

For What Should We Pray?

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Prayer Is a Privilege and Blessing that Belongs to the Christian—

1. The privilege, the right, the prerogative, the benefit of prayer belongs to the Christian, the child of God, the righteous, the one in fellowship with God (I Peter 3:12; Psalms 34:15–16; cf. I John 1:6; Proverbs 28:9; 15:29; John 9:31).
2. When the child of God prays in faith assurance is given that God hears his prayer (James 1:5-7; I John 3:22; 5:14–15; cf. Romans 10:17).
3. Prayer is not only the privilege of the child of God but the means of promised blessings (Matthew 7:7-11; I John 1:9; Acts 8:20-24).
4. Prayer is also something the child of God is exhorted to do “without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17)—that is, unceasingly, with habitual inclination, with vigilant attendance; something never to be abandoned for any cause.

B. These Promises and Assurances Raise Two Questions:

1. For what should we pray?
2. How can we know that for which we should pray?

II. DISCUSSION:

A. The Disciples of Jesus Had Need of Being Taught How to Pray (Luke 11:1)—

1. Matthew 6:5-13 is an example of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray, wherein he taught them both what to do and what not to do in their prayer life, which he did in light of the hypocritical lifestyle of the hypocrites of the day.
2. Luke 11:1-13 is another example of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray as a result of a request to do so by one of them wherein additional information about prayer is revealed.
3. Question: If his disciples then needed such instructions, does it not emphasize the possibility that his present-day disciples might also need it?
 - a. I know I do! Prayer has been a difficult and trying subject for me;

especially in knowing, having confidence in knowing, what to pray for — making sure my requests in prayer are not selfish and self-centered — and how to express myself in praying!

b. Our need to be taught to pray is indicted it seems to me because there seems to be a tendency:

(1) For our prayers to be repetitious—just repeating the same words over and over each time we pray; that is, the same prayer each time we pray, never any variation—or just repeating what we have heard others say in their praying —perhaps because we do not think about it, do not plan, or have not learned to pray as well as we should, and therefore need to be taught. (I include myself in this category!)

(2) For our prayers to be made up mostly of thanksgiving, with little or no requests from God for things for which we are taught in his word to request of Him.

(a) Don't misunderstand me. Thanksgiving is to be a vital part of our praying. In fact, sometimes it is the very purpose for praying (e.g. at the Lord's Table).

(b) But, so are many other things for which we are taught to pray, but which are seldom mentioned in our public prayers.

B. In View of this Need, We Ask: For What Then Should We Pray?

1. The various things for which the apostle Paul prayed are things for which we can and should pray in making requests of God.

a. In Romans 1:9-12, he prayed that both he and they might “be comforted (consoled) together” by their “mutual faith.” That is, by each other's faith.

b. In Romans 9:1-3 and 10:1-4, he prayed that Israel, his brethren in the flesh, “might be saved.”

c. In Romans 15:30-33, he prayed:

(1) That he might “be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea” (or from evil men) as a result of the prayers of the Roman Christians on his behalf (vv. 30–31; cf. II Thessalonians 3:2).

(2) That “the God of peace be with” the brethren at Rome (v. 33).

d. In I Corinthians 1:4-8 he prayed for the Corinthian saints:

(1) That they might by God be “enriched” (made rich) “in all utterance, and in all knowledge”(v. 5).

(2) That they might “be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, that they would maintain their faith and works to the Day of Judgment.

e. In Ephesians 1:15-21, Paul prayed to God for the Ephesian Christians, wherein:

(1) He gave thanks for their faith in the Lord Jesus (vv.15–16).

(2) He prayed God would give (continue to give) to them “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (v.17).

(3) He prayed that “the eyes of your understanding be enlightened; that ye may know (continue to know) what is the hope of his calling...and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ...” (vv. 18–20).

f. In Ephesians 6:19–20, Paul asked that the Ephesian Christians pray for him, asking:

(1) That utterance may be given unto me.

(2) That I may open my mouth boldly.

(3) To make known the mystery of the gospel.

(4) That I, as an ambassador of Christ in bonds, may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

g. In Philippians 1:3-11 Paul offered continual thanks to God and prayed for the Philippian Christians making request with joy:

- (1) For their fellowship with him in the gospel (v 5, cf. 2:25; 4:10–18).
- (2) He prayed that their love would abound yet more and more, directed by fuller knowledge and keener insight (v.9).
- (3) That they would always approve the better things, have a proper sense of what is vital, or of right things (v.10a).
- (4) That they might be sincere and blameless till the day of Christ, or be faithful till the end (v. 10b). That they might be filled with or abounding in the fruits of righteousness, which are by, or with the help of Jesus Christ, unto God's glory and praise (v. 11).

h. In Colossians 1:3-11 Paul gave thanks to God and prayed continually for the Colossian saints.

