

# The Prayer of Intercession

by F.B. Meyer

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*F.B. Meyer emphasizes the significance of intercessory prayer and the practices that enhance a believer's prayer life.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 1:3

**Topics:** "Intercessory Prayer", "Cultivating a Prayer Life"

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## Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the significance of intercessory prayer, drawing from Paul's epistles to illustrate how prayer should be a constant and joyful practice for believers. He encourages Christians to cultivate habits of prayer, setting aside specific times and places for communion with God, and to approach prayer with a spirit of joy and faith. Meyer highlights the importance of praying for both the saved and unsaved, and the necessity of relying on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower our prayers. He concludes that effective prayer requires a deep faith in God's willingness to hear and respond to our requests.

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## Transcript

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy."-Phil. 1:3,4. The epistles of Paul are full of allusions to his prayers. We might almost call them his prayer book. Let us verify that assertion by turning to the epistles as they come on the pages of the Bible.

"God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request...."-Rom. 1:9,10.

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ."-I Cor. 1:4.

"I...Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."-Eph. 1:15,16.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father."-Eph. 3:14.

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you."-Col. 1:3.

"I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh."-Col. 2:1.

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."-I Thess. 1:2.

"Wherefore also we pray always for you."-II Thess. 1:11.

"I thank God...that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee."-II Tim. 1:3.

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers."-Philem. 4.

These texts are sufficient to substantiate the assertion that the epistles of Paul abound in allusions to his prayers on behalf of his converts. And just as our Lord Jesus Christ ever lives to intercede, so the true pastor, Sunday school teacher, or Christian friend should day and night, without ceasing, remember the saved and unsaved of his charge in prayer.

But there was a special liberty in the apostle's prayer, for in verse 4 he says, "Always in every prayer [supplication] of mine for you all making request [my supplication] with joy."

Those of us who know what it is to pray are familiar with the alternations that come over the soul when it waits before God. There are some tracts and passages in our daily prayer life which we tread with difficulty and tears. For those who seem so obdurate; for those who appear to have turned their backs determinedly upon God; for certain churches that appear hopelessly desolate and barren, we plead with strong crying and tears. We tread these acres of our prayer life, with weeping, sowing seed destined to bear an abundance of harvest fruit.

There are other parts of our daily prayer life that are illumined with joy. When we come to pray for a beloved child, for some kindred spirit, for some blessed work of God which enjoys the perpetual dew of His favor, then it is easy to pray, and we make our supplication and request with joy. We know exactly what Paul meant when he said that there was a liberty, a freedom, a gladness in prayer which suffused his heart as he prayed for the Philippians.

### Habits of Prayer

Nothing would be better for most of us than a great revival in our habits of private prayer.

Perhaps we cannot do as Luther, who was accustomed to say, "I have so much work to do today that I cannot get through it with less than three hours of prayer"; or as Andrewes, who regularly set apart five hours each day for private devotion; or as Law, the author of the Serious Call, who was accustomed, as the clock rang out each third hour, to turn to prolonged prayer, allocating to each occasion some special subject. But that we should pray more, that we should labor in prayer as Epaphras did, that we should cultivate the art of prayer, is clear.

Habits of prayer need careful cultivation. The instinct and impulse are with us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but we need to cultivate the gracious inward movements until they become solidified into an unbending practice.

### Set a Time to Pray

As far as possible, we should set apart one period in each day for prayer, and there can be no question that the morning hour is best. When the body is fresh from sleep, and before the rush of daily thought, care and activity invades the mind, ere we hold intercourse with our nearest and dearest, then the bells ring for matins, and it is wise to heed their call.

Give Him thy first thoughts;

So shalt thou keep

Him company all day

And in Him sleep.

#### A Place to Pray

It is good also to have an oratory. There should be, as far as possible, one room and one spot in the room, or one garden path, or a walk over the moor or beside the sea, where our seasons of private devotion are spent and our prayers are wont to be made. The posture is a secondary matter. Many a Heaven-moving prayer has been uttered whilst the feet have been plodding along the road, or the hands plying their toils, or when weakness has chained the body to the couch. Whilst Paul was floating for a night and a day in the deep, his soul was as much rapt in the spirit of prayer as when he was in a trance in the temple.

A rich man, visited by his pastor, was in sore distress because when praying during the night he had not removed his nightcap. His scruples were, however, allayed by the wise and skillful reply, "Some people pray, as Christians mostly do, with their shoes on and their heads uncovered; others, like the Jews and Mohammedans, pray with their heads covered and their shoes off. Now, I daresay, my friend, when you prayed, you had not your shoes on?" "No sir, I hadn't," was the eager answer, and the troubled soul was comforted.

