, or has perhaps forgotten them. Remember Daniel. He prayed, and the Bible says that God heard him on the first day, and dispatched an angel with heaven's reply. But the powers of darkness opposed the angel of the Lord, and it was a full three weeks before the answer finally reached Daniel. But during that time Daniel continued in prayer day by day. He did not yield to his feelings and exclaim as so many do, "What's the use of praying anyway!" Daniel persisted in his prayer so that when the angel came he was able to minister to him and give him God's blessing (Da 10:1-14). Hosea said, "... you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always" (Ho 12:6).

## **3. COME CONFIDENTLY BEFORE GOD**

Proper humility must be coupled with godly boldness. We should not creep into God's throne room; if we are sincere in our hearts we may have perfect boldness in our approach to the Lord (He 10:19-22).

#### **4. COME BELIEVING HIS PROMISE**

If we would please God it is essential that we have faith; believing is the Bible condition for receiving (Mk 11:24; He 11:6).

A person who continually wavers in his trust in God can expect no answer to his prayer (Ja 1: 6-7). The antidote to a weak faith is to have recourse to the Word of God. It is by Òdrinking the Water of LifeÓ and Òeating the Bread of LifeÓ - by constantly absorbing GodÓs Word - that our faith is established (Jn 4:50; Ac 27:25; Ro 4:20-21; 10:17). Peter said, Ò(God) has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine natureÓ (2 Pe 1:4).

#### **5. CONSTANTLY SEEK TO KNOW GODÓS WILL**

This was the foundation of the MasterÓs prayer life (Mt 26: 39, 42), and it must also be the foundation of our prayer life (1 Jn 5:14). If there is no answer to your prayer it is simply because you have asked with a wrong motive, or contrary to GodÓs will (Ja 4:3). If you want to be sure of getting an answer, take time to discover the will of the Lord, before you pray, and then ask in perfect confidence!

(For your interest, here are some Bible examples of God refusing to answer prayers because they were contrary to his will - Ex 33:19-20; De 3:23-26; 1 Sa 12:15-23; and because of sin - Ez 20: 1-3; Pr 1:24-26).

#### **6. CALL UPON GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART**

There must be earnest longing, intense desire, deep passion, fervent faith, behind every petition you present to God. The Lord is unmoved by sleepy, half-hearted, indefinite, apathetic praying. Consider Jesus himself - he Òoffered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tearsÓ (He 5:7). And see also Ge 32:26; Je 29:13; Ac 12:5; Co 4:12; Ja 5:16-17.

#### **CONCLUSION**

So then ...

knowing the mighty power of prayer;

knowing that the Lord is unquestionably willing to answer your prayer;

with the peace of God ruling in your heart (Co 3:15);

with an inward witness that you are praying in the will of God;

with all doubt and uncertainty banished;

come boldly to the throne of grace, and

ÒASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, AND YOUR JOY WILL BE COMPLETEÓ

(Jn 16:24).

### **SECTION 3**

#### **WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR? AND HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?**

##### **Chapter 1**

#### **WHAT IS PRAYER?**

The Bible teaches us that we should address our prayers to God, as our Heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus Christ grounds all prayer upon this relationship we have with God; and reveals God as freely charging himself with all the responsibility of protecting and providing for us. The heart of the Lord God is moved with all the

affection of a father toward all who have been born into his family through faith in Christ.

PRAYER THEREFORE IS A CHILD'S PETITION TO AN ALL-WISE, ALL-LOVING, ALL-POWERFUL, FATHER AND GOD.

Sometimes we will approach God humbly, as little children; other times we may come with great boldness and confidence, as full grown sons; but the basic principle remains unaltered.

Once we have embraced this Father-child relationship, some tremendous possibilities open up before us.

In his love, the Lord God earnestly longs to give us good things. So Jesus said, "You are men, yet you know how to give good things to your children. How much more then shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to those who ask him" (Mt 7:7-11). And the apostle James added, "Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" (Ja 1:17).

Nor should we be niggardly in our approach to God, for the Bible says, "God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ep 3:20). But best of all, we need to understand that it is always God who takes the initiative in approaching us. The Saviour said, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Re 3:20). All that is required of us is to take the Lord at his word, open the door of our hearts to him, and call upon him in sincerity and truth. So the scripture says, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call on him while he is near." (Is 55:6) And again, "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Je 29: 12-13).

But not everyone can approach God in this way, as all those who have not accepted Christ as Saviour are spoken of as having Satan as their "father" (Jn 8:44). In many places we are clearly taught that God will not hear sinners (see for example Pr 28:9) except when they repent and pray for the salvation of God (see Jn 9:31; Ro 10:13). But to those who have accepted Christ, and have found the joy of sins forgiven, a bold entrance into the presence of God is granted. We read, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter The Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith ... " (He 10:19-22). And again, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ep 2:13).

Because of this, the promise is clear, whatever you ask in the name of Jesus will be given - " ... **I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it**" (Jn 14:13-14).

## Chapter 2

### ASKING IN JESUS' NAME

But what does it mean, to ask "in the name of Jesus"?

Obviously, more is involved than just repeating those five words, 'In the name of Jesus.' This phrase is not a magic formula that will bring to any man who speaks it wealth untold without any qualification. Asking in the name of Jesus implies ...

