

The Pattern Prayer

by J. Glyn Owen

Prayer is the authentication of our genuine sonship and proves we are God's children, allowing us to experience a deeper sense of sonship and relationship with God.

Duration: 1:04:28

Scripture: Luke 11:1, Acts 9:1

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a vision and seeing things from God's perspective. He compares the view from above to the insignificance of massive mountains, highlighting the clarity and understanding that comes from seeing things through God's eyes. The speaker also emphasizes the significance of prayer in deepening our relationship with God and transforming us into His likeness. He encourages the practice of prayer as a means to authenticate our genuine sonship and to be actively involved in God's divine workings.

Transcript

And we are going to base our message this evening on the request that is found in the opening verse of the chapter. The request that was made by one of the disciples who had overheard our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer. We read, one day Jesus was praying in a certain place.

When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray. Just as John taught his disciples, Lord, teach us to pray. Quietly spoken, albeit with a note of profound conviction, the preacher said to the congregation something like this, Be sure, he said, you are really nothing else and nothing more than what you are as you bow before God in prayer.

You are really nothing else and nothing more than what you are as you bow before God in prayer. Was he right? How does a man assess his real spiritual stature? What reliable gauge is there concerning a person's growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord? Is it adequate, for example, when a man shows that he is living on the path of moral rectitude? Does that necessarily prove that we are progressively moving toward maturity? I'm not so sure. The Pharisees of the New Testament were beyond reproach in most cases.

But they certainly were not growing in grace nor in the knowledge of their Lord. In fact, throughout the three to three and a half years period of his public ministry, they got worse and worse, harder and harder,

until at last they crucified the Lord of glory. It is not therefore enough to say that a man is mature, Christianly speaking, just because he's living on the plane of good, moral, upright behavior, though upright behavior is necessary and laudable.

Is it not adequate to say that if a man is orthodox in his beliefs, then he is surely moving in the right direction? Well, now, orthodoxy of belief is essential as far as the Bible goes, because the Bible tells us that God has revealed himself to us. And if God has revealed himself, it is right and proper and necessary that we believe what God has said. And orthodoxy of belief is nothing other than believing what God has said.

But you and I know that the Bible tells us that the devils believe and tremble and at last will be cast into the lake of fire. You know, I'm afraid there is too much truth in this statement to which I've referred to pass over it. What you and I really are before God is not what we appear to be in the ordinary run and mill of everyday experience.

What we really are is what we are when we are in the presence of God with a camouflage off, with a mask down, and we come into the light. And as he sees us, that's exactly what we are. Now, prayer assumes such a tremendous importance in the Bible, because prayer involves taking the mask away.

Real prayer involves coming close up to God so that we consciously focus our thoughts and our hearts upon him and begin to converse with him and to commune with him. And in that confrontation with God, character is made, souls are delivered from sin and transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus, and much, much else takes place. To be wrong here means that I can't be right anywhere else.

If I am right here in the place of prayer, then I have the possibility open to me of being right everywhere else in the whole of my life and living. But if I'm wrong here, nothing will be right, though it appears to be so. Prayer, then, is such an important thing because it involves our coming close up to God and having communion and conversation with him, and that with our hearts bare and our spirits bare before him.

It is no wonder, then, that the Bible places such an important emphasis upon prayer. The wonder is that we don't make it the priority that it ought to be in our lives. But in the Bible, from beginning to end, prayer is essentially the very center point of the life of the godly.

It's not just an item on the agenda, it's the item. Everything grows out of it when it is seen in its biblical perspective. Everything leads up to it and leads out of it again.

It is the center point, it is the heart, it is the throbbing pulse of life, the place and the practice of prayer. It's important, therefore, from time to time that we give some serious attention to what the New Testament in particular has to say about this all-important subject. And, perhaps, of all studies of prayer, it is necessary that from time to time we should look at the model that Jesus gave for praying.

I haven't been sure what title, really, to give to this short series that we are beginning tonight. This is the introduction. But I think we ought to call it something like the model for praying.

I don't like to call it the Lord's Prayer. I'll tell you why. Two reasons.