- (1) He gave thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus (v. 4a, cf. II Timothy 1:3-5).
- (2) For the love they had for all the saints (vv. 4b, 8), i.e. the love with which the Spirit had awakened or inspired in them.
- (3) For their hope of what is laid up for them in heaven, of which they had learned in the word of the truth of the gospel (v.5).
- (4) He prayed that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding (v. 5).
- (5) That they might walk (live) worthy of the Lord to God's full satisfaction, being fruitful in every good work, growing continually in fuller knowledge of God (v.10).
- (6) That they thereby be strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience or endurance and longsuffering with joyfulness, or every sort of joyful endurance and forbearance (v. 11).

i. In I Thessalonians 1:2– 3 Paul offered thanks to God for the saints at

Thessalonica and prayed for them remembering without ceasing:

- (1) Their work of faith (v. 3a).
- (2) Their labor (toiling) of love (v. 3b).
- (3) Their patience of (or enduring hope) in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3c).

j. In I Thessalonians 3:9-13 Paul again expressed thanks to God for the saints in Thessalonica and prayed for them:

- (1) Saying, in effect, in v.9, in view of what he wrote in vv.7, 8, "For how can I render God enough thanks for you, for all the joy I have on account of you in the presence of God."
- (2) That the Lord would make them increase and abound or overflow in love one toward another, and toward all men (v.12, cf. 4:9-10).
- (3) That God may stablish your hearts in holiness when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints (v. 13).

k. In II Thessalonians 3:1-2 Paul prayed asking that the saints pray for him:

- (1) That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, or continue to spread and prove its glorious power—literally continue to run and be glorified (v. 1).
- (2) That he would be delivered from unreasonable (unprincipled) and wicked men: for not all men have faith (v. 2).

l. In I Timothy 2:1-4 Paul taught that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks:

- (1) Should be made:
 - (a) For all men.
 - (b) For kings.
 - (c) And for all that are in authority (v. 1).
- (2) The stated purpose for this that we, as God's people, may lead quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and honesty (v. 2).

- (3) He said this is the right thing to do because it pleases God our Savior, who would have all men to be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth (vv. 3–4).
- m. In II Timothy 1:16–18 Paul, on behalf of Onesiphorus, prayed that the Lord:
- (1) Would give or show mercy to the house or family of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed or cheered me, and was not ashamed of the chains I wore (v. 16).
 - (2) Would grant unto him that he may find mercy (or be granted eternal reward) of the Lord in that day (v.18, cf. Jude 21).
- n. In II Timothy 4:14–16 Paul prayed:
- (1) That Alexander the coppersmith, who did him much evil, and who greatly withstood or opposed our teaching, would be rewarded by the Lord according to his works (vv.14–16, cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13–14; Romans 2:6; II Corinthians 5:10).
 - (2) For those who, at his first answer or verbal defense in court, forsook him, he prayed to God “that it may not be laid to their charge” (v. 16, cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59–60).
- o. Also in all his epistles from I Corinthians thru Philemon, at the beginning and the end of each one, he offers in prayer the following words or their equivalent: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”

III. CONCLUSION:

A. Therefore, in Summation, in Faith, We May and Should Pray:

1. For our enemies, even those who hate us, curse us, spitefully use and persecute us (Luke 6:27–28).
2. For all men, kings, rulers and all who are in authority (I Timothy 2:1–4).
3. For the forgiveness and salvation of others (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59–60; 8:24;

Romans 10:1–3; James 5:16; 1 John 5:16).

4. For brotherly love to abound, more and more (I Thessalonians 4:9–10; Philippians 1:9–11).
5. For brethren to increase in knowledge of God's will, spiritual understanding, and walk worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:9–11).
6. For boldness and courage in preaching the gospel (Ephesians 6:19).
7. For God to open unto us doors of utterance and that the word may have free course in our preaching (Colossians 4:2–4; II Thessalonians 3:1).
8. For brethren that they do no evil (II Corinthians 13:7).
9. That the Lord keep faithful brethren from evil men (II Thessalonians 3:2; Luke 11:1–4; Matthew 6:13; Romans 15:31).
10. For our temporal needs; our daily bread, etc. (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:1–3).
11. For our prosperity and health as our soul prospers (III John 1–2).
12. For mercy and forgiveness (Acts 8:22; Matthew 6:12, 14–15; I John 1:9).
13. For the Lord to send forth laborers into the harvest (Matthew 9:38).
14. For the Lord to increase our faith (Luke 17:5; cf. Romans 10:17).
15. For wisdom and knowledge in spiritual things (James 1:5; Colossians 1:9–11).
16. That God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).