

Studies in Christianity Prayer – A Private Discipline #1

S#1.

Some Fundamentals of Prayer ?

S#2.

Text : **Psalm 139**

A. Our last lesson summed up our series on assembled worship.

S#3.

1. We started off observing that worship is universal.
 - a. There has never been a culture that did not worship something.
 - b. A.W. Tozer observed that “We were created to worship ...
It is built into human nature”
 - c. Not all worship is acceptable. S#4.
2. We assemble for worship on Sunday, but we may also assemble on other days..
 - a. Christians are always the church, but there’s a special significance of the assembly.
**I Cor. 11: 18 – For, in the first place, when you come together as a church,
I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.**
 - b. The primary purpose for the assembly is to commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus.
3. What constitutes an assembly of the church. S#5.
 - a. When God gather His people together to worship it is called a “**Holy convocation.**”
 - b. It’s a sin to forsake the assembly of the church so when is a gathering an assembly
4. There are 5 things we do when we assemble which we call “Acts of Worship.” S#6.
 - a. Lord’s Supper ... Holy Communion ... (Denominations : Sacrament ... Eucharist)
 - b. Singing , Sermon , Praying , giving
 - c. The Lord’s Supper is commanded, but we do the rest to follow N.T. examples
(*We saw that examples are not commands so they cannot establish doctrine.*) S#7.
5. We observed some things beyond the 5 are done because commands, and examples.
 - a. We saw the command that all things in the assembly to be done for edification.
 - b. Though there are no rules for conducting an assembly, it must be kept orderly.
(“**Orderly**” *is culturally defined.*)
 - c. Encouragement and fellowship are required so everything can’t be formal. S#8.
6. We saw the offering is worship in that it reflexes one’s heart of love toward God.
 - a. No specific amount is given, but it’s an amount the Christian gives cheerfully.
 - b. **I Cor. 16** instructs the Christ to give in proportion to his prosperity, **but**
the only percentage or “proportion” mentioned in scripture is **10%**.
 - c. Jesus taught that acceptable giving is sacrificial, not given from ones surplus.
(*It’s what I keep that counts rather than what I gave.*)

7. In lesson #7 we observed that the assembly should be a time of great joy. **S#9.**

- a. We are collectively expressing appreciation for our salvation.
- b. Our expressions of gratitude for our salvation are sacrifices to God.

Heb. 13: 15 – Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

- c. Anticipating eternity in the presence of God is a source of great joy.

8. Our last lesson was a very practical look at praying in the assembly. **S#10.**

- a. We should pray when we gather, but not as a way to be seen by others.
- b. The prayer in the assembly must be heard, understood, **and** acknowledged. (**Amen**)
- c. A public prayer must not be memorized, but appropriate to the specific assembly.
- d. Prayers in the assembly must be led by a man.

B. Having looked at public worship we now turn to our private worship.

- 1. Fundamental to all worship is a love and respect for the one being worshipped.
- 2. Fundamental to a relationship of love and respect is good communications.
- 3. In order to maintain our relationship with God we have to communicate with Him.
 - a. We invite Him to speak to us through His word.
 - b. We speak to Him in prayer. (*Not read poetry to Him, or being overly formal.*)

C. In this lesson we want to look at some fundamentals of prayer. **S#11.**

- 1. The character of prayer.
- 2. Why should we pray.
- 3. Some preconditions of prayer.

I. What is the character of our prayer life ? **S#12.**

A. Our prayer should be bold, but not disrespectful.

- 1. We have the confidence to enter the presence of God.
 - a. **Eph. 3: 11** – This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized **S#13.**
in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (ESV)
 - b. **Heb. 4: 16** – Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- 2. Even Queen Esther did not dare to go uninvited before the King in Susa.
 - a. **Esther 4-5**
 - b. We would not dare to approach our governor.

B. We must pray with persistence, but not with vain repetition.

1. **Matt. 6: 7** – And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. **8** So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. S#14.
2. But conversely, Jesus told two stories to illustrate persistence in prayer.
 - a. **Luke 11: 5-13** ... Parable of the friend who needs bread at 12:00 S#15.
 - b. **Luke 18: 1-8** ... Parable of the unjust judge.