Jesus himself could never have prayed this prayer. That is right through. Because in one place it says, and forgive us our sins.

And our Lord Jesus challenged the folk around him one day and said, Which of you convinces me of sin? He never confessed sin. This is why John the Baptist felt it to be so utterly incongruous that Jesus should come to the sinner's baptism. And John was bewildered.

He knew not what to say. Until our Lord pacified him and said, Now he says it's all right. We must fulfill all righteousness.

So you take it from me, said Jesus to John the Baptist. You take it from me. It is necessary.

You'll understand one day. He had no sin. This is this is a prayer for sinners.

So it's not the Lord's Prayer in the sense that he prayed it. Neither do I believe that our Lord Jesus expected his people to pray this prayer. As we so often do repeatedly over and over again.

I don't think that was the intention at all when Jesus gave it. I'm not suggesting there's anything wrong in repeating it. We do from time to time.

But I'm quite sure that is not how Jesus gave it. He gave it as a model. As an ideal, as a pattern, an outline, if you like, a skeleton.

Upon which to hang our thoughts and ideas and showing us what should have priority and how things should be ordered in our prayer. He would have our prayers ordered. He didn't give this prayer for everybody, para twice to pray this prayer over and over and over again, as people would say the Rosary.

He gave it and said, in this manner, you should pray something like this. You should pray. It's according to this pattern, according to this model.

Now, we shall be looking at this on Sunday evenings during the summer months when it is my privilege to preach. But tonight I felt we ought just to introduce the theme. I'm going to speak tonight about some of the things that are very basic.

I trust they're not too basic to be meaningful to all of us, however long we may have been travelling the Christian road. Or for that matter, if as yet there may be someone here tonight who hasn't begun the Christian pathway, who is not as yet trusting the Lord Jesus as Savior. I trust that there will be something in this basic introduction which will be relevant to all of us.

Now, there are two main things I want to say, and the first is this. In the practice of prayer, we have, first of all, the authentication of our genuine sonship. Why is prayer so important? Why does it occupy the place it does in the lives of men and women in the Bible and according to the teaching of the Bible? Why should men always pray and never faint? Why should all the writers of the Bible in their own way encourage us to pray? There are many reasons.

One reason is this. It is by our prayers that we prove that we are God's children, but I must add a rider to that. It is only by really praying, praying as God counts praying.

It is only when we really pray that we prove that we belong to God and are His children indeed. Charles Haddon Spurgeon could sometimes express volumes in a nutshell, and he did precisely that when, as it is recorded, he said this. He said, God has no dumb children.

I don't know what you think of that. How does it strike you? God has no dumb children. Well, I guess you would say what I said when I heard it first of all.

Well, it depends what you mean, and of course it does depend what you mean. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was no obscurantist, and he did not mean to say that there aren't times in the experience of most, if not all, the people of God when they would rather not pray. He knew as well as you know, as well as I know, that there are times and seasons in the lives and experiences of the people of God when they get further and further away from their Heavenly Father and their hearts get cold and they don't want to pray.

He probably also knew that there are certain conditions when a person is almost incapable of prayer, too weak to pray, unable to think enough to pray. But what Charles Haddon Spurgeon meant was this. There is no such a person in the kingdom of God as a person who doesn't pray.

You are born into the kingdom by prayer, and you live in the kingdom by prayer. How does a man come into the kingdom? Well, ask the Apostle Paul, and let me just give you an illustrative answer. We could add so many other passages with this one.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. There is the appeal of a believing soul to a promising God.

That's how a man is saved. That's how a man comes into the kingdom. Do you see? You can't be dumb.

God has not dumb children. If you come into the kingdom, you've cried to him. You've asked him.

You've sought his face. You've become as a beggar, acknowledging your unworthiness and your poverty of spirit. And you've said, Lord, I've got nothing in my hands.

I cry, bless me in Christ. You've cried. I trust every one of us knows something of that tonight.

This is really one thing that brings us all on common level if we are really Christian men and women. We've cried. We've opened our mouths.

We've begun to speak. God has no dumb children. All his children have the capacity to speak to him and should have the desire to be on speaking terms with him.