But it would have been better far if it had never been troubled. It is of real service to have the fixed closet and the habitual attitude there, but it is a great mistake to magnify any of these accidents and circumstances as though they were essential.

#### A Spirit of Prayer

The main point for each of us is to have a spirit of prayer, so that the exercise be not irksome and tedious, but that the spirit may spring to it with delight.

We must not, however, wait for the high tide to rise before we launch forth on the voyage. If there is not deep water, we must make what use we can of the shallows. If we cannot step off to the big ship, we must make for it in the little boat which draws only a foot or two of water. If the gale is not blowing to fill our flagging sails, we must make what use we can of the light breezes that dimple the calm and lethargic ocean.

Good is it when the soul leaps toward the prayer hour, as a child to mother, or wife to husband; but failing this eager desire, let us pray because we ought and because the supreme Lover of Souls will be disappointed if we do not appear at the trysting place to keep our appointment.

The ways by which the sluggish soul can be incited to pray are various, and hints may be jotted down here which will be useful.

#### Take Plenty of Time

When the hour for prayer arrives, allow time for staying on the threshold of the temple to remember how great God is, how greatly He is to be praised, how great your needs are. Remember the distance between

you and Him, and be sure that it is filled with love.

Recall the promises that bid you to approach. Consider all the holy souls that have entered and are entering those same portals; and do not forget the many occasions in which the lowering skies have cleared, the dark clouds have parted, and weakness has become power during one brief spell of prayer.

### Praying Spiritually

We specially need the aid of the Holy Spirit, who helps our infirmities in prayer. He kindled the spark of devotion at the first and knows well how to fan it into a flame.

It is good to confide in Him, to confess that you would but cannot pray, that your desires are languid and your love cool, that the lips which should be touched with fire are frostbitten, that the wings which ought to have borne you to Heaven are clipped.

He understands and loves to be appealed to and will assuredly quicken the flagging soul until it shall mount up as on eagle wings, running without wearying and walking without faintness.

One look to the Spirit of prayer will find Him in the heart. As our Teacher, He begins to repeat the words of petition which we lisp after Him. As our Comforter and Paraclete, He stands beside us, showing us where to aim our petitions and steadying our trembling hands. As the Spirit of Life, He makes us free from the law of sin and death.

Felt art Thou, and relieving tears

Fall, nourishing our young resolves;

Felt art Thou, and our icy fears

The sunny smile of love dissolves.

It is advisable to use the Bible specially and afterwards some spirit-stirring book, be it memoir or spiritual treatise, to stir up the black hot coals and compel them to break into a Heaven-ascending flame.

### Example in Prayer

The story of George Muller, of James Gilmour, or of David Brainerd; the writings of Samuel Rutherford, Andrew Murray and Frances Ridley Havergal; the poetry of Horatius Bonar and John Keble, are of perennial use in this direction.

Sometimes it will be the confession of recent backsliding and inconsistency, which have drawn a veil over the face of Christ; sometimes, the overflowing of thanksgiving, as you count over your blessings, one by one; sometimes, the urgency of need to intercede for some beloved friend or friends; but always, if you look for it, you may discover some wave of blessed helpfulness, which, flowing up on the shore of your life, will, as it recedes, afford you an opportunity of passing out with it from the high and dry stones to the bosom of the heaving ocean.

### Pray in Faith

One condition of successful prayer must never be forgotten. We must believe that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The Father is the object of our prayer, through the mediation

of our Lord Jesus and by the aid of the Holy Spirit; but however we conceive of it-whether the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit is the prominent object before our thought-we must believe that there is an eye that witnesses our poor endeavors, an ear that listens, a mind that can be impressed and affected by our requests.

But further, we need a living faith which reckons on the faithfulness of God and believes that it has already received its petitions, when they are founded on specific promises and evidently prompted by the Holy Spirit.

When we pray, it is not enough merely to speak a long list of requests into the ear of God; it becomes us to wait after each one and to receive by an appropriating act of the soul. It is as though we saw God take from the shelves of His storehouse the boon on which we had set our heart, label it with our name, and put it aside until the precise moment arrived in which He could bestow it on us without hurt.

But whether it is in our hands or not is of small matter, because "we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:15).

Well may George Herbert sing:

Oh-what an easy, quick access,

My blessed Lord, art Thou! how suddenly

May our requests Thine ear invade!

To show that state dislikes not easiness.

If I but lift mine eyes, my suit is made:

Thou canst no more not hear, than Thou canst die.

Since then these three wait on Thy throne,

Ease, power, and love; I value prayer so,

That, were I to leave all but one,

Wealth, fame, endowments, virtues, all should go:

I and dear prayer would together dwell,

And quickly gain, for each inch lost, an ell.

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