



Moments *for* You

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Theme: Prayer



CAN YOU SAY, “FATHER”?

That famous example of prayer we often call “The Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6:9-13) begins with “Our *Father* which art in Heaven.” Everything that follows: conversing with Him, praising Him, petitioning Him—these things *all* start by knowing Him as “Father.”

Is God your Father? Put another way: Are you a child of God? Some people think we are *all* God’s children, but Jesus taught otherwise. He told those who opposed Him that they were children of the *devil* (John 8:44). The Bible goes on to teach that all who have not answered God’s call to repent and put their trust in Jesus are “children of disobedience” upon whom the “wrath of God” will one day fall (Colossians 3:6).

This raises some interesting questions with regard to prayer. Does God hear the prayers of those who are not His children? How can *your* prayers be heard by God?

PRAYERS OF THE UNSAVED

Because God is omniscient, He sees and hears *everything*; however, He does not promise to *listen to* or *answer* the prayers of the unsaved. Notice who it is that God takes notice of and listens to: “The eyes of the Lord are upon the *righteous*, and His ears are open unto their cry” (Psalm 34:15).

Most prayers offered up by people who are not God’s children rise no higher than the ceiling. On the other hand, there is *one* prayer of the unsaved that God *always* hears and answers. He has promised that “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans

10:13). When a sinner realizes his lost condition, turns to God, and cries out for help, He answers that prayer every time!

BECOMING A CHILD OF GOD

To come into God’s family requires a spiritual birth—Jesus said “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). By nature, all people are “dead in trespasses and sins,” and our only relationship with God is one of being “strangers” who are “far off” (Ephesians 2:1,12,13). But God’s Son, Jesus Christ, opened the way for us to be brought into a relationship with God when He willingly laid down His life as the sacrifice and payment for our sin.

How can you be washed clean and made new in God’s sight? Read this carefully: “By grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). God, in His grace, rescues us when we put our trust in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift—bought and paid for by Jesus—which God gives to all who see their need of it and look to Him in faith.

“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee” (Jeremiah 33:3).

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

“Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.... And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 3:26; 4:6).

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

WHY PRAY?

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

When we stop to weigh the meaning of these words, the child of God is driven to say, “I must pray, pray, pray. I must put all my energy and all my heart into prayer. Whatever else I do, I must pray.” Why is constant, persistent, sleepless, overcoming prayer so needful?

1. There is a devil. He is cunning, he is mighty, he never rests, and he is always plotting the downfall of the child of God. If the believer relaxes in prayer, the devil will succeed in ensnaring him. This is the thought in the context of Ephesians 6, which describes our spiritual battle and the need for the Christian to take up the armor of God. Paul tells us that to all else we must add prayer—constant, persistent, untiring, sleepless prayer in the Holy Spirit, or all else will go for nothing.

2. Prayer is God’s appointed way for obtaining things, and the great secret of all lack in our Christian experience is neglect of prayer. James brings this out very forcibly: “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). Many Christians are asking, “Why is it I make so little progress in my Christian life?” Ministers and Sunday school teachers are asking, “Why is it I see so little fruit from my labors?” God answers us all: “Neglect of prayer. You *have* not because you *ask* not.”

3. The apostles regarded prayer as the most important business of their lives. When the multiplying responsibilities of the early church crowded in upon them, they recruited

helpers so they could “give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). Paul, in what he wrote to churches and individuals about praying for them, made it evident that much of his time and strength were given to prayer.

4. Prayer occupied a very prominent place in the earthly life of our Lord. He was not unfamiliar with “rising up a great while before day” (Mark 1:35), or spending “all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). The words *pray* and *prayer* are used at least twenty-five times in connection with our Lord in the brief record of His life in the four Gospels, and His praying is mentioned in other places where these words are not used. A man or woman who does not spend much time in prayer cannot properly be called a follower of Jesus Christ.