And when anything comes between them and strikes a distance between him and them, that is wrong and to be deplored. Now, let me illustrate this, first of all, and then let me show how it is a general principle in the New Testament. First of all, let me give you a beautiful illustration of this.

It's not from the passage, not from the text, nor the context. It's from the book of Acts. Acts chapter nine begins with a statement that Saul of Tarsus, you remember, was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples, having had authority from the chief priests to go anywhere and everywhere and to discover those who made profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah and to bring them down to Jerusalem where they would be dealt with.

Nearing the city of Damascus on his errand of hate, this merciless Saul was physically blinded and morally and spiritually challenged by the ascended Lord seated upon his throne in the glory. The Christ whom he despised is alive again, risen from the dead, reigning at the Father's right hand, and he stops the murderer, the man of hate, on his career of hate. And Saul, the Jew, knew instinctively that the one who

addressed him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me, was Lord Jehovah.

And you know, he did what many of us do. He asked a question, the answer to which he already knew. We do that, don't we? You notice it only after you've done it, because you realize that Paul has answered his question before he's asked it.

Lord, he says, who art thou? Well, he's telling the Lord and he's telling us who it is. But he was so perplexed. Jehovah, blinding him on the road to Damascus, he thought he was doing the Lord's work.

And here is the Lord blinding him on his way, stopping him, frustrating him, standing in the way. And he comes off his horse and there he is wallowing in the dust on the highway. Lord, he says, who art thou? Well, without going into the details of it, you remember that something more happened to the Apostle Paul there, to Saul of Tarsus there, than simply being physically blinded.

A work of grace began in his soul that made him a new creature. He left the shackles of Judaism and Phariseism, and he became a new creature in Christ Jesus, and he was born again, born from above, born of the Spirit, born into the family and the household of faith. He became a new man, he became a Christian.

But now here's the problem. Can you see it? Here he was a Jew, converted, the archenemy of the Christian church, become a convert. How on earth is he going to get on? Who's going to look after him? How is he going to know how to behave? Who's going to befriend him? Is he going to be a sole pelican in a wilderness? Well, God has his people and his servants everywhere.

It's very wonderful, isn't it? And God had his men ready there in Damascus. He had one of his saints there ready for the task. His name was Ananias.

I'd like to know Ananias, I'd like to meet Ananias. And the Lord came to Ananias and said to him, Ananias, I've got a job for you to do. And I want you to go to a certain place in Straight Street, and I want you to call for a man Saul of Tarsus.

And knowing, of course, knowing precisely what Ananias was going to say by way of a retort, the Lord said to him, he's praying. Now, why did he say that? I believe it's for this reason. Ananias would naturally have been puzzled.

He knew, as he tells us later on, and we're told in Acts chapter 9, he knew that Saul was the archenemy of the Christian church. He knew of the massacres. He knew of the butchery.

He knew of the harassment. He knew of everything that Saul had been involved in right up until that point. And here God was asking him to go to Saul, put his hand upon him, and bring sight back to the blind man.

And so he tells the Lord, Lord, he says, you know, you know this man, and I know this man. Are you sending me into the lion's mouth? But you see, God has prepared him for this. And you notice how he's done it.

He said, behold, he's praying. He's praying. And in his prayer he has seen something, and he's heard something.

He's not just mouthing words, throwing words out into space. This Saul of Tarsus, the archenemy of the church, is now praying, and he's receiving impressions from me. And he knows that there is a man called

Ananias who is coming to him to put his hand upon him and going to say something to him that's going to be meaningful for the rest of his life.

He's in touch with me. That's prayer. And Ananias, he says, I love you as the apple of my eye.

I'm reading between the lines, of course. I love you as the apple of my eye. I gave my son to die for you.

I'm not sending you into the lion's furnace. You can trust yourself now. You can go and call him brother.

You see, the man that is really praying, really praying, praying as God calls praying, that man can be trusted. That man proves his pedigree. That man or that woman, I say, is a child of God.

And let me go one step further. What we have there as a practical illustration, or a particular illustration, we later on in the New Testament, we discover to be a general principle. Now let me just briefly pinpoint that.

