

# Prayer Is the Basis of Everything in Our Life With the Lord

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*True prayer is the basis of everything in our life with the Lord, and it involves humility, submission, adjustment to God's will, and deep worship.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:2, Acts 9:10, Acts 22:14, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Transformation"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks delves into the profound impact of Apostle Paul's prayer life, particularly focusing on his initial prayer experience in Damascus. Paul's prayer was marked by deep humility, confession of sins, absolute surrender to the Lord, and alignment with God's will. His prayer was also characterized by deep worship, expressing gratitude for God's grace and mercy. These elements opened the way for the Lord to work in Paul's life, leading to his spiritual transformation and empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Chapter nine of the Book of the Acts, at verse ten through twelve, "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Behold, I am here, Lord.' And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.'"

The last words of verse eleven, "BEHOLD, HE PRAYETH." From these words, we see that the life of the Apostle Paul in relation to the Lord Jesus commenced in prayer. Although he had spoken to the Lord on the Damascus road, this was really the first time of prayer that he had with the Lord Jesus. Perhaps it will surprise you to know that this time of prayer between Paul and the Lord Jesus lasted for three days and three nights. I wonder how many of us here have prayed for three days and three nights continually. Well, three days and three nights of prayer lays a fairly good foundation for a Christian life, and no doubt this time laid the foundation for the life of the apostle.

Have you realized that some of the greatest things that ever the Lord has revealed to us came through the prayer life of the Apostle Paul? You have only to call to mind some of his prayers, and you will see that they were a revelation of which there is nothing like it anywhere else. If you look in the Letter to the Ephesians, you will see the wonderful things that came out when Paul prayed. The same was true in his

Letter to the Colossians; and there are many other prayers of Paul in his letters. In those letters, he tells us what he prayed for, and they were very wonderful revelations of God's mind. Now we are not going to study those prayers tonight. We are not even going to read them. But we are simply pointing out that prayer is a wonderful way in which God makes Himself known, and prayer is the basis of everything else in the life with the Lord.

Now I expect you are wondering what Paul was praying about during those three days and those three nights. If we could answer that question, we should have a fairly good basis for prayer. That is, we should understand what true prayer is, we should know some of the things which constitute true prayer. I think that I shall be right when I suggest some of the things that Paul was praying about in that first wonderful time of prayer. And I feel that these are the things which ought always to find a place in our praying.

We shall not be wrong if we say that the first thing in that first prayer was humiliation and confession. It was the prayer of a broken and a contrite heart. I am quite sure that was the first thing in Paul's prayer. You see, he had just come to realize what he had been doing with his life. It was not so long before this time that he gave his consent to the death of that remarkable young man, Stephen. It says that the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And it says that Saul was consenting unto his death. Then Saul had obtained authority from the high priest to put men and women in prison. And Paul tells us, himself, that he persecuted the church unto far distant cities. Again it says, Saul, breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the people of this Way. Thus, he had just come to realize what a great mistake he had been making. How terrible was the thing that he had been doing. What injury he had been doing to the Lord Jesus. He had been responsible in spirit and in principle for the crucifying of Christ. His sin had really nailed Jesus to the Cross.

And now he was alive to all this terrible truth. His prayer, therefore, must have commenced in deep humiliation and contrition of heart. He must have been confessing to the Lord how wrong he had been, and asking the Lord for forgiveness. You know, dear ones, that is the first element in any true prayer, the acknowledgment of our own sinfulness, the confession of how unworthy we are of the mercy of God. We can never come into the Presence of the Lord without a sense of our sinfulness. We can never stand before Him without bowed heads because of our unworthiness. No pride or self-righteousness is allowed in the Presence of God. The Word of God says, "To this one will I look, even to him that is of a broken and contrite spirit" (Isa 66:2). And I am sure that this spirit was in this man in his first prayer. I am quite sure that there were many tears shed by Paul during those three days and those three nights.

Then the second thing in that prayer, I am quite sure, must have been a spirit and attitude of surrender to the Lord. There must have been in him a spirit of absolute submission to the Lord. The complete committal of himself to the Lord Jesus. Many times after that, he called himself the prisoner of the Lord, and many times in his letter, he said, "Paul, the bondsman of Jesus Christ." I am quite sure that it was in that first prayer that Paul took that position of the prisoner and the bondsman of Jesus Christ, with an absolute submission and surrender to Jesus as his Master. And I am sure you will agree with me that that must be a feature of all our praying. First, a confession of our own sinfulness, and then an absolute submission to the Lord Jesus, as His prisoners, and as His bondsmen.