5. Praying is the most important part of the present ministry of our risen Lord. Christ’s ministry did not close with His death. After Christ accomplished His atoning work, He rose and ascended to the right hand of the Father, where “He ever liveth to make intercession for [believers]” (Hebrews 7:25). “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). The ministry of intercession (praying for others) is a glorious and mighty ministry, and we can all have a part in it.

Nothing has so impressed me with a sense of the importance of prayer as the thought that it is the principal occupation of my risen Lord. I want to have fellowship with Him, and to that end I have asked the Father to make me an intercessor, to make me a man who knows how to pray, and who spends much time in prayer.

—Adapted from *How to Pray* by R. A. Torrey.

CLOSET COMMUNION

“When thou prayest, enter into thy closet” (Matthew 6:6).

What do these four words suggest: “Enter into thy closet”? The closet is simply a place shut out from intrusion and interruption—the meeting place of one man and his Maker. The closet is the Holy of Holies where the soul meets God alone and communes with Him at the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat. Every praying soul needs some place and time for prayer, free from needless interruption and intrusion. The more completely we can separate ourselves from all other persons, all worldly pursuits and pleasures, all distracting cares or diverting thoughts, shutting out all else but God, the better.

God has appointed two means for cultivating a sense of His existence and a realization of His presence. First, a meditative reading of Holy Scripture, and secondly a habitual communion with Him in the closet.

When a devout disciple takes God’s Word in his hands, for studious and thoughtful meditation, he naturally lifts his heart to Him who alone can unveil the eyes of his understanding to behold wondrous things out of His law (Psalm 119:18). As he reads and searches, meditating therein, the same Spirit who first inspired the Word illumines his mind. New light is thrown upon the sacred page, so that what was obscure or hidden becomes visible and legible. When the Author of the Word becomes Instructor and Interpreter of His own textbook, we read Heaven’s great classic with the notes and comments of the divine Author Himself!

Communion with God in the closet implies *meditation*. The closet is not an *oratory*—a place for prayer in the

narrow sense of mere request—as much as it is an *observatory*, from which to get new views of God, and new revelations of Him. There is a quest higher than mere request—a search after knowledge of God and communication from Him. In this secret place, devout souls learn what is meant by *communion*—and communion is mutual. There is not only prayer offered, but blessing received. The praying soul speaks to God, and hears God speak. He who enters the closet gets as well as gives, and finds the most precious part of this communion, not in any requests imparted Godward, but in returns imparted manward, the reception from God of divine impressions and communications.

To get such exalted impressions of God, an investment of *time* is needed. He who rushes into the presence of God to hurry through a few formal petitions, and then hurries back to worldly cares and pursuits, does not stay long enough. He does not take sufficient time to fix his mind’s gaze on the unseen and eternal. Many so-called “praying people” have never once really met and seen God in the closet. But when such communion becomes real, prayer ceases to be mere duty and becomes delight.

—Condensed from *Lessons in the School of Prayer* by A. T. Pierson.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Have you ever been stuck in a conversation with someone who talks only about himself? Imagine what it must be like for our heavenly Father to listen to our prayers during our devotional time. We may have read a portion of His Word, but then in prayer we swiftly shift focus exclusively to our needs. We ask for help in solving a problem, providing for

a financial need, or healing a physical ailment. But the passage we've just read doesn't even enter into our prayers. What God has just said to us goes largely unacknowledged.

Apparently the writer of Psalm 119 did not have this perspective. Instead, he sought God's help in understanding the Word: "Open Thou mine eyes," he said, "that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (v. 18). And as he prayed he expressed how he treasured God's Word, calling it his "delight" (v. 24).

Let's develop a discipline of praying our response to the Word. It just might transform our devotional time. Bible reading and prayer should reflect a two-way communication. Listen to God's Word, then pray about what you've heard.

—Dennis Fisher, *Our Daily Bread*

MAKING TIME FOR GOD

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come ... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Timothy 4:8,15).