The Apostle Paul learnt the lesson very well. And when writing to the Galatians, for example, he wrote to them in these words, in Galatians 4, verses 4 to 6. But when the time had fully come, he says, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons, the adoption of sons. And then he goes on.

And because you are sons, you've been adopted into God's family, because you are sons, he tells the Galatians, God sent the spirit of his son into your hearts, or our hearts, the spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. Now, my friends, let's pause with this for a moment. It's such a precious little chunk of Scripture that we must get the honey out of it.

You've only to pause and ponder these words for a moment and you see how compellingly clear they are and what a marvelous message they bring. God sends the spirit into the hearts of those who believe. Yes, but that's only a fraction of the truth, a precious truth, even though only a fraction, but it's only a fraction.

What spirit does God send into the hearts of believing men and women? Well, the Holy Spirit, of course. Yes, that's true. But that's not the whole truth.

That's not the whole truth that we have here. Well, what else does Paul say about the Holy Spirit in this particular context? Well, he puts it like this. The spirit whom God sends into the hearts of men and women when they believe is none other than the spirit of His Son.

Oh, what difference does that make? Well, now wait a moment. Look at the incarnate Lord living in this world. He laid aside some of the prerogatives of His deity before He became man and took our humanity to His deity.

And here He lives under the law, makes Himself obedient to the law, who was the lawgiver Himself. And He was obedient in every solitary detail. And in the midst of the entirety of His life, in the midst of all the circumstances of His life, there is one outstanding thing I want you to notice, namely, our Lord's constant sense of God's being His Father, of the Fatherhood of God, and of His own Sonship, Divine Sonship.

As a boy of twelve in the temple, you remember, he put it, according to some of the translations which are very suggestive, wist ye not, he said to Mary and Joseph, who had lost Him and came back to the temple and ultimately found Him, wist ye not, says the King James, that I must be about my Father's business. Now, forget everything else for a moment, what I want you to notice is that Jesus was aware of being

God's Son. Where did He get that consciousness from? Oh, from the Holy Spirit.

It was by the Spirit of God dwelling in His heart that He had the consciousness of belonging and this filial consciousness never left Him. He went into the wilderness to be tempted by the Spirit. He overcame His temptations by the Spirit.

He returned to Jordan by the Spirit. He cast out demons by the Spirit, by the finger of God, He says. And you go through the whole length and breadth of His life and at last you are told in the epistle to the Hebrews that He laid down His life by the power of the Spirit.

Until you come to that great final act on the cross, Father, ah, here we are again, Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit. How on earth does He still believe that God is His Father? I'll tell you why. It's the Spirit of God within Him.

Now, says Paul, He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. You say, what difference does that make? Well, the difference it will make, of course, is this, that as sure as the Holy Spirit gave to our incarnate Lord the sense of sonship, the filial consciousness of belonging to God as His Father that He had, so sure will you have it and will I have it. People are pining today for a sense of belonging.

They know not where they are. They are alone in the crowd as they are alone when they are aloof from people. Here, my friend, is something which is more precious than rubies, and it is to have the Spirit of God in our hearts, the Spirit that cries out, says Paul.

It's a beautiful thing. This is the habit of the Spirit, the Spirit that cries out, Abba, Father. You see, the notion is this, that the Spirit leads us in prayer, that the Spirit in us will always cry to God, Father.

And if I am one with the Spirit and reconciled to the Spirit and yielded to the Spirit, I too with the Spirit will cry, Abba, Father. In other words, I pray. And if my understanding of this is correct, then we come to this conclusion.

It is impossible for a man to be born again of the Spirit of God and to be living in obedience to the Spirit, honoring the Spirit and obeying the Word without being a man or a woman of prayer. This is what authenticates my sonship. If you and I can live throughout the years by just coming and going to church and talking about religion and even mouthing correct Orthodox beliefs, but we don't know what it is to have hard conversations with God, men and women, we may still be lost.

Unless the Spirit of God has so come into your soul that He in you is crying, Father, search your soul. Prayer is no extra little bit of luxury tucked onto Christian living. Prayer is the life breath of the children of God.