... that we know the power of his matchless name, and fully recognise that this name stands far above all others, and that before it every knee must bend (Ph 2:9-11).

... that we stand in the name of Jesus, being aware of the heavenly rights, and privileges, and authority over Satan, that are ours as we claim his name as our own (Mk 16:17-18; Lu 10: 19; Ac 3:16).

... that we recognise the holiness and purity and selflessness and salvation and love embraced in the music of his wonderful name (Ac 4:10-12).

... that if we are living such lives, or making such requests, as contradict all that the name of Jesus signifies, his name will lose all efficacy to us (Co 3:17; 1 Ti 6:1; 2 Ti 2:19).

... that we speak that name always in love, and godly fear, and implicit trust and confidence, and never in anger, or greed, or malice, or carelessly, or irreverently, or in unbelief or doubt.

... that we will not endeavour to use his name to ask for things that are contrary to his will in any way at all, or while we remain in known opposition to his purpose for our lives.

To sum it all up: the one qualification, or limit, placed upon our asking and receiving, is that God will only give us good things, and what is according to his will. In an earlier chapter we discussed exactly how to discover the will of God. but, briefly, we can say now that the Lord desires you to have all things that pertain to godliness, true happiness, health of body, mind, and spirit, the provision of every real need, freedom from sin and triumph in temptation. In fact, everything implied in the 'more abundant life' the Lord Jesus Christ came to provide for us (Jn 10:10).

So to conclude: we have access to God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy spirit (Ep 2:18).

### **Chapter 3**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**The perfect pattern of prayer is set out for us in the well-known 'Lord's prayer,' found in Mt 6: 9-13.**

#### **PREPARATION**

## **ÒOur Father in Heaven.Ó**

We must address ourselves to God only - not to saints or angels - we come directly to God - we have no need of any human or angelic mediary.

We must speak to God as our Father. In three ways we are the children of God: he is our Father by **creation** (Ma 2:10; Ac 17:28); we are his children by **adoption through Christ** (Ep 1:5; Ga 4:6); and we are his **natural born children** by the Ònew birthÓ through the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:3-5). We must therefore approach God with love, and trust, and pleasant confidence.

We must speak to God as our Heavenly Father, which demands that we come to him also in reverence, and purity, and godly fear (Ecc.5:1-2).

## **PETITION**

### **1. There are, firstly, three petitions concerning GOD**

#### **ÒHallowed be your name.Ó**

Our first thought in prayer must be for the honour of God, and all that we ask will be bounded by this thought, and will therefore be acceptable to the Lord. The psalmist said, ÒTurn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your nameÓ (Ps 119:132). Love the name of the Lord! Then he will show you his mercy! God has called us that we Òmight be for the praise of his gloryÓ (Ep 1:12), and, Òyou were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.Ó (1 Co 6:20).

#### **ÒYour Kingdom Come.Ó**

Implicit in this prayer is complete consecration of your whole life to the will of God. ÒThe kingdom of God is within you,Ó said Jesus (Lu 17:21); and only as you yield to its inward laws will you find its outward blessings. Still further, the prophet Amos said, ÒDo two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?Ó (Am 3:3) What is the burning purpose of God? The whole testimony of the scripture thunders his desire to establish his everlasting kingdom amongst men. To this end all the energies of the divine Spirit are directed. If we would please God, then our own consuming longing must be to aid this great work. If our praying or behaving is antagonistic to the kingdom of God, we can hardly expect an answer from heaven.

#### **ÒYour Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.Ó**

When we pray these words we echo the words of the old priest Eli, ÒLet the Lord do what seems good to him, - Lord, do what you please with me and mine.Ó We also stand with Jesus when he said, ÒFather, not my will but yours be done!Ó Here is a petition which displays total faith in the goodness and mercy of God. And, to do the will of God is to bring heaven down to earth.

### **2. There are, secondly, three petitions concerning our NEIGHBOURS AND OURSELVES**

#### **ÒGive us Today our Daily Bread.Ó**

When we pray for ourselves it is called ÒpetitionÓ; when we pray for others it is called Òintercession.Ó Both of these we find here.



**PETITION:** It is proper to pray for ourselves, and our daily needs, both physical and spiritual - for we need bread for our souls as well as our bodies. It is also right to expect that the Father will see to it that these needs are supplied. But we can only expect this as we adhere to the former petition, "your will be done"; and the will of God as we find it in his word is, "If any man will not work, then neither shall he eat" (2 Th 3:10). Certainly God will supply our every need "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," but we are expected to go out and gather the goodness of God. "Man goes out to his work, to his labour until evening ... these all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them they gather it up ..."  
(Ps 104:23,-27-28). God gives freely in answer to those who wait upon him; but we can only gather the provision of God as we set about our own proper labour.

What will God provide? From the Bible we learn of many things for which we may petition God; our daily needs, wisdom, understanding, forgiveness of sin, victory over sin, healing of sickness, protection, strength for our necessary tasks, boldness in Christian witness, prosperity in our work and play; in fact, for everything to do with our daily living and our requirements for health and happiness.

**INTERCESSION:** This is perhaps the highest privilege the believer has, - the right to intercede on behalf of others.

The great example of intercession is found in the Lord Jesus Christ,  
"... he is able to save completely all those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (He 7:25).  
"... Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself" (He 9:24).