It was not easy for Hudson Taylor, the prominent missionary, to make time for prayer and Bible study while traveling in northern China. His children remember how at night, after sleep had finally brought a measure of quiet, they would hear the striking of a match and see the flicker of candlelight which told that their father, however weary, was poring over his Bible. From 2 to 4 a.m. was the time he usually gave to prayer, as it was the time when he could be most sure of being undisturbed to wait upon God. In later years, the memory of that flicker of candlelight meant more to them than all they read or heard on secret prayer.

—H. and G. Taylor

CONFESSION

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23,24).

One element in true prayer is confession. I do not want Christian readers to think I am talking to the unsaved. I think we, as Christians, have a good many sins to confess.

If you go back to the Scripture records, you will find that the men who lived nearest to God, and had the most power with Him, were those who confessed their sins and failures. Job was no doubt a holy man, yet he had to fall in the dust and confess his sins. When Isaiah saw the purity and holiness of God, he beheld himself in his true light, and he exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). You will notice that when Daniel got that wonderful answer to prayer (Daniel 9), he was confessing his sin. It was when David said, "I have sinned!" that God dealt in mercy with him.

If we are regarding iniquity in our hearts, or living on a mere empty profession, we have no claim to expect that our prayers will be answered. It is well for us to search our hearts, and find out why it is that our prayers are not answered.

—Condensed from *Prevailing Prayer* by D. L. Moody.

When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do. When we rely upon education, we get what education can do. When we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. But when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do.

—A.C. Dixon

ABIDE IN ME

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

When we compare this promise with the experience of most believers, we are startled by a terrible discrepancy. Who could count the prayers that rise and bring no answer? Why?

“If ye abide in Me.” As the union of the branch with the vine is one of unceasing growth and increase, so our abiding in Christ is a life process in which the divine life takes ever fuller and more complete possession of us. Entire consecration to the fulfillment of our calling is the condition of effective prayer. The surrender to God’s supremacy, His glory, His will, and His pleasure, ought to be the first and uppermost thought in our life. To those who abide like this, the promise, “ask what ye will,” comes as their rightful heritage.

“And My words abide in you.” As the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our life and influence it, our words will enter His heart and influence Him. In His words His will is revealed. As the words abide in me, His will rules me. In the exercise of obedience and faith, my will is brought into deeper harmony with Him. He can fully trust it to will nothing but what He wills, and is not afraid to give the

promise: *“Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”*

The reason we have not had power to prevail in believing prayer is that our life was not as it should have been. Obedience is the only path that leads to the glory of God. Take the words in 1 John 3:22: *“Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”* Or take the oft-quoted words of James: *“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”* (James 5:16).

Later in Jesus’ lesson on abiding in the Vine, He says, *“I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you”* (John 15:16). Let us seek to enter into the spirit of what the Savior teaches us here. The one thing He commands us as branches is to *bear fruit*.

Let us live to bless others, to testify of the life and the love there is in Jesus. Let us in faith and obedience give our whole life to that which Jesus chose for us and appointed us to—fruit-bearing. It is the man or woman who, in obedience to the Christ of God, is doing what the Lord wills, for whom the promise of answered prayer is given.

—Adapted from *The Believer’s School of Prayer* by Andrew Murray.

WHAT HAS PRAYER DONE?

Prayer has divided seas, rolled up flowing rivers, made flinty rocks gush into fountains, quenched flames of fire, muzzled lions, disarmed vipers and poisons, marshaled the stars against the wicked, stopped the course of the moon, arrested the rapid sun in its great race, burst open iron gates, recalled souls from eternity, conquered the strongest devils, commanded legions of angels down from Heaven. Prayer has brought one man from the bottom of the sea, and carried another in a chariot of fire to Heaven. What has prayer *not* done?

—*The Anchor*

THE HEART OF PRAYER

God, who is a God of law and order, has set certain conditions on His promise to hear and answer our prayers. What kind of heart must we have for God to hear us?