It's the pulse beat of the believer. It's the main artery of his life. Now, the second thing I want to say follows on from here.

The perfection of one's prayer life is essentially the ambition of a progressive discipleship. I don't care how you put this, but what I want to say is this. All right, I am a Christian and the Spirit of God has come within me, the Spirit that cries out, Father, within me.

Now, if as a child of God I am moving forward progressively, I am a disciple on the move, I am learning the lessons, I am growing in any sense, then as the primary issue on my list and on my list of goals in

particular, I will want to do this. I will want to perfect the art of prayer. Now, let me just say one word about this, a progressing discipleship.

What do we mean by that? Can I add a little to what we've said? I believe that a progressing discipleship is one which increasingly finds its center in God, and then because it finds its center in God, it finds its all in God. There are many who have started on the pilgrim way and God was right in the heart of their lives, in the heart of their thinking, in the heart of their planning, right at the center of everything, and then suddenly God is, as it were, being pushed into the background and other things come cramming in. A progressive discipleship is a discipleship in which God is more and more central, and because He is more and more central, we find that He is everything, and all our needs are in the one will, the will which is God, the great I Am.

Now, unfortunately, there are many things in life that can transform that situation and make it quite different. You know, sometimes even people who pray, those of us who pray, and especially those of us who pray in public, and are given the responsibility of leading a congregation in prayer, there is nothing which is more difficult than that. And I'll tell you one thing that is possible, it is possible for prayer itself to come between us and God.

I mean the act of praying, the words we pray, the formulating of our prayers, and the saying of our prayers, we can be so concentrating upon the prayer itself that we are not, our hearts and our minds are not on God at all. I heard someone say something which I thought was, sounded quite heretical to me at the time. He said, I just don't believe in prayer.

I believe in God. And I began to criticize him in my mind. You know how we do, don't you? And I passed my judgment on the good man, and I thought, well, now you're splitting hairs, are you not? Until I think I came to agree with him.

Do you know that our very prayers, and the jargon we have, and the clichés we use, and the way in which we pray, the whole thing can become an end in itself, and really we're not centered on God at all. We're centered on praying, talking. It's a very subtle thing.

And I say to you, it is possible for a long, long time to be involved in what we ostensibly call prayer, and we've never really begun to pray. Our thoughts are not on God, our heart's not on God, our will is not yielded to God, we are not with God in that sense at all. We're not tuned in yet.

By a progressive discipleship I mean a progress in the awareness of God. I know when he's absent, and I know when he's present, and I know when my heart is fixed upon him, and I know when my soul is in tune with him, and I'm conscious of it, and I know when I grieve him. Do you? That's the point.

Such a progressive discipleship will have two inevitable consequences, namely, the transformation of character towards an increasing God-likeness, and the ever-increasing mobilization of our faculties and our forces and possessions to serve God's purposes. But now comes the question. You may have asked it already.

Why will such a progressing discipleship express itself in an attempt to perfect the noble art of prayer? Why can I say so dogmatically that if I am progressing as a disciple, then I will want to be better at this exercise of prayer? Two things I want to say. I want to focus, first of all, on prayer and the knowledge of God, and then prayer and the service of God. Why is prayer so absolutely vital in the knowledge of God?

Well, now, let's come to it in this way.

God has revealed himself to us in many ways. Those of you who were here on Wednesday will permit me to refer to what Professor Ian Rennie said. God has revealed himself to us in his creation.

After such a lovely day as this, we shall all be glad to acknowledge that. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, night unto night shows knowledge.

There is no voice nor language where their testimony isn't heard, and so forth. God has revealed himself in history, in what he has done. He didn't mention it, but God has revealed himself also in our own consciences, in the human conscience.

God has revealed himself also and supremely and finally, and has said his last word, has revealed the truth about himself, not a truth or a few truths strung together like a few beads, but he has revealed the truth about himself in his co-equal son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, in that revelation that God has given of himself in Christ, he invites men, and this is the wonder of it, he invites us that in receiving that revelation, we should begin to explore the infinite glories of God himself, both in solo and in concert, that is alone and in fellowship. And this becomes the meaning of life and the purpose of life.