Seeing then that we have such a great High Priest, who is risen from the dead and ascended through the heavens to the right hand of God, we should come before him with all confidence, holding fast to our confession of faith in him. For in Christ we have a High Priest who is able to understand and sympathise with our weakness and infirmities; he was tempted in every respect, just as we are. But although he suffered, under the impact of temptation, he did not sin. His victory over sin, and his willingness to intercede for us, should give us fearless confidence; so that we may boldly draw near to the throne of grace, and there find the mercy and forgiveness of God for our many failures, and his favour to help us in every time of need (He 4:14-16).

### **Bible Examples of Intercession**

**SAMUEL** - interceded on behalf of Israel. He said he would be condemned if he failed to do this: "... far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you ..."  
(1 Sa 12:23).

**MOSES** - delivered Israel by his prayers: "(Israel) forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt ... so he said he would destroy them - had not Moses his chosen one stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them"  
(Ps 106:21-23).

PAUL - set a fervent example of prayer on behalf of all the saints of God. Here are three of his prayers ...

Ò ... I fall on my knees before the Father, and I pray that out of the glorious richness of his resources he will enable you to know the strength of the Spirit's inner reinforcement, that Christ may actually live in your hearts by your faith. And I pray that you may be firmly fixed in love ... may you be filled through all your being with God himself! (Ep 3:14-19 - Phillips)

Ò ... My prayer for you is that your love may grow and grow and then you may show your love by greater knowledge of God and wiser insight into his ways. And may you learn to always emphasise those things that are most important, dwelling on things that are of real value, so that you will be sincere and blameless as you approach the day of Christ. I pray that your lives will be filled with evidence of that real righteousness which is produced in you by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God! (Ph 1:9-11 - paraphrased).

Ò ... I never stop praying for you and longing that you might come to a deep and clear understanding of God's will. And with this knowledge may you also be given true spiritual wisdom, so that you may walk in a manner that is a credit to your Father. In this way your whole life will be pleasing to God, and you will be fruitful in every good work, and your knowledge of God will increase still more. To help you in this it is my prayer also that all of God's power might be given you to strengthen you and fill you with his glory! (Co 1:9-11 - paraphrased).

### **ÒLead us not into temptation.Ó**

It is not enough to have only forgiveness of our sins, we must also be diligent to pray for grace to avoid sin. David longed for God to help him in this - ÓKeep your servant also from wilful sins; may they not rule over me; then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my RedeemerÓ (Ps 19:13-14).

God desires not only to forgive us for our sins, but to free us from our sins. Pray for deliverance, and he will surely do it. The Lord will loose you from your sin, and sickness, and every snare of Satan.

### **PRAISE**

#### **ÒFor the kingdom is yours, and the power, and the glory.Ó**

This sentence is linked logically and emotionally with the first three exclamations in the prayer.

Father in heaven ... thy kingdom come ... for thine is the kingdom.  
... thy will be done ... for thine is the power.  
... thy name be hallowed ... for thine is the glory.

In this one short ascription of praise, then, the Lord shows us that ...

... God gives and forgives as only the King of kings could do.  
... God is able to make good all his promises because his power is sufficient.  
... God and his glory must be the end of all our prayers, the happiness

of all our hope.

So it is good that we should devote time to praise God: every prayer should be crowned with praise, every request sealed with rejoicing. We must give God glory and honour, not because he needs it - he is praised incessantly by a world of angels - but because he deserves our praise. Someone once said, "Praise is the work and happiness of heaven, and all who would go to heaven hereafter must begin their heaven now!"

Hence the Bible exhorts us - "ALWAYS giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ep 5:20). And again, " ... give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Th 5:18).

Very strongly we are urged to be "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer ... WITH THANKSGIVING ... present your requests to God" (Ph 4:6). And again, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and THANKFUL!" (Co 4:2). That word, "thankful" will make all the difference to the real effectiveness and faith of your prayer.

In fact, when men stopped acknowledging God, and giving him thanks for his goodness, the human race plunged into the vilest depths of sin (Ro 1:21). Again and again the Lord reminds us of this, and for our own sake he urges us through his prophets - "Praise the name of the Lord; praise him you servants of the Lord" (Ps 135:1); "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Ps 150:6).

"From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised" (Ps 113:3).

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name" (He 13:15).

Jesus said the very stones would be constrained to cry out if the children of God refused to praise him! (Lu 19:38-40).

What should we praise God for?

We should praise the Lord for his loving kindness, and for his Word (Ps 138:2); for his glory and his wondrous name (Ps 148:13); for his mighty works, and his excellent greatness (Ps 150:1-2).

### **"For ever and ever."**

The kingdom of God will be established; it will be established FOREVER; it will be established by HIS POWER; it will be filled with HIS GLORY; and God will be all in all.

May your prayer be as David's -

"Praise be to, O Lord God of our Father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the

kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands is strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks and praise your glorious name (1 Ch 29:10-13).

### **ÒAmen.Ó**

That is, Ólet it be so!Ó And if we follow the MasterÓs pattern of prayer, the requests we make will surely be heard, and heaven will answer in full.

To sum it up : in all your praying these things should be apparent -

Thanksgiving to your Father.

Communion with your Lord and Saviour.

Consecration of your whole life.

Submission of all your will.

Confession of every known sin.

Intercession for your enemies - and friends.

Prayer for revival.