A Pure Heart: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18).* This means that the man who continually practices sin and who has in his heart a purpose to commit sin, and who clings to sin, has no claim upon the ear of God. The only prayer such a person can expect God to hear is one of repentance.

An Unselfish Heart: *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).* Man has no right to ask God for something which he wants to use merely for the gratification of his own desires or for his own personal satisfaction.

A Humble Heart: *“Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear” (Psalm 10:17).* God hates pride, but He loves humility. God says that He hears the humble man.

A Yielded Heart: *“If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14).* A heart yielded to God’s will is certainly a heart that is pure and unselfish. The life in which the will of God is foremost is a life which seeks God’s glory, and one which will experience His blessings.

A Believing Heart: *“All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).* Nowhere does God promise to answer prayer offered without faith. A believing heart is essential if we are to meet the conditions which God places upon our access to Him with our petitions.

Christ’s Heart: *“Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).* Only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are men saved. Only through His blood are sins washed away, and only in Him do we become children of God. How proper, therefore, that our prayers to our Father should be in the Name and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Praying “in the Name of Jesus” simply means praying with Christ’s interests in mind—asking the Father for the things that touch the heart of Christ. In Christ’s Name we may bring our petitions to our Heavenly Father, and “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

—Adapted from *As The Small Rain*.

EPAPHRAS

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers” (Colossians 4:12).

We are thankful for preachers, pastors, teachers, and missionaries; but we want men and women of prayer, those who minister like Epaphras. Without a spirit of fervent, agonizing, persevering prayer, no spiritual work can prosper.

The precious labors of the prayer warrior demand no special gift, no peculiar talent, and no preeminent mental abilities. A Christian may not have the ability to preach, teach, write, or travel; but every Christian can pray. What we need in the church is a real spirit of prayer, a spirit that enters into the present need of the church and bears that need up to God in persevering, fervent, believing intercession at all times, and in all circumstances. —C.H. Mackintosh

PRAYERLESSNESS

A Christian overheard several co-workers having a discussion in which some very harsh and cruel things were said about Christians. When he could stand it no longer, he said, "I admit there are some hypocrites in the church, but most of us are sincere believers."

Turning their attention to him, they proceeded to ask him whether or not he truly believed that all unsaved people were destined for an eternity in Hell. "Yes," he replied. Then they asked whether or not he believed God truly answers prayer. "Yes, I do," he declared confidently. "Then tell us: during the years that we have worked together, how many nights have you spent in prayer for our salvation? How much time have you spent in prayer for us *this week*?"

The Christian hung his head in shame, realizing that his actions were not living up to his beliefs and profession. What about you? Are you guilty of the sin of prayerlessness? Do you lightly promise others that you will pray for them and about their circumstances, and then forget as soon as the words have left your lips?

—Robert A. Laidlaw, adapted

WORK AND PRAYER

Here is the great secret of success. Work with all your might, but trust not in the least in your work. Pray with all your might for the blessing of God, but work at the same time with all diligence, with all patience, with all perseverance. Pray then, and work. Work and pray. And still again pray, and then work. And so on all the days of your life. The result will surely be abundant blessing. Whether you see much fruit or little fruit, such kind of service will be blessed.—George Müller

NECESSITY OF PRAYER

It is interesting to see how much of the Bible is occupied with the subject of prayer, either in providing examples, enforcing precepts, or pronouncing promises. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). Then, just as we are about to close the volume, the "Amen" of an earnest supplication meets our ear (Revelation 22:21). In God's Word we find a wrestling Jacob, a Daniel who prayed three times a day, and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elijah, in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises.

What does this teach us, but the sacred importance and necessity of prayer? We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much need of it. So deep are our necessities, that until we are in Heaven we must not cease to pray. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the rest of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honor of a Christian.

Pray that this year you may be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; that you may have closer communion with Christ, entering more frequently into communion with Him. Pray that you may be an example and a blessing unto others, and that you may live more to the glory of your Master. The motto for this year must be, "Continue in prayer."—C. H. Spurgeon