It's to explore God. It's to know God. It's to seek to know him more and more and still more and more.

And this is the great invitation that underlines and underwrites the whole of the Bible, and especially the New Testament epistles. It's come and know more of God. Come and experience more of God.

Come and know more. You know him, there's always more to follow. So that you have a man like the Apostle Paul in his mature years saying, that I might know him.

And don't you know him? Of course I do, but there is a knowledge of him which is ahead of me. I can't keep up with him, he's vast, he's eternal, he's infinite, and he's ahead of me, and still there's more to follow. You know the little hymn, Have you on the Lord believed, still there's more to follow.

Of his grace have you received, still there's more to follow. More and more. More and more.

Always more to follow. That's it. And the whole invitation of the New Testament, properly understood, is this.

It's the invitation to a knowledge of the eternal God. The infinite God, who condescends, if we walk in the way of his statutes, to reveal himself more and more, not generally, but particularly, to you who obey, and to me if I obey. So that it is a thrilling thing, the invitation of the New Testament is not just simply to be saved, but into the knowledge of God, here in this world, and in this life, and ultimately in that which is to come.

Now, as I hurriedly pass on, I want to say that every aspect of prayer involves dealings with God that ought to enable us to know him the better. This is a theme that you can follow out on your own, at your own leisure. Prayer is divided into many parts, usually five.

We all concede, I trust, that the first aspect of prayer is worship and adoration. Oh, worship the Lord in the splendor or in the beauty of his holiness, says the psalmist in Psalm 29. Now, what does that mean? What does that mean? Well, what I want you to notice is this.

To worship the Lord, to worship him, involves centering my whole being upon him, and thinking about him, and, pardon me, assessing his virtues and his actions and his perfections in such ways that we can adore. It means that the whole soul focuses its gaze and its thoughts upon God. Now, is this your life? This exercise of worship involves, for example, the acknowledgement that God is worthy.

The old English word for worship was worth-ship, which means giving God his worth, acknowledging his worth, and conceding that he is worth whatever. And that is reflected in one of the statements in the Lord's Prayer. Hallowed be thy name.

Literally, it means sanctified be your name, or let me make it still more literal, separate be your name. Your name is distinct. And this is what Jesus taught his disciples to pray.

You must discover your God to be one whose name is absolutely unique. And when you mention it, there is something about your spirit, there is something in your attitude, which concedes something to him that you give to no one else. He is unique.

Hallowed be thy name. But, you see, you don't get there without thinking about God. You don't get there without stopping to think and to read and to consider.

And what I'm saying now is this, you see, that prayer involves turning the whole gaze of the soul upon God, conference with him, communion with him, thinking of him. God becomes central. Not only with worship and with adoration, but also with thanksgiving.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love, his mercy endures forever. Psalm 118 verse 1. But, you see, what does this mean? Give thanks unto the Lord for his mercy endures forever. When you read the psalm, you'll discover that the psalmist has been thinking where his blessings are coming from.

And he traces all his blessings and his benefits back to their source. And he sees that the source is in God. He goes up the stream until he comes to the source, and there it is.

And so he pours out his soul in adoration, yes, and in praise. Real praise means this, my friend, that you look at your suit of clothes and you say, where did this come from? From the shop. And it did, of course.

But ultimately it comes from God. Where does the food on your table come from? Where does the strength that you have come from? Where does the day of the Lord come from? Where does all, where do all the benefits of this life come from? Every good and perfect gift, says James, comes from one and only source, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation. He doesn't change.

He doesn't alter with the wind. He's the same eternal and unchangeable one. And you see, to give thanks to him means that I've traced all my blessings to him.

And so I begin to praise him. We may be grateful for those who've been his agents. We will be giving thanks to Greg Sharp for all that he's been to us here since he came here with Ruth three years ago.

But you know, in one sense, he's done nothing at all. He's just been an agent. The source of every gift is there in God.

