

Prayer

by James Smith

Real prayer is the going forth of the soul to the Lord to communicate its needs, wishes, and requests, and is a privilege unspeakably great.

Scripture: Psalm 62:8, Psalm 145:18, Matthew 7:7, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Holy Spirit"

Description

James Smith preaches on the essence and power of real prayer, emphasizing that it involves communicating our needs, fears, and desires to God, seeking His guidance, provision, and blessings. He highlights that prayer is a privilege, a duty, and a means to confess sins, plead God's promises, and receive new blessings. Smith underscores that spiritual prayer is a result of the Holy Spirit's work, rooted in God's revelation and strengthened by the gospel promises. He explains that prayer brings Christ into our hearts, opens heaven to us, and has the power to change circumstances, defeat enemies, and secure victories.

Transcript

Real prayer is the going forth of the soul to the Lord to communicate its needs, wishes, and requests. It is making known our feelings, fears, and troubles, unto our God. It is pleading with our King for life, liberty, and blessedness. It is pleading with our Prophet to teach, instruct, and make us wise. It is pleading with our heavenly Father for food, sanctity, and peace. It is spreading our cares, exercises, and distresses, before a kind and beneficent Friend; and entreating him to give what he has promised, and do as he has said. It is committing ourselves and all our concerns into the hands of infinite wisdom and love, in the confidence of faith and hope. It is visiting the supreme object of our love--for fellowship, enjoyment, and satisfaction. It is calling for help from God--against sin, Satan, and the world. It is interceding with the great I AM, for ourselves, our families, the church, and the world. It is crying for help, asking for favors, and seeking admittance into the presence of the Most High God.

Prayer is a privilege unspeakably great--a duty of the first importance--a favor profitable and sweet. In prayer we confess our sins; plead the promises of God; reason from what the Lord has done; wrestle as for life or liberty; supplicate with earnestness and fervor; acknowledge the mercies received; and importune for new blessings.

Real prayer springs from a sense of need, a desire for grace, and a wish to glorify God. It is the effect of the Spirit's teaching, founded on the gracious revelation Jehovah has given of himself, and strengthened

by the glorious promises of the gospel. Without the Holy Spirit we are graceless, and while graceless--we are prayerless. Without the perfect work of Jesus--we would never have received the gift of the Holy Spirit; and except the Father had been a God of infinite grace and mercy, Jesus had not been given, nor the foundation for prayer laid--thus we trace up our prayers to the infinite grace and goodwill of the Father, through the atonement of the Lord Jesus, by the teaching and operations of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit teaches us our wants, opens the promises to the mind, leads to the throne of grace, furnishes with energy and argument, and enables us to plead and prevail.

Spiritual prayer does wonders: it brings down Christ into the heart, opens heaven to the view, and fills us with joy and peace; it restrains our enemies, checks our opposers, and often secures us a victory; it prevents evils, procures blessings, and removes fear. It clears the judgment, fortifies the mind, and sanctifies the heart. It has defeated Satan, controlled men, and ruled the elements. It has stopped a lion's mouth, changed the nature of fire, and made the sea part asunder. It has procured food for the appetite, clothes for the back, and an habitation for the houseless. It has obtained promises, brought down blessings, and changed an Esau's heart. It has opened the prison doors, struck enemies blind, and made ravens feed a prophet. It has made a dungeon delightful, the rattling of chains musical, and the most painful death desirable. It has conquered kings, employed angels, and frustrated the designs of devils. It brought Joseph from the dungeon--Israel out of Egypt--and Pharaoh into the Red Sea. It discomfited Amalek, brought manna from heaven, and water out of a flinty rock. It nailed Sisera to the ground, raised up Samson to deliver Israel, and made Gilead's fleece both wet and dry.

Prayer will make a miserable man happy, set a bond-man free, and procure a pardon for the guilty and condemned. It eases the mind, relieves the soul, and liberates the spirit. It engages God as our ally, holds the hands of omnipotence, and brings over the Captain of salvation to our side. It has power with God and with men, and prevails.

But prayer is confined to this world--Now is the season for prayer; now the throne of grace is accessible; now the intercessor stands before the throne; now our God says, "Prove Me;" now the promise runs, "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

In heaven--there will be no sin to confess, no sorrow to pain, no enemies to oppose, no needs to urge, no desires unsatisfied; there will be joy, peace, and praise, in perfection, and forever--but no prayer. And in hell all will be gloom, misery, and hopeless despair; sinners will curse themselves, their God, and their doom, and will look upwards--but there will be no prayer there. Prayer is now offered up in private, in public, and in the social circle; in different places, under different circumstances--but all on earth. In heaven they have nothing to pray for; and in hell they have no ground of hope--all is pain, enmity, and horror.

The prayers of believers are spiritual, fervent, and prevalent. They arise in the heart, carry with them the affections, and prevail with God. Their prayers are often painful, urgent, and mingled with desponding feelings: at other times they are sweet, pleasant, and ascend on the wings of full assurance: at all times they are needful, profitable, and required; and, if spiritual, are at all times heard, approved, and answered.

Opposed to praying--is complaining to man, murmuring against God, and indulging in self-pity and pride. Self-dependence generates stupidity; stupidity leads to the neglect of prayer; the neglect of prayer issues in hardness, doubt, and a long train of evils. The man who seldom prays, is sure to be weak in faith, and lukewarm in his profession of Christ. Only men of prayer are found to be diligent, devoted, and useful

members of the church; our public actions are greatly influenced by our private devotions.

Prayer is, in the holy scriptures, compared:

to emptying a vessel, "pour out your hearts before him;"

to the cry of a child to its parent, "then shall you cry unto me;"

to the smoke of the incense in the tabernacle, "let my prayers come up before you as incense;"

to the lifting up of the hands, "I will lift up my hands toward your holy oracle;"

to the holding of the hands of another, "let me alone, or unhand me;"

to wrestling, "there a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day;"

to flying, "I flee unto you to hide me;"

to calling for help, "call upon me in the day of trouble;"

to knocking at the door of mercy, "knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

The Lord testifies his approval of prayer in many ways in his word. He says the prayer of the upright is his delight. He tells his church that "her voice is sweet," her "lips drop as the honey-comb," and assures her that he "will hear her cry and will save her."

Do we believe that prayer is powerful, profitable, and pleasant to God? What do our closets say? Do we come to prayer as the hungry man to his food, as the miser to count over his gold, or as the bride for fellowship with her beloved bridegroom? Or have we neglected this privilege, lightly esteemed this duty, and thus grieved and vexed the Holy Spirit? Beloved let us attend to his intimations; stir up ourselves to take hold on God; and plead in prayer--for ourselves, our families, and our churches, until we prevail. Our God hears prayer--delights in prayer--will answer prayer. Let us ask for great things in the name of Jesus, and expect what we ask because he is faithful who has promised. May the Lord pour out a spirit of earnest, importunate, believing prayer, upon his church, and upon every one who reads these lines. Amen.

Prayer is the breath of God in man,

Returning whence it came;

Love is the sacred fire within,

And prayer the rising flame.

The prayers and praises of the saints,

Like precious odors sweet,

Ascend and spread a rich perfume

Around the mercy-seat.

When God inclines the heart to pray,
He has an ear to hear;
To him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear.
The humble suppliant cannot fail
To have his wants supplied,
Since He for sinners intercedes,
Who once for sinners died!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-smith/prayer/>

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