Then there was a third thing, which I am quite sure was in this prayer of Paul's. It was complete adjustment to the will of the Lord. Up to this time, he had followed his own will, he had allowed his own will to control his life and his actions, he had directed his own life, and he would have said, 'My will be done.' And we can see how thoroughly he sought to do his own will. But now, at this time, he was getting

adjusted to the will of the Lord. If he did not use the actual words, I am sure this is what he meant, 'No longer my will, but Thy will, Lord, for my life.' That must have been a feature of this prayer; because it is so evident that from this time to the end of his life, there was only one thing for which he lived, and that was THE WILL OF THE LORD.

Now, while that has to be our attitude at the beginning of our Christian life, that must always be a feature of our prayer life. There are many ways in our Christian life where we have to get adjusted to the will of the Lord. The will of the Lord is not always an easy thing for our flesh; and so very often, we have to have a real battle to get adjusted to the will of the Lord on some particular matter; and prayer is the time in which that adjustment has to be done. It is just possible that some of us here this evening are having a battle over the will of God on something. Well, this is the time to get through with that issue. Our prayer times give us the great opportunity of getting right into line with the will of God on all matters.

Well, just collect up these things before we go any further. True prayer is the prayer of confession and humiliation! True prayer is the time of absolute committal and surrender and submission to the Lord! True prayer is the time for getting right into line with the will of God on all matters!

Now these three things, we could call negative things. Of course they are not negative when we have to face them, they are very positive matters. But when we come to the fourth thing, we move over a bit to another side; and I am sure that this first time of prayer in the case of Paul was a time of deep worship. What does worship come out from? What is it that leads us to worship? What is the true nature and spirit of worship? Is it not a deep unspeakable gratitude for the grace of God?! We only worship in the measure in which we appreciate the grace of God. I am sure that this man on his knees during that time was just pouring out his heart with gratitude for the mercy of God. Realizing what kind of a man he was, realizing his guiltiness, and what an enemy of Christ his nature had been, and yet that risen, persecuted Lord had come down to save such a man as he was, that must have made Paul pour out his heart in the deepest gratitude for the grace and mercy of God. You remember that a favorite way to Paul of opening his letters was with three words: "Grace, mercy, and peace, be unto you." That was the foundation of everything for Paul. Wonderful grace, grace that could never be explained; boundless mercy; and peace with God. That was surely the consciousness of this man during his prayer. It was the prayer of deep worship for the grace of God, and that must have a place in all true prayer.

Now, you notice that given these four things, there is an open way for the Lord to come in. The Lord had His eye upon that man in that room as he was praying. He knew what Saul of Tarsus was doing. He said to Ananias, "Behold, he prayeth." And the Lord knew what he was praying about. And He knew that these four things made up that prayer. THEY OPEN A WAY FOR THE LORD. So the Lord said to Ananias, "Go to a certain house in a certain street, to this man, Saul of Tarsus. That man is praying. Ananias, you go in and lay your hands on him, that he may receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." The Lord had an open way to meet that man. First of all, to open his blind eyes. They were physically blind, but you may be sure that he got a spiritual eye-opening at that time. If Saul of Tarsus was still under a heavy cloud as he knelt there in prayer, if there was still any darkness over his mind, when Ananias put his hands on his head, and said, "Brother Saul," all the darkness went; and his heart was filled with the Light of heaven.

Then, secondly, Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called the Seal of our Redemption. "We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). We are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). You know what that

means in business. If your seal is upon any goods, you have a right to claim them. You can go anywhere and say, "That is mine, I take possession of it." In the same way, the Holy Spirit is the Seal of God, the Seal of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Seal of that which belongs to Christ, and He can claim it at any time. It is a great thing to have the Seal of the Lord upon our lives.

Now we know that to receive the Holy Spirit is to receive our equipment for our life's work; because Ananias said this unto Saul (later called Paul). And he said, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:14,15).

These three things happened when Ananias put his hands on the head of Saul, and used that wonderful word, "Brother" Saul. That was a triumph of grace! But the Lord had an open way to come into that life, and it was because of those four things that we have mentioned which composed his prayer. This may help us a little in our time of prayer, not only for tonight, but for all times of prayer. If this is the way, the heart way of our praying, the Lord will have a clear way with us.

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