Another aspect of prayer is confession. What is confession of sin? Confession of sin is nothing other than this. It is acknowledging what God says about my wrongdoings.

You know, literally, the Greek word confess means to say the same as. And in practice, it is this. God says that is sin in your life or in mine.

Confession of sin means this, that when God says that is wrong, I say back to God, it is wrong. But you see what happens? I'm accepting God's verdict. I'm in touch with God.

See? I'm accepting his judgment. I'm in touch with him. I'm conscious of him.

I'm having dealings with him. God is in the center. And this is the real, this is the reality of the Christian life.

It's dealing with God as real. You and I, you and I do not refuse to do certain things or live according to a certain way of life just because it's the done thing or not the done thing. No, no, no.

If we are really Christian men and women, we come into the presence of God, we walk in the light and we submit everything to his judgment and we have reference to God. He judges us. And then we make our decisions.

But you see, it means this contact with God all the time. God is in the center. Oh, let me go hurriedly on.

There are two other aspects of prayer. Petition, when we make a request for ourselves, for our personal needs, and intercession, when we plead for the needs of others. Now, basically, they're both the same, but you see, they both mean coming to God and making request of him.

I must share this with you. I was reading this last week, a little monograph written by the late Dr. W.E. Sangster of Central Hall, Westminster, London, England, in which he wrote this beautiful passage. Now, he's talking about prayer.

He says, The rainfall in western India is very curious. Along the coast from Bombay to Cape Cameron, the rainfall is very heavy. North of Bombay and all over the terrible desert of Thar, it's negligible.

The same moisture-laden winds blow over both areas alike, but with this significant difference. South of Bombay, the western ghats, the mountains, the mountain ranges, they strain toward the skies. They condense the clouds and bring the water down.

North of Bombay, the mountains peter out. The earth does not aspire. The southwest monsoon laden with water from the Arabian Sea sweeps over the whole thirsty land, but gives no rain in all the parched area until it reaches the Himalayas.

And then he comments, It is not dissimilar with the blessings of God. Winds big with mercy blow above the prayerful and the prayerless alike. With this vast difference, one lifts praying hands to heaven and brings the blessing down.

The others do not aspire and therefore they do not experience. But there is no caprice in God. Prayer gives him the opportunity which he never fails to take.

You got the picture? In asking, be it for myself or for another, I bring the blessing down. I ask that I may receive. Or, if I'm not asking, James tells me, You have not because you ask not.

But if I am a man or a woman who makes petition and intercession, then I have dealings with God, I come to Him and I make my requests known unto Him. Can you see what I'm getting at? Every aspect of prayer,

every type of prayer means that we have dealings with God. God's in the center.

So you see, we're coming to know Him better. If we're men and women of prayer. This is the arena in which we really come to know God in His activities and in His mercies.

Long before I ever saw an inch of American territory, I knew there was a country called America. So did you, I'm sure. Saw it on the map.

Some people who had been there talked to me about the country. I knew they had some book agencies in the United States, too. They used to send me their catalogs every now and again.

And like other bookworms, I used to write to them. I'd never seen anyone there, of course, but I used to write to them and take them up their word. They said to me, in effect, If you want this book, well, the only thing you have to do is to send a check and we'll send the books.

And I took them up their word, and I sent my check and blessed them. Apart from one consignment, which seemed to have got lost somewhere between the United States and the UK, all the others came to hand. Some unseen eyes, unseen human, read my requirements, got my check and my request and packed the goods and sent them back addressed to me, and they came.

It is not dissimilar with God, you see. A man or a woman who is trading with Heaven every day, who is asking in the name of Jesus, who is pleading the promises, who has learned how to pray and why God says no or doesn't listen and discovers the art of it all, this man, I say, this woman, comes to know God. And this is the man or the woman that you cannot shake in the storm.

You may have your philosophical expertise, and you may have your scientific knowledge, and you may stand, preaching the gospel, proud, not because of your knowledge of God, but because of your capacity to argue scientifically. There is an altogether different species in the Christian church. He may not know, he may not be up to date with the science, he may not be able to analyze things scientifically at all, but he knows his God.

I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able. You know that character? He'll not shake in the storm. He knows his God.