Praise for GodÓs greatness and goodness.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER**

#### **1 WHEN SHOULD I PRAY?**

There are many times when it is proper to pray. Here are some of them

Leading in prayer in a public meeting - Jn 11:41-42; Mt 26:26-27;

Praying in a group - Da 2:17-18; Ac 4:24; 12:5,12; 20:36; 21:5.

Private prayer - most of our prayer should be of this nature (Mt 6:6). In this we have a wonderful example in the Lord Jesus Christ (Mk 1:35; Lu 6:12). It may be in the morning (Ps 5:3), in the evening, or at noon (Ps 55:17). It should certainly be our habit to be in constant communion and prayer with our Father, right through the day (1 Th 5:17; 1 Ti 2:8; Ro 12:12).

Before making any vital decision you should pray for guidance (Lu 6:12-13; Ja 4:15); and prayer should be your habit in times of trouble (Ps 50: 15; 81:7; Ac 16:22-25). In fact, we are exhorted to pray at all times, and in every circumstance for every need (Lu 18:1; Ja 5:13; Ep 6:18).

Daily communion with God is essential to a happy and prosperous Christian life. It is good to endeavour to spend some time alone with God in prayer every day. Most people find that the morning is the best time; but the most important thing is that you find a quiet place, then remember that you are talking with God, and to your Father, and focus all your attention on him. Draw close to God by reading the BIBLE first. Be diligent to thank God for the blessing you have already received; and bring EVERYTHING before him in prayer.

#### **2. WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY TO PRAY?**

Physical position in prayer is of minor importance when compared to a right heart attitude. The Bible shows men in prayer as standing (Mk 11:25); prostrate (Mt 26:39); kneeling (Ac 20:36); in chains (Ac 16:24-25); with hands outstretched (Is

1:15); with hands raised (Ps 28:2); bowing (Ge 24:26); crouching (1 Ki 18:42); leaning on a staff (He 11:21). Circumstances and individual preference, will determine the manner of prayer. The urgent thing is to PRAY, and to pray with a right heart. However, for private, and often for group prayer, to kneel would usually seem best (Ps 95:6; Ep 3:14).

Nor are long prayers in any way necessary. The longest prayer in the Bible can be read in just a few minutes. By all means spend as long as you are able in reading the Bible, in listening to God through his Word, in fellowship and communion with the Master. But there is no virtue in many words. See Ec 5:2; Mt 6:7; 23:14; and see the effectiveness of the short prayers of Elijah and Hezekiah, 1 Ki 18:36-37; Is 38:2-3. FAITH is the essential in all prayer.

Let us conclude with the words of Christ (Jn 15:7) ...

ÒIF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND MY WORDS REMAIN IN YOU, ASK WHATEVER YOU WISH, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU.Ó

## **Section 4**

### **IN THE HEAVENLIES WITH CHRIST**

#### **Chapter 1**

#### **PREPARING THE WAY**

A basic reason for the almost total failure of a vast number of Christian lives is the widespread reversal of the Bible order of faith and practice. We can state it briefly this way: **it is an inviolable spiritual principle that doctrine and faith must always come before ÓdoingÓ and Ófreedom.Ó** This is a law that is as true and as unremitting as the law of sowing and reaping.

Ignorance of this truth, and failure to observe it, is a fundamental cause of unanswered prayer. The best explanation of this law is found in the words of Jesus. The Master said, **ÓThen you will know the truth and the truth will set you free!Ó** (Jn 8:32). We want freedom; freedom to serve God, freedom to love God, freedom to rejoice in God; freedom in faith, in prayer, in worship, in praise; freedom to live righteously, to walk soberly and godly in this present world; freedom from sin and sickness and all the works of darkness. How can we have this freedom? Jesus said, simply, **KNOW THE TRUTH!** In other words, **knowledge must come before performance; sound doctrine is the essential precursor of successful doing.**

This is born out plainly and convincingly by every New Testament epistle. In Romans, Paul set down eleven chapters of powerful argument on the plan of salvation and justification by faith before he attempted to urge his readers to live the life of the just. At the end of his letter Paul added five chapters of practical instruction in righteous living. But the liberating truth of salvation by faith was first pressed home!

So too in Galatians; the closing two chapters of warnings, instruction, and exhortations, are preceded by four chapters of glorious gospel truth, climaxed by the words, **ÓStand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slaveryÓ** (Ga 5:1). Not until he had brought the Galatians on to the ground of

Christian liberty and full spiritual freedom did the apostle instruct them how to display the characteristics of a true Christian life.

In Ephesians, Paul begins with three breath-taking chapters showing the glories of Christ, the immensity of his salvation, and the vast scope of his plan for the church. He sounds out the infinite wealth of the gospel and the riches of grace and glory that we have in Christ. Then, and not before, does he begin a practical application of the truth, and urges a consistent Christian life. He was careful to declare what God had done for us before setting down what we had to do for God.

We could go on citing other epistles, both in whole or in part, and everywhere the same principle would be observed. **Before urging Christian duties the apostles were always careful to remind the people of Christian doctrine.**

### **THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER**

Especially in the prayers of Paul is this truth apparent.

An apostle praying for the saints: what would be the theme of his prayers? Did he pray that they might be victorious over sin? or healed? or would have revival: or that their needs might be met? - and so on. No! He prayed for none of these things! With all his passion he pleaded, not that they might have things, **but that they might know the truth.** Again and again he longed that they might know ... know ... KNOW! In fervent intercession he prayed that God would give them WISDOM and REVELATION in the KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST; that they might know the hope of their calling, and know the riches of his glory, and understand the exceeding great power that was theirs in Christ, and that they might comprehend the power that was theirs in Christ, and that they might comprehend the love of God, and know his will, and have all spiritual understanding! (Ep 1:15-19; 3:14; 14:17; Ph 1:9-10; Co 1:9; etc).

**Paul was convinced that if only people would familiarise themselves with the truth as it is in Christ, if they would only steep themselves in understanding of the gospel and all that Christ wrought on the cross for our full salvation, they would have need of nothing else, for all that they could desire would follow as a natural consequence!**

Perhaps the most concise presentation of the wealth that is freely ours in the Lord Jesus Christ is found in the first three chapters of the epistle to the Ephesians. Here Paul sounds out the infinite depths, and scales the utmost heights of the gospel glory, and reveals them to us in four pungent statements of what we have and what we are **IN HEAVEN in Christ** (Ep 1:3).

#### **1 PAST TENSE**

You will notice that Paul says this great work has already been done. This is not a promise. This is emphatic statement of fact, God **HATH BLESSED US!** You say that you have need of blessing: **but God has already blessed you.** And what has God given us?

#### **2. PROVISION**

It is nothing less than **all spiritual blessings.** Can you even begin to enumerate the vast profusion implied in that remark? Can you ever exhaust that limitless treasure? All spiritual blessings! All the good things you have ever longed for,

prayed for, cried for! Every blessing the human heart could desire: every kindness divine hands can provide. All the riches of glory; all the stores of earth; for your body, all health, and victory, and ability; for your mind, all satisfaction and understanding; for your soul, all cleansing and life; for your spirit, all quickening and illumination. With such superlative provision the Lord God has already blessed you! But, you say, I do not see that I have all these things! Perhaps you have looked in the wrong place?

### 3. PLACE

Where are all spiritual blessings to be found? In yourself? In your church? In your own good works? The scripture tells us quite plainly where to locate them: God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings ÒIN HEAVENLY PLACES.Ó

Here then is a particular realm, known as Òheavenly places,Ó where you and I have unlimited credit. In this place, credited to our name, is untold wealth. It is ours now! If we are not enjoying this divine provision it is only because we are not looking in the right place or approaching by the right way. If a friend deposited a large sum of money, in your name, at a certain bank, it would be of no value to you unless you went to that particular bank, presented an authority which gave you the right to draw on the money, and identified yourself as the person for whom the wealth was in fact intended.

So it is with our riches in heavenly places. We first have to enter this realm, then we must enter it with the right authority, and also we must bring forward proof that the treasure belongs to us. Exactly how to do this will be outlined at the end of this study. But first let us discover more about this realm that Paul calls Òheavenly places.Ó

## Chapter 3

### OUR POWER IN THE HEAVENLIES

Ò ... which he exerted in Christ when he (God) raised him from the dead, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realmsÓ (Ep 1:20).

#### 1 PRAYER

Take particular notice of the apostleÕs earnest prayer in this connection. he said, ÒI have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and **his incomparably great power** for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to comeÓ (Ep 1:16-21).

He did not ask God to give them power. He longed only that they might KNOW the greatness of GodÕs power in the heavenly realms, and KNOW that this power, all of it, was already their possession and prerogative! What was this power? and how does it become ours?

## 2 POWER

Paul places a measure on this power and tells us two things about it. Firstly, it is incomparably great. We need have no fear of it being insufficient to meet any difficulty we are faced with. But, secondly, he defines it more accurately as being a particular demonstration of the might of God. What was this? The power available to you and me is

... **his incomparably great power** ... which he exerted in Christ WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD AND SET HIM AT HIS RIGHT HAND. So the extraordinary strength which is extended toward us is the same in character, and force, and effect, as that which broke the bonds of death from the Lord Jesus Christ, freed him from sin's darkness, and raised him in glory to heaven's sovereign throne!

It is interesting to compare the standards of power of the old dispensation and the new. Before the resurrection of Christ, whenever men wanted to depict the might of God they could call on no greater demonstration than the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Again and again the prophets pointed to that phenomenal event as indicating the limits of God's working on behalf of man and what tremendous things the Lord would do for those who trusted him. The measure of God's power in the old dispensation was according to Israel's deliverance from the slavery of Egypt.

But now there is a new standard: an infinitely higher measure of revealed omnipotence. It is found in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. If the manifestation of God's power was great in the former time, now it is **incomparably great!** If it was the working of his power that brought Israel out of Egypt, now it is the working of his mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and set him on the right hand of the majesty on high.

And it scarcely needs me to tell you the contrast in effectiveness which appears between the old standard and the new. If the first was a physical deliverance from temporal bondage, the second is spiritual freedom from death. If the first wrought national liberty, the second has brought forth salvation for the whole race. If the first offered Israel an earthly inheritance and natural wealth, the second has opened to all who believe the unlimited storehouse of the kingdom of God, and a house eternal in the heavens.

## 3. PROMISE

But this incomparably great power is not to be found lying carelessly around the earth. It has been drawn up with Christ and remains with him, its source and focal point, in heavenly realms. Yet it does not exist for the benefit of God. It is not extended toward the angels. It was designed for us who believe and toward us it is proffered.

Moses had his rod. It was offered him by God and he stretched out his hand and took it up, whereon it became for him the symbol of God's power. By it he appalled the Egyptians with the signs and plagues that became for centuries the summit of God's power among men. Do you envy Moses his privilege? Do you stand in wonder at this mighty demonstration? **Yet this ancient gift has been abundantly surpassed and wholly supplanted by God's new feat in Christ!**



Now, right now, offered to you who believe, is the same staggering power that wrenched Christ from death and exalted him to the highest glory! And now, in heavenly realms, the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in splendid authority, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come! (Ep 1:21). What stupendous authority! What colossal dominion!

But - and mark this well - this great victory was not achieved for the purpose of establishing God's power over the devil: that was established centuries ago, in the garden of Eden. This was done to establish **the power of the believer in Christ**. This incomparably great power is not meant to be a weapon in God's hand, **but a weapon in your hands**.

Christ himself had no need to be exalted above the kingdom of darkness: before time began Christ had easily thrown down Lucifer and the angels who rebelled with him, and left them bound in darkness. It is indeed true that ... God placed all things under Christ's feet ... but why? Paul continues - ... and appointed him to be head over everything for THE CHURCH ... (Ep 1:22). In other words, exercising his mighty power in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to heavenly places, **God has made it possible for us to rise far above all rule and authority, power and dominion**. Here is victory over the prince of evil, deliverance from the power of sin, freedom from the might of sickness, liberty from the dominion of temptation!

But even further than this. Not only has such authority become possible for us: it is already ours! For he goes on to say: God placed all things under his feet, and appointed him to be the head over everything for the church, WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULNESS OF HIM WHO FILLS EVERYTHING IN EVERY WAY (Ep 1:22-23).

Now, if Christ is HEAD, and we are his body, where he is we must be also; what he is we must be; what he has must be ours too. How can it be otherwise? Christ is no monstrosity. He is not deformed. Where your head is your body is! In natural life, every good thing our bodies are to receive enters the body by the head - through the mouth, or eyes, or ears - and is thus shared by the whole body. All the fullness of Christ, then, belongs to his body also: the church is the fullness of him that filleth all in all. What is given to the Head - Christ - belongs to his body - the church.

#### Chapter 4

#### OUR POSITION IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS

**God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus ...** (Ep 2:6).

#### 1 POSITIVE

This third text is the natural and necessary extension of what has gone before. Christ is the Head: we are his body. If he is raised, we are raised. If all things are put under his feet, then they must be under our feet: for are we not his body? If Christ is seated in total authority, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, then we are undoubtedly seated there too. How can it be otherwise? It is not possible for the head to be separated from the body, unless the body be dead!

So here again we have a statement of positive fact. This is not a promise, or a hope, or a wish or prayer, or something which will be done in the future. It is a declaration of historical truth. "God has raised us up, and has made us sit in heavenly realms!" Nothing could be plainer than that: the implications of that sentence are inescapable. Comparing it with Paul's previous word we see just how emphatic is this fact of our position in the heavenly realms -

**"God has raised Christ** from the Dead ... (1:20)

**"God has quickened us** ... and has raised us up" (2:5,6);

And again he said -

**"God set Christ** in heavenly realms" (1:20)

**"God has made us sit together** in heavenly realms" (2:6).

Wherein do these statements differ? Where is the one less true than the other? How can it be said that the one is less positive than the other?

The scripture means exactly what it says. If it is true that Christ is risen from the dead, **then we also must be risen**. If it is true that Christ is set down by God in heavenly places, **then we also are sitting in heavenly realms**. The scripture postulates precisely the same things for us as for Christ! If we are willing to accept the fact that Christ is risen from the dead, and is now established by God in heavenly places, where all things are put beneath his feet, **we can do no other than accept exactly the same propositions as being true of us**.

To make it more personal, let me put it this way. In effect the scripture says two things -

1. "God has raised Christ, and set him in heavenly realms";
2. "God has raised me and set me in heavenly realms."

And again -

1. "God has put all things under Christ's feet";
2. "God has put all things under my feet."

Now, I have no right to accept what the Bible says of Christ, but to reject what it says of me. If the Bible is true when it says that Christ is risen from the dead and raised to heavenly places, far above all principality and power, then it must be equally true when it says that I too am raised from the dead, and God has also lifted me to heavenly places, far above all power and might and dominion. This conclusion is inescapable, else the scripture is broken.

But now arises a grave difficulty. How can I reconcile this scriptural statement of fact with the contrary evidence of my own experience? I do not yet see myself enjoying all spiritual blessings, or wielding God's exceeding great power, or sitting in heavenly places, with all enemies under my feet!

## 2. POSITION

The answer is discovered in a consideration of our true position. It is not to be found in ourselves, it is "in Christ." God has quickened us, but it is "together with Christ." God has made us to sit in heavenly places, but it is "together with Christ."

The Bible truly claims that we are already risen from the dead, and that we are already seated in heaven's place of supreme authority and command: but it is realised only as we stand together in Christ. "Heavenly realms" are not a special locality, a particular place that you can measure with a yard-stick, they are found in a

person, the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't have to go anywhere to be in the heavenly realms, you only need to be in Christ!

How you can achieve this will occupy a later comment: but now let us see God's purpose in revealing these things.

### 3. PURPOSE

**In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus** (2:7).

If we do not have to go anywhere to enter this heavenly realm with its superb blessings and its incredible power, neither do we have to be anything, or become anything. Some would say, "Surely these immense privileges are reserved only for those who are truly good. I am too sinful and weak for these things to ever be true of me!"

On the contrary, God intends none of these blessings for the righteous or for those who are already doing good works. They are reserved solely for sinners, for those who are "dead in transgressions and sins" and who have felt the crippling power of "the cravings of our sinful nature" and have known the sickening "gratifying of the cravings of the flesh and of the mind," and who are "by nature objects of wrath" (Ep 2:1-3), and compare also - "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants" (He 2:14-16).

If you are a sinner you qualify for all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! So Paul tells us that God did not "quicken us" when we were worthy, but when we were "dead in sins" (Ep 2:1). He did not "quicken us" because we deserved such goodness, or earned it, or merited it in any way at all; it was done only because "God was rich in mercy, and for his great love wherewith he has loved us" (Ep 2:4-5). We are not raised to heavenly places because we are good, but solely because of God's grace. And these things are not even done essentially for our benefit: but rather that throughout all time God might "show the generosity of his own grace and kindness" (v.7 - Phillips). Out of sheer generosity, then, out of his own love, grace, and kindness, has God wrought so mightily in us and for us: "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ep 2:9).

### THE PLACE OF GOOD WORKS

Is there then no place for good works? Does righteous living have no value or importance? Most certainly it does! Here in fact is the crux of the matter: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus TO DO GOOD WORKS, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ep 2:10).

God does not work his mighty works of redemption and renewal in us because we are doing good works; neither has he created us righteous in Christ because we are godly people. The very reverse is true. **Just because we were dead in sins and totally incapable of doing good God has quickened us, and raised us, and seated us together with Christ in heavenly places. Now, because this amazing work has been done, we are actually able to live godly and victoriously, fruitfully and happily, before the Lord.**

So then, away with that false humility, that mock servility, that hidden carnal pride, that lustful desire to create your own goodness, that wicked unbelief, which godlessly maintains a position of sinfulness, and defeat, and weakness, and separation from God's blessing. How dare we say we are not quickened when God says we are! How dare we assume we are not seated with Christ in heavenly places when God says we are! **How dare we detract from the glorious demonstration of the incomparable riches of God's grace in his kindness toward us by endeavouring to secure his favour on the grounds of our own good works!**

Yet there are tens of thousands of Christians who are struggling after righteousness and good works from an earthly standpoint. Seeing themselves as earth-bound, sinful, weak, defeated, trodden down by Satan, they are fighting to rise up and live acceptably before God. Believing that they are not yet living in heavenly places, and that they are not blessed with all spiritual blessings, they are working desperately to bring themselves into that happy place: but their efforts inevitably end in failure. "Not by works, so that no one can boast," said the Lord. But let us once accept, and hold fast to, what God says concerning our provision, power, and position, in the heavenlies, and the whole aspect will change. Knowing ourselves to be wealthy potentates, "priests and kings of our God," we will find a new confidence, a new authority, a ringing faith, a zestful enthusiasm for God's service. We will be totally rid of all fear of sin, or Satan, or poverty, or lack, or failure.

Gladly and contentedly allowing God to have the whole glory of his workmanship and his new creation, we will, with a bold faith, simply enter the heavenly realm, taking our place there in Christ, and will begin to enjoy all the riches of his glory. As we enter this realm, stepping into the position which is already ours by virtue of our union with Christ, we will suddenly discover that we do indeed have all spiritual blessings, that we no longer lack God's exceeding great power, and Satan is indeed placed under our feet, and that "we are more than conquerors" in Christ! We will then become conscious too of the vast honour and privileges that belong to us in Christ, in the heavenlies.

## **Chapter 5**

### **OUR PRIVILEGE IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS**

**"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms"** (Ep 3:10).

#### **1. PRINCIPALITIES**

The very mightiest angels themselves stand in awed wonder as they behold the marvel of this generous salvation God has so freely given us. The many splendoured wisdom of God shines before their astonished gaze as they see miserable sinners picked out of lust, shame, and death, and raised in an instant to the dizzying heights of glory, where they sit with Christ in matchless joy and supreme authority!

The angels see this and praise God exceedingly for it: yet they share it not. It would be a great pity if we who are the intended recipients of these marvellous favours turn them aside by reason of our hardness of heart and reluctance to believe all that the scripture says!

But do not expect to span these things with the natural eye, nor to grasp them by carnal understanding. See what the apostle said elsewhere - "We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God has destined FOR OUR GLORY before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him". **But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit** (1 Co 2:7-10).

**Love the Lord: join the apostle in his prayer that God might give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know ... the provision, power, position, and privilege that are yours in heavenly realms in Christ;** and then you will joyfully enter into the outward reality of God's abundant kindness.

## **2. PREACH**

To Paul, the greatest privilege of all was this. "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ..." (Ep 3:8)

This is a privilege we all may share, know, or at least begin to know, the unsearchable riches (fathomless grace) of Christ, and you too will scarcely be able to forbear proclaiming this revelation far and wide. With Paul you too will long to make all men see the glory that belongs to them in the Saviour. Indeed, if men had known, really known these things, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Co 2:8). And neither would Christians crucify to themselves afresh the Son of God (He 6:6) if they once fully saw themselves as in heavenly places with Christ, and lived in the influence of this glorious revelation!