C. Our prayers must be an ongoing dialog.

1. The scripture teach us that we should “never stop praying.”
 - a. **I Thes. 5: 16** – Rejoice always; **17** pray without ceasing; **18** in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. S#16.
 - b. This is not to suggest that we have one ongoing prayer or that we nag God.
- * 2. Suppose your good friend picked you up at the international airport in Nashville you said thanks when you got in the car, but did not say another word all the way home even when he stopped to buy you lunch.
 What kind of relationship would you have hours later when you arrived home?
 We sing “What a friend we have in Jesus”, but how often do we go all day and say nothing to Him as He walks with us.
3. Prayer should be part of the way we think.
 - a. God is with us all day and we should talk to Him through the day.
 - b. Prayer does not have to be a formal thing with head bowed and eyes closed.
 - c. Most everything can be an occasion to pray.

D. To the Christian prayer is as natural as breathing.

1. You don't even have to think to breathe; you do it is your sleep.
 - a. A section of your brain senses the oxygen level and signals your lungs to breathe.
 - b. If you try not to breathe after a minute or so you will get red in the face and
2. The Christian can no sooner stop praying than he can stop breathing.

II. Why should we pray ?S#17.**A. Prayer activates the power of God.**

1. Prayer changes things.
2. Prayer changes us ... it builds our faith.

B. Prayer is commanded.

1. **Eph. 6: 18** – With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and **S#18.**
with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, **19** and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
 - a. Pray persistently
 - b. Pray for all other Christians
 - c. Paul make personal request for prayer (*Paul asked for boldness in the face of death*)
2. Remember **I Thes. 5: 17** – pray without ceasing

C. We pray to avoid temptation. Jesus warned Peter :

1. **Mark 14: 37** – And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, **S#19.**
"Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?
38 Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation;
the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
2. One who is given to prayer is much less likely to be given to temptations.
3. Thus, when temptations come, prayer is the logical response of a Christian.

D. Prayer brings glory to God.

1. **John 14: 13** – Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the **S#20.**
Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If you ask Me anything
in My name, I will do it. (John 16:24 .. ask in my name)
2. How does one ask something FROM Jesus ? "If you ask Me anything"
3. What is the difference in asking from Jesus and asking in His name?
 - a. **John 16: 23** – In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, **S#21.**
truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name,
He will give it to you. **24** Until now you have asked for nothing in
My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.
 - b. Does this mean that we have to say the words "*In Jesus name*" to end each prayer?
 - c. To speak or act in the name of anyone is the act by authority granted by them.

III. What are some of the precondition of prayer.**S#22.****A. Prayer must be in Jesus name.**

1. Who / what is Jesus ? ... Jesus is God.
2. How many Gods are there ? **One !**
3. If there is only one God, can anything be by the authority of one and not the others?

B. Prayer must be uttered in faith.

1. **Matt. 21: 21** – And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, **S#23.**
if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was
done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken
up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. **22** "And all things you ask
in prayer, believing, you will receive."
2. **James 1: 6** – But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who **S#24.**
doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For
that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,
8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
3. Thus, prayer is an expression of faith and a builder of faith.

C. Our prayers must be within the will of God.

1. Man can never prevail against God or force Him to act against His will, interest.
2. **I John 5: 14** – This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **S#25.**
if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. **15** And
if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that
we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
 - a. God does not always answer in the way we anticipate.
 - b. Sometimes he says we need something different.
 - c. He may say yes, **but** the answer comes in His time, not ours.

D. Prayer must come from a pure heart.

1. Jesus refused the disciples request to destroy a village.
Luke 9: 54 – When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, **S#26.**
"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and
consume them?" **55** But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "...]
2. James instructed us to be righteous in our prayers.
James 5: 16 – Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for
one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer
of a righteous man can accomplish much.

CONCLUSION :**S#27.**

Prayer is one of the most precious privilege given to Christians. *Take full advantage of it.*

Why is it so infrequently used ? ... (*Often viewed as an emergency escape or panic button*)

1. Because it is a private discipline.
2. It's just between God and you.
3. No one is forcing you and only God is monitoring you.

Prayer gives you spiritual power and growth.

Lesson Text :

Psalm #139

1 Lord, You have searched me and known me.

2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar.

3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

4 Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all.

5 You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,"

12 Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are alike to You.

13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.

14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;

16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.

When I awake, I am still with You.

19 O that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.

20 For they speak against You wickedly, And Your enemies take Your name in vain.

21 Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

22 I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.