There are many things he cannot answer, many questions you can put to him, and you won't know what to say, but he will say, I know him. Do you? What I am telling you, my friend, is this, that real prayer, real prayer, as God calls it, prayer, is the arena in which we come to know God. My time has gone, and I will only just barely mention this to conclude.

Prayer and the service of God. Now, if I were to end just there, you would say, well, that's a very warped sermon you've given us tonight, and a very warped truth. It all has to do with worship of God, but the world needs Christians who are prepared to do something.

And you're quite right. What is equally true is this. The man who knows God, or the woman who knows God, will always be available to do what God wants him or her to do.

What I want to tell you is this. If your prayer and mine is real, then we are in fellowship with God, in communion with Him. And in communion with God, we have vision, compassion, and calling.

Vision is this. It's the capacity to see things as they really are. There's a world of difference between what the Bible calls vision and just the kind of understanding of things that you get from the newspaper.

Now, I don't like to run down the reporters as some people do. I think there are good and bad among them. Perhaps I'm a little bit biased there.

You forgive me. But you know, at their best, they can only see things from the human point of view. At their best, from the human point of view.

And they don't see everything. No two men see everything. They may stand on the same spot, they may see exactly the same set of circumstances, but the one will miss something.

What is the difference between vision, biblically conceived, and this understanding of things that we have by our writers in our newspapers and journals? Well, vision means this. It is seeing things from the vantage point of God. Through the eyes of God.

It is not dissimilar from the difference of viewpoint that you have as you walk through the countryside on the one hand, and then you fly over it on the other. Now, it isn't so evident here in Canada, but in some of the countries of Europe where the mountains are high, you know, you walk up and down some of those valleys in Switzerland, and my word, they almost overshadow you when you don't know where you're going to, whether it's going to be dark before you go much further. Yet the amazing thing is this, when you're flying over them, they don't look so high at all.

It is so different from above. Some of the massive mountains, they pale into comparative insignificance when seen from above. Now, this is not a perfect illustration, but it illustrates in part something of the truth I'm getting at.

A man with a vision is a man who sees things in perspective, and he sees them from the vantage point of the throne of God, and therefore he sees them clearly. He sees them as they are. He sees them with the eyes of God, as God told John, when no one else knew what was happening in the ancient world.

John, he says, come up here and I will show you things. Revelation 4 and verse 1. Men are wondering what's happening to the world. Why is Caesar allowed to do this? Why is this power allowed to do that? And then God says to this dear man, come up here, he says, and I'll let you look down and see things from here, from my side.

That's the real vision. It's seeing things from where God is. You see, you can only have that in communion with God.

That doesn't come to the philosopher because he's a philosopher. That doesn't come to the scientist because he's a scientist. It may come to a philosopher and a scientist, if they are saints of God, they know how to pray.

And it'll come to you in the same way. Vision, understanding of the times. But not only vision, compassion for men.

You can't live near God very long without feeling as he feels. And I must end by saying this, not only feeling as he feels, you can't live long in his presence without saying, Lord, if you want me to do something, here am I. Send me. What am I saying? What I'm saying is this, my friends, that a real life of

real prayer is the gymnasium in which we go through the spiritual exercises that result in the knowledge of God indeed.

A knowledge of God in which we ourselves are transformed into his likeness, see things from his perspective, and with a clarity that we never could see things before, feel for the needy, and are caught up into the machinery of the divine workings and find ourselves involved in the affairs of our God and our King. Now, that's the history of the church as I understand it. Oh, Lord, teach us to pray.

Isn't that your cry tonight? I don't know who it was, which of the disciples. I'd like to guess. It's worth guessing, but we won't do it tonight.

We won't accept the luxury. Which of the disciples was it? One of them overheard it. And our Lord's prayer was no sooner over than he went to him and he said, Lord, teach us how to pray.

And then as an afterthought, John also taught his disciples how to pray. You teach us. Oh, Spirit of God, may we too likewise be taught to the glory of the name of our Heavenly Father in the outworking of his purposes in us and through us.

Let us pray.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26562.mp3>

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