## **3. PURPOSE**

The consummating purpose of God's kindness in raising us to heavenly realms with Christ is given to us in these words: "... his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord: **IN HIM, AND THROUGH FAITH IN HIM, WE MAY APPROACH GOD (into the heavenly realms) WITH FREEDOM AND CONFIDENCE**" (3: 11-12).

## **Chapter 6**

### **HOW TO ENTER HEAVENLY PLACES**

How can you come into the presence of God? How can you enter the realm of heavenly blessings? By your own efforts? Bringing an offering of your own goodness? No! Only, and sufficiently, because of our faith in him do we dare to approach God with freedom, having no reserve or fear. Only as we stand in his grace do we have access to all spiritual blessings. Only as we humbly acknowledge his kindness and our absolute dependence upon his favour can we boldly take our stand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and power.

### **HOW TO ENTER THE HEAVENLY PLACES**

If we are to enjoy all spiritual blessings, if we are to experience God's exceeding great power, if we are to have authority over all the works of the enemy, if we are to

abound in good works that are acceptable to God, we must enter heavenly places and find ourselves seated there together with Christ. How can we do this?

(1) Know the truth - become thoroughly familiar with all that Christ gained for you on the cross, and all that God wrought for you when he raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places. Christ died, and was buried, and after three days was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high: but it was not done for his sake: this great work was completed for your benefit, for your glory (1 Co.2:7). But you will be incapable of appropriating and applying the riches of this mighty deliverance unless you first familiarise yourself with the truth as it is in Jesus.

Bluntly, emphatically, Jesus said, **“... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free!”** (Jn 8:32).

(2) Knowing the truth, rejoice in it! Paul's first word was, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...”** Even if by reason of sheer unbelief you cannot appropriate these divine truths, even if you have not experienced the joy of dwelling in heavenly realms, that is no reason for withdrawing your lips from praising God. Whether we believe it or not; whether we have experienced it or not; it still remains true that **GOD HAS BLESSED US WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES**, and he deserves our praise for this tremendous work.

And the wonderful fact is this - if we will begin to praise God for the mighty things he has already done for us in Christ, it will not be long before we feel a stirring of our faith. Soon the Spirit of God will add understanding and revelation and wisdom to our knowledge of the truth, and suddenly it will become clear to us that **WE ARE INDEED ALREADY IN HEAVENLY PLACES WITH CHRIST!** We shall shake ourselves loose from the remaining vestiges of doubt, and boldly we shall begin to think and act and believe as those who have been lifted far above the trammels of the flesh, and as those who have discovered that all their foes are truly placed beneath their feet!

(3) Remember vividly that the whole workmanship is of God. It is his grace, and his grace alone that has achieved these things. The moment you think to earn the right to enter heavenly places by virtue of your own goodness, that moment you will find yourself thoroughly excluded from that happy realm. It is never, never, never to be gained by good works; it is all of grace. (In this connection meditate deeply on Ephesians 1:4-9 and the Lord will give you wisdom.) You can only stand in heavenly places as you stand in Christ.

(4) If you are a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ then Christ is in you and you are in Christ. Christ is in heavenly places; therefore, if he is in heavenly places that realm lies within you. In other words you do not have to go anywhere or become anything; right where you are now you can suddenly discover yourself in this place of supreme victory and power and might and supply and privilege!

(5) So, **by an act of will** accept the truth of your position in Christ. You believe that Christ is risen from the dead and ascended on high; believe also that you too are risen from the works of death and that you are now placed with Christ on the throne of authority. Begin now to see yourself seated with Christ in the heavenlies;

look down and laugh at the vain raging of the enemy, far below you; look up and bless God for the terrific power and unending provision that lies right within your reach. **Right now decide that you will fear no longer but that from this day on you will think of yourself only in the terms of the scripture and that you will wholeheartedly believe all that God says about your position and power in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

(6) Then **by an act of faith** let loose in your life the provision of God; unleash his mighty power to break the thralldom of sin and temptation; resist the devil and tread him vigorously underfoot; shout the praise and glory of God as by faith you begin to exercise your rights as one of the heavenly saints, a person privileged beyond measure!

The promise is for Ò ... us who BELIEVE ... Ó (Ep 1:19 ff).

(7) But finally remember always that you can maintain your position only as you are Òin Christ.Ó That is, God must find you Òabiding in Christ, and his Word abiding in youÓ (Jn 15:7). This means that if you attempt to act outside the scope of God's will for your life or beyond the bounds of his Word or in a way that is contrary to the nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ you will immediately find yourself excluded from the heavenly realms and you will become easy prey to the enemy.

But so long as you hold fast to Christ and walk in the Spirit then you have open, bold, confident, access to all spiritual blessings, the exceeding great power of God and such glorious privileges and opportunities as make the powers of darkness who also Òbelieve and trembleÓ (Ja 2:19), shiver in dread dismay while the very archangels themselves gasp in amazed wonder!

**ÒSoldiers of Christ, arise!  
And put your armour on,  
Strong in the strength which God supplies  
Through his eternal Son.  
Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
Stand in his mighty power;  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
Is more than conqueror